

# How governments are failing on the right to education

Findings from citizens' reports in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nepal





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# Foreword

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This report presents important new findings on the right to education from citizen-led research in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nepal. Unlike most such studies it is the product of research and analysis by children, parents, teachers and community organisations who have actively scrutinised the performance of their local schools against core dimensions of the right to education. The process has helped to deepen people's engagement as citizens in holding their government schools and their public education systems to account.

Ten areas are highlighted where the right to education has been undermined and promises have been broken. Government spending is unnecessarily constrained meaning too many children remain out of school and too many costs are passed on to parents. Girls and children with disabilities face particular disadvantage, sometimes including violence. Infrastructure is often inadequate and governance systems are often weak and not inclusive. Teachers often face overwhelming class sizes, making it hard for children to learn.

These findings will not come as a shock for many people who are familiar with the challenges faced by under-funded public education systems – but it makes a massive difference when it is citizens on the frontline who are raising these issues and calling for change.

Rather than leading to disillusion with public education, positive solutions are put forward to ensure that government systems can deliver on the right to education. These solutions can be clustered under four core areas. Governments need to increase the financing of education – both through increasing the **share** of the national budget spent on education and increasing the **size** of the national budget overall. A particular focus is placed on how simple tax reforms in just one area - ending harmful tax incentives - could make a transformational difference in each country.

Increasing the share and size of the budget will not be enough if the **sensitivity** of spending is not also increased. The report flags the importance of investing for equity, for example to end the disadvantages faced by girls and children with disabilities, and to ensure that professional teachers are well trained and valued. Alongside this there is a need for greater **scrutiny** of education spending – ensuring better governance systems are in place, that budgets are tracked and that resources are spent appropriately and effectively.

When citizens are actively engaged in building their own evidence base and are mobilising to demand increases in the size, share, sensitivity and scrutiny of education budgets for gender-responsive public schools, the right to education becomes much more than just a promise.

As such, whilst I strongly commend this report I equally strongly commend the process that generated it! The right to education cannot be contained only in distant conventions and treaties, it needs to be translated and popularised to live in the minds and actions of citizens everywhere.

**David Archer**  
*April 2017*



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## Executive summary

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ActionAid has recently conducted extensive research in schools in four developing countries – Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Nepal – to assess the extent to which children, especially girls, are accessing good quality primary education. Our findings, while showing some positive progress, are extremely concerning. They show that:

- Governments are not investing enough to ensure a quality education for the next generation, and are largely failing in their duty to promote the right to education.
- Governments are also largely failing to meet the education commitments they have signed up to in international fora.
- The consequence is that few children are receiving a quality education. It is girls who often lose out most: girls are more likely to be victims of violence and abuse in school, often do less well in school examinations and are enduring extremely poor school sanitation facilities that are not conducive to a quality learning environment.

ActionAid's findings are consistent with the experience of many other developing countries, which we also analyse here. Recent years have seen real improvements in some aspects of education and millions more children have gained access to school. But millions of children around the world remain out of school. Further, many millions of children who are in school are simply not accessing a quality education. Too many children are being taught in schools with not enough teachers and classrooms or inadequate infrastructure such as sanitation facilities - and this is contributing to high dropouts and poor learning outcomes, such as low examination pass rates.

**ActionAid's research** in the four countries has involved a large number of stakeholders, including parents/guardians of schoolchildren, pupils themselves, head teachers and teachers, school administrators, local education authority staff, community leaders and school governance structures such as School Management Committees. The research was conducted in:

- **Malawi:** in 20 schools in four districts - Chitipa, Neno, Lilongwe and Ntchisi.
- **Mozambique:** in 14 schools in one district - Marracuene.
- **Tanzania:** in 30 primary schools in two districts - Kilwa and Singida.
- **Nepal:** in 25 schools in two districts - Kailali and Doti.

