

Lessons Learned



Patti Gower/PhotoSensi



care

Investing in the Future:
Basic Education and HIV/AIDS
Lessons from Malawi

Investing in the Future: Basic Education and HIV/AIDS *Lessons from Malawi*

Summary:

The impact of HIV/AIDS on education presents a major challenge to the futures of developing economies in Africa. In both the home and school environments, HIV/AIDS is threatening children's right to attend school, within a safe school environment, as well as education systems' capacity to achieve the Millennium Development Goal target of universal access to quality primary education.

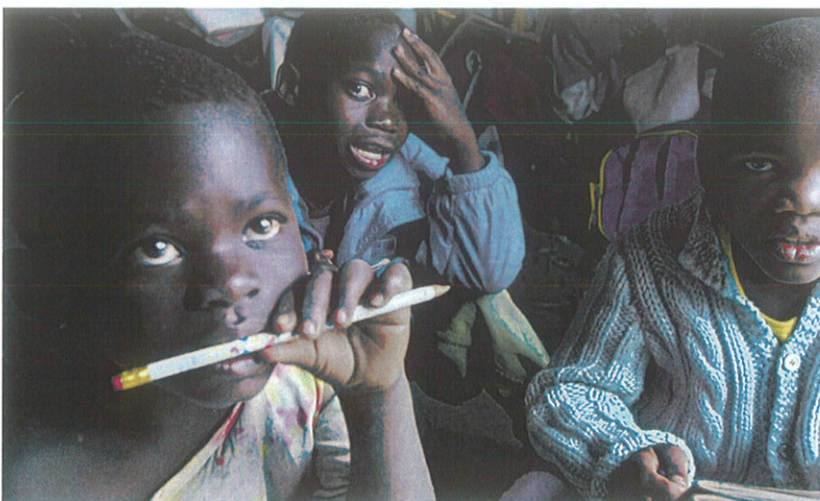
Some of the main challenges include: declines in school enrolment, including withdrawal of children – especially girls – from school; meeting the needs of orphans and children affected by HIV/AIDS; loss of teachers due to illness, death, or care giving responsibilities; sexual abuse of students by teachers; and compromises in quality of education as schools scramble to fill in the gaps.

These challenges jeopardize the health and security of future generations in countries, like Malawi, where the HIV/AIDS epidemic is most severe.



Effective approaches to ensuring access to quality basic education for children in Malawi include:

- Putting in place strategies to protect students from sexual abuse by teachers and other students, including strategies to effectively monitor and report such abuse;
- Strengthening care and support services for HIV/AIDS affected and infected teachers;
- Confronting cultural practices that promote the spread of HIV/AIDS and discourage children from going to school;
- Strengthening the capacity of civil society organizations (CSOs) to identify and advocate for education policies that address the impact of HIV/AIDS on the education system.



Andrew Stawicki/PhotoSensitive

Program Title

Basic Education and HIV/AIDS Support Project (BEHASP)

Program Duration

Jan. 2003 – Dec. 2006

Main topics

HIV/AIDS and Education

Contact

Norman Tembo, Education Program Manager;
Norman@caremalawi.org; +265 1 774 737 / 738
or +265 8 846 474

Principal Donors

Canadian International Development Agency and CARE Canada

Goal

To improve the quality of, and access to, basic education for all by mitigating the impact and spread of HIV/AIDS.

Objectives

Increased capacity of teachers to mitigate the impact of HIV/AIDS through better understanding of prevention, care, support and treatment practices. Increased awareness among education stakeholders on children's rights, especially girls' rights. Enhanced development and implementation of policies focusing on HIV/AIDS and education.

