



Report

INTEGRATED ADOLESCENT PROGRAMMING

April 2018: A review from the Malawi Country Office

[Savethechildren.org.uk](https://www.savethechildren.org.uk)

Registered charity England and Wales (213890) Scotland (SC039570)

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Acronyms

While this report attempts to minimise use of acronyms for ease of reading, there are a few widely used ones that will be referenced throughout the document. These are:

CDSS	Community Day Secondary School
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights
UN CEDAW	UN Convention on the Elimination of all forms of Discrimination Against Women
UNCRC	UN Convention on the Rights of the Child
VSL	Village Savings and Loans (groups)

Introduction

Save the Children International has worked in Malawi for over 30 years, focusing on the core programming areas of Education and Child Development, Maternal and Child Health, Child Protection and Child Rights Governance, Child Poverty and Humanitarian work. Spanning across all of these programming areas, is a focus on **adolescence in general and adolescent girls in particular**. This is particularly relevant given the national context of high rates of child marriage, early pregnancy, high maternal mortality and premature birth as well as neonatal mortality—often attributed to the young age of mothers.

Adolescence (10-19 years) is a transformative time, spanning quite distinct life stages, ranging from primary school to secondary school and, in many cases, to early marriage, parenthood and employment. Adolescent girls in Malawi (as in many other developing countries) do not enjoy basic rights—they are generally less educated, less healthy, and less safe compared to their male peers, and face a myriad of deprivations as well as obstacles to achieving their aspirations. In 2016, the Country Office reached more than 1.3 million adolescents through targeted interventions, with programming achieving results including: reducing school drop-outs from 20.6% to 2.3%, and reducing absenteeism of girls from 12-36 days per year, to zero days through provision of menstrual hygiene supplies. Following such a prominent focus on adolescence, the Country Office is now seeking to marshal its experience, learning and evidence about its adolescent interventions, in order to inform future programming based on **what is known to work best to empower adolescent girls, and to unpack the meaning of empowerment**.

The purpose of this document therefore, is to capture and synthesise the overall successes, challenges and lessons learned from Save the Children's current (as well as recently closed) adolescence projects, and in turn formulate a **'package' of integrated activities** believed to be the most effective for rolling back early marriage and pregnancy. The report delves into questions such as: What seem to be the key factors of an integrated approach? What works? And why?

An integrated approach is one that Save the Children Norway is currently launching, with the view to programming being primarily conducted around key issues rather than the traditional sectoral/thematic perspective. This way, issues can be explored from a multi-sectoral angle to identify key drivers and enablers,

and multi-sectoral programme strategies can be developed and employed to address said key drivers. This requires a systems shift in how operations are delivered at both Country Office and Member level. This report explores what some of those operational shifts need to look like.

Additional to this, Save the Children's experience is that **integrated programming improves Impact, Efficiency and Value for Money**. While this report cannot confirm this experience in its entirety—due to the limited timeframe, and lack of impact evaluations or costing analyses on Save the Children's adolescent projects—this report is the first step in determining what Save the Children needs to be doing in Malawi to deliver impactful integrated programming that will empower adolescents. The document concentrates on:

1. The challenges and barriers that adolescents face in Malawi (widely recognised to be global issues)
2. Spotlight on Save the Children's adolescent programming, followed by a summary of the successes, challenges and lessons learned from each of the 12 adolescent projects targeted in this report (out of a portfolio of 17; see Annex A).
3. Key take-aways in what integrated programming looks like, from both a design and operational perspective
4. Review of Malawi's Policy Environment that impacts on Adolescents
5. Review of media coverage on adolescents
6. Landscape: other actors working with adolescents
7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This report captures and packages the gains made in sustainable solutions to the challenges that adolescents face and seeks to understand how an integrated package of interventions can address adolescents' cultural, physiological, psycho-social, economic and educational needs. This is all within the context of knowing that well educated women are equipped to make informed decisions in relation to their children, and over time, play a critical role in ending poverty—for **every last child**.

Save the Children Malawi, April 2018

Joanna Howarth, Independent Consultant

Definitions

In Malawi, there are a range of platforms, models and groups used which will be referred to throughout the document. Outlined here are their definitions. It should be noted that these are not the only notable platforms and structures; there are others (as well as national strategies and policies) that are explained in more detail throughout the body of the report.

- There are varying parameters to differentiate between **Adolescents and Youth**—for the purpose of this report, youth is 10-35 year olds (Malawi National Youth Policy definition), and adolescence is 10-19. Where this report refers to youth or children, it is referring to them within the adolescent bracket of 10-19 year olds. The focus of the report is on all adolescents—boys and girls—and so will use the inclusive term of ‘adolescence’. Due to the increased challenges that girls and young women face however, there is an increased focus on them at points.
- **Initiation Ceremonies** are prevalent across Malawi, provided to adolescent boys and girls when they reach puberty. Led by **Initiation Ceremony Leaders** they include ceremonies for girls to learn about marriage and sexual intercourse, and educating boys on their masculine roles in society. Initiation Ceremonies sometimes enforce cultural and social stereotypes that are harmful to adolescents—and girls in particular. Specific challenges regarding initiation ceremonies are covered under relevant projects listed in this report.¹
- **Life Skills Classes** are a mandatory part of Malawi’s primary and secondary curriculum. They are classes within which topics such as Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights is covered, along with information on puberty, financial literacy and other general life-skills. Where the phrase ‘Life Skills’ is used within this document, it is referring to the classes within school or similar content in classes for those adolescents who are out-of-school.
- **Malawi’s Education System** follows an 8-4 model. Primary school is eight years and is referred to as Standard 1-8. For a child starting school at the nationally recommended age (6) and continuing uninterrupted they would be in primary school until they reach age 14. The four years of secondary school are referred to as Forms 1-4 and take a young person up to age 18. The success of a child at primary school determines if they will go to a Boarding Secondary School, or a Community Day Secondary School (CDSS). The higher your grades on leaving primary, the more chance of being allocated a place at boarding school. Tertiary education is a further four years.
- **Mother Groups** are unique to Malawi—established in 1998 by Forum for African Women Educationalists and subsequently scaled by the Government, they are groups of women that come together within their community to support girls to stay in school. They are affiliated with primary schools and have been mandated nationally by the Government. Their remit includes provision of counselling (to both parents of children dropping out of school—particularly due to marriage, as well as counselling girls at risk of entering marriage), follow-up home visits to households where girls have dropped out of school, withdrawing girls from illegal child marriages, and income generation for girls’ education in their communities. They are a core component of the National Girls’ Education Strategy and receive training from Regional and District authorities. In reality, there is very little budget allocated by Government for the training and development of these groups.²
- **Village and Area Development Committees**: made up at both village and area levels, these committees are responsible for community development. They are representative of society with committee members comprised of community members, elders, traditional leaders, and local authority members.
- **Youth Groups**: There are various youth groups that are constituted by different actors such as NGOs, Civil Society Organisations, schools, faith-based organisations, and the Ministry of Labour, Youth, Sports and Manpower Development (MoLYSMD). Most of these groups serve as mechanisms to reach youth with various interventions. It is important to note that the MoLYSMD has a formal mandate to form youth groups with the specific purpose of reaching out-of-school adolescents. Other groups exist within school-based settings.

One can deduce that through these well-established platforms and varying structures, Malawi has an enabling environment in which to deliver adolescent programming. This enabling environment is however affected by other structures such as Initiation Ceremony Leaders, the role of Traditional Authorities who may play either a progressive or reactive role in society. The Government of Malawi often struggles with weak technical and financial resources to effectively implement policies and some laws have yet to be harmonised with the legal age of the child, which is set at 18.

¹ In 2006 the Malawi Human Rights Commission conducted a report on harmful cultural practices—referenced in the Annex D for further information.

² The 2007-2017 National Education Sector Plan has a budget line for ‘Set up and support Mother Groups for Girls’ Enrolment’ totalling 1241.2 million MK, (approx. \$1,705,371 USD) over 10 years. This is \$170,537 per annum to Mother Groups. Every primary school is mandated to have a Mother Group—while it is not easy to determine how many primary schools there are in Malawi, we know that in 2014, there were 3,688,000 children enrolled in primary education (Education Policy and Data Centre). With an average 3,000 children per primary school, we can deduce there to be approximately 1,299 primary schools in Malawi, and thus 1,299 Mother Groups. This is \$131 USD per group per annum investment. It is to be noted that this is not for their running costs, only training.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY



This Integrated Adolescent Programming report delves into the successes, challenges, and lessons learned from 12 projects out of a possible 17 addressing barriers faced by adolescents. It also identifies approaches to strengthening integration for greater impact.

Why Adolescence? There are more young people in the world than ever before. 25% of Malawi's population are adolescents (10-19 years old) while almost three quarters (73.9%) are under the age of 30. Such a 'youth bulge' has the potential to be either a demographic dividend or demographic drain on resources for this southern Africa nation. If the Government wants to see a demographic dividend, then investing in youth—adolescents in particular—is an absolute priority. As the world's largest demographic, young people are affected by a multitude of challenges. This needs to be reflected in how they're considered within programme designs; whether the focus be food security or education, climate change or health, economic empowerment or SRHR. This was highlighted by a 2017 report by The Guardian³ illustrating how climate change has influenced the number of child brides in Africa. On the surface these are two seemingly unrelated topics, but it illustrates how trends at large need to be considered with respect to this unique segment of the population with such a large impact on the national picture – soon to become adults and give rise to the next generation.

Why is integration important? "Integrated services across different sectors have the potential to address multiple outcomes, mitigate common risks for poor health and development, and are a potentially more efficient use of financial and human resources".⁴ Despite investment in and development of adolescents being a global challenge, the thinking behind (a) how to integrate adolescence into development programming and (b) integrate adolescent solutions with one another, is by no means mature. The range of thematic dimensions that adolescence touches on are vast, as are the intervention opportunities and entry points through which to reach adolescents. This in turn contributes to the integration challenge.

This report begins the process of addressing what we have learned about integrated adolescent programming by showcasing experience about what is and is not working in adolescent programmes in Malawi, identifying common themes across adolescent interventions, exploring integration models, and addressing the role that operations needs to play for true integration.

The report has also enabled the team to start to identify project models that are already effectively using integration, including Option Y (page 17)—a livelihoods programme that is integrating ASRHR, education, and agriculture into delivery, as well as leveraging existing government extension systems to strengthen support provided to adolescents.

What have we learned? Analysis of the 12 adolescent focused interventions identified the four most common thematic dimensions within adolescence programming to be: Education, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR), child protection, and Livelihoods/Economic Empowerment. These four areas are recognised to be the most practical in ensuring interventions are aligned with the different phases of life which 10-19-year-olds encounter. Some of the key impacts and findings under these three intervention areas show that:

Education projects achieve impact through engaging men and boys; investing in female role models; strengthening life skills classes; addressing the lack of infrastructure and supplies for menstrual management which acts as a barrier to school attendance; cash transfers; and leveraging Mother Groups.

³ <https://www.theguardian.com/society/2017/nov/26/climate-change-creating-generation-of-child-brides-in-africa>

⁴ Building Brains: Early Stimulation from birth to three toolkit | Save the Children International, 2017



The ASPIRE programme has **reduced absenteeism among girls** to zero (from roughly 12 – 36 days per annum) by providing menstrual hygiene supplies.

Keeping Girls in School programme has **reduced the repetition rate** among girls from standard 7 to 8 to 0.5% (from 18.5% at baseline) and **reduced school dropouts** among girls from 20.6% at baseline (2014), to 2.3% in 2016.



The Reducing Teenage Pregnancies project has:

- Reduced school dropout rate of girls due to pregnancy by 90% in 2 years
- Seen 1,457 teenage mothers return to school
- Secured a 46.4 percentage point increase in adolescent girls that are able to refuse sex when their partner proposes
- Played a role in delaying marriage among girls, with the average age at first marriage for girls up to 13.6 years, from 10 at baseline.

ASRHR gains have been made through projects that generate demand creation by linking schools to health facilities in the catchment areas and strengthening Youth Friendly Health Services (among others).

Child protection projects improve self-efficacy of adolescent girls through providing role models, mentors and strengthening school clubs, resulting in increased sensitization on their rights.

Findings from the end-line evaluation of Youth in Action, an economic empowerment project, show that: mentoring has stronger impact than provision of technical skills; the integration of projects within existing community structures supports ownership and results; and VSL groups provide a firm foundation for youth to have increased access to capital, and sustained savings.

Additional findings include:

- The critical importance of sustainability of the approach. Successes have been found in using (and creating linkages between) community structures and platforms to own and continue the interventions; and
- Strengths can be found in youth participation, access to justice, and sustainability and ownership—with a strong focus on consultative and community led processes.

There are a number of different integration models that can be developed to optimise the impact on adolescent girls and boys in Malawi.

Currently, Save the Children Malawi's current project portfolio divides interventions by sector, resulting in a series of interventions that often overlap. This siloed project approach can be mitigated by having an approach that sees adolescence as a programme made up of multiple projects, all addressing the key drivers that suppress adolescents from thriving, such as poverty, early marriage and teenage pregnancies to name a few. Some ways of addressing these key drivers would be through multi-sectoral approaches including advocacy, systems strengthening, and economic empowerment. This moves Save the Children away from traditional, service provision-oriented projects to an issue-based portfolio that embraces integration.

An integrated adolescent programme can consider two approaches:

- **Complementarity**—the adding of adolescent thematic dimensions where other interventions exist. This could be particularly relevant in emergency programming where the focus might be on food security and resilience, but where adolescent girls and young women may be at particular risk.
- **Issue based**—identifying an issue such as Early Marriage and developing a multi-faceted programme strategy to address the issue. This puts issue at the core and requires every intervention to address the challenge in a comprehensive way.

Operations: Integration is complex, and we cannot just focus on integration via programmatic implementation. Operational and logistical aspects of an organisation need to embrace integration in order to have the greatest impact. This needs to look at staffing, funding, monitoring and evaluation, stakeholder relationships (both internal and external), and logistics, as well as robust learning platforms, and prioritising opportunities for sharing across projects.

To conclude, this report illustrates Save the Children Malawi's most promising practices of adolescent programming and outlines some initial models for integrated adolescent programming, taking into account both implementation and operational perspectives, as well as guiding principles for integration approaches moving forward.

Limitations of the review

The conclusions and recommendations offered in this review mainly derive from project reports, baseline studies, monitoring activities, on-the-ground experience by project staff and conversations with stakeholders that have taken place over time. Most of the adolescent interventions are relatively new and have not yet reached the stage of evaluations or endline studies although there are a few notable exceptions such as *Keeping Girls in School* and *ASPIRE*. *Youth in Action*'s final evaluation is nearly final. It is clear that generating rigorous findings from other interventions will be important for drawing robust conclusions in the future albeit finding the resources, both human and financial, to achieve this goal is difficult. Overall, there is a lack of costing analysis among these projects. Nevertheless, with several years of experience and close to twenty projects addressing adolescents, this is an important moment for SCl to take stock of where it sees the strengths and weaknesses of its work and to map the contours of where the most potential seems to lie for successful programming to address adolescent challenges.

I. Status of Adolescents in Malawi

The adolescent years span distinct life stages for young people growing up in Malawi: primary to secondary transition, early marriage, parenthood/childbirth, and employment. This stage in life is often decisive in how youth will transition from school to work and for the likelihood of transitioning out of poverty. Yet adolescents from poor households are deprived of the opportunity to build skills, networks and self-esteem in order to make the transition to safe and decent livelihoods. This section provides a snapshot of what life looks like for an adolescent growing up in Malawi—from an education, livelihood, Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) and Early Marriage perspective—as well as the wider national context within which they sit.

CONTEXT: MALAWI

Malawi is **one of the poorest countries in the world**, ranked 170 out of 188 on the UNDP Human Development Index (2016).

56.1% of the population live in **multidimensional poverty** while nearly 71% live below the income poverty line of \$1.90 USD per person per day according to the UNDP Human Development Index (2016).

Malawi has **high gender inequality**—ranked 145 out of 159 on the UN Gender Inequality Index (2015).

Malawi has a **high youth population**: adolescents account for 25% of the population, while youth (10-35) account for 45.4% of the population. Almost three quarters (73.9%) of the population is under the age of 30 (Malawi Demographic and Health Survey (MDHS) 2010).

HIV is at epidemic levels in Malawi: 10% of adults aged 15–49 are living with HIV (UNAIDS 2014).

HIV disproportionately affects women, particularly at younger ages—4.2% of females 15–19 years of age are HIV-positive compared to 1.3% of their male counterparts (Population Council 2009).

The majority of the population in Malawi lives in **rural areas** and almost **70% of the employed youth population work in the agricultural sector**.

EDUCATION

Since 1994, Malawi has had free primary school education which has resulted in high enrolment rates for young adolescents.

The **sector faces multidimensional challenges**: inadequate school facilities, high pupil-teacher ratios, low learning achievement, and huge capacity gap in school inspection and supervision.

Approximately 5% of youth have no formal education and 57% have attained at most incomplete primary education. This means **a total of 62% of 15-24 year olds have not completed primary education** (EPDC 2014).

The proportion of **males and females out of school** at primary level is similar, yet the **gap widens at secondary** with males accounting for 23% of those out-of-school compared to 32% female (EPDC 2014).

While the Government has shown commitment to education with over 20% of the national budget allocated to it, the number of youth achieving a full education remains woefully low.

The **mean years of schooling stands at just 4.4** according to the UNDP Human Development Index (2016).

For girls to achieve academically they must: enter and stay in school, be learning while in school, and be healthy and safe in their communities at all times.

RIGHTS

11% of children aged 6-13 are out of primary school, while 27% of adolescents aged 14-17 are not in secondary school (EPDC 2014).

The AMAA⁵ project baseline study indicated the top reasons for girls dropping out of school to be: **pregnancy, marriages, school fees and distance to school**.

Out-of-school rural youth face **limited formal socioeconomic opportunities**, are often **unable to access systems and structures** (such as quality formal education or the formal economy), and **lack assets** such as life skills, hard technical skills, capital, and job opportunities.