## Progress

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Developing countries have made some progress in education in recent years. Millions more children are attending school: between 1999 and 2012, the net enrolment ratio increased from 60% to 83% in low income countries and from 59% to 79% in sub-Saharan Africa.<sup>1</sup> Girls' enrolment has improved and many countries now have as many girls as boys in primary school. Many countries have embarked on infrastructure improvement programmes, building more classrooms and improving school facilities. Pupil/teacher ratios have declined in most countries and many countries have been prioritising the recruitment of more teachers.<sup>2</sup>

There have been clear signs of progress in certain aspects of education in the four developing countries ActionAid has analysed:

- In **Malawi**, enrolment in primary school has increased to 94%, with roughly equal numbers of girls and boys enrolled.<sup>3</sup>
- **Mozambique** has achieved a surge in primary and secondary school enrolment from 3.6 million children in 2003 to around 6.7 million by 2014, and is now at 97%.<sup>4</sup>
- In **Tanzania**, primary school enrolment increased from 4.8 million to 8.4 million (from 55% to 94%<sup>5</sup>) between 2001 and 2010, and the number of teachers has increased from around 165,000 in 2010/11 to over 190,000 in 2014/15<sup>6</sup>.
- **Nepal**, despite a decade long armed insurgency and other political turmoil in the country, has in recent years achieved significant progress in education, especially in largely achieving gender parity in enrolments in primary and secondary education, and in increasing the number of schools.<sup>7</sup>

In all four countries, governments are showing considerable political will to address education deficiencies, and have comprehensive strategies on paper to, for example, train more teachers and improve infrastructure.<sup>8</sup>



**Annie, 27, and friend, Malawi**  
PHOTO: GRAEME ROBERTSON/ACTIONAID

# Challenges: 10 Broken Promises

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Unfortunately, the progress made is nowhere near sufficient to provide a quality education to all children, especially girls. ActionAid's findings from the research in the four countries, combined with our analysis of the situation globally, highlights ten major challenges that are not being adequately addressed by governments. Governments are largely failing to meet their commitments to fulfil the education rights enshrined in international human rights law and to meet their political commitments outlined in the *Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action* to which governments committed in 2015.<sup>9</sup>

**The ten major challenges are:**

## 1 Children out of school

ActionAid's research in schools finds disturbingly high levels of children out of school and dropping out:

- The highest rate is in **Malawi**, where the number of out of school children is estimated to be equivalent to 22% of children enrolled.
- In **Mozambique**, data was only accessible in 2 of the 14 schools, showing an average out of school rate of 2.7% of those enrolled.
- In **Tanzania**, some 4.3% of those enrolled in the two districts are estimated to be out of school.
- In **Nepal**, an average of 8% of children aged 5-9 years are estimated to be currently out of school; for girls, the proportion is 9.6%.

## 2 Cost of education for parents

Our research found that all schools in all four countries charge some sort of extra costs to parents:

- In **Malawi**, all 20 schools charge fees for examinations and 19 charge for 'school development', among other costs. These fees are compulsory in all schools.
- **Mozambique** has abolished school fees for primary education but parents make voluntary contributions to school maintenance and school guards, and pay for school uniforms, in most of the 14 schools.
- In all 30 schools studied in **Tanzania**, parents have to pay for school uniforms and writing materials. Parents also make compulsory payments for exam fees in 9 schools, for sanitation equipment such as brooms and buckets in 8 schools and for food contributions in 4 schools, among others.
- In **Nepal**, despite the Constitutional provision of free education until secondary level, all 25 project schools were found to charge fees of some kind which in most cases are compulsory. For example, 22 schools require examination fees to be paid.

## 3 Girls' education

The research found that both girls and boys are losing out in accessing a quality education, but that the situation is worse for girls in some areas:

- More boys than girls are estimated to be **out of school** in Malawi and Tanzania, with a higher figure for girls in Nepal, and insufficient data available in Mozambique. The dropout rate for girls is higher than for boys in Malawi and lower than for boys in Tanzania and Nepal.
- Girls do less well than boys in **end of primary school exams** in Malawi and Nepal but better than boys in Mozambique and the same as boys in Tanzania.
- Girls are particular victims of **violence and abuse**. In Tanzania, for example, corporal punishment against girls was reported as taking place in all 30 project schools, sexual violence and harassment were reported in 11 and physical punishment and bullying in nine. In Malawi, of the 17 schools that provided data, physical violence was reported to take place in 10, affecting girls more than boys, while sexual abuse was reported in 5 schools, affecting girls only.



