

Chawani, B. S. ; Kadzamira, E. 2004. *The Impact of HIV/AIDS on the Education Sector in Malawi. Study 2 – Examining the Impact of HIV/AIDS on Governance in the Education Sector.*

This report presents the findings, conclusions and recommendations of a study on the impact of HIV/AIDS on educational governance. Its purpose is to examine how AIDS affects the daily life of the staff of the central ministry, and division and district offices.

Malawi has an adult prevalence rate of 14.2 per cent (UNAIDS, 2004) and is one of the countries worst affected by HIV/AIDS in southern Africa. Such a generalized presence in society means that the epidemic and its effects touch all sectors of society, and education is no exception to this. However, limited research has been undertaken to date to examine the impact of HIV/AIDS on the human, financial and material resources of the education sector.

In view of this, research is required to provide the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) with policy options, and financial and management strategies to strengthen the overall effectiveness of its institutions and structures to operate in an AIDS-affected environment.

The study was undertaken to examine how the functioning of the education sector has been affected by HIV/AIDS at the central, division and district levels, by considering the impact of staff attrition and absenteeism. In the case of the former, research on current levels of staffing compared personnel deficits by department, division and unit, and the most significant types of attrition. In the absence of concrete quantitative data, the researchers examined the impact of absenteeism on governance in the education sector by analyzing the perceived causes and consequences of absenteeism. Finally, the budgetary impact of attrition and absenteeism was analysed by tracing the annual trends of resources spent on funerals and survivors' benefits. It is hoped that the findings will enable the MoEST and its partners to identify how the various negative impacts can better be avoided or minimized.

The approach taken in this study has been to seek information from as diverse a group of informants as possible. Primary data were obtained by conducting interviews with MoEST employees at different levels, ranging from directors to clerical officers, to elicit their views on HIV/AIDS and human resource issues. Interviews were held at MoEST headquarters, two division offices and four District Education Offices (DEOs) in Lilongwe and Zomba. The sample at district level was divided equally between rural and urban areas. Interviews were complemented by quantitative data collected from human resource and financial records.

Researchers found that there is a high and increasing level of attrition at the central, division and district levels. Death has become the cause of the highest levels of attrition, accounting for more than 40 per cent of all people that left the service between 1999 and 2004. Deaths are disproportionately high among young adults of both sexes, which corresponds with the mortality trends expected in situations of high HIV/AIDS prevalence.

There is evidence of institutional vulnerability at all levels of the ministry, due to the fact that offices operate:

- in a policy environment that is not yet sensitive to HIV/AIDS;
- with very high vacancy rates;
- with inadequate financial and material resources, and
- with substantial information gaps due to the lack of comprehensive information management systems.

The government is losing enormous amounts of scarce resources in trying to cope with the effects of ever-increasing levels of morbidity and mortality. These include greater absenteeism, reduced productivity, higher staff turnover, lower morale and falling levels of work experience and quality. These negative impacts are due, to a significant extent, to HIV/AIDS, which has yet to be mainstreamed in MoEST central, division and district offices, or considered in budgeting and financial planning.

The human resource and financial issues outlined above must be urgently addressed. The MoEST needs to produce a workforce plan that projects the human resource implications of HIV/AIDS over the next 5 to 10 years, anticipating employee absenteeism, illness and death, demand on employees' benefits, staff turnover, recruitment time and all additional costs.

Policy, financing and management strategies regarding funeral costs, death benefits, gratuity and cost implications of absenteeism should be seriously considered to strengthen the overall effectiveness of MoEST institutions and structures to operate in an AIDS-affected environment. Financial planning should project these cost implications over the next 5 to 10 years and ensure that all MoEST institutions and programmes budget for focused HIV/AIDS interventions.