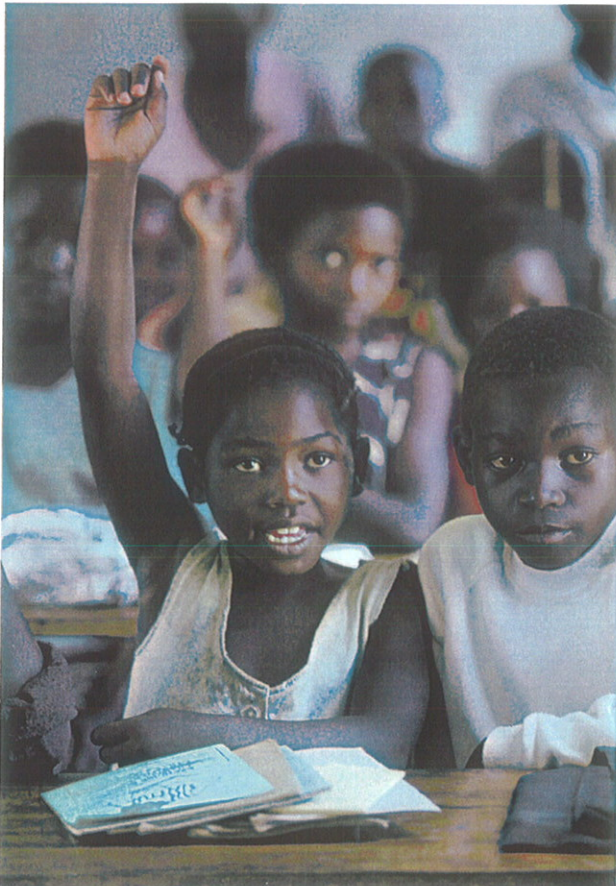
Investing in the Future: Basic Education and HIV/AIDS *Lessons from Malawi*

Background:

Malawi is a small, landlocked country in east Central Africa with a population of 12.3 million, almost half of which is under 15. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world, ranking 165th out of 177 countries in the UNDP's Human Development Index (2003). Life expectancy at birth is 39.7 years. Over three quarters of Malawians live on less than \$2 a day¹.

The adult literacy rate as of 2003 is 64.1%, but is higher for men (74.9%) than women (54%). Similar gender inequalities exist in the literacy rate for youth aged 15-24: 82.1% of young men are literate compared to only 70.7% of young women.

Malawi has one of the highest rates of HIV infection in the sub-Saharan African region, with 14.1% of adults aged 15-49 living with HIV at the end of 2005.



Andrew Stawicki/PhotoSensitive

HIV/AIDS has a devastating impact on the education sector, affecting access, quality, equity and efficiency. Currently, teachers living with HIV do not receive adequate support from the system. The number of teachers lost to HIV/AIDS and other illnesses exceeds the number that the government can retrain each year. Teacher attrition has an obvious impact on the ratio of teachers to students, which currently stands at an average of 71 students for every teacher (and even higher in rural schools).

School-aged children face many challenges to accessing quality basic education. HIV/AIDS has driven absenteeism up (especially for girls); this is particularly true during key periods when agricultural labour is required in the fields. Furthermore, anecdotal reports of male teachers engaging in sexual relationships with female students are all too frequent – and sadly are also often substantiated.

CARE's education program in Malawi works towards:

- Improving social inclusion through a rights based approach;
- Enhancing teacher professional development;
- Improving representation of civil society and communities in the provision of education;
- Strengthening the institutional & management capacity of local authorities and participating civil society organizations.

CARE's history of programming and research activities in the education sector in Malawi includes:

- Strengthening community partnership: In 2001, the Ministry of Education enlisted CARE Malawi to help develop the National Strategy for Strengthening Community Participation in Primary School Management. Local communities in Malawi are traditionally active partners in primary school education, but their potential to participate in whole school management – particularly through community-run School Management Committee (SMCs) – was not fully met. The National Strategy recommended strengthening SMCs to enable them to address HIV/AIDS, gender and human rights issues within schools.

¹ : Human development statistics were obtained from the UNDP 2005 Human Development Report Country Sheet for Malawi. Available online at <http://hdr.undp.org/statistics/data/countries.cfm?c=MWI>. Accessed 11 April 2006. UNAIDS 2006 Report on the Global AIDS Epidemic.