When out-of-school youth are **unable to engage in incoming generating activities and self-employment** they are increasingly likely to: engage in childhood delinquency, drugs and prostitution; enter into family life very early; and enter into harmful work environments in order to earn a living.

Participants in the AMAA project baseline felt that **educating a girl child remains unimportant**: *“when girls get married they move away from their parent’s community and there is nothing they (parents) benefit from their girl child. Communities prefer educating boys than girls”*.

40% of the youth population in Malawi between 15-24 years is unemployed (Population Reference Bureau, 2014).

Unemployment among women is higher than that of men in the age category 15-24. Difficulty earning adequate income and managing economic shocks can turn women towards unsafe coping strategies—including remaining in abusive relationships, or transactional sex, thus increasing their exposure to HIV.

Less than one-third of adolescent girls in Malawi use modern contraception resulting in **increased rates of teenage pregnancy** among 15-19 year olds, which have risen from 26% (2010) to 29% (2016) (MDHS 2010).

Malawi has one of the **highest adolescent fertility rates in the world**—137 births per 1,000 women aged 15 to 19 years (UNDP Human Development Index 2016).

3 in 10 women begins child bearing by the age of 18—yet pregnancy, childbirth and unsafe abortions are the leading causes of death in young women aged between 15 and 18 (MDHS 2010).

A 2005 study showed **adolescents account for 20.6% of all maternal deaths** in Malawi. Adolescents do not have access to SRH services appropriate for their age, despite being the most exposed to SRH related risks.

14.7% of young women and 18.2% of young men in the age bracket 15-24 years engaged in sex before age 15 (MDG End-line Survey 2014 report, NSO-2014).

Condom use with non-regular partners among 15-24 year olds stands at just 57.2% among women and 69.9% among men (MDG End-line Survey 2014 report, NSO-2014).

Reasons hindering adolescent engagement in SRH services include:

- Lack of youth friendly services leads to low demand, despite high knowledge of the importance of SRH including use of contraceptives.
- Health facilities are often times a long distance away.
- Girls are suspicious that health personnel may not respect confidentiality and may divulge information about girls’ visits to health facilities.
- Despite knowing about risks such as HIV/AIDS, adolescents lack adequate autonomy for making decisions and adopting safer sexual behaviours and lack support from their social context.

New policy commitments by the Government to increase uptake by adolescents of SRH include the **Youth-Friendly Health Services Strategy**.

CHILD MARRIAGE

Marriage under the age of 18 is illegal in Malawi, yet 11.7% of women aged 20–24 report having been married by age 15 (MDHS 2010).

Nearly half of all women aged 20–24 (49.6%) report being married by age 18 (MDHS 2010).

Girls marry much younger in Malawi than their male counterparts. The EC funded Combatting Child Marriages and Human Trafficking project baseline study⁶ found that 61.3% of the children interviewed knew at least a girl aged 10–18 years in early child marriage, while only 37.9% knew of a boy in child marriage.

The reasons for child marriage in Malawi are many and complex, including:

- **Poverty**—this can motivate parents to marry off their daughter, or lead to girls engaging in transactional sex and falling pregnant
- **Pregnancy results** in pressure to marry the father of the child
- **Religious beliefs** as well as **cultural traditions** including:
 - Initiation ceremonies—these are conducted among girls and boys when they hit puberty. Girls in particular are taught about sexual activity and prepared for marriage. After this two-week process, many girls drop out of school and look for a husband.
 - Kutomera—a cultural tradition of pre-arranged marriage by parents.
 - Traditional leaders benefits economically from marriages, dissuading them from playing a key role in preventing early marriage.
- Limited role models for adolescents, poor parenting skills, lack of voice among adolescents to speak out, peer pressure and/or ignorance, among others.

In Malawi, sex with a minor is a criminal offence under the Penal Code—however sex with a minor has often been justifiable within the context of marriage.

UNICEF has recently reported (06 March 2018) that child marriage numbers are falling globally—an estimated 25 million marriages have been prevented in the last decade and now just 1 in 5 girls are married before they are 18, compared to 1 in 4 a decade ago. The greatest gains have been made in Asia, with an understanding that in India, this has been achieved by better education for girls and by publicising the harm child marriage causes.

UNICEF highlight that the problem now remains most severe in Africa—one in three child marriages takes place in sub-Saharan Africa (compared to one in five, 10 years ago).



Photo: Girls Camp session| Ending Child Marriage and Human Trafficking Project| Mwanza District

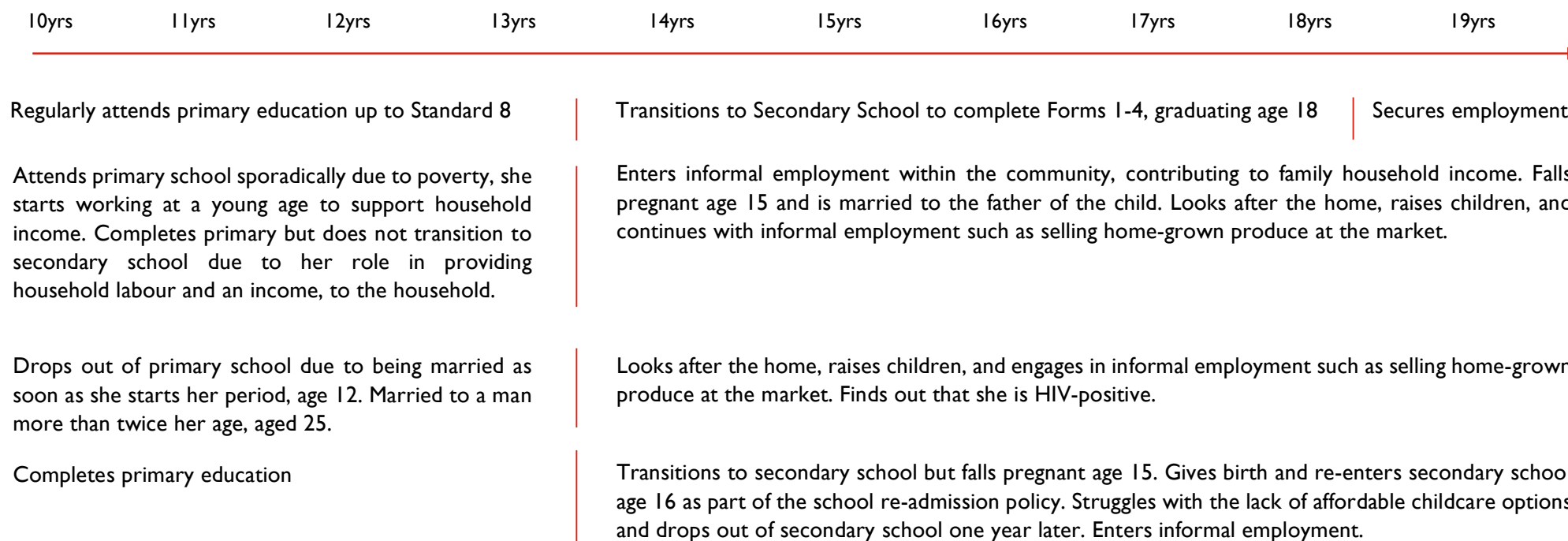
<http://www.bbc.co.uk/news/world-43297085>

⁵ Refer to page 30 for more information on AMAA

⁶ Refer to page 23 for more information on the Combatting Child Marriages and Human Trafficking project

Hypothetical Lifeline of 10-19-year-old Adolescent Girls and Young Women





This timeline illustrates the hypothetical journey of girls both in- and out-of-school, illustrating the multiple different pathways that they may navigate, and in turn the breadth of responses required by organisations such as Save the Children to ensure adolescent girls don't fall through the gaps.



This is purely a hypothetical illustration of the various routes that adolescent girls and young women may choose or be forced to follow. They are of course all interchangeable, and a girl may be confronted with all or none of these challenges to her adolescent years. As the 10-19 age range covers a range of different contexts, diverse responses are required from providers such as Save the Children. The weight of different components will depend on the differing situations entirely. Obviously, an adolescent in school can be reached through services that may not extend to adolescents outside of school. This requires engagement with a variety of Ministries and institutional organisations.

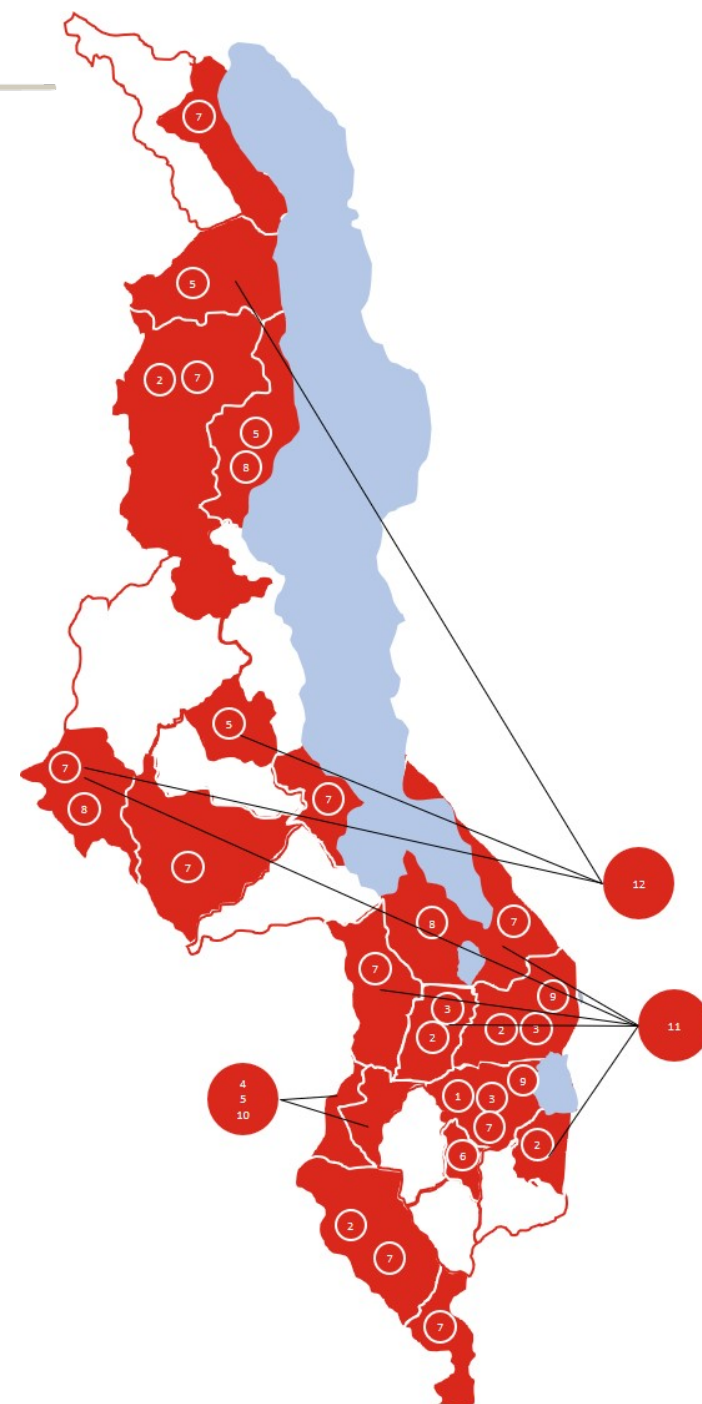
2. Map of Programming

Save the Children Malawi has 17 projects that work with adolescents across the country, 12 of which have been studied in detail for this report. The full list can be seen in Annex A. For the purpose of grouping in this report, these 12 have been split into the four thematic categories of: Education, Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR), Child Protection, and Economic Empowerment/Livelihoods.

THEME	PROJECT NAME	MAP REF.
ASRHR 	Adolescent Development (component of the larger Sponsorship Programme)	1
	ASPIRE	3
	Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Family Planning for Protection and Empowerment of Adolescents and Women in Malawi	5
Livelihoods 	Decent Livelihood Options for Youth Economic Empowerment (Option Y)	6
	Youth in Action	12
	Opening Doors to Dignified Work (DREAMS)	9
Child Protection 	Marriage, No Child's Play	8
	Combatting Child Marriages and Human Trafficking	4
	Reducing Teenage Pregnancies	11
Education 	Quality, Learning and Accountability	10
	Keeping Girls in School	7
	Apatseni Mwayi Atsikana Aphunzire (AMAA)	2

The map to the right illustrates the locations of these projects by district.

Save the Children Malawi's operational structure sees advocacy cut across all of these projects; each project feeding into the national advocacy strategy (led by a team in the Programme Development and Quality Team).



Of the 26 districts that Save the Children Malawi is operating within (out of a total 28), 19 have adolescent programmes, illustrating a high focus within the country office on this segment of society.

District	Intervention
Karonga	Education (7)
Rumphi	ASRHR (5) and Livelihoods (12)
Mzimba	Education (7 and 2)
Nkhata Bay	ASRHR (5) and Child Protection (8)
Ntchisi	ASRHR (5) and Livelihoods (12)
Mchinji	Education (7), Child Protection (8 and 11), Livelihoods (12)
Salima	Education (7)
Lilongwe	Education (7)
Mangochi	Education (7), Child Protection (8 and 11)
Ntcheu	Education (7) and Child Protection (11)
Balaka	Education (2) and ASRHR (3)
Machinga	Education (2), ASRHR (3) and Livelihoods (9)
Zomba	ASRHR (1 and 3), Education (7) and Livelihoods (9)
Chiradzulu	Livelihoods (6)
Phalombe	Education (2)
Mwanza	Child Protection (4), Education (10), and ASRHR (5)
Neno	Child Protection (4), Education (10), and ASRHR (5)
Chikwawa	Education (2 and 7)
Nsanje	Education (7)

Some key take-aways we can see from mapping the adolescent projects, include:

- Projects are thematically and geographically aligned—experience shows that where multiple projects exist in one area, the targeted children may receive multiple overlapping interventions which sometimes contradict one another and sometimes have to choose one intervention over another. Local platforms also become exhausted. For example, one Mother Group will be engaged by multiple projects for trainings and implementation, which adds to their already tight workload.
- One advantage of multi-sectoral projects in one geography is that adolescents receive the range of interventions needed to address the multiple challenges that impact on them between the ages of 10-19. This needs to be balanced with the risk of overlapping interventions, and can be addressed through an integrated approach to adolescent programming (which is covered in detail under Section 3).
- A sector focused approach means that projects are not integrated at a programming level. Each project is an island.

Save the Children Malawi's Adolescent Programmes: Successes, Challenges and Lessons Learned

A series of key informant interviews with project staff, as well as document reviews from each of the projects has supported the compilation of lessons learned, successes and challenges encountered for 12 identified adolescent projects. Each of the projects is at a varying stage in delivery, with end line data available for only two projects—*Keeping Girls in School* and *Reducing Teenage Pregnancies*—and a third end line evaluation underway for *Youth in Action* (the results unfortunately won't be available in time for inclusion in this report).

Covered in the following pages is a synopsis of each of the adolescent projects, grouped according to the thematic categories on the previous page. This is notably a light touch review of each project, with a focus on the learnings and what Save the Children Malawi can be pulling out of these interventions to develop an integrated approach.

ADOLESCENT SEXUAL AND REPRODUCTIVE HEALTH AND RIGHTS PROJECTS



Girl Camp session, Ending Child Marriage and Human Trafficking Project

Adolescent Development component of the Sponsorship Programme

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Girls Empowerment through Education and Health Activity (ASPIRE)

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Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Family Planning for Protection and Empowerment of Adolescents and Women in Malawi (EC-SRH) Project

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Adolescent Development component of the Sponsorship Programme (2013-2023)

The 10-year Sponsorship Programme has five components, one of which is ‘Adolescent Development’—concentrating on adolescent’s aged 10-18, who are both in- and out-of-school. The project focus is on: (1) retaining adolescents in school, (2) increasing access and quality of reproductive and sexual health services for youth, (3) promoting adolescent’s economic opportunities, (4) advocating for improvements in their health behaviours through awareness campaigns, and (5) actively engaging stakeholders to address risky practices identified in traditional ceremonies. The project is achieving this through two approaches: Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (ASRHR) and Adolescent Skills for Successful Transitions.

The **ASRHR approach** is addressed through structures including:

- **School:** using adolescent health clubs to support youth to stay in school. Clubs are divided into 10-14 year olds and 15-19 year olds, with each cohort supported by Club Patrons (trained teachers—one male and one female per club) whose role is to provide counselling, use developed puberty books for education, and use drama to educate on topics such as HIV/AIDs.
- **Mother Groups** have been trained on menstrual hygiene management and provided with tailor made training on how to hand stitch reusable sanitary pads for girls, as well as encourage community members to do the same, as a mechanism to keep girls in school. Mother Groups have also been trained on tracking girls that have dropped out of school—linkage with the schools and health centres means that those that have dropped out due to early marriage can be encouraged back to school (and oftentimes out of the marriage) while those that are pregnant can receive the medical support needed, as well as information on returning back to school.
- **Teen Mothers Clubs** were established in recognition that teen mothers are often treated like adults, yet are just children themselves. The clubs provide a space for teen mothers to receive training on parenting and ensure the girls’ family are providing adequate support—this is supported by the Mother Groups.
- **Health Centres:** The project is improving the quality of Youth Friendly Health Services at health facilities and supporting their accreditation as government approved Youth Friendly Health Centres (YFHCs)—for example identifying private spaces for adolescents to receive an integrated package of support. For health centres run by Catholic organisations (who do not promote contraception use), community outreach is provided to ensure access to contraception for youth.
- **Community Leaders** are engaged through providing them with training on Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health in a culturally sensitive way.

The **Adolescent Skills for Successful Transitions** approach is addressed through working with TEVETA (the Technical, Entrepreneurial and Vocational Education and Training Authority) to provide out-of-school youth with vocational skills for economic independence. Following a market survey, the adolescents are trained in: knitting, sewing and bakery—identified as being cost effective livelihoods with large market demand. The adolescents are also trained on entrepreneurship and business skills, and linked with other components of the wider Sponsorship Programme for support in Village Savings and Loan (VSL) groups and agri-business training.