## 4 Learning outcomes

Learning outcomes vary across the four countries:

- In **Malawi**, across the 15 schools that could provide data, the average pass rate in end of year primary examinations was 67%: 64% for girls and 70% for boys.
- In **Mozambique**, only 55% of those who sat the final primary school examination in 2015 passed. The pass rate for girls (58%) was far much higher than for boys (40%).
- In **Tanzania**, the average pass rate in end of primary school exams was 68% in 2015, equal for girls and boys.
- In **Nepal**, the pass rate in end of primary school exams was relatively high, at 84% in 2015, a rate which was slightly higher for boys (85%) than girls (82%).

## 5 Infrastructure and sanitation

Our research found especially poor sanitation facilitation, a situation that impacts girls in particular.

- In **Tanzania**, only 4 of the 30 schools have flush toilets. On average, there is a toilet for every 53 pupils across the 30 schools, split roughly equally between girls and boys – there is a toilet for every 52 girls. Only 13 of the 30 schools have toilets with doors.
- In **Malawi**, there is an average of one toilet for 113 girls and one toilet for 134 boys. In the worst case, one school had an average of just one toilet for every 513 girls. In only 12 out of 20 schools do most toilet facilities have doors.
- In **Mozambique**, there are only 38 toilets in the 14 schools – an average of just 2.7 per school. In two schools, it was reported that there were none at all. Thus on average, there is a toilet for every 339 pupils across the 14 schools. For girls, there are 19 toilets available in the 14 schools – one for every 331 girls.
- In **Nepal**, an average of 87 pupils share each toilet in the project schools. Where separate toilets were available for girls, 84 girls shared a toilet compared to 70 boys.

## 6 Teachers

Our research in the project schools found that the average pupil/teacher ratio across the schools studied was 1:73 in **Malawi**, 1:45 in **Mozambique**, 1:59 in **Tanzania**, and 1:25 in **Nepal**. These figures sometimes mask significant variations – one school in Malawi has 126 children per teacher, for example. (Official government targets are 1:40 in both Tanzania and Nepal and 1:60 in both Malawi and Mozambique).

## 7 Violence against children

Our research reached a number of very disturbing findings on stakeholders' perceptions of the prevalence of violence in schools:

- In **Tanzania**, corporal punishment against girls was reported as taking place in all 30 project schools, sexual violence and harassment were reported in 11 and physical punishment and bullying in nine. Teachers are identified as the main perpetrators of corporal punishment but boys and peers are mainly responsible for other forms of violence.
- In **Malawi**, of the 17 schools that provided data, physical violence was reported to take place in 10, affecting girls more than boys, while sexual abuse was reported in 5 schools, affecting girls only. Corporal punishment was reported to take place in 7 schools, affecting boys more than girls.
- In **Mozambique**, physical punishment is reported to be widespread, taking place in all 14 schools, while sexual harassment (i.e., bullying or coercion) was reported to take place in eight and sexual abuse (i.e., molestation) in one.
- In **Nepal**, physical violence was reported to take place in 16 of the 25 schools while sexual abuse was reported to exist in two schools. Teachers, boys, and peers were reported as the key perpetrators.



One problem is the lack of training received by teachers to respect children's rights. Our research found that, in **Tanzania**, only 57% of teachers in the schools were reported to have received this training. In **Malawi**, the proportion was found to be just 7%. In **Mozambique**, 5 of the 14 schools do not have teachers who have been trained to respect children's rights and in **Nepal**, only 10 of the 24 schools which reported have at least one teacher trained to respect child rights including protection against corporal punishment.

## 8 Children with disabilities

Our research found an exceedingly small percentage of children enrolled in the project schools with disabilities: less than 1% of all those enrolled were disabled in the project schools in **Malawi**, **Tanzania** and **Nepal**, while 1% of children were recorded as disabled in **Mozambique**. These low figures are likely to be the result both of poor recording by schools and children with disabilities simply not attending school.