Investing in the Future: Basic Education and HIV/AIDS *Lessons from Malawi*

- Building civil society capacity: Between 2001 and 2005, CARE focused its efforts on working with civil society partners in the education system. Apart from providing technical support in institutional development, CARE also enhanced civil society harmonization through coalitions and networks. Through this project, CARE witnessed the impact of HIV/AIDS in the education system firsthand, and identified the need to centralize HIV/AIDS in its education programs.
- Researching the impact of HIV/AIDS on Primary Education: CARE's research findings revealed that HIV/AIDS awareness was inadequate among teachers and students, male teachers were commonly engaging in sexual relationships with female students, and certain cultural practices were putting children at high risk of HIV infection (for example, as part of the "initiation" tradition, girls are forced to have sex with older men). These findings highlighted failures in protecting the rights of children, and directed CARE towards promoting child rights within schools and communities as a means to combat the spread of HIV/AIDS.

BEHASP's Methodology:

CARE's BEHASP put the child, especially the girl child, at the centre stage of its activities. The project's primary aim was to promote children's right to education. But recognizing that human rights do not exist in isolation, CARE's strategy had to address a broader range of human rights.



Girls from Beluzi School share information on HIV and AIDS with fellow classmates



Honesi Mzunga, 14, is an orphan who had dropped out of school. Honesi was encouraged to return to school by her classmates through her school's Anti-AIDS Club.

Therefore, the BEHASP also aimed to promote realizing the right to good health (including protection from HIV/AIDS and its negative impacts), the right to choice, the right to participate in decision making, and the right to accurate and accessible information for both teachers and students.

The project's understanding of the overlap between access to quality **education**, protection from **HIV/AIDS** and its negative impacts, and promotion of **human rights** allowed for a unique approach that tackled the root causes of the challenges related to education and HIV/AIDS in Malawi. For the first time, the solution involved working collaboratively with a number of different stakeholders, including: students, school administrators, teachers, parents, community leaders, government officials, civil society organizations, and communities as a whole.

The rights-based approach would work by: **enhancing support** for students and teachers affected by HIV/AIDS, and **protecting young girls** from child abuse within schools.

One of the key tools for ensuring that children's rights were upheld within schools was the **Teacher Code of Conduct**, a national-level document (still in draft form) produced by the Teachers Union of Malawi. It outlines expectations for teacher conduct including aspects of teaching quality and explicitly prohibits sexual relationships with students.

Investing in the Future: Basic Education and HIV/AIDS *Lessons from Malawi*

CARE's BEHASP used the Teachers' Code of Conduct to facilitate dialogue among teachers and School Management Committees on issues within the document and how they relate to the situations within their particular schools. From these discussions, teachers were able to better understand expectations for their behaviour. School Management Committees were able to participate in dialogues around child rights and about teaching quality. Both teachers and School Management Committees were also able to provide feedback on the draft document. Furthermore, School Management Committees were enlisted to play a key role in monitoring and enforcing adherence to the draft Code of Conduct.

Program Highlights:

CARE's BEHASP has seen progressive improvements in 40 schools from two districts (Zomba and Lilongwe). These results include:

Strengthened teacher capacity to address HIV/AIDS Issues: Teachers have completed HIV/AIDS education training, which has reduced stigma surrounding HIV/AIDS, helped them establish support groups for affected teachers, and encouraged them to undergo free voluntary counselling and testing for HIV.

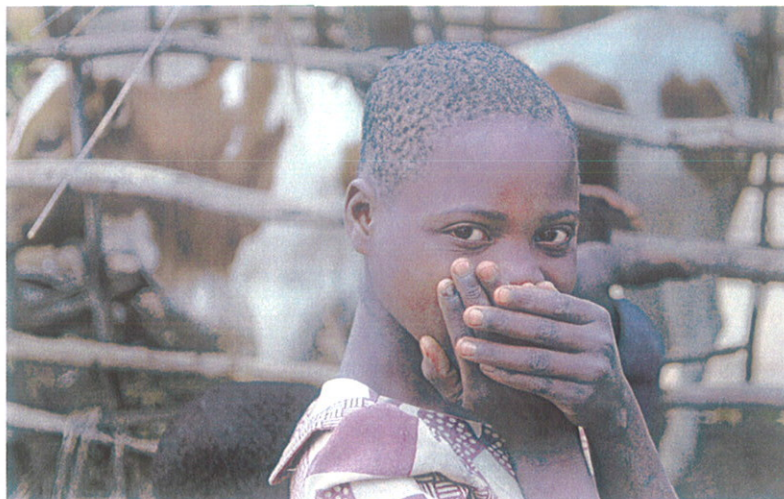
Enhanced awareness and enforcement of child rights: Working closely with traditional leaders, parents, teachers, students, and other community stakeholders, the BEHASP's efforts to increase sensitization and enforcement of child rights has led to the formulation of strict by-laws aimed at ensuring children enjoy their right to education, enhanced community dialogue on cultural practices that

threaten children's right to education and health, improved accountability among teachers and adherence to the Teacher Code of Conduct, and fewer reports of student abuse in schools.