Successes

- Linkages with the ASPIRE programme (page 14), resulting in avoiding duplication, sharing of resources (e.g.: training materials), and learning visits between projects.
- Vocational skills for economic independence has worked well for the out-of-school youth.
- Accreditation of the Youth Friendly Health Services as a means for sustainability and high-quality support for adolescents
- Theatre for Development as a means of ensuring youth voices are heard and listened to.
- The project adopted and initiated the implementation of the Partnership Defined Quality for Youth (PDQ-Y) in four government health facilities with the aim of improving quality and accessibility of youth friendly health services through effective collaboration between the health services providers and the youth.

Challenges

- Schools at both primary and secondary level do not allow provision of contraceptives on school grounds—youth friendly health services can however be engaged outside of the school gates.
- School drop-outs due to pregnancy continues to be a challenge—largely down to cultural issues (Zomba district—where the project is delivered—has high rates of initiation ceremonies, and households are looked down on or shunned if their children do not partake).
- Ownership of the start-up materials provided to those partaking in vocational activities—one sewing machine for example might be used by a number of adolescents, and when it breaks, no one takes ownership of fixing it.
- In the last two years the project has moved to implementation through grassroots civil society organisations—this comes with challenges of intensive monitoring to mitigate risk, and high financial resources to build adequate capacity in partners.

The USAID funded ASPIRE project approaches girls' empowerment through a combination of education and health activities. The overall objective is to improve educational achievement for girls in upper primary and secondary schools via: (1) improved reading capacity, (2) adoption of positive sexual and health-care seeking behaviours, and (3) decreasing the structural and cultural barriers for girls' access to schooling. The project targets 10-19 year olds and has already directly reached 292,705 learners across Standards 4-8 in intervention primary schools. Key activities being implemented include:

1. **Reading:** ASPIRE is addressing weak literacy outcomes in schools by building the capacity of teachers through a 15-day course.⁷ This is complemented by Reading Camps led by Youth Learning Movements at community level, and competitive Reading Fairs for the students at school, cluster, and zonal levels.
2. **Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH):** this component provides adolescents with correct information needed to make informed decisions. This is done via Life Skills Education classes (an existing part of the school curriculum, but often poorly delivered when teachers reach taboo or sensitive topics). The project has developed a Continuing Professional Development manual for the teachers, as well as activity cards to support effective delivery of Life Skills Education for topics such as HIV/AIDs, contraception, gender, and violence against girls and women. ASPIRE also works to bring Youth Friendly Health Services closer to schools through School Health Days, where adolescents can engage in and use a range of services.
3. **Structural and Cultural Barriers:** ASPIRE is focusing on improving sanitation facilities in schools to prevent absenteeism among girls when menstruating, via construction of pit latrines which have menstrual hygiene rooms including a mirror for the girls to check they haven't soiled their clothing, and a private changing area for the girls. The Mothers Groups have been trained on producing reusable sanitary pads and have been provided with sewing machines. ASPIRE is working with Initiation Counsellors to provide information and awareness on the harmful practices being carried out in the name of tradition, and linking them to health facilities to support safer methods of male circumcision.

ASPIRE is delivered with three implementing partners: CRECCOM, Forum for African Women Educationalists – Malawi Chapter (FAWEMA), and Malawi Institute of Education.

Successes

- Reduced absenteeism from roughly 12 – 36 days annually to zero by giving menstrual hygiene materials to girls.
- The teacher training on reading is strengthening the teaching styles being used (in turn increasing the student's proficiency in literacy), as well as standardising teaching methods.
- The SRH support cards were designed with the learners, to ensure they use language the pupils will engage with.
- SRH aspects of the Life Skills classes are more active, have varied content, and are delving further into taboo topics.
- School Health Days are linked with the Ministry of Gender and Child Protection, strengthening case management of students testing as HIV positive.
- The Mothers Groups are well linked with various other platforms and groups—such as Male Champions, School Management, Female Role Models—which is strengthening referrals and resolve against, for example, early marriages.

Challenges

- The teachers being supported are all starting from very different baseline levels—some have trained through distance learning, and others through training college. This makes for a wide range of teaching styles and standards.
- Number of students per class can exceed 60, making the suggested teaching styles challenging for teachers to implement.
- Schools are reluctant to have SRH services available on their grounds, meaning ASPIRE can only engage partners to hand out products and speak to students outside of the school gates.
- Adolescents engaging in HIV testing has far exceeded expectation, raising challenges around quality assurance.⁸
- Intervention communities are far apart, making it challenging for the Mothers Groups to effectively conduct household visits

Lessons Learned

- Communities *have* to be involved in child education projects for any level of impact to be realised.
- Harmonising of activities among different structures can help to reduce absenteeism and school dropout.
- Few community members are aware of laws and policies that can be of benefit to their children.

⁷ Delivered over three x 5-day sessions per annum with each 5-day session taking place in the holiday period.

⁸ This high number of adolescents requesting testing is thought to be down to good sensitisation, adolescents wanting to engage in what their friends do (thus creating a ripple effect) and using HIV+ role models in the community to speak at School Health Days about how they're living active lives with HIV.

Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Family Planning for Protection and Empowerment of Adolescents and Women in Malawi (2015-2020)

The EC-supported five-year Comprehensive Sexuality Education and Family Planning for Protection and Empowerment of Adolescents and Women in Malawi (EC-SRH) project is delivered in conjunction with three implementation partners—Banja la Mtsogolo (BLM), Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM), and Kamuzu College of Nursing (KCN)—as well as the Government of Malawi. The project aims to reduce teenage pregnancies amongst adolescent girls aged 10-19 years and reduce unplanned and high-risk childbearing amongst sexually active women aged 15-24. It is being delivered in five districts that have been identified for their high un-met needs for family planning. Over half of youth in these districts are sexually active, including nearly 10% of 10-14 year-olds. The project aims to bring Sexual Reproductive Health services closer to adolescents in hard-to-reach areas through outreach clinics and Youth Community Based Distribution Agents (YCBDAs).

Successes

- Dedicated Outreach Teams have conducted 748 outreach clinics offering SRH services and information to 103,267 people (75% of which were youth).
- The project has held open days that have reached 48,008 people with SRH services and information. Adolescents are targeted through using youth clubs as the point of entry.
- Following the training and mentoring of Youth Friendly Health Facility providers, notable progress has been made toward improving relevant protocols for adolescents.
- The project leverages community structures and 25 community-based organizations (CBOs) to take an active role in enhancing coordination, communication and accountability of SRH service delivery.
- The mobilisation of youth community-based distribution agents has further enhanced service availability through peer education, mobilizing youth to attend outreach clinics, and distributing condoms.

Challenges

- Implementation challenges in service delivery where there are myths and misconceptions surrounding services such as Family Planning.
- Conflicting policies between Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health. For example, the Ministry of Education does not allow provision of SRH products (i.e. contraception) in schools, negatively impacting Ministry of Health aims.

Lessons learned

- Provision of capacity building to frontline health workers is not enough on its own. The EC-SRH project also provides these health workers with mentors and regular supervision as well as training in new skills (e.g.: provision of injectable contraception for youth).
- Enhancing awareness of SRH service delivery points and methods, as well as improving knowledge, attitudes, and practices of adolescents and community members on SRH rights are critical pathways toward empowering youth to make healthier choices.
- All community structures need to be engaged in strengthening SRH for adolescents—including schools. The project has sensitized School Management Committees, teachers, Parent Teacher Associations, and Mother Groups on the importance of providing youth with age-appropriate sexuality education including the Life Skills Curriculum.
- To (1) break down negative perceptions on adolescent SRH, (2) change harmful norms and behaviours, and (3) create a more supportive social environment, a communications strategy is needed, focusing on the dissemination of messages tailored to different target populations, e.g.: adolescents, parents, service providers, and communities. This boosts the effect of behaviour change communication (BCC).
- Adolescents usually access family planning services during youth activities and not directly from the access points because they are shy to be seen procuring family planning services.

LIVELIHOODS PROJECTS



Participant engaging in the Action Phase of the Youth in Action Project

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Decent Livelihood Options for Youth Economic Empowerment (Option Y) (2016-2018)

The Option Y project has the goal to support 2,000 out-of-school young women and men (aged 15-24) to transition to viable livelihoods through vocational, entrepreneurship and life skills development, in turn enhancing nutrition, income and food security for themselves and their families. Delivered in one district in the Southern Region (Chiradzulu District) the project is split into two phased pathways: (1) Learning and (2) Livelihood. The project makes use of Care Groups, in combination with the Village Savings and Loan (VSL) methodology, to forge Care and Enterprise Groups as a core model within the project. All programming takes place through these groups.

1. **Learning Phase** includes training, education, and support in areas including: literacy, numeracy, business planning and management, disaster risk reduction, gender equality, infant and young child feeding, food preparation and processing, and life skills among others. Also within this phase, the Care and Enterprise Groups (CEGs) are formed, with members being taught the VSL methodology. The learning phase is led by CEG Facilitators (volunteers), who receive training on how to deliver each module as well as pictorial training guides to facilitate their sessions. The groups meet twice a month in 'learning centres' donated by the community—e.g.: in classrooms after school has finished, halls, and churches.
2. **Livelihood Pathway Phase** builds on the theoretical business component of the learning phase, linking adolescents with business mentors and artisans (with the technical support of TEVETA, which has helped to identify the artisans and build their capacity in instructional methods). TEVETA then monitor the adolescent's apprenticeship with the artisan for four months, prior to providing certification. Adolescents receive start-up capital and starter kits to commence their jobs following the completion of this phase.

The project has three mainstreamed themes: Disaster Risk Reduction, Gender Equality, and Maternal and Child Nutrition and Health. The sessions delivered under the learning phase are split into these categories.

Successes

- Government structures—such as health extension agents and agriculture extension agents—are working well with the CEG Facilitators to provide information to the groups.
- Community mobilisation (and in particular engaging the Village Development Committees and Area Development Committees) has strengthened community ownership of the project, and their commitment to support the retention of adolescents in the programme.
- Market research on eligible industries for adolescents to enter into was conducted by the young people, thus securing their ownership and interest in the second Livelihood Pathway phase.
- The model takes into account the need to address gaps in numeracy and literacy, in order to equip youth for successful businesses management.

Challenges

- Working with adolescents and youth from 19-24 has resulted in exclusion of 25-35 year olds (who are still classified as youth by the Government of Malawi) which many communities have challenged.
- Working with government institutions as a core partner has at times delayed processes. For example, working with TEVETA has entailed many layers of approvals and procurement required across departments, as well as he same at Save the Children.
- Success of the VSL groups has been a challenge, as youth do not have the funds to save at the outset.
- Three years is a short duration for a project with so many components and procurement requirements.
- Artisans receive a fixed stipend for training the adolescents, yet the stipend is the same whether they have one or 10 mentees.

Lessons learned

- The CEG facilitators were selected by the communities themselves as well-respected individuals that would play a strong role in motivating the adolescent participants. As volunteers, the project wanted to pay them a stipend however the local government was unable to commit to sustaining this beyond the project lifespan. Instead, the project bought the CEG facilitators bicycles as an incentive to take part and support their mobility to engage in the project.
- The budget for start-up capital and starter kits was lower than what was needed, and lower than what some other projects have budgeted. All projects working with the same models need to standardise budgets for consistency and feasibility.
- For projects that target out-of-school adolescents, the targeting criteria must specify that the adolescents dropped out prior to the project start date. Otherwise the project may encourage adolescents to drop-out of school.
- Resilience to climate change has to be incorporated into projects that target rural adolescents—the majority of whom depend on the land for their food security.

Refer to Annex B for case studies from Option Y, as well as insights from an Option Y Project visit.

Youth in Action (2012-2018)

Youth in Action is a six-year multi-country programme funded by MasterCard Foundation, seeking to improve the socio-economic status of young people aged 14-18 that are out-of-school, by: (1) enhancing youth work readiness skills, (2) facilitating their engagement in livelihood opportunities, and (3) building partnerships to remove barriers to youth participation in local economies and communities. Youth in Action incorporates employability, social assets, literacy, numeracy, financial literacy, and real-life experience into a participatory learning cycle.

Delivered in three districts—Mchinji, Ntchisi and Rumphi—the project will reach a total of 7,050 youth. The project is also being delivered by Save the Children in Uganda, Ethiopia, Egypt and Burkina Faso. The project follows a three-step structure:

(1) Selection	1-month	Mobilisation, sensitisation and enrolment of the young people onto the programme—selecting 50% male/50% female. Community Based Facilitators are also engaged and enrolled onto the project. For every cohort of youth there are two facilitators, one male and one female.
(2) Learning	3-months	Community Based Facilitators deliver training to the young people, working through a training curriculum comprised of four modules: My Self, My Family, My Community, and My Business. The final module includes establishing VSL groups and providing training on the methodology. This is supported by Ministry of Gender and Community Development who continue to monitor and support the groups. Each cohort has a maximum of 33 young people in it, and they receive their learning at 'Learning Centres' donated by the community—e.g.: classrooms, churches, halls. At the end of this Learning phase, the individuals select one of three pathways: (1) Enterprise Development; (2) Apprenticeship; or (3) Vocational.
(3) Action	3-months	The young people are attached to business mentors (for enterprise development) and/or artisans (for apprenticeships) or linked to TEVETA (for vocational course). The young people engaging in developing their own enterprises conduct their own market assessments (as a form of 'youth led procurement') and receive a cash transfer of \$90 USD to procure the items they need to start their business.

After this seven-month period, the young people have a graduation ceremony, and then continue on their employment pathway with continued monitoring by local authorities. Youth in Action has also: developed platforms for the young graduates to deliver continued peer-to-peer support to one another; and facilitated exchange visits for the graduates to learn from one another and share markets. Each Learning Centre has a Management Committee which is responsible for ensuring youth participation and identifying (and removing) barriers leading to drop-outs. Between January 2013 and July 2017, 6,341 youth (45% female) were enrolled in the learning phase, with 90% (44% female) completion rate. Of those who completed the learning phase, 75% selected pathways, with most youth choosing enterprise (84%) and apprenticeship (9%), and the remainder either returning to school or attending a vocational training institute.

Emerging Impact

The end-line evaluation for Youth in Action is taking place as this report is being written, meaning definitive impact data cannot be incorporated. There has however been a recent study of the project in Malawi, designed to understand how work readiness among youth (financial literacy, work support and resources, academic skills, and transferable skills) might change for a sample of youth over the programme period and how those changes affect socio-economic outcomes (income earning status, adequate savings, credit access). The study collected data from 579 adolescents partaking in the project. Of this random sample, the average age was 16, 13% of whom had a child. 99% last attended school more than five-months ago and 42% had a job for longer than 1 month. The findings are:

- Statistically significant improvements in the work readiness skills and socioeconomic outcomes for partaking youth, however the size of improvements was small.
- 42 percentage point increase in financial literacy, with 64% of youth reporting high levels of financial literacy at post-test.
- On average, youth reported having one additional tangible asset by post-test.
- At pre-test 42% reported earning less than 20 Malawian Kwacha/day (reducing to 19% at post-test)—at post-test, 38% reported earning more than 100 Malawian Kwacha/day (an increase from 18% at pre-test).

- 65% of youth were able to read with comprehension post-test (compared to 54% pre-test).
- Average youth moved from having: inadequate to adequate self-employment skills; inadequate to adequate workplace teamwork and drive; and from having a low level of savings to having a medium level of savings.

This study had challenges with the reporting on job status⁹ meaning there isn't any comprehensive impact data on the percentage of Youth in Action graduates in sustainable employment. It concludes however that it is clear that Youth in Action can help build work readiness skills in rural Malawian youth.¹⁰ It also finds very initial indications that female adolescents may benefit more from the project than their male counterparts (in terms of increased income and job prospects) despite the additional barriers they face to be able to partake.

Successes

- VSLs have been a success within Youth in Action. Where some other projects have struggled due to lack of saving capacity among youth, it is felt to have succeeded in Youth in Action as it is introduced purely as a methodology under the learning phase. Groups are formed, and the individuals develop their structures and gain trust in one another and those that can save, start from the beginning. The firm foundation that has been developed supports their success and sustainability.
- The peer-to-peer mentorship platform has been very successful.
- The Learning Phase strengthens the success of individuals upon graduation, particularly the foundational skills it provides (e.g.: literacy, numeracy and financial literacy) which are all core skills for good business management, and often lacking by those that have dropped out of school early.
- The confidence of family members and communities to invest in youth has been integral to successful outcomes. Their engagement in supporting youth to succeed has seen families providing land for young people, as well as top-up capital to invest in their businesses.

Challenges

- The project targets out-of-school youth, and one of the key reasons girls drop out from schooling is pregnancy. As such, child care poses an additional barrier for girls to engage in the project regularly over a seven-month period. This has been addressed by using role models, and intervention of the Learning Centre Management Committees.
- Youth aged 14-16 are struggling to 'own' their own businesses. Due to their age, their parents are heavily engaged and can often times take over, including looking after the profit. While parent support and encouragement is needed, more needs to be done to strengthen this age-groups' capacity to take charge.
- Malawi is a country focused predominantly on agriculture. Many of the young people therefore chose businesses related to agriculture, but this sector has been vulnerable over the past few years due to El Nino and climate changes.
- Female youths and youths living in remote villages reported challenges accessing mentors and business opportunities.
- Adolescents choose markets with high seasonal fluctuation such as the second-hand clothing market which has a boom after harvest when people have disposable income, and the maize market where pricing varies considerably from season to season

Lessons learned

- Mentorship on skills such as negotiating, communication, social skills and networking was seen to be more important than the transfer of technical knowledge. Mentoring also has a multiplier effect, whereby adolescents become very effective mentors themselves, particularly towards younger siblings and peers, once they attain some success themselves.
- Additional to this, the peer-to-peer mentorship motivated and sustained youth's business drive.
- The project initially targeted 12-18 year olds, but this was confronted by two-challenges: (1) the Government of Malawi actively encourages out-of-school youth under the age of 14 to return to school, meaning this project wasn't aligned with Government priorities, and (2) there were some cases of youth dropping out of school to be able to participate in the project. The age limit was increased to 14, and anyone enrolled in the project had to have been out-of-school for a minimum period of time prior to engaging in the project.
- A way to address the 14-16 year-olds' business ownership issue would be for them to take the vocational rather than enterprise development pathway. The vocational pathway enables them to possess a skill, even if their parents prevent them from owning their business initially.
- The project should incorporate climate smart agriculture training to increase resilience of those entering into agri-business.
- The training of mentors is one of the key ingredients for the success of the mentorship relationship and programme quality.
- Female youth are more likely to save via VSL groups, while male youth were more likely to invest their savings in assets, such as livestock and land.