## 9 School governance

- Our research found that the School Management Committees are 'active and fully functioning' in **Malawi**, **Mozambique** and **Tanzania**. In **Nepal**, however, the SMC reported to be active and fully functioning in only 3 out of 25 schools.
- In the same 3 countries, the SMCs are regarded as being mainly inclusive of all main groups in the local community. However, in **Nepal**, SMCs are regarded as inclusive in only 4 out of 25 schools.
- Women are much less represented on SMCs than men in all four countries. For example, in **Tanzania**, only around a third of members are women and in only 5 of the 30 schools is the chair of the SMC a woman. In **Nepal**, only around 1 in 5 members of SMCs are women. In **Tanzania** and **Malawi**, the precise proportion of women could not be estimated but was described as minimal.

## 10 Government financing for education

The four countries under analysis are largely failing to adequately promote the right to education. In order to change this, they must allocate adequate resources to the task. Yet all four countries are failing to allocate 20% of their national budgets to education, as agreed by world leaders in the Incheon Framework of Action. Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania are spending 17-19% of their budgets on education while Nepal is allocating just 12%. Developing country governments as a whole are failing to meet their education spending commitments. On average, low income countries allocate 16.7% of the national budget to education (Sub-Saharan Africa 16.6%).

Governments need to increase spending on public services and find extra resources to do this. One major way of finding the resources needed to fund education is to reduce the tax incentives that governments currently give to corporations. In 2013, ActionAid estimated that developing countries lose US\$139 billion a year just from one form of tax incentive – corporate income tax exemptions: even this would be more enough to fund the US\$39 billion education financing gap. The four countries under analysis in this report all lose vast amounts of revenues from tax incentives given by their governments to corporations.

- Most stark is **Nepal**, which lost \$990 million to tax incentives in 2014/15 – more than it spent on education.
- **Malawi** may have lost \$117 million a year on average during 2008-12, which could have increased the education budget by 27%.
- **Mozambique** lost \$561 million in 2014, which could have increased the education budget by 31%.
- **Tanzania** lost \$760 million in 2014/15, which could have increased education spending by 28%.

## Summary - Are the four countries adequately promoting the right to education?

The findings of the research suggest a mixed picture but overall it is clear that many aspects of the right to education are currently being violated in the schools under study in the four countries.

- The **Right to Free and Compulsory Education** is being supported in the high enrolment rates for girls and boys but is being violated by the high numbers of children out of school and who drop out, and in requiring parents to pay for various school costs.
- The **Right to Quality Learning** is being compromised by high pupil/teacher ratios in Malawi and Tanzania and relatively low pass rates for end of primary school (except in Nepal, which has relatively high pass rates).
- The **Right to Adequate Infrastructure** is being compromised by poor and inadequate sanitation (toilet) facilities, especially for girls.
- The **Right to a Safe and Non-Violent Environment** is being violated by widespread corporal punishment and sexual and other forms of violence in many schools and by an insufficient number of teachers trained to respect children's rights. These factors adversely affect girls in particular.
- The **Right to Participate** is being supported by children reported to be able to participate in class and in clubs or councils, by mainly equal participation of girls and boys, and by the SMC listening to children's views (except, for the latter, in Mozambique).
- The **Right to Transparent and Accountable Schools** is being supported by a large number of SMCs being active and fully functioning (except in Nepal) and by SMCs monitoring school budgets and children's participation in many schools. It is being compromised, however, by school governance structures not playing these roles in some schools and by women's under-representation in SMCs.

Underlying all these issues is a lack of adequate financing.



**Friends, Mozambique**  
PHOTO: ACTIONAID

## Recommendations .....

*Fundamental to addressing the broken promises and rights violations is to increase the financing available to education in a sustainable way. For this reason we put our recommendation on increasing financing first, because it is this which will enable the other recommendations to be achieved.*

### Government financing for education

- Announce a timetable to reach, within three years, a tax to GDP ratio of 20% (e.g. through ending harmful tax incentives and promoting other progressive tax reforms) and an allocation of at least 20% of government spending to education (publishing a clear breakdown of budget allocations by sub-sector online).

### Children out of school

- Ensure that up-to-date, accurate and gender-disaggregated figures are available on the number and location of children out of school and develop a costed plan to ensure that all children are enrolled for example through inclusive education interventions, cash transfers, school-feeding and active outreach programmes.