Revamped Anti-AIDS Clubs: Anti-AIDS clubs are student groups dedicated to promoting positive behaviours among students, reducing stigma associated with HIV/AIDS, and supporting students affected by HIV/AIDS within their school. While the idea of these clubs is not a new one in Malawi, the vast majority of school clubs are inactive or extremely limited in the activities they undertake. This project helped develop terms of reference for clubs through a participatory process, trained teachers to serve as club patrons, and trained students on how to manage the clubs with impact. Now the clubs are able to play a stronger role in HIV/AIDS prevention and awareness in their schools.

Empowered girls: Through providing assertiveness training for girls, and with the support of the Anti-AIDS clubs, CARE's BEHASP program has helped girls make informed decisions to claim their right to education.

Putting HIV/AIDS and human rights on the policy agenda: CARE's BEHASP, through a strong partnership with the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education (a coalition of 68 CSOs advocating for policy formulation and implementation in the education sector), has been advancing policy dialogue concerning violence against girls, readmission to school for pregnant teens, and conditions of service for teachers in light of the impact of HIV/AIDS.



Investing in the Future: Basic Education and HIV/AIDS *Lessons from Malawi*

Lessons Learned:

HIV/AIDS and sexual abuse of children are legitimate concerns in the education sector and can be openly discussed: Through open dialogue with teachers, parents, SMCs, school administrators, students, and other stakeholders, communities worked collectively to break the culture of silence around HIV/AIDS and violations of children's rights in schools. Creating a space for dialogue is a challenging and slow process. But through it, stakeholders became better informed on the issues involved and were equal participants in working towards the solutions, especially towards holding teachers accountable for their behaviour.



Andrew Stawicki/PhotoSensitive

Teaming up with communities through School Management Committees is a key to success and sustained impact: The BEHASP worked with SMCs to strengthen their organizational management skills, foster positive group dynamics, and develop their capacity to participate in dialogue surrounding human rights and gender issues. This enabled community members to take on a more active role in school management than previously afforded, not the least of which was enforcing the Teacher Code of Conduct in schools. Some SMCs even took on independent initiatives to tackle additional challenges to school attendance, such as starting school feeding programs during critical periods when food supply was low.

Multi-stakeholder commitment and time are crucial to changing socio-cultural risk factors for HIV/AIDS: The project worked closely with traditional leaders, parents and communities towards changing cultural practices like early marriage and rites of initiation that put children (and especially girls) at increased risk of HIV infection and of dropping out of school.

Changing long standing cultural practices is a gradual process requiring tremendous patience and commitment.

Some concepts – like gender inequality – are perceived as being borrowed from the West and therefore not relevant in Malawian culture. The project has only begun to scratch the surface of cultural change by garnering support from traditional leaders to institute by-laws that aim to protect children's rights. With time and continued commitment from community stakeholders, more progress can be made.

Girls can be decision-makers: Given the opportunity to assert themselves, girls in the BEHASP seized it enthusiastically. The girls demonstrated that they can be active participants in the overall process of education, and can make decisions to protect their bodies, to develop in dependence, and to choose to stay enrolled in school. CARE's BEHASP also learned that parents still reserve a lot of control over their daughters, so they, too, must be involved in the process of developing girls' assertiveness.

The Teacher Code of Conduct held teachers accountable for their behaviour: This document, though still in draft form, served as an important tool in cracking down on sexual abuse of children in schools. In Malawi, the finalization of the draft Code of Conduct needs to be hastened so that the document can be more widely circulated, because it has potential to be an effective means to enforce national standards for teaching quality and teachers' behaviours.