⁹ This was due to the young people being interviewed misinterpreting the question, in particular the difference between self-employed and employed.

¹⁰ With no comparison group, the extent to which this can be attributed directly to Youth in Action (as opposed to general maturation) cannot be deciphered.

Save the Children's Opening Doors to Dignified Work (DREAMS) project—funded by the Dreams Innovation Challenge—is being implemented in the districts of Zomba and Machinga for two years between October 2016 and September 2018. It targets 3,500 young women aged 19-24, who have had at least some secondary school education but who are at risk of resorting to unsafe economic coping strategies which could expose them to HIV. The project seeks to consolidate gains by ensuring that out-of-school adolescent girls and young women have market relevant skills that can facilitate self-employment or gainful safe employment for better livelihoods options.

The project is comprised of two phases, which each cohort of adolescent girls will go through:

1. **Learning Phase:** this lasts for three months, and provides the attendees (15-30 per class) with structured learning on topics including (1) Employability—including communication skills, workplace norms, job search strategies, technical and vocational trades available etc., (2) Entrepreneurship—including financial literacy, market analysis, business plan development, and (3) Life Skills—including positive identity, gender, HIV prevention, SRH, child health and nutrition etc. There are two Community Facilitators per group, and they deliver the training in community arranged 'Learning Centres'.
2. **Specialisation Phase:** a subsequent three months where attendees can select one of four employment pathways, the first two leading to self-employment, and the latter two wage employment: (1) Vocational Training—gaining places at training institutions; (2) Apprenticeships—being placed with a master craftsman or TEVETA; (3) Agri-business training—for example processing, or packaging; and (4) Off-farm enterprise training—general business start-up.

All adolescents receive a cash transfer for their business start-ups. Running alongside these two phases: the establishment of Village Savings and Loan groups for trainees to join as well as linking individuals to formal finance; establishment of alumni groups for trainees to provide continued peer-to-peer support; sensitization of employers; and addressing community gender norms. Girls are connected with mentors after graduation from the Specialisation Phase—these mentors receive orientation and training on what is expected from them.

Successes

- The first cohort of adolescents recruited to the project has had less than 4% drop out rate.
- Adolescent girls and young women are willing and excited to go for male dominated trades at vocational institutions.
- Parents are supportive and encouraging to girls and young women regarding their businesses.
- Adolescent girls are able to make their own decisions concerning when to get married.
- DREAMS Committees have been developed in intervention communities to identify girls to partake in the project, monitor drop outs, and observe any mis-spending of cash transfers. These committees strengthen ownership of the project.
- Mothers and husbands are providing the support needed (e.g.: provision of childcare) to ensure the girls can fully participate.

Challenges

- The first cohort of adolescents received their cash transfers prior to being linked with a mentor—this meant that some of them spent their money on daily needs other than establishing their businesses.
- The adolescents can choose any type of business they want. While this was what the project wanted, it has caused challenges in procuring training places for such a wide range of occupations and identifying such a range of artisans/mentors.
- Boys are not able to be beneficiaries of this project, and this has caused some back-lash in intervention communities.
- Partnering with vocational institutions has caused delays due to procurement and contracting: courses have sometimes started before the girls can be enrolled (as Save the Children is procuring places, rather than the girls directly).

Lessons learned

- The project encourages joint ventures for capital intensive businesses. This was not part of the original design but was recognised to be a missing component that adds strength to the girls' enterprises.
- The retention rate has been excellent—it is thought that this is down to engaging adolescents with some level of secondary education, as they're aware of what they have missed out on and are keen to have this opportunity.
- Two-years is too short for such a complex project like this. The first year alone needs to be able to concentrate on market analysis, training course development, building partnerships etc.
- Securing buy-in from mothers and husbands of the enrolled girls (particularly those with children) is key. The family and wider community are responsible for providing child-care and undertaking the girls' chores to give her the time to partake.
- Rural adolescents are taking the project more seriously than those in town centres. More analysis needs to be done to understand why this is the case.

CHILD PROTECTION PROJECTS



Marriage, No Child's Play

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Combatting Child Marriages and Human Trafficking

Page 25

Reducing Teenage Pregnancies

Page 26

Marriage, No Child's Play (2016-2020)

The *More than Brides Alliance* established in 2016 is a consortium made up of Save the Children (lead), Oxfam Novib, Simavi and the Population Council, and funded by the Dutch Ministry of Foreign Affairs. The aim of the alliance is to empower young people to decide if and when to get married, and to make informed choices about their Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights (SRHR). The 2016-2020 programme—'Marriage, No Child's Play'—is being implemented in five Child Marriage high prevalence countries, including Malawi.¹¹ Simavi is the lead in Malawi; Save the Children's role is to provide technical support to the implementing partners which include YONECO (working in Mangochi and Mchinji Districts) and GENET (working in Nkhata Bay District).

The *More than Brides Alliance* encompasses seven key approaches to achieve their objectives: (1) information on Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; (2) access to formal education; (3) economic opportunities for girls at risk, (4) access to child protection systems, (5) Youth Friendly Health Services; (6) increased engagement and collective social actions, and (7) influencing legal and policy frameworks.

The *More than Brides Alliance* has spent its first year of operation formalising working relations across the lead organisations, recruiting staff, conducting baseline surveys, establishing/strengthening community structures, and establishing knowledge sharing and learning mechanisms. Capacity building has formed most of the project interventions during 2017, which will build into the 2018 interventions. At this early stage, there are few documented successes, challenges and lessons learned from a programming perspective, but activities have been established and implementation is underway.

In Malawi, this includes:

- Establishing girls clubs as a mechanism for ensuring young people are better informed about SRHR—including the adverse effects of child marriage—and empowered to voice their needs and rights.
- Providing training to health workers on minimum requirements for Youth Friendly Health Facilities, as the first step to increasing utilization of SRHR services and ensuring that they are responsive to the needs of young people, particularly girls at risk of and affected by child marriage.
- Using theatre and dialogue to hold community sensitization meetings on SRHR and highlighting the role of traditional and religious leaders in addressing sociocultural barriers to SRHR. This seeks to contribute to the outcome of increased engagement and collective social action against child marriage and in support of adolescent SRHR.
- Building the capacity of implementing partners, police officers, and social welfare officers from the intervention districts on child protection systems and services including counselling, reporting and referral. This training was followed by mapping, orientation meetings, and training of local Child Protection Committees.
- Capacity strengthening of law enforcement agents in child marriage related laws.
- Case management for child marriages training for community structures.

Successes

- The role that the *More than Brides Alliance* played in the task force for Ending Child Marriages in Malawi, significantly contributing to the amendment of the constitutional definition of the age of a child, raising it to 18. This was part of the Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Act (see more on page 39).
- Strengthening the capacity of key actors and also multiplying the number of actors at local/community level, district and national levels in the campaign against child marriages.

Challenges

- Girls returning to child marriages, often due to lack of support for the girls and their children.

Refer to the policy section on page 39 for more details on the *Marriage, Divorce, and Family Relations Act*

¹¹ The four other countries are: India, Pakistan, Mali and Niger

Combatting Child Marriages and Human Trafficking (2017-2019)

Combatting Child Marriages and Human Trafficking (CCMHT) is a 30-month EU funded intervention delivered in Mwanza and Neno Districts. CCMHT was designed to complement the Quality, Learning and Accountability project (covered in detail on page 27), and supports school, community and district structures to facilitate stronger systems of child protection, with particular focus on child marriages and human trafficking. This approach recognises that Malawi has the structures in place, yet they're weakly implemented.

CCMHT works through existing structures at community level, including in-school child clubs and out-of-school youth clubs, to raise awareness among in- and out-of-school adolescents aged 10-18 on their rights, and empower them to hold duty bearers accountable.

The CCMHT project uses a number of community structures, such as Mother Groups (using them to follow up girls at risk, counselling, supporting families to end promised child marriages etc.) as well as providing child rights trainings to traditional leaders, Community Policing Forums, and Child Protection Committees. In addition to training, the CCMHT has used mass media for raising public awareness of laws and child rights, including the use of billboards, radio jingles, and holding panel discussions on the radio.

Successes

- The project has generated high demand in communities for response. Whistleblowing on planned early marriages for example has increased through use of both a national and Save the Children toll-free line during the project duration. Traditional leaders (including Chiefs) are agreeing that child marriage is wrong—this is a big achievement.
- The project has used drama and music (through the Theatre for Development model) to support traditional leaders to draw in a strong crowd and deliver protective messages to their communities.
- Systems strengthening is working well—the project is seeing a stronger and more coherent referral system.
- Adolescents are following up with their peers that are absent from school or dropping out, and reporting them to the Child Protection Committees, Mother Groups and/or Headteachers to help those children back into school.
- Integration with the Quality, Learning and Accountability project has led to sharing of resources—e.g.: technical support staff, as well as shared implementation partners.
- The engagement of multiple committees has provided a strong foundation for coordination and referral.

Challenges

- While the project has generated demand for action, there are scant resources within the project framework or budget to respond to the increased needs. The local government bodies do not have the financial or human capacity.
- A lot of training around child protection laws is needed, not just one-off events. While the district councils are meant to enforce laws that prevent child trafficking and early marriages, few of the delegated officers are aware of what the law stipulates.
- The project is not designed to address the core driver of the reason why child marriage and trafficking frequently takes place—poverty—hence the sustainability of any impact is questionable.

Lessons learned

- Targeted messaging has the strongest results—the groups raising awareness via theatre will visit a village first to understand the specific challenges they're facing. The messages delivered to the communities a few weeks later, are therefore very relevant.
- Projects need to focus not only on social and cultural factors that lead to child marriage and trafficking, but also economic factors.
- Provision of materials to Community Policing Forums—e.g. Jackets, whistles, torches—has boosted their motivation.
- More advocacy is needed to ensure the government has mechanisms in place for rescued girls.
- A more holistic approach is needed when delivering an awareness raising project—in particular to ensure the right players are involved to address increased demand, that family support systems are strengthened to accept girls back from early marriages, and that an aftercare programme is in place for girls after they leave early marriages. The absence of this after-care plans risks girls returning to marriage.

Reducing Teenage Pregnancies (2014-2016)

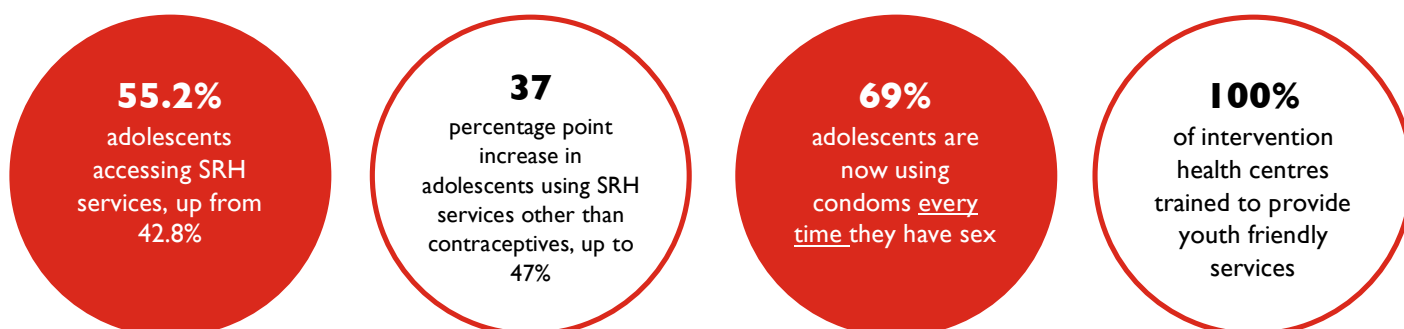
Funded by NORAD, the three-year Reducing Teenage Pregnancies project had three core objectives:

- Increase access to key sexual and reproductive health practices, services and information
- Reduce girls' school dropout rate
- Increase school re-entry rate young mothers after pregnancy

The project approach concentrated on (1) **improving the learning environment and self-efficacy of adolescent girls** through: training teachers; providing girls camping, role modelling and mentors; and school clubs. (2) **Improved access to high quality SRH services** for adolescent girls, targeting adolescents through a variety of platforms including: Mobile outreach clinics; health facilities; and community outreach. Additional methods to raise awareness included: health talks in schools; establishing Youth Community Based Distribution Agents; and holding quizzes in-school and club sessions out-of-school. (3) **Improved social environment to support adolescent girls' SRH rights and educational attainment**, spearheaded by Mother Groups conducting home visits, providing counselling, providing SRH sensitisation sessions, and engaging with school management. (4) **Improved operationalization of policies** to support adolescent health and education achievements, concentrating in particular on the Re-admission Policy, Family Relations and Marriage and the Child Justice Acts, and the Youth Friendly Health Services strategy.

End-line evaluation results from the intervention area are as follows:

897,140 adolescents (66% female) were reached with SRH services and information throughout the project



Girls are consistently using condoms—in 2016 condom use by girls increased by 60% compared to 2015

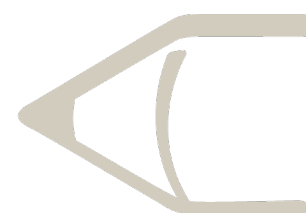
GIRLS EMPOWERMENT



- 25.4** percentage point increase in girls that can make informed decisions, up to 55% at end-line
- 68.1%** of girls able to refuse sex when their partner proposes, up from 21.7% at baseline
- 3.6-year delay** in girls getting married, up from 10 years of age at baseline

EDUCATION

- 1,457** teenage mothers returned to school
- 6.3** percentage point reduction in girls dropping out of school due to pregnancy, down to 15%
- 29%** girls returning to school after giving birth (up from 15% at baseline)
- 87%** retention rate of girls in standards 5-8 (up from 80% at baseline)



- Qualitative review shows substantial **progress in communities' attitudes and perceptions** towards Adolescent Sexual Right Health (ASRH) services. Adolescents have improved awareness on SRH services and have started accessing youth friendly SRH services.
- **526,447 adolescents (59% female) accessed SRH services.** Of these, 54% accessed HIV Test Counselling (HTC). More girls than boys accessed HTC which is a positive indication of girls' empowerment and self-efficacy. Secondly, this indicator illustrates a shift in mind set and willingness among adolescents to know their HIV status, enabling actions to protect themselves from both HIV/AIDS and teenage pregnancies.

How has this been achieved?

- **Use of Mother Groups:** Mother Group members have played a significant role in identifying, counselling, motivating and supporting teenage mothers to be returned to and remain in schools, with 38% of young mothers visited returning to school. There is a correlation on the strengths of the Mother Groups support, and the reduction of dropout rates.
- Importance of **youth clubs and SRHR youth agents** working as peers for other youths (called Youth Community Based Distribution Agents—YCBDAs), disseminating information, and providing services. The project trained 377 youth, and data indicates that more youths accessed services through the YCBDAs and health facilities, than through the mobile outreach clinics.
- **Youth clubs** were found to be friendly and useful for assertiveness and life skill discussions—62% of girls have been involved in youth clubs (compared to 38% of boys)
- The project identified **Female Role Models**—women that were from the area and have pursued successful careers. They were invited to speak to the girls and were able to share their frustrations, fears, and challenges while showing an alternative route they had managed to carve for themselves.

Policy component:

- The project worked with various stakeholders including the: Youth Friendly Health Services (YFHS) Technical Working Group (TWG); Family Planning Steering Committee and Reproductive Health TWG; Youth Development TWG under the Ministry of Youth; and the Child Safety Steering Committee under the Ministry of Gender and Social Welfare.
- Positive achievements were the amendment and passing of new Ending Child Marriage Bill, which upgraded the age of marriage for girls to 18-years in line with the Constitution.
- The project also collaborated with other stakeholders, implementing partners, and other projects to translate, publicize and disseminate the Re-Admission Policy and other documents like Child Protection Policy (Child Protection and Justice Act 2010), the Teachers Code of Conduct, the Students Code of Conduct and the health rights charter—utilising community events to disseminate and discuss these documents.

Successes

- The project created channels for demand creation by linking the schools to the health facilities in the catchment areas.
- The project created an environment in which interventions were building and leveraging on each other—for example the training of the YCBDAs led to them being linked to the YFHS which supported them in getting the materials needed to conduct outreach (e.g.: bicycles, rain coats). The YCBDAs received supplies from the YFHSs and reported back to them.
- The project promoted collaboration between the community structures (e.g.: Mother Groups, YCBDAs, Child Protection Committees), health service providers, and schools to create a coherent social protection system for girls. By the end of the project, the Mother Groups were successfully referring to government and school structures.

Challenges

- Retaining trained Youth Friendly Health Service providers. Due to high staff turnover, only 53% of those trained were still in post at the end of the project.
- Weak platforms for coordination with other external agencies.
- Plight of teen mothers who returned to schools and the welfare of the children they left at home, was a risk. Some girls dropped out again due to having no one to look after their child(ren).

Lessons learned

- The project is relevant and addressing retention and teenage pregnancy, yet ~45% adolescents are still not accessing SRH Services. The same can be said for school drop-outs with some areas still having rates as high as 8-10%.
- Three years was not long enough for behaviour change to be sustainable.
- The project would have been strengthened if it had a cash transfer component so that teenage mothers had support for their re-entry into school.
- Future interventions should have a stronger focus on boy's self-efficacy alongside girls' to prevent jealousy and a backlash against girls. While boys were involved in the project through the SRH components, the core focus was on girls. Boys need to be more concretely involved in the journey to generate male champions for girls' rights.