### Cost of education for parents

- Ensure that all primary education is genuinely free by abolishing all compulsory direct and indirect costs to parents and ensuring that the State covers these costs.

### Girls' education

- Ensure that girls' education is explicitly prioritised in education budgets, including by devoting some separate budget lines to improving education for girls, taking action on violence in schools and supporting girls clubs.

### Learning outcomes

- Make improved efforts to raise learning outcomes, through more investment in training for formative assessment by teachers and addressing the underlying reasons for poor learning outcomes such as large class sizes, too many untrained or poorly trained teachers, outdated pedagogy and teaching-learning materials, and inadequate infrastructure.

### Infrastructure and sanitation

- Develop a national policy to ensure that all primary schools have an appropriate number of classrooms, safe drinking water, good sanitation facilities (separate and safe for boys and girls), access to electricity and web-connections.

### Teachers

- Ensure that all children are taught by a properly trained and qualified teacher, investing in more female teachers, better quality training, more equitable deployment, incentives for working in remote areas and domestically competitive salaries for teachers.

### Violence against children

- Announce zero tolerance for violence in and around schools and take steps to ensure this is implemented, making corporal punishment in schools illegal, training all teachers in human rights standards and ensuring all schools have clear policies to prevent violence, with confidential reporting processes for children linked to the police and courts.

### Children with disabilities

- Ensure that schools have a mechanism to record the numbers of children with disabilities in school (and out of school in their catchment area) and that national inclusive education provisions are implemented, including in relation to infrastructure and teacher training.

### School governance

- Review national policies to ensure that all schools have an effective school management committee, which is well resourced, representative (50% women), empowered to monitor school performance, learning and budgets, and fully transparent and accountable to the local community (for example by ensuring schools budgets and spending are posted publicly).



**Rahma, 11, Zeinab, 10, and Asha, 10, Tanzania**  
PHOTO: RACHEL PALMER/ACTIONAID

# Introduction

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**ActionAid has recently conducted extensive research in schools in four developing countries – Malawi, Mozambique, Nepal and Tanzania – to assess the extent to which children, especially girls, are accessing good quality primary education. Our findings, while showing some positive progress, are extremely concerning. They show that:**

- Governments are not investing enough to ensure a quality education for the next generation, and are largely failing in their duty to promote the right to education.
- Governments are also largely failing to meet the education commitments they have signed up to in international fora.
- The consequence is that few children are receiving a quality education. It is girls who often lose out most: our findings suggest that girls are more likely to be victims of violence and abuse in school, often do less well in school examinations and are enduring extremely poor school sanitation facilities that are not conducive to a quality learning environment.

ActionAid's findings are consistent with the experience of many other developing countries, which we also analyse here. Recent years have seen real improvements in some aspects of education and millions more children have gained access to school. But millions of children around the world remain out of school. Some will never enrol while some are dropping out, often at alarming rates.

Further, many millions of children who are in school are simply not accessing a quality education. Too many children are being taught in schools with too few teachers and classrooms or inadequate infrastructure such as sanitation facilities - and this is contributing to high dropouts and poor learning outcomes, such as low examination pass rates. The next generation of children in many developing countries is simply not being given the means to take advantage of the benefits that education offers.





Many parents living in poverty around the world see a good quality education as the key passport to social mobility for their children. If we want to create more equal and fair societies, education is the bedrock. But we need a radical shift, a renewal of the political will of governments to provide free, quality, public education that is the right of all children and a rebuilding of confidence in the capacity of governments to finance public education that is of good quality. This will only come from a substantial scaling up of investment.

Yet currently, many governments are not investing enough in education even if education is often the single largest item in governments' budgets. Most governments do have the ability to find the extra resources needed – they can do so by reducing the often extremely large amounts they are giving away to corporations in harmful tax incentives. As we detail below, these can, and should, be used to finance critical education investments, notably in the quality education of girls.