HIV/AIDS education in schools promotes increased visits to VCT: Among both teachers and students, HIV/AIDS awareness campaigns highlighting prevention and impact mitigation have inspired increased visits to VCT. Information empowers people to act.

Partnerships are integral to addressing HIV/AIDS in the education sector: Everyone is a stakeholder when it comes to the education of Malawi's future generation of leaders. CARE's BEHASP worked closely with Ministry of Education officials at national and local levels, parents, teachers, school administrators, students, community leaders, and partner NGOs in the Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education to ensure that ownership of the challenges and the response came from all levels. In the context of poverty, a single actor cannot effect change alone.

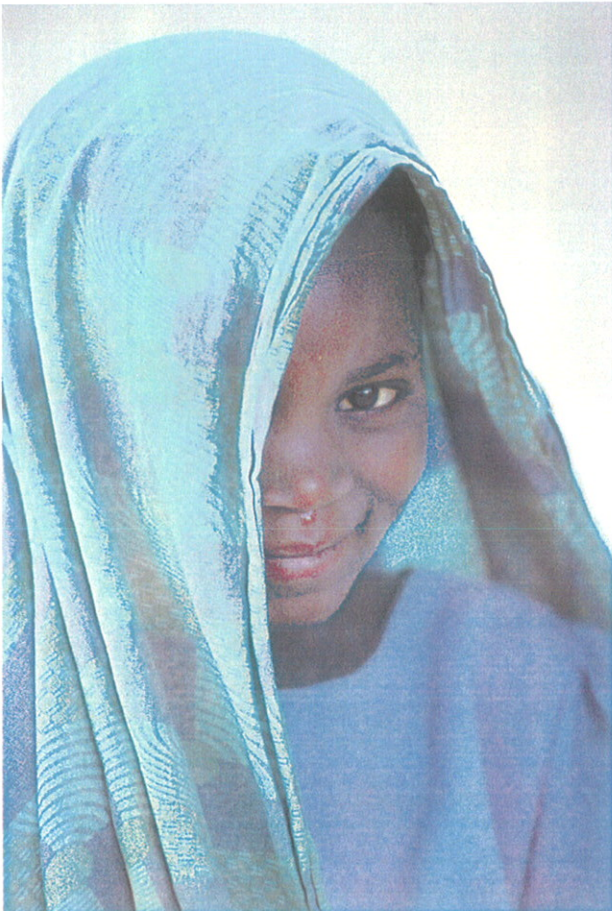
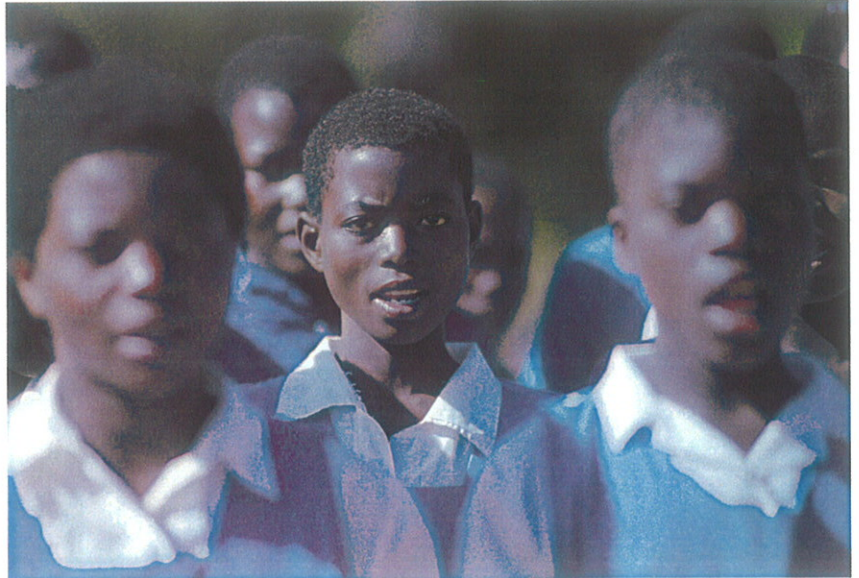
Basic education is key to national development: Children are the future of Malawi; investing in their education is an investment in the country's future. Education lowers the risk of HIV infection, helps to reduce gender inequality, and helps to create opportunities to lift oneself out of poverty, all of which are contributing factors to the nation's development.