School girl, Quality, Learning and Accountability Project

Quality, Learning and Accountability

Keeping Girls in School

Apatseni Mwayi Atsikana Aphunzire (AMAA)

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The NORAD funded Quality, Learning and Accountability (QLA) project pivots around Education and Child Rights Governance, with a particular focus on implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child—UNCRC. It focuses on monitoring Malawi's adherence to the UNCRC, building capacity of Civil Society and the Human Rights Council, and empowering citizens to hold duty bearers to account by social accountability mechanisms. The project is implemented by two local Civil Society Organisations.

The project focuses on the rights of adolescents aged 10-18 and promotes meaningful child participation. This has unfolded via establishing a Child Parliament within the two intervention Districts—Mwanza and Neno—with 50 adolescents participating in each District. Following three days of training on their rights, the Child Parliaments develop a shortlist of priority issues that children need to see tackled in Malawi.¹² Over a further three days, these are presented to and debated with duty bearers—including local councillors and District Executive Members—concluding with priority actions for the District Council. Subsequently, Save the Children facilitates interface meetings between the council and the Child Parliamentarians to support the monitoring of the actions and implementation. The project has also developed user-friendly versions of child laws to raise awareness on children's rights.

Running concurrent to the Child Parliament's is the implementation of Community Scorecard—an accountability tool that brings a broad range of rights holders and duty bearers together to discuss specific services being delivered and their gaps. This is followed by the development of an action plan that is monitored by all stakeholders involved. The Community Scorecard is an effective way of alerting project staff to topics on which further awareness raising is needed.

Successes

- Children now have structured platforms through which to voice their needs and ensure they are heard.
- The Community Scorecard tool creates space for accountability.
- Duty bearers are more accountable—approximately 50% of the issues raised by the two Child Parliaments are being actively addressed. The remaining 50% require costs/infrastructure/capacity that the local authorities cannot currently meet.
- Where duty bearers are unable to meet rights holders demands and needs, they're working with communities to identify short-term temporary solutions that the community can implement until the required budget is identified.
- There is noted behaviour change, for example a reduction in use of corporal punishment in schools now that teachers, pupils, and their parents know it is illegal, and there are accountability mechanisms in place.

Challenges

- Initially, the duty bearers were reluctant to turn up to the social accountability sessions, fearful of confrontation. On understanding how the Community Scorecard process works (and that it is not an opportunity to confront officials but a collaborative process and discussion), this fear has reduced and there is strong engagement.
- The resources channelled to District Authorities from the National Government is too small for them to be able to meet all of their obligations—the commitment is there, but without the funding there's a limit to the actions they can carry out.¹³
- External factors outside of the control of duty bearers (e.g.: inflation and fluctuating markets) further exacerbate budget allocation challenges.
- Staff turnover within Government departments is high, hence gains made through capacity building can be quickly lost.

Lessons learned

- While a lot has been achieved, four years remains too short a time in which to deliver advocacy that will have long-term impact. The team is currently developing the design of a second phase, which would be for a further four years.
- The Child Parliaments have been linked to the Government-established Youth Parliament, to ensure local level issues facing children are elevated to national discussions taking place.
- A holistic approach to child rights is needed, encompassing all stakeholders, not just Government.
- Strengthening systems is a good way for addressing child rights issues as it increases the chance sustainability.

¹² This is preceded by issue generation taking place at the community level to ensure all children's issues are gathered

¹³ The project team is working with the Save the Children Malawi national advocacy team to lobby for increased resources

Keeping Girls in School (2015-2017)

The UK Department for International Development (DFID) funded Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) project has been implemented across 10 districts in Malawi (Karonga, Mzimba South, Mchinji, Lilongwe Rural East, Salima, Ntcheu, Zomba Rural, Mangochi, Chikwawa and Nsanje). The project seeks to increase the number of girls who complete their primary school education by delivering activities at upper primary and secondary level (especially standards 7 and 8). In total, there are 1,612 primary schools and 234 Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSS) engaged in the project. KGIS has a two-pronged approach to implementation:

1. Mitigating financial barriers to girls' education through provision of **cash transfers**, addressing the role that poverty plays as a reason for so many girls dropping out of school;¹⁴ and
2. A **School Experience** component aimed at improving: (1) cultural and social attitudes towards girls in relation to their attendance and retention in school, (2) the violence they experience on the way to, in, and around schools and (3) gender parity in upper primary and lower secondary schools. Stakeholders including parents/guardians, teachers, Mother Groups and other community members, as well as the girls themselves were targeted under this component.

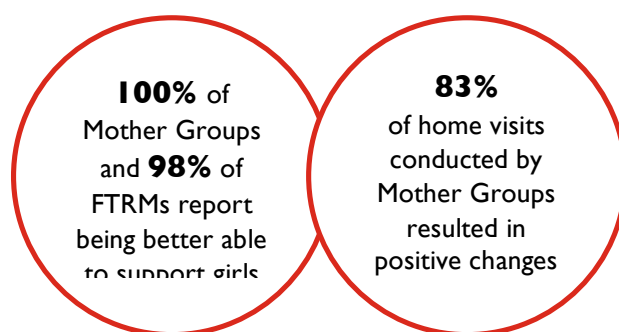
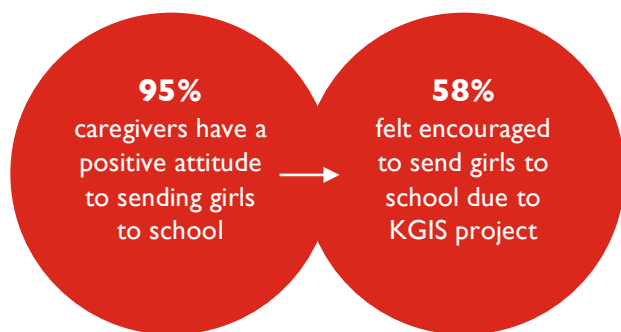
The theory is that an improved School Experience would support the effectiveness of the Cash Transfers by helping to create an environment in which the Cash Transfers were used for what it is intended—to keep girls in school. The project has been delivered with local civil society organisations as implementing partners: CCAP Synod of Livingstonia; CCAP Blantyre Synod; Forum for African Women Educationalists in Malawi; Creative Centre for Community Mobilization; and Education Commission Archdiocese of Lilongwe. Alongside partners, the project engaged a number of community actors such as Mother Groups and Child Protection Committees, as well as adopting some existing models including *Choices*,¹⁵ and new approaches including Male Champions, Female Teacher Role Models and Girls' Spaces (run by the Female Teacher Role Models—FTRMs).

Findings from the projects end-line evaluation illustrates the following impact in the intervention areas:



0.5% repetition rate from standard 7 to 8, down from 18.5% at baseline

Just **2.3%** of girls dropping out from school, down from 20.6% at baseline



78% of Male Champions assessed themselves to either have 'much influence' (28%) or 'reasonable influence' (50%) on the attitudes of other men and of boys in supporting girls



69% of girls interviewed highlight **Cash Transfers** to be making either a 'big' (59%) or 'considerable' (10%) difference to their ability to stay in school. The remaining 30% mostly stated the amount is not enough to fully meet their needs.

61% of caregivers are reportedly using a portion of the cash to invest in small business, such as farming, to be able to support girls in the future.

¹⁴ Eligibility for Cash Transfers was determined by criteria developed by Mother Groups, School Management Committees, and Parent Teacher Associations

¹⁵ *Choices* is a series of sessions for girls and boys aged 10 – 14 years old which aims to create change in gender equitable norms and behaviour. Evaluations of Save the Children's *Choices* model show it to be effective in contributing to more gender equitable attitudes and behaviours among girls and boys.

89% of girls and **75%** of boys interviewed cite violence to have reduced.

“KGIS has managed to at least change people's mindset regarding issues that were taken as what the culture accepts as a norm. For instance, Mother Groups and male champions have been discouraging people from marrying off girls, people are now able to accept that girls deserve the opportunity to go to school. They also are changing view on other abuses”.

District Education Manager

Lessons Learned:

- Girls' Spaces provide the space for girls to voice their concerns and talk openly with female teachers (and Mother Groups) on issues affecting their education.
- Female Teacher Role Models have become effective in a short space of time, with girls coming to them with issues such as: pressure to marry, unreasonable amounts of household chores, unwanted attention from boys and male teachers.
- Improved linkages between school and community structures is preventing (as well as improving the reporting, referral and response to) violence against children. The structures do still highlight challenges, such as some groups still 'working in isolation' and resistance of some to change.
- Efforts to challenge gender norms in schools and communities can at the same time challenge attitudes and social norms which keep disabled girls out of school.
- The implementation civil society partners have a strong role to play beyond the project life-cycle in advocating for, and influencing government policy to appropriately support girls to stay in school.

The evaluation alludes several times to the impact that can be had when a coordinated approach is in place, including: a wide range of structures being brought together to contribute effectively to reducing violence; systems being in place to report and refer incidents of violence against children; and a wide range of actors taking action to prevent and respond to violence. The increased awareness and co-ordination between groups at all levels, leads to broad support for girls' education. This makes it much easier for official stakeholders to convince parents that girls should stay in school.

- The success of Mother Groups rests in their impartiality, and trust they've gained across communities, authorities, schools and leaders.
- Strengthened capacity of school leadership has resulted in increased efficiency, which they state has in turn supported their effectiveness in supporting girls and addressing violence against children.
- Mother Groups, Female Teacher Role Models, and Male Champions all state ability and commitment to continue their support of girls beyond KGIS—yet they identify support that they think they might need to be able to do this, including continued training, a means to reach the girls in very rural locations, a uniform for identification, and some form of allowance or business start-up funds to continue being able to support the girls financially.¹⁶
- A one-off intervention, or project of just two-years duration is unable to effect attitudinal and behavioural change around deeply rooted cultural beliefs and practices.

Challenges

- All groups faced the challenge of continued resistance (and sometimes hostility) of some families to change, indicating that social and attitudinal change is a process, which needs continual and effective follow-up support.
- There remains a reluctance of some community members to challenge abuse or violence when it is condoned by a Chief or people in powerful positions.
- Mother Groups and other structures have challenges reaching very distant homes for home visits, making it likely that girls and families who are distant will receive less support. Some women are walking 15-20km to try to reach girls.
- Traditional leaders are given money (cha mfumu) whenever there is a marriage or engagement in their village. This greatly contributes to early marriages among girls, and alternative incentives are not provided to these leaders via this project.

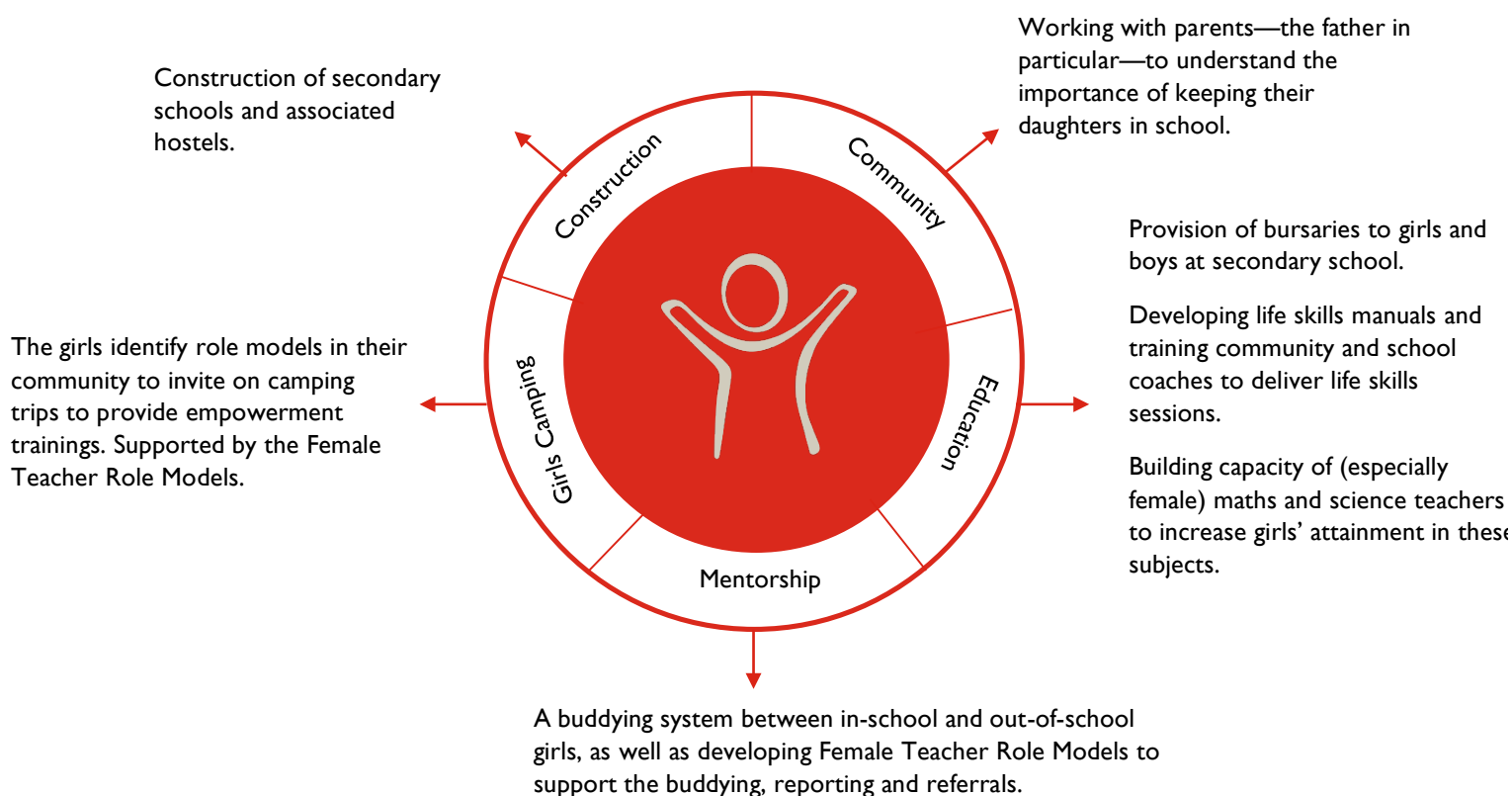
A Standard 8 girl - Maria - comes from a very poor family, and due to challenges that she faced in sourcing the necessary items for school, Maria's school attendance was erratic. She started seeing men in order to find money not only for her needs but also to support her family.

After noticing that Maria had almost dropped out of school, the school's Female Teacher Role Model reported the issue to the Mother Group who approached both Maria and her father. Following a series of visitations by the mothers and also the involvement of the Village Headman, she eventually complied and was linked to the Cash Transfer for support. Maria has just finished her final primary school exams.

¹⁶Assumedly this aligns with a wish to continue the Cash Transfer component, which is not sustainable unless absorbed by the Government.

Apatseni Mwayi Atsikana Aphunzire, Chichewa for 'Give Girls a Chance to Learn' (2016-2021)

The USAID funded Apatseni Mwayi Atsikana Aphunzire (AMAA) is delivered by a consortia of Save the Children (lead), Concern Worldwide, and local organisation Grassroot Soccer. It targets adolescents aged 10-19 with the overall objective of increasing enrolment and retention in educational programmes for girls. The project works with communities and 321 primary and secondary schools, and has an important 'men engage' approach—recognising gender norms to be a core barrier to girls' educational attainment. The AMAA interventions place the girl child at the centre, and surround her with a suite of models and approaches known to strengthen her ability to thrive.



Successes:

- As the recognised decision maker, getting fathers has been a successful strategy for achieving girls' retention at school.
- Most Maths and Science teachers are underqualified to be teaching at secondary level, meaning they welcome the additional training and capacity building.
- Girls attending the life skills sessions in school, are more vocal about their rights, are identifying solutions to their own challenges, and are sharing what they've learned with their peers. The sessions are mixed gender.

Challenges

- There are very few female Maths and Science teachers, increasing the challenge of engaging girls in these subjects.
- The budding system between in-school and out-of-school girls is not thriving—seemingly due to attitude problems.
- Bursaries have only been available for day secondary schools, not boarding secondary schools. Girls progress to secondary school based on their primary scores, and those with the best scores get into boarding school. Many of these brightest girls cannot accept the place without a bursary though and the project is unable to support them.

Lessons learned

- The engaging father's component of the design focused on the father and daughter spending time together. This has had cultural back-lash however, and so has been adapted for mothers to engage in this father/daughter time as well.
- Providing bursaries for both boys and girls has prevented any back-lash against the girls benefitting.
- The Female Teacher Role Models (FTRM) lack motivation, in turn manifesting itself in low reporting and referrals. A model that has been leveraged from the Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) project, it's apparent that KGIS spent more time on training their FTRMs, yielding stronger results in their engagement and capacity to refer cases of early marriage, and report abuses.
- Where there are no FTRMs, the project has engaged Mother Groups to play the same role. Referral and reporting case management in the areas working with Mother Groups is far higher.

3. What does ‘Integrated Programming’ entail in practice?

*“Integrated services across different sectors have the potential to address multiple outcomes, mitigate common risks for poor health and development, and are a potentially more efficient use of financial and human resources”.*¹⁷ Despite investment in and development of adolescents being a global challenge, the thinking behind (a) how to integrate adolescents into development programming and (b) integrate adolescent solutions with one another, is by no means mature. The range of sectors that directly and indirectly touch on adolescence are vast—Education, Health, Livelihoods, Sexual and Reproductive Health, Nutrition, Environment and Climate Change, Governance to name a few—as are the intervention opportunities and entry points through which to reach adolescents. This in turn contributes to the integration challenge.

Save the Children is investigating how an adolescent programme might look, made up of a range of integrated projects. These projects encompass multi-sectoral approaches to address common challenges faced by adolescents, such as Child Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy.