## ActionAid's research and the right to education

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*Education is not a privilege. It is a human right. This means that the right to education is guaranteed legally for all without any discrimination and that states have the obligation to protect, respect and fulfil the right to education. States can and should be held accountable for violations or deprivations of the right to education.*

ActionAid's research in the four countries has involved a vast number of stakeholders, including parents/guardians of schoolchildren, pupils themselves, head teachers and teachers, school administrators, local education authority staff, community leaders and school governance structures such as School Management Committees. The research was conducted in:

- Malawi: in 20 schools in four districts of the country - Chitipa, Neno, Lilongwe and Ntchisi.
- Mozambique: in 14 schools in one district - Marracuene.
- Tanzania: in 30 primary schools in two districts - Kilwa and Singida.
- Nepal: in 25 schools in two districts - Kailali and Doti.

Unlike most research, the data collection at school and community level was undertaken by members of the local community themselves under the guidance of professional researchers. Our approach follows the **Promoting Rights in Schools (PRS) Framework** developed by ActionAid and the Right to Education project which aims to actively engage and empower parents, children, teachers, unions, communities and local civil society organisations in collectively monitoring and improving the quality of public education. The PRS framework is focused on improving 10 aspects of the right to education (see box).

## The promoting rights in schools framework

1. **Right to free and compulsory education:** there should be no charges, direct or indirect, for primary education. Education must gradually be made free at all levels.
2. **Right to non-discrimination:** schools must not make any distinction in provision based on sex, race, colour, language, religion, political opinion, nationality, ethnicity, ability, or any other status.
3. **Right to adequate infrastructure:** there should be an appropriate number of classrooms, accessible to all, with adequate and separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys. Schools should be built with local materials and be resilient to natural risks and disasters.
4. **Right to quality trained teachers:** schools should have a sufficient number of trained teachers of whom a good proportion are female; teachers should receive good quality pre-service and in-service training with built-in components on gender sensitivity, non-discrimination, and human rights. All teachers should be paid domestically competitive salaries.
5. **Right to a safe and non-violent environment:** children should be safe on route to and in school. Clear anti-bullying policies and confidential systems for reporting and addressing any form of abuse or violence should be in place.
6. **Right to relevant education:** the curriculum should not discriminate and should be relevant to the social, cultural, environmental, economic and linguistic context of learners.
7. **Right to know your rights:** schools should teach human rights education and children's rights in particular. Learning should include age-appropriate and accurate information on sexual and reproductive rights.
8. **Right to participate:** girls and boys have the right to participate in decision making processes in school. Appropriate mechanisms should be in place to enable the full, genuine and active participation of children.
9. **Right to transparent and accountable schools:** schools need to have transparent and effective monitoring systems. Both communities and children should be able to participate in accountable governing bodies, management committees and parents' groups.
10. **Right to quality learning:** girls and boys have a right to a quality learning environment and to effective teaching processes so that they can develop their personality, talents and physical and mental abilities to their fullest potential.

Source: Right to Education Project, Promoting Rights in Schools: Providing Quality Public Education, <http://www.right-to-education.org/resource/promoting-rights-schools-providing-quality-public-education>



**Classroom, Tanzania**  
PHOTO: EMANUELA COLOMBO/ACTIONAID

# Progress in education

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## Progress globally

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Developing countries have made some progress in education in recent years. Millions more children are attending school: between 1999 and 2012, the net enrolment ratio increased from 60% to 83% in low income countries and from 59% to 79% in sub-Saharan Africa. Girls' enrolment has improved and many countries now have as many girls as boys in primary school:

- Of 161 countries with data for 1999 and 2012, the number with an equal number of girls and boys enrolled rose from 83 in 1999 to 104 in 2012.
- Some 69% of countries worldwide have achieved gender parity at primary level.

Many countries have embarked on infrastructure improvement programmes, building more classrooms and improving school facilities. Pupil/teacher ratios have declined in most countries and many countries have been prioritising the recruitment of more teachers, with several countries, such as Benin, Burkina Faso, Ethiopia, Morocco, Mozambique, Nepal and Niger, explicitly prioritising the recruitment of women teachers.