Investing in the Future: Basic Education and HIV/AIDS *Lessons from Malawi*

Conclusion:

The BEHASP presents an effective model of addressing HIV/AIDS in the education sector using a rights-based, multi-stakeholder strategy. A key strength was the project's forthright approach to upholding the rights of students, especially girls, and teachers in community and policy dialogues. The BEHASP has shown that communities can come together to secure their children's right to accessing quality education in the context of the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and in an environment that is safe for both students and teachers.

Author: CARE International in Malawi, with special thanks to staff members Norman Tembo and Gladys Msonda, and Lisa Thacker.



Acknowledgements:

The Canadian International Development Agency's Partnership Branch; the Government of Malawi's Ministry of Education; CARE Canada's Programme Agreement, HIV/AIDS and Communications Teams; staff at CARE International in Malawi; schools, local communities, SMCs and Anti-Aids Clubs from of Zomba and Lilongwe Districts; and CARE Malawi's CSO partners, especially the Malawi Schools Parent Association and the Teachers Union of Malawi.

Acronyms

AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
BEHASP	Basic Education and HIV/AIDS Support Project
CS-BESP	Civil Society Basic Education Support Project
CSO	Civil Society Organization
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
SMC	School Management Committee
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing

CARE International Secretariat
Chemin de Balexert 7- 9
1219 Chatelaine
Geneva
Switzerland
Tel: 41-22-795-1020
Fax: 41-22-795-1029
E-mail: info@careinternational.org

CARE Australia
G.P.O. Box 2014
Canberra, ACT 2601
Australia
Tel: 61-26-279-0200
Fax: 61-26-257-1938
E-mail: info@careaustralia.org.au

CARE Canada
9 Gurdwara Road
Ottawa, ON K2E 7X6
Canada
Tel: 1-613-228-5600
Fax: 1-613-226-5777
E-mail: questions@care.ca

CARE Danmark (Denmark)
Noerrebrogade 68B
Postbrooks 698
DK-2200 Copenhagen N
Danmark
Tel: 45-35-36-88-58
Fax: 45-35-36-88-78
E-mail: care@care.dk

CARE Deutschland (Germany)
Dreizehnmorgenweg 6
D-53175 Bonn
Deutschland
Tel: 49-228-975-630
Fax: 49-228-975-6351
E-mail: info@care.de

CARE France
CAP 19
13 rue Georges Auric
75019 Paris
France
Tel: 33-1-53-19-89-89
Fax: 33-1-53-19-89-90
E-mail: info-care@carefrance.org

CARE Japan
2-3-2 Zoushigaya
Toshima-Ku
Tokyo 171-0032
Japan
Tel: 81-3-5950-1335
Fax: 81-3-5950-1375
E-mail: carejpn@ny.airnet.ne.jp

CARE Nederland (Netherlands)
Juffrouw Idastraat 11
2513 BE Den Haag
The Netherlands
Tel: 31-70-310-50-64
Fax: 31-70-356-07-53
E-mail: general@carenederland.org

CARE Norge (Norway)
Universitetsgt 12
0164 Oslo
Norway
Tel: 47-22-99-26-00
Fax: 47-22-99-26-01
E-mail: care.norge@care.no

CARE Österreich (Austria)
Lange Gasse 30
1080 Wien
Österreich
Tel: 43-1-715-0-715-0
Fax: 43-1-715-9-715-12
E-mail: care@care.at

Raks Thai Foundation
185-187 Phaholyothin Soi 11
Samsen, Nai, Phayathai
Bangkok, 104000
Tel: 662-279-5306/7
Fax: 662-271-4467
E-mail: Info:raksthai.org

CARE UK
10-13 Rushworth Street
London, SE 1 ORB
United Kingdom
Tel: 020-7934-9334
Fax: 020-7934-9335
E-mail: info@uk.care.org

CARE USA
151 Ellis Street, NE
Atlanta, GA 30303-2440
USA
Tel: 1-404-681-2552
1-800-521-CARE
Fax: 1-404-577-5977
E-mail: info@care.org



care