This report is approaching the idea of integration from two angles:

1. **Project Design:** What do we know is working well to provide the holistic support needed to adolescents in Malawi?
2. **Operations:**
 1. What is required operationally to strengthen integration, including knowledge sharing and learning?
 2. What is required for Save the Children to integrate with external stakeholders for a more holistic national approach to strengthening rights and opportunities for adolescents in Malawi?

Following interviews with project and operational staff, below are the insights on what Save the Children is doing well, where there are gaps, and what the ideal scenario could look like moving forward if the country office were to fully embrace integrated programming. Firstly, we’ll address integration from the project design angle.

Project Design

Following detailed interviews with project staff, and a thorough desk review of programme documents, it is apparent that projects directly targeting adolescents needs to cover three critical thematic areas which impact on adolescents’ wellbeing—and that of girls’ in particular—in particular their ability to be safe, negotiate their own path, meaningfully engage in their communities, and secure a livelihood that will lift them out of poverty. These are:

1. Education;
2. Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health and Rights; and
3. Economic Empowerment (or Livelihoods).

At the moment, Save the Children Malawi’s project portfolio divides interventions by sectors such as these three—this results in a series of interventions that often overlap, duplicate efforts and sometimes place extra pressure on target groups due to competing project demands. This siloed project approach can be mitigated by having an approach that sees adolescence as a programme made up of multiple projects, all working to address the key drivers that prevent adolescents from thriving—such as poverty, early marriage, teenage pregnancies, lack of affordable child care options, and poor policies to name a few. Some ways of addressing these key drivers would be through approaches including economic empowerment (addressing the key driver of poverty), social norm change (addressing the key driver of harmful traditional practices such as early marriage) and advocacy (addressing the key driver of inefficient policies). Such an approach moves Save the Children away from a traditional project portfolio to an issue-based portfolio that embraces integration.

Where is the evidence pointing us in terms of making good choices for adolescents? The following diagram groups the identified successful models, as well as the environmental and social factors needed for impactful programming. This creates a multi-sectoral approach to adolescence, that is centred around the enabling environment needed to create sustainable change.

¹⁷ Building Brains: Early Stimulation from birth to three Toolkit | Save the Children International, 2017

Systems Strengthening:

- Accredited Youth Friendly Health Services
- Strengthening SRH modules in Life Skills classes
- Capacity building of teachers
- Strong Mother Groups
- Construction of schools, hostels, and WaSH facilities
- Accessible HIV testing (and use of HIV+ role models to encourage testing among adolescents)

Access to reliable support and information:

- Available Adolescent Health Clubs
- Hosting School Health Days (bringing SRH services to schools)
- Forming Teen Mother Clubs
- Establishing Female Teacher Role Models (especially in Maths and Science)
- Equipping Community Based Facilitators with knowledge and resources
- Utilising Youth Community Based Distribution Agents
- Establishing Girls Spaces

Economic Empowerment

- Village Savings and Loan (VSL) groups
- Care and Enterprise Groups
- Cash Transfers—for both business start-up and school attendance
- Apprenticeships, Vocational Trainings and Enterprise Development options (particularly looking at Learning followed by Action phases)

Behaviour Change and Communication:

- Theatre for Development model for community outreach

Enabling Environment

- Parents and Community Leaders are engaged in girls' rights
- Community buy-in and ownership of adolescent interventions
- Households are economically empowered
- Equal power dynamics between husband and wife
- Empowered communities
- Linkage of platforms (e.g.: Mother Groups, Child Protection Committees...) to support referrals
- Water, and Sanitation Hygiene facilities in schools
- Government Policies and Strategies for Youth Friendly Health Services are implemented
- Effective policies for teenage mothers to be able to return to school
- Education policies are effectively implemented
- Strong Health and Agriculture Extension Workers to support vocational pathways
- Option and support to return to school, especially for those under the age of 14

Social Norm Change:

- Engaging men—particularly fathers
- Engaging Initiation Ceremony leaders to end harmful traditional practices
- Social Accountability mechanisms including Community Scorecard and Child Parliaments

Improved Self-Efficacy:

- Training Mentors and Role Models
- Forming Alumni Groups and Peer-to-Peer Mentoring
- Production of re-usable pads for girls
- Establishing buddy systems
- Life Skills—including financial literacy, numeracy, literacy, empowerment

Advocacy

- Increased budgets for Adolescents
- Effective implementation of Re-admission Policy
- Alignment of SRH and Education policies
- Enforcement of legal age of marriage

These models, approaches and requirements take into account the journey that adolescents, both those in- and out-of-school, travel between the ages of 10 and 19.

Commentary on these findings:

- When these approaches are used, and an enabling environment is in place, positive impacts can take root on other related themes, such as Nutrition; Health; Food Security; Resilience; and Maternal, Newborn and Child Health.
- Cutting across all of this is the need to keep children in school—well addressed through the Keeping Girls in School and AMAA project models.
- There is a notable challenge in deciding whether to engage out-of-school youth in ‘back to school’ programming, or economic empowerment interventions. Where you have education interventions in the same location as economic empowerment, this can cause conflict between the two projects in terms of targets, approaches and mixed messaging to communities.
- A recurring theme when looking at the enabling environment, is the need to understand and be able to address the social and cultural factors at play and to employ strategies that generate normative and behaviour change that leads to an enabling environment.
- Sustainability of the approach is key. There have been successes in using (and creating linkages between) local government structures and community platforms to promote ownership of interventions beyond project life-cycles.
- Sources of strength can be found in (1) youth participation, (2) access to justice, and (3) sustainability and ownership—with a strong focus on consultative, community-led processes.

Building on this, one can identify two different approaches when working with donors to address adolescent challenges. Recognising that ‘stand-alone’ adolescent funding is rarely available, Save the Children can consider:

1. **Complementarity:** this would aim to add attention to adolescents where other interventions exist, particularly from the perspective of adding value.

This could be particularly relevant in emergency programming, where for example there has been a drought, flooding, refugee influx or earthquake. The natural focus in such scenarios would be on recovery, food security and protection, but by integrating a focus on adolescent girls and young women, there would be huge value add to the success of the intervention when considering the particular risks that girls and women face in such scenarios, such as dropping out of school, engaging in transactional sex in exchange for aid, trafficking, migration, gender based violence.

2. **Issue Based:** This would entail identifying an issue—such as Early Marriage, Teenage Pregnancy, Economic Empowerment, HIV etc.—and developing a multi-faceted programme strategy to address the issue.

This puts adolescence at the core of an organisation’s national strategy and requires every intervention to address the issue, no matter what thematic dimension it is focusing on (e.g.: climate change, food security, education etc).

Guiding Principles for Integration

The following ‘Guiding Principles’ are steps that can be taken to begin incorporating adolescent solutions into all of Save the Children’s projects.¹⁸

1. Identify entry points to reach adolescents, such as schools, youth clubs, sports groups, faith-based platforms etc. This will build on existing services for greater sustainability and will support the integration of adolescents into programmes of any theme. A situational analysis is beneficial for identifying entry points.
2. Identify three-to-five priority messages to share with adolescents. Determine these with a wide range of stakeholders (including adolescents themselves) and select messages that are cross-cutting so that support to adolescents can be provided within projects of any theme. For example, messages could centre around continued learning, accessing Youth Friendly Health Services, empowerment, and building resilience skills. One such message could be *Invest in Youth* which was the slogan of the Youth in Action national event.

¹⁸ Inspiration for these Guiding Principles has been sought from Save the Children’s 2017: *Building Brains: Early Stimulation from Birth to Three Toolkit*

3. Leverage existing platforms to strengthen integration, such as use of Mother Groups, Village Development Committees, and existing advocacy groups.
4. Build capacity through training and supportive supervision. By providing training to a wide range of stakeholders on adolescents and the unique set of challenges and barriers they face, stakeholder capacity to address such challenges will be increased in any programme, in turn strengthening the integration of adolescents.
5. Engage men and boys. While it is recognised that adolescent girls and young women face an increased range of challenges due to cultural, social, and economic barriers, it is essential that men and boys are part of the solution. Engage them through role playing, peer learning, and discussions.
6. Consider indigenous knowledge, language, local resources and strength of families and communities as a means to empower parents and adolescents.
7. Build an evidence base to advocate for harmonisation of policies and better implementation. Through effective integration of programme teams, a stronger pool of evidence can be generated and shared, to strengthen Save the Children's national advocacy strategy.
8. Develop learning platforms and use these platforms to commission research papers and document impact, particularly focusing on gains when adolescents are integrated into programming. By sharing such learnings on adolescent engagement in particular, the argument for integrating adolescents into a wider range of interventions will be strengthened.

Integration via Operations:

Now that we've looked at integration from a design perspective, we'll approach integration from the angle of operations, prompted by some critical questions.

What are the barriers to effective integration of adolescent programming from an operational perspective?

- Restrictive donor requirements, including:
 - Specific indicators (or areas of interest) that silo one project from being able to effectively integrate with others;
 - A compliance mindset that what was designed has to be implemented, with little flexibility to adapt project interventions with changing landscapes;
 - Staff are 100% assigned to projects, creating siloed thinking; and
 - A lack of flexibility of funding, meaning that individual projects can only spend on their specific interventions, with little room to contribute to, for example, wider national advocacy on the same topic.
- Siloed operational units, including HR and Procurement. HR may not apply learning from existing programmes when it comes to hiring and staffing structures.¹⁹ Similarly, procurement does not learn across projects when making recommendations for new interventions (e.g. different contractors being hired for the construction of adolescent girls' toilets, who deliver different levels of quality and cost). This could be addressed through taking a team approach around adolescent programming, with experienced staff from different departments coming together to design adolescent projects that take existing lessons and experience into account.
- Save the Children's sector approach to programming can result in project silo's. All projects fall under one of the following sectors: (1) Health and Nutrition, (2) Education, (3) Child Protection and Child Rights Governance, and (5) Humanitarian, with Advocacy falling under the unit of Programme Development and Quality. In reality, projects (and particularly those seeking to address the broad spectrum of challenges faced by adolescents) need to cut cross across multiple-sectors. A multi-sectoral programme strategy approach, with all projects addressing key drivers to a widespread challenge such as Teenage Pregnancy or Child Marriages would help to address this issue.

¹⁹ The example is that of designed projects with too few staff to successfully implement an integrated approach or budgeting staff in the wrong proportion to enable integration. There is also the issue of drafting job descriptions that reflect integration skills and managing performance to deliver on integration.

This would see, for instance, advocacy, education, economic empowerment and systems strengthening projects all working together under the one programme framework.

- Projects are being designed from scratch for each donor, with slight tweaks to models and approaches. This leads to inefficiencies where resources such as manuals for Mother Groups or training materials are re-invented from project to project. There is no one standardised approach that Save the Children can stand behind which limits the potential for scale and/or sustainability. However, this may change when a Common Approach emerges for adolescent interventions.
- A perceived lack of balance between the time invested in compliance to donor and internal compliance requirements versus programmatic delivery, knowledge sharing and learning. With an increased donor focus on the former, there is less time or space for delivering high calibre, innovative and sustainable programmes.
- Competition among sectors may prevent project staff from proactively enabling others to learn from their mistakes and successes.
- Integrated approaches are often complex and rely on relationships as well as buy-in that are time-consuming and potentially difficult to broker. Once built, the relationships can be challenging to sustain, especially in a context of high staff turnover among Government and Development Partners, leading to a rapid loss of gains made.
- Securing Government approvals of integrated policies or of integrated strategies can be a lengthy process. Nevertheless, it is possible in the Malawi context – such as the recent example of the School Health and Nutrition Guidelines that were signed off by multiple ministries.

What is required operationally to strengthen integration, including knowledge sharing and learning?

- The **design of a comprehensive national adolescent programme**—no one project should be designed without determining (1) how it will address one or more of the complex set of triggers that limit opportunities for adolescents such as Early Marriage and Teenage Pregnancy, and (2) how it complements other existing adolescent interventions (without creating overlap).
- Development of **learning platforms** for projects to come together and share best practice around adolescent interventions, in turn strengthening programming through collective action. This could include involving existing adolescent project staff in new project kick-off meetings, to ensure learnings specifically about adolescents are taken on board.
- Development and use of **Standardised Quality Benchmarks** and/or **Sector Led Indicators** across adolescent projects, to strengthen Save the Children's capacity to illustrate impact. There is the potential for one or more integration quality benchmarks to strengthen integration moving forward.
- A more **coherent advocacy approach**. This is currently siloed within the Quality, Learning and Accountability project, with little evidence of other adolescent projects contributing to advocacy in a systematic and meaningful way. While the Country Office has a national advocacy strategy focusing on the school Re-admission Policy, it has little funding to deliver this, depending instead on individual projects—only one of which has a strong advocacy focus. A cross-cutting advocacy strategy could serve as an effective way of pulling all of the adolescent projects together to work collaboratively, yet it currently does not take place due to lack of financial and human resource, and a silo mentality within project boundaries rather than a programmatic approach.
- **Youth led integration**: Creating a Youth Committee to advise and engage in Save the Children's adolescent (and other) programming. The committee would meet quarterly to input to key decisions being made by Save the Children in Malawi, steer adolescent programming, be a voice for children within Save the Children, and externally advocate for youth participation in Malawi's development discourse. The committee could kick off with the development of Youth Participation Guidelines.
- Save the Children can conduct a micro-mapping exercise to **identify the areas of integration prior to new projects being designed**, thus ensuring all new projects have integration factored into them at design stage. What does this look like?:
 - Mapping what exists in the area and what this new project is going to add;

- Thinking about which existing, tried and tested model can be used, rather than designing something new. While the model proposed might not fit perfectly, it can be adapted, leading to the next iteration of the model which should be documented for posterity/learning. Eventually this may crystallize in a common approach justified by evidence that the organization can stand behind;
 - Ensuring the country office has a *consistent* approach to adolescents. For example, under what conditions does Save the Children encourage adolescents back to school and under what conditions does it invest in their livelihood instead? Ensure this is applied in project design;
 - Design each new project with scale in mind. Incorporate learning opportunities throughout the project duration, documentation of the model, and rigorous research into impact; and
 - Build advocacy into the project—this will strengthen the team’s capacity to disseminate the model to mainstream actors by the end of the intervention, for absorption and scale.
- **Learn from previous adolescent projects** in terms of what did and did not work well, and take this into account at design stage. This learning should be explicitly documented in the proposal to illustrate the learning that has informed the approach.
 - **Buy-in and engagement from everyone in the country office** that integration will strengthen their work and contribute to greater outcomes for children in Malawi.²⁰ This can be achieved by incorporating integration into performance objectives to elevate its importance and make individuals accountable through the performance cycle.

Of note is the exclusion of Technical Working Groups, specially developed meetings, or creation of integration ‘champions’ within these recommendations—all of which are rightly deemed by the Save the Children Malawi office to be light-touch recommendations that rarely work because they outsource the responsibility to individuals rather than pushing for institutional change. What is considered useful is:

1. The utilisation of existing platforms to encourage integration. This reduces the burden on time-poor colleagues and should leverage existing and functionally required platforms. Such examples identified by the Programme Development and Quality team (PDQ) include the existing project quarterly review meetings. These can take place across a number of projects to enhance coordination and strengthen implementation. Similar existing structures for external engagement should be leveraged. These are covered on the following page.
2. A systems change approach for Save the Children nationally, not just with a focus on programming. For instance:
 - HR: drafting job descriptions that require integration experience or an integration mindset and testing for this within recruitment of staff; setting objectives around integration; and holding staff accountable to integration by appraising them on integration during the performance cycle;
 - Operations: putting in place integrated teams to respond to opportunities or work on proposals; taking an issue-based, team approach to programming rather than sector-based.
 - PDQ: finding the resources to hire technical expertise that works across sectors, rather than being boxed inside sectors or projects; measuring integration through indicators (quality benchmarks).
 - Senior Leadership Team: setting clear expectations that Save the Children works in an integrated way, through setting an example themselves; rewarding and highlighting examples of integration.
 - In line with this is a need to lobby internally for the logic of taking an integrated approach that will benefit staff, the organisation, and the outcomes for children. There is also an important efficiency argument to consider in order to keep Save the Children competitive.

What is required for Save the Children to integrate with external stakeholders for a more holistic national approach to strengthening rights and opportunities for adolescents in Malawi?

- Stronger internal linkages across projects, leading to a unified perspective and voice about effective practices that can be shared externally.

²⁰ There is often times the barrier of staff not wanting to engage in supporting other projects as they don’t have time and don’t see it as a priority. The rhetoric needs to shift to show the benefit to everyone.

- Investment in rigorous research about outcomes and impact that can inform future programming and be used as evidence of what works, and what does not work.
- More succinct, visual documentation of learnings, impact and best practices that is shared with external peers. This entails more resources dedicated for communications and advocacy activities.
- Draw on experience from adolescents themselves—which interventions have worked well for them, and which less so. Build a body of knowledge on which to base future programming that includes their views.
- Play a convening role among different actors (NGOs, UN Agencies, Civil Society) to raise the profile of adolescents and of our respective endeavours. This could take the form of an annual **National Learning Forum on Adolescents** which brings together private, public, and bi/multi-lateral actors, NGOs, and adolescents themselves to share insights/lessons and to consider collective advocacy strategies.
- Cultivate buy-in from Mainstream Actors (especially Government and Development Partners) about the value of integration with clear argumentation about the benefits in terms of efficiency, impact and value for money. This will require research including cost effectiveness analyses, hence new skills will be required in staffing.
- **Save the Children Members** are a critical external actor that have a big influence in steering the national office towards more successful integration, particularly through: (1) entrenching integration in Save the Children's global approach so as to encourage (and eventually enforce) an integrated approach rather than sector silos; (2) consistency of messaging within and between members; and (3) identifying sources of support for integrated approaches. If Save the Children were to internationally track integration in the same way that they currently track use of Common Approaches, or advocate for quality benchmarks that include integration, great strides could be made. Save the Children Norway is an example of this thanks to its integrated approach to addressing key issues (e.g.: Reducing Teenage Pregnancies and Child Marriage), rather than traditional thematic programming.

As per the previous point on leveraging existing external platforms, the PDQ team have identified a number of platforms that could be utilised as a means to engage other actors in an integrated approach, including:

- Civil Society Networks, coalitions and consortiums. E.g.: the National Girls Education Network; the NGO Humanitarian Consortium; the Civil Society Organizations Nutrition Alliance; the Malawi Human Rights Commission; and VSLs.
- Decentralised Government: District Nutrition Coordinating Committees, Area Development Committees, Village Development Committees, Traditional Authorities.

4. Malawi's Policy Environment

Malawi has an enabling policy environment when looking at addressing the challenges that adolescents face with reference to education, early marriage, gender, child/youth rights, and Sexual and Reproductive Health. However, implementation and enforcement of legislation is weak. Although the Government of Malawi set the age of the child up to the age of 18, there are a raft of laws and acts that still refer to children only up to the age of 15 or 16, such as the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act; Penal Code; Child Care, Protection and Justice Act; Prevention of Domestic Violence Act; Trafficking in Persons Act; Adoption of Children Act, and Gender Equality Act. 16 and 17-year-olds are at risk of being seen as adults by the law. The only two documents that explicitly refer to children up to the age of 18 are the Constitution and Family Relations Act. All laws need to be harmonized with the legal age set for children. It is also important for laws to be popularized so that citizens, including adolescents, understand their rights and can claim those rights effectively.

A summary of the policies and legal frameworks that are relevant to Integrated Adolescent Programming follows.

The **Education Act No. 21 (2013)** follows up on the constitutional commitment to make primary education free and compulsory—a good entry point for ensuring that girls finish primary education and enter secondary education. Generally, compulsory primary education is yet to be achieved in practice due to inadequate enforcement. This Act unfortunately doesn't take into consideration the Joint CRC/CEDAW General Recommendation that secondary education also be free and compulsory as a means to create an environment that allows girls and women to become agents of change. Full implementation of the Education Act (and its amendment to extend compulsory education to secondary schooling) would be one way to guarantee that girls are found in schools, not marriages.

Discipline Policy on Girls Education (1993), informally known as the **Re-admission Policy**, allows schoolgirls who have fallen pregnant (and the schoolboys responsible) to withdraw from school and return after a period of one year. This is provided as a one-time chance within a girl or boys' education cycle (this is against the international recommendation for it to be an open opportunity). Contrary to the suggestion of the Joint CRC/CEDAW General Recommendation, the policy does not accommodate the right to continue studies during the pregnancy itself if the girl wishes. Weak monitoring of this policy makes it hard to know how well it is or isn't being implemented.

The National Youth Policy (2013) prioritises a range of focal areas including: Youth Participation and Leadership, Youth Economic Empowerment, Education for Youth, and Youth Health and Nutrition (among others). The policy includes powerful policy statements to allow youth to thrive; implementation however is woefully lacking. Some of the policy statements include: An enabling environment is created for youth participation (e.g.: youth clubs, youth centres and youth parliament); Youth participation guidelines are developed and implemented; Youth are in decision making bodies at all levels; Establishment of a Youth Development Fund for youth entrepreneurs to access credit; Improved quality of education; Literacy and numeracy programmes for out of school youth; Full involvement of youth in identifying their reproductive and health needs and designing programmes that respond to these needs; Provision of comprehensive sexuality education; Adequate and accessible youth friendly health services; Comprehensive SRHR and HIV prevention information, services and life skills; and enforcement of laws that advance youth reproductive health including sexual violence.

Child Protection and Justice Act no. 22 (2010) addresses the elimination of child labour, protection of children and young persons including the protection of children from undesirable practices, which include: Harmful cultural practices (chapter 80) and Forced Marriage or Betrothal (chapter 81). Under these respective chapters the Act makes it illegal to: subject a child to a social or customary practice that is harmful to the health or general development of the child; and/or force a child into marriage or betrothal. The Act also takes into account a child's need to be in education and thus makes certain activities illegal (such as hawking if detrimental to the child's educational attainment), and places the onus on communities to report infringement of child's rights.

The **UN Convention on the Rights of the Child** does not have a specific provision that directly mentions child marriage. A 2008 UNICEF working paper (Child Marriage and the Law) notes that *'while child marriage per se is not referred to in the 1989 Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC), the Convention contains a provision calling for the abolishment of traditional practices prejudicial to the health of children.'* In this context, child marriages are cited as some of traditional practices that impact negatively on the lives of children, under the argument that children are not physically or emotionally ready to take up the burden of marriage. It is only through the **Convention on the Elimination of All forms**

of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW) that child marriage is explicitly condemned. Article 16 states that ‘the betrothal and the marriage of a child shall have no legal effect, and all necessary action, including legislation, shall be taken to specify a minimum age for marriage and to make the registration of marriages in an official registry compulsory.’

Recently the Malawi Parliament took a landmark decision to amend a Constitutional provision, which previously allowed children between the ages of 15 and 18 to marry, with parental consent. The new change has taken into account other legal instruments such as the Marriage, Divorce and Family Relations Act which provides for children to marry at the age of 18. Unfortunately, cases of child marriages persist—largely owing to the existing dichotomy in the way civil and customary marriages are constituted or dissolved.

Gender Equality Act No. 3 (2013) provides for the right of every person to access education and training—except in the cases of special need, this entails providing equal access to girls and boys and women and men to: the same curricula; the same examinations; the same teaching staff with qualifications of the same standard; institutional premises and equipment of the same quality; and the provision of sanitary facilities that take into account the specific needs of the sex of the students (section 14). The law imposes a quota for tertiary co-education, requiring the Government to take active measures to ensure the enrolment at tertiary education institutions of either sex to a minimum of 40% and a maximum of 60% of students (section 16). In general, the Government holds the duty to ensure that the curricula for all primary and secondary schools integrates particular principles/subjects towards the promotion of human rights, gender equality; and promote subjects that enhance the integration of female students in disciplines that are traditionally male dominated (section 17).

The Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) Policy (2009), the purpose of which is to address the SRH problems that emerge from different age groups and provide the framework for implementation of SRH programmes nationally. The SRH policy is linked to the Malawi National Youth Policy and Youth Friendly Health Services National Standards, recognising the challenges young people face (including early marriages, early and unwanted pregnancies, and early child bearing among others). The policy statements that are of relevance to Integrated Adolescent Programming include: sexual and reproductive health services and HIV and AIDS services to be fully integrated and provided as a package; all young people shall have access to quality youth friendly health services that are safe, guard their right to privacy, ensure confidentiality, and provide respect and informed consent, while also respecting their cultural values and religious beliefs; Young people shall not require parental consent for STI services, and confidentiality shall be maintained at all times²¹; and Elimination of harmful SRHR practices shall be fully integrated in the delivery of sexual and reproductive health and rights services. The SRH Policy is unfortunately at odds with the Education Policy, which limits how well it can be implemented. The contradiction is that the education policy prevents access to SRH services (i.e. condoms and other contraceptive medicines) on school grounds.

Disability Act No. 10 (2012) addresses the rights of persons with disabilities, including the prohibition of discrimination in education or training institutions, rights to social protection, health care services, and economic empowerment (among multiple others). The Act commits that persons with a disability receive the same range, quality and standard of free or affordable health care services as provided to other persons, including sexual and reproductive health services, and that they receive the right to an education on the basis of equal opportunity.

Alongside the legal policies, are a couple of strategies that are pertinent to adolescents:

Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS) II (2011-2016) is the overarching medium-term policy that is meant to steer the nation’s growth and development. It tackles child marriage as a concern related to Malawi’s high fertility rates, which has been estimated at 5.0 in the MDG end-line survey (2014). The MGDS II recommends advocacy for girls’ education and delayed marriage as one way of controlling fertility, and additionally includes girl specific strategic actions in its efforts to improve access to quality and relevant education at primary, secondary and tertiary levels. In primary and secondary school systems, these include providing supportive infrastructure/ facilities for girls (and boarding facilities for secondary school girls); reviewing policies related to girls; providing grants to schools to address equity issues; rolling out Mother Groups in all schools; providing girl friendly sanitary facilities; and recruiting more female teachers. While there are multiple organisations supporting the Government in their endeavours to achieve

²¹ This is from age 13+. Malawi is one of the few countries in southern Africa with this provision.

the MDGS II, and the education components in particular, there is a need for them to all be coordinated by the NGES (see below).

National Girls Education Strategy (NGES) (2014-2018) was established to accelerate progress to improve girls' education, and in particular that increased numbers of girls equitably accessing, participating in, excelling and completing primary, secondary and tertiary education through the removal of obstacles to their education. A priority area is addressing traditional beliefs and social cultural factors affecting girls' education. One of the proposed strategies under the NGES is to strengthen the capacity of local leaders to advocate for girls' security—an important strategy to pursue at national scale. There now exists a National Girls Education Network, and is in the process of establishing regional networks. The plan is to later have these networks at district level.

5. How does the media influence citizens' views of Adolescents?

The purpose of this section is to review how adolescents are being portrayed in the media, how the media are sourcing their information, and the core themes being written about. The table in Annex C illustrates details about 24 print articles between 30 September 2017 and 22 March 2018 in Malawi.²² The International Day of the Girl Child fell during this period (likely a reason for a share of the coverage) and the theme was 'The Power of the Adolescent Girl'.

In summary, we can see a trend to focus on girls in general and the issue of child marriage in particular—always from an education angle, followed by a child rights angle. The portrayal of adolescents is on the whole positive, illustrating the injustices that 10-19-year olds face in Malawi and the frustration at government inaction. Other priority themes to emerge are girls' education and social accountability.

On the whole, content mainly reports on events, statements, or copying press releases. There is little investigative coverage or editorials covering specific issues in detail. The style is informative, yet rarely refers to facts, figures and storytelling as means to portray the severity of the issues being discussed. The voice of adolescents is rarely included. There are calls to action, but they are normative without the force of evidence or urgency.

It would be positive to see a wider range of media houses discussing a wider range of issues affecting adolescents in a more meaningful way, utilising investigative journalism, first person accounts, and the voice of adolescents themselves to bring their point of view across. There is a role for NGOs like Save the Children to play in engaging the media as a core partner in adolescent programming by providing training to a cohort of media professionals (spanning online, print and social media) to build their knowledge in adolescent laws and rights, as well as investing in their capacity for investigative journalism. This would allow for more impactful reporting that can gradually generate social momentum for collective action to hold the Government to account on adolescent rights. Social media can be key within this scenario and should receive more attention when addressing media coverage.



²² For print media, the Malawi team monitored the two largest (and oldest) publishers in Malawi, which gives a fair representation.

6. Landscape: Actors working with Adolescents in Malawi

Various development and public sector actors are working with adolescents in Malawi. Combining these actors with the various platforms or local entry points available for in- and out-of-school adolescents, creates an enabling environment for well-coordinated, integrated adolescent programming in Malawi.

The government mandated platforms to reach adolescents include:

In-School	Out-of-School	District Level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adolescents health clubs - Child led clubs - Girl solidarity clubs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth clubs (MoLYSMD) - SRH facility-based interventions - SRH community-based interventions (e.g.: radio) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Youth Friendly Health Services - Child Protection Committees - Area and Village Development Committees - Mother Groups - Nutrition Care Groups

An important challenge for integrated programming is the number of ministries that are in some way involved with adolescent issues:

Ministry of:	Responsible for:
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Health 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Adolescent Sexual and Reproductive Health, incl. WaSH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education, Science and Technology 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Primary, Secondary and Tertiary Education, as well as Mother Group training and support
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agriculture, Irrigation & Water Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Agriculture extension services, food security and WaSH
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Local Government and Rural Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interventions and budgets at regional and district level
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Gender, Children and Community Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Women and child development services
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Labour, Youth, Sports and Manpower Development 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - TEVETA, as well as wider youth empowerment and governance; youth groups for out-of-school youth.

Stakeholder management across so many actors can be labour-intensive and time-consuming. There is little coordination, co-budgeting, or collaboration across departments. This hinders the effectiveness of programming for adolescents and creates fragmentation in terms of budgeting and budget allocation.

In addition to these national structures and departments, there are numerous development partners, UN Agencies and International NGOs working in the adolescent sector. They often address systems strengthening, piloting of new approaches or models, beefing-up social accountability, advocacy for more equitable policies and their effective implementation, and argue for investing in adolescents as a priority for national development given the demographic picture of the country. The key actors in this space are:

- **UN Agencies:** notably UNICEF, UN Women, UNFPA, WFP and WHO
- **Development Agencies:** including DFID's 'Keeping Girls in School' programme; World Bank's 'Adolescent Girls Programme'; and the Norwegian Embassy funded 'Joint UN Programme for Adolescent Girls'
- **International NGOs including:**
 - **World Vision** which is implementing back to school campaigns throughout its areas of operations and incorporates male involvement. World Vision has integrated school-based child protection programmes. They are also implementing an advocacy project called *Action for Girls and Young Women*.
 - **Plan International's** 'Because I am A Girl' initiative, geared towards supporting girls to get the education, skills and support they need to transform their lives and the world around them.
 - **CAFOD** works through local partners on combatting stigma around HIV through use of drama and radio programmes, and increasing HIV testing, particularly for women and girls.
 - **CARE International's** youth programming that encompasses: girls' education, health and economic empowerment.
 - **Christian Aid's** interventions focusing on HIV/AIDS awareness, reducing school drop-out rate, and combatting violence against women and girls.

- **GOAL's** PaMawa (Youth as agents of change) project, which works with young people to help them understand population dynamics in Malawi and the need for family planning, and also to address the impact and effects of climate change and how adolescents can develop resilience to these risks.
- **ActionAid's** Mother Group strengthening and School Scholarship Programme.

When looking at the landscape of actors (and determining how integration could be established from an external perspective), it is important to understand Save the Children's value in terms of what it would bring to other interventions. Interviews with the Country Director and the Zomba Area Operations Manager, as well as outcomes from a focus group discussion held by the Programme Development and Quality team in late 2017, identified the following contributions that Save the Children believes it could make to existing efforts:

Technical Expertise

- Child protection
- Education
- Ending early marriage

Approaches

- Child Participation—providing the spaces, platforms and confidence for young people to raise their voice to address challenges, demand action from duty bearers, and generate the solutions needed to address challenges.
- Taking a flexible—keeping a fair balance between prescribed design and openness to learn from the adolescents themselves.
- Operating an inside out approach—understanding the culture deeply, not demonising culture, and converting negative practices into positive practices that benefit adolescents.
- Minimising imposition of what worked elsewhere—fully understanding the dynamics of the impact area and taking that into account in designing interventions, rather than parachuting in global models. Without this approach, organisations spend a lot of time and effort addressing effects rather than causes.

Private Sector: Within this analysis, the only engagement we have of the private sector has been in the economic empowerment projects who partner with small-scale artisans as technical mentors. None of the studied projects have specific and contracted private sector partners. Save the Children has not yet conducted any mapping of private sector actors working with adolescents in Malawi. This is considered an important activity to undertake as part of the adolescent programming approach, to identify relevant partners and ensure a multi-sector approach to tackling adolescent challenges.



Life Skills Session for Primary School pupils, AMMA Project

7. Conclusion and Recommendations

This review of Save the Children's adolescent programming in Malawi illuminates a spectrum of aligned and appropriate interventions with indications of having a positive impact on the target group. We can only refer to an indicated impact due to the limited number of impact evaluations that have taken place to date. Our conclusions are based on mid-term reviews, analyses, case stories, key informant interviews, and a few end-line evaluations.

It is evident that prioritising education, SRH and economic empowerment (or livelihood) programming is positioning Save the Children in a relevant arena where there is demand. Child Protection and gender are indispensable as cross cutting topics across all these areas as well as distinct areas of intervention. The introduction of child governance programming paves the way for institutional or system changes that has a longer-term impact. While interventions are showing positive results, there are challenges that feature across multiple projects. This points to a lack of learning platforms that would inform and enable staff to address those challenges. All staff spoken with stressed the importance of this assignment and a desire for stronger integration, however they struggle with shared constraints including lack of time, being stretched too thin across activities, and focusing narrowly on achieving donor targets. The fragmentation among efforts reflects not just Save the Children International's sectoral structure but the nature of donor funding modalities which rarely allow for implementers to design a *comprehensive* integrated programme.

Section 3 concludes that integration needs to be tackled from both a project and operational perspective. Both perspectives require high level support and an enabling policy environment from Save the Children to establish true integration within adolescent programming. It will involve changes to operational structures, issue-based areas of focus, synergistic project and programme design, and staff engagement as well as performance with respect to integration. To avoid repetition, I refer readers back to Section 3 for the full summary and recommendations of what integration looks like.

Further to the recommendations made under Section 3, the following additional recommendations also emerged throughout the findings of this report:

- Projects need to be more realistic in terms of time required to create change. Five years is a good starting point. Recognising that five-year funding is often challenging to find, shorter projects need to be mindful of over-promising, and consider instead how they can contribute a new adolescent perspective or component to an existing project, thus strengthening integration and building on already established delivery platforms.
- This report argues for and provides the first building block of a learning culture which the Country Office leadership should continue to prioritise, particularly at the project or programme design stage. Adolescents should be more meaningfully involved in the design of new interventions. Save the Children staff should learn from other Save the Children offices in the region and facilitate learning exchanges across countries. They could request for a meeting with the UN Joint Girls Education Programme. The programme is an example of an integrated approach in action where lessons could be learned about where they have successes, and what needs to change for more effective integration.²³ Another relevant, integrated effort that could provide valuable lessons is TWaweza in Tanzania.
- The team can consider a stronger focus on designing projects for scale to have a more sustainable impact. Designing for scale focuses on co-construction with duty bearers throughout the intervention; a focus on systems strengthening; piloting; learning; sharing; elevating findings to decision-makers, system designers and mainstream actors; and engaging duty bearers to (jointly) implement the intervention, in turn strengthening their buy-in and interest in sustaining the approaches in the long-term. While there is an indication of this happening in some instances, there are a range of stand-alone projects being delivered which can only impact on the lives being immediately touched. While there is no denying that this is hugely needed, it is not sustainable, nor an effective long-term strategy.
- The Country Office portfolio of projects are currently located in one or another sector as the 'lead'—this needs to be reviewed if the Country Office is to take a successful approach to interventions spanning different sectoral activities. A recommendation is to review and question whether such projects should be managed within a single sector.
- The team should consider how Save the Children's global cross-cutting themes such as gender, climate change and inclusion feature within adolescent programming. Inclusion, with particular attention to diverse abilities, is the most

²³ The Joint Girls Education Programme is co-delivered by three UN Agencies—WFP, UNICEF and UNFPA in Malawi—combining expert knowledge across a range of fields, to improve access to education. This project is a second phase of the former Joint UN Programme for Adolescent Girl (JPAG); the JPAG evaluation illustrated that the multisectoral approach helped strengthen collaboration on the issues and challenges affecting adolescent girls. There are unfortunately no online resources easily available to learn more about JGEP or JPAG, to learn more at this point in time.

notable gap among the programmes under review, with gender and climate change being relatively light-touch. Whatever attention there is to gender, generally does not fundamentally challenge existing norms in terms of male control of resources, resource allocation, and decision-making.

- Advocacy is notably lacking from the adolescent programme portfolio. Quality, Learning and Accountability is the only project to focus on it explicitly, yet does not link advocacy with the spectrum of other adolescent programmes under the Save the Children portfolio. The national advocacy team does not have the capacity required in terms of financial or staffing resources to meaningfully engage in long term, consistent advocacy efforts that could build off of diverse interventions. A dedicated advocacy project that builds on all that has been delivered and learned to date could significantly enhance the impact of adolescent interventions.
- There is room for the team to take gender programming to the next level. Engaging men as the traditional decision maker is critical to supporting girls' education. The next step is to create opportunities for men and women to engage in joint decision making, to change the patterns of patriarchy that limit outcomes for girls.
- Undertake a private sector mapping exercise to understand which private actors are operating in the adolescent space, and what they can contribute to addressing specific barriers faced by adolescents in Malawi.

In terms of **Next Steps** for Save the Children on how to take integration forward, listed below are some recommendations on what those next steps could be. Again, these should be combined with the recommendations made elsewhere in the document and will need to be prioritised by the leadership team based on the strategic choices being made for the institution, resources, and opportunities.

- **Prioritise investment in impact evaluations**—Save the Children currently has a large adolescent portfolio with a large number of programmes that will be closing over the coming years. This is the right time to rigorously investigate what is working well across the adolescent spectrum, and where the greatest gains for adolescents can be made.
- **Refine Save the Children models**—use the impact evaluations to determine which interventions are the most valuable, and invest energy in consolidating them, refining them, and scaling them up.
- **Develop the platforms needed for internal learning and knowledge sharing**—whether these be digital or face-to-face, operational or programmatic. The willingness among staff is ripe and should be optimised.
- **Seek funding to deliver an integrated adolescent programme**—this would allow Save the Children to work differently to deliver an integrated approach, and in particular, would support the implementation of a number of other suggested recommendations generated by this report. The integrated programme could feature:
 - Funding of research to validate the Theory of Change—does integration improve efficiency, value for money and impact? This could be done by a randomised control trial comparing the effects of a pilot in one district to deliver various projects that are designed to dovetail with each other and achieve system change, with a range of similar interventions in another district which are delivered but with no deliberate integration. The evidence base for the virtues of integration has yet to be built.
 - Development and launch of a National Forum for Adolescents.
 - Piloting of a Youth Committee to advise the Save the Children International in Malawi Senior Management Team.
 - Development of integrated Quality Benchmarks and MEAL systems to be rolled out nationally across the Save the Children portfolio.
 - Focused documentation and sharing of learnings both internally and externally. The evidence generated can then be packaged to support the national advocacy strategy.
- **Leverage learnings from the Sponsorship Programme**—this 10-year programme focusing on a wide-range of interventions for children and adolescents presents a unique learning opportunity that should be leveraged to illustrate the best practices of integrated programming.
- **Pitch for unrestricted funding**—develop an Integrated Adolescent Strategy and request donors to invest in the strategy rather than specific projects. This would remove many of the donor barriers to integration. While it is recognised as increasingly challenging to take this approach, both TWAVEZA and Living Goods are examples of organisations that get donors to buy into their strategic agenda, rather than specific projects, creating the room for innovation, piloting, rapid scale-up, and changes to intervention based on the context.
- **Delve deeper into how adolescents are using technology and social media**—social media and technology are notably absent from this report, with few of the adolescent projects seeming to engage in the use of such platforms. Globally, ICT4D (information Communication Technology for Development) and social media are recognised as critical for reaching young people. This may or may not be the case in Malawi, but should be considered.

Annex A: All Save the Children Projects in Malawi touching on Adolescence

Sector	Project	Targeting	Type of Intervention	Gender	No. of Youth
Child Poverty	Decent Livelihoods Options for Youth Economic Empowerment (Option-Y)	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Empowerment - SRH - Climate Smart Agriculture 	Boys and Girls	2,000
Child Poverty	Providing a Bridge to Employment (DREAMS)	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Empowerment - SRH - Gender Champion Outreach Activities - Psychosocial Support - Smart skills agriculture and nutrition 	Girls	3,500
Child Poverty	United in Building and Advocating Life Expectations (UBALE)	Indirect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Empowerment - Smart Skills Agriculture - Gender Champion Outreach Activities 	Boys and Girls	n/a
Child Poverty	Youth in Action	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Empowerment - SRH - Livelihood 	Boys and Girls	7,050
Child Protection	Combatting child marriages and human trafficking in Malawi	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Awareness on child marriages and human trafficking 	Boys and Girls	20,000
Child Protection	Marriage: No Child's Play	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SRH - Child protection system strengthening - Economic Empowerment 	Boys and Girls	120,000
Child Protection	Quality Learning and Accountability Project	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving quality learning environment - Child protection system strengthening 	Boys and Girls	87,460
Education	Girls' Empowerment through Education and Health Activity (ASPIRE)	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving quality learning environment - SRH 	Girls	360,000
Education	Inclusive Education in Malawi	Indirect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education 	Boys and Girls	n/a
Education	Keeping Girls In School	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education - SRH 	Girls	100,000
Education	Let Girls Learn Initiative (AMAA)	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Education - SRH 	Girls	91,800
Education	Adolescent Development—Sponsorship Programme	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Economic Empowerment - SRH 	Boys and Girls	38,000
Education	Quality Learning and Accountability Project	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving quality learning environment 	Boys and Girls	87,460
Health	Sexual Reproductive Health (EC-SRH)	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SRH 	Boys and Girls	160,000
Health	Reducing Teenage Pregnancies	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Improving quality learning environment - SRH 	Boys and Girls	897,140
Health	Swedish Sexual Reproductive Health	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SRH 	Boys and Girls	13,700
Health	Netherlands: Sexual Reproductive Health	Direct	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - SRH 	Boys and Girls	45,000

Annex B: Option Y in practice

A trip to Matenjere School within Chakachadza Village allowed the observation of three CEG groups within their Learning Phase of the Option Y project. The three groups were grouped together as one large cohort for the purpose of the visit. Energetic, interactive and fun sessions were held for adolescents on:

1. Health and Nutrition, with a focus on the six food groups and what comprises a balanced and nutritious diet
2. Gender and HIV, discussing the modes of transmission of HIV, how to prevent HIV, and the different risks that men and women face when it comes to contracting and living with HIV
3. Disaster Risk Reduction, concentrating on the importance of budgeting, preparation, and assets as resilience mechanisms

Interviewing the Group:

What have you enjoyed most about this project?

- Hope it has provided to adolescents that had no other options or prospect for jobs;
- Vocational skills gained;
- Learning how to be self-reliant and not depend on parents;
- VSL groups have provided the potential to access loans;
- How to avoid malnutrition—particularly among those in the group with children;
- Understanding about climate smart agriculture;
- Breaking down gender stereotypes around ‘male’ and ‘female’ livelihood options; and
- The ability to continue with what has been learned even once the project closes.

When asked ‘What have you found difficult or challenging about the project?’ the majority of responses concentrated on the lack of access to learning resources (such as sewing machines) which was down to a delay with procurement; followed by the lack of funds to put into their VSL groups. This clearly differs per group, with some VSLs working more successfully than others.

What are your hopes for the future? resulted in similar responses along the theme of:

- To be a good and productive member of the community;
- To become a mentor for other adolescents;
- To own my own business; and
- To be employed and self-sufficient.



The group were asked ‘If you were designing the project, what would you do differently?’

- Incorporate adult literacy;
- Provision of nursery school for those with young children—they cannot always rely on family or their husbands to look after the children;
- Development of a step-by-step guide to business management;
- More detailed information on nutrition; and
- Stronger focus on agriculture techniques, such as irrigation. (NB: while Climate Smart Agriculture is a component of the Disaster Risk Reduction modules, the youth have asked for more of a focus due to the majority of them depending on it for their food security).

Eness's Story

Eness Mapuranga is 23 years old—she is married to Frank Abraham (25) and together they have two children, aged five and one. Eness and Frank were married when she was 19 years old.

Eness left school when she fell pregnant with her eldest daughter. She was in Form 2 of secondary school. Before enrolling in the Option Y project, she says that she was “doing very little” for herself, meaning she had to rely on her husband financially. She used to help him on their farm and the little money that they made would be split between them. Malawi has been heavily hit by the El Nino weather phenomenon since 2015, and more often than not, the crops that Eness and Frank grew on their farm, were not enough to feed the family. There were days when they had nothing to eat.

Since enrolling in the Option Y project, Eness says that she has “learned to have a future vision, aspirations, and hope”. She is part of a VSL group—she is saving through buying shares, and has taken out a loan of 8,000 Kwacha (~\$11 USD) to establish a small business selling popcorn and fritters.

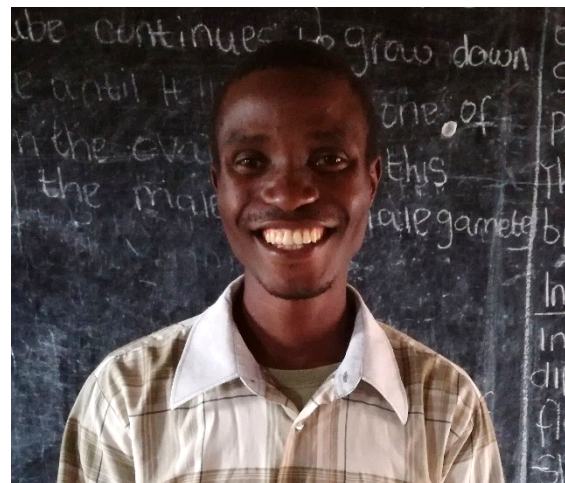
When asked what has changed at home since engaging in Option Y, Eness states that the household income has improved—the business management skills she has learned have helped her to set up her own business. She is also using the poultry they have to generate more income. The family doesn't go hungry anymore. Through the projects' Disaster Risk Reduction component, she has learned how to make manure and their farm is now more productive.

Most importantly, Eness has gained self-esteem—she no longer sees herself as submissive and quiet, but as an equal in her marriage. She now has a voice.

Eness's future dream is to purchase some more land so that they can expand the family farm—this will help her to provide for her family and ensure they don't go hungry again. She'd like to see the project link her to formal finance, so that she can secure a larger business loan to achieve her dreams.

Eness has just started the second Livelihoods component of the project and is learning bricklaying under a local artisan.

Austin's Story



Austin is 23 years old and not yet married. He dropped out of school in Form 3 due to there not being enough resources at home. The same was the case for his two younger sisters—none of them were in school. Before enrolling in the Option Y project he was helping his parents out with the farming on their small plot of land. They grew cabbages, tomatoes, onions and maize.

Through the project, Austin has learned that there are skills to be self-reliant. He states that “the project has opened my mind to imagining a future for myself—I have a vision now, and it's good. I'm excited to improve it as life goes on”.

Austin has joined a Village Savings and Loan group, which he learned about through the project, and alongside contributing his savings, he has taken out a loan for 8,500 Kwacha (~\$11.75 USD) with which he's bought fertiliser. A session on climate smart agriculture taught him how to mix the fertiliser with other natural products—including manure. Now, his yield is not only bigger meaning he has more to sell for profit, but the investment in the fertiliser is going much further through this technique.

Austin is proud that the project has helped to overcome stereotypes around gender roles, especially the roles for men and women within the household. Now that Austin is making more money, he is supporting his two younger sisters (21 and 18) to go back to school. In the future, Austin hopes to produce enough food to be able to sell wholesale to large buyers, like hospitals and prisons.

Austin has just started the second Livelihoods component of the project and is learning carpentry under a local artisan.

Annex C: Media Coverage

Media Source	Theme	Source of Information	Summary	Tone
Malawi News	Child Protection	Human rights consultative committee	Calling on the Government to be doing more to protect children, especially from sexual abuse (girl focus), as data shows cases are on the increase. Call is for more sensitisation on the law and referral mechanisms.	Soft call to action
The Nation	Child Marriage	Save the Children & World Bank press release from launch of joint report	Raising awareness of what the Government needs to do to address early marriage, in line with International Day of the Girl Child	Soft—information only
The Nation	Child Marriage	Traditional Authority	Information on reasons girls are married early, and what one Traditional Authority is doing about it.	Soft—information only
The Nation	Education, Girls	Human Rights Watch	In line with International Day of the Girl Child, a summary of how legal and social structures can be strengthened to increase educational attainment for the girl child	Soft call to action
Malawi News	SRH	Girls Network Malawi	Importance of providing SRH information to reduce teenage pregnancies—recognising the lack of information to be the driving challenge. Focus on girls being empowered to use their potential to address challenges.	Soft call to action
The Nation	Child Marriage	Unknown	Case story of a 17-year-old girl married into an abusive polygamous marriage (age 14), that she could leave thanks to the support of a Mother Group; includes her call to the Government to be more accountable in supporting girls to remain in education.	First person, stronger call to action
The Nation	Child Marriage	Unknown	Case story of a successful business woman, who was married at 12 years old in exchange for groceries. Call to the public to monitor girls in their community at risk of marriage and do their legal duty and report it. Uses data and refers to legal instruments.	First person, stronger call to action
Daily Times	Child Marriage	World Relief	Reporting on the rescue of 47 girls from early marriage, and the ability to keep them in school	Informative
The Nation	Education, Girls	Handover Ceremony of pit latrines	Call for NGOs (and others implementing projects promoting girls education) to address sanitation facilities at school as a key driver to keep girls in school	Soft

Daily Times	Social Accountability	Malawi Human Rights Youth Network	Highlighting failure of Government to meet 10 youth commitments made in 2014 (to date, 30% have been met).	Hard stance against Government
The Nation	Social Accountability	Youth Parliament	List of the five resolutions that the Youth Parliament closed with	Soft
Daily Times	Women Empowerment	AU-CIEFFA workshop	Summary of a workshop promoting the importance of educating women and girls to achieve poverty eradication	Soft—purely summarising an event
Daily Times	SRH / Teenage Pregnancy	Minister of Education and CSO Banja La'mstogolo	Referencing a speech from the Minister of Education that called youth to use contraception and get rid of the stigma of using contraceptives as a means to reduce teen pregnancies.	Soft—purely summarising a speech
The Nation	SRH	IOM—International Organisation for Migration	Referring to a statement made by IOM that adolescents and other migrant communities lack access to SRHR globally. The issue needs urgent attention by the Government and other human development agencies.	Soft—information with slight push for government action
Daily Times	Child Marriage	ICRW—International Centre for Research on Women	Referencing the ICRW research that 80% of girls from Thyolo and Phalombe Districts get married before the age of 18, and details on the Girl Empowerment Network project launch to address the issue.	Soft—purely summarising a report
The Nation	Child Marriage	Unknown—likely the Diocese.	Basic summary of how a women's group in Ntcheu District has rescued 13 girls from early marriages following training they've received from the Dedza Diocese Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace.	Soft—purely repeating information.
Daily Times	Child Marriage	Girls Empowerment Network	Reporting launch of new project by the Girls Empowerment Network to reduce child marriage by empowering girls and informing them of their rights.	Soft—purely repeating information
Daily Times	Education, Girls	Total Malawi	Reporting Total Malawi's donation of pads to primary school girls as part of their social responsibility in line with International Women's Day	Soft—likely repeating press release
The Nation	Teenage Pregnancy	YAIO—Youth Activists Initiative Organisation	Reporting on training provided by YAIO to teen mothers on providing care to their babies and infants, recognising many of the mother's lack capacity due to their age and lack of willingness to have a child.	Soft—likely repeating press release

The Nation	Youth and Development	District Commissioner	Relaying District Commissioner speech regarding a youth clubs involvement in development, including environmental protection.	Soft—information only
The Nation	Child Marriage	62nd session of the commission on the status of women in New York	Quoting Minister of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare statement, made in New York, which complemented the Government of Malawi's efforts to end Child Marriage which includes developing a national strategy and campaign.	Soft—relaying the speech only.
The Nation	Child Marriage	Editor, The Nation	Editorial response to the above piece, citing statistics on Malawi's child marriage problem and suggesting that the government needs to address the challenges that parents with girls withdrawn from marriages face, such as inability to provide for the girls needs in school.	Hard thought piece that challenges the Government
Daily Times	Child Marriage	EU	Quoting EU delegation to Malawi, demanding that child marriage and human trafficking be dealt with as priorities, due to their contribution to population growth. Following EU tour to projects addressing child marriage and human trafficking, that are funded by the EU	Soft—relaying the speech only.
The Nation	SRH	Unknown	Highlighting the challenge of getting traditional leaders to openly discuss SRHR in public, despite training, and that the lack of discussion on such topics is not addressing the issue of youths engaging in risky sexual activities that expose them to teenage pregnancy and HIV/AIDs. Chiefs are being appealed to do more to enforce by-laws, particularly around child marriage.	Soft—purely relaying information.

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