## Progress in the four countries

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There have been clear signs of progress in certain aspects of education in the four developing countries ActionAid has analysed:

**Malawi** has made significant progress in some areas. State commitment to education is strong and free primary education has been offered since 1994. **Enrolment** in primary school has increased to 94%, with roughly equal numbers of girls and boys enrolled. Strides have been made in addressing the educational needs of **out-of-school** children through Complementary Basic Education Centres which now total over 600 nationwide. In addition, the introduction of the Open and Distance Learning programme to train teachers has been a major success, nearly doubling the number of **teachers trained** per year. The number of primary school teachers increased from around 46,000 in 2010 to over 55,000 in 2012, resulting in an improvement in the student-teacher ratio from 80:1 in 2010 to 74:1 in 2012, although this is still very high. Malawi's **school grants** provided under the Primary School Improvement Programme are widely regarded as a significant success story.

**Mozambique** has achieved a surge in primary and secondary school **enrolment** from 3.6 million children in 2003 to around 6.7 million in 2014, and is now at 97%. **Gender parity** has also improved in recent years in some respects: Overall, for every 100 boys in primary school, there are now 95 girls, compared to just 81 girls in 2000. In addition, the pupil-teacher ratio in primary education has fallen from 69 in 2009 to 62 in 2014, although this is still a high number.

In **Tanzania**, primary school **enrolment** increased from 4.8 million to 8.4 million (from 55% to 94% ) between 2001 and 2010. However, in more recent years net enrolment in primary has been falling and in 2015 stood at 88%. The number of teachers has increased from around 165,000 in 2010/11 to over 190,000 in 2014/15. The government is committed to improving education, which it recognises as one of its priorities. It has recently (starting in January 2016) abolished school fees at secondary level, complementing the abolition of fees for primary school.

**Nepal**, despite a decade long armed insurgency and other political turmoil in the country, has in recent years achieved significant progress in education, especially in largely achieving gender parity in enrolments in primary and secondary education, and in increasing the number of schools. The official net **enrolment rate** in primary is now 96%, having risen from 92% in 2008/09. The **pupil/teacher ratio** is also relatively impressive by developing countries standards, at between 26 and 41 per pupil, depending on different sources. Over 80% of Nepali children progress from primary to **secondary school**.

In all four countries, the government is showing considerable political will to address education deficiencies, and has comprehensive strategies on paper to, for example, train more teachers, increase enrolment and, in some, establishing more early childhood education facilities to prepare the way for primary and providing scholarships for disadvantaged children.

## ActionAid's research

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ActionAid's research involved collecting information on over 20 aspects of education policy (see next section). Yet of these, only two provided largely positive findings – school enrolment and children's participation.

### Enrolment

Our research found that girls comprised a slightly higher proportion of children enrolled than boys in the schools under analysis in Tanzania and Malawi – 51% compared to 49% for boys. In Mozambique and Nepal, there was slightly lower enrolment for girls. In Mozambique, 49% of those enrolled were girls. In Nepal, using a different calculation, there was a gross enrolment rate for girls of 81% in 2016, compared to 85% for boys.



## Participation

The research asked stakeholders for their views on the extent to which pupils participate in school. Many of the responses were positive.

- In **Malawi**, pupils are reported to be given an opportunity to participate in class in all 20 project schools; in school clubs in 18 of the 20 schools; and in school governance/decisions in 12 of the 20 schools. However, in none of the 20 schools do children participate in making decisions about the curriculum. And in only four schools are children involved in monitoring school budgets.
- In **Mozambique**, a large majority of children (83%) say they participate in class and in 10 of the 14 schools there is the opportunity for all children to participate equally.
- In **Tanzania**, some 92% of stakeholders consider that children participate regularly in class, 78% believe they do so in clubs or councils and 59% believe they participate in school governance. However, only 29% believe that girls participate regularly in clubs and only 19% believe that all children participate in decisions concerning the school curriculum.
- In **Nepal**, children are said to have an opportunity to participate and express themselves in the classroom in 23 out of 25 schools. Children are able to participate in school clubs in 17 of the schools. However, the participation of girls was found to be very limited. There is only one school which has separate clubs for girls. In terms of inclusivity among social groups, only one out of 25 schools reported that the opportunities to participate are not equal for children.



## The challenges: 10 broken promises

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**The progress highlighted in the previous section is real but nowhere near sufficient to provide a quality education to all children, especially girls. ActionAid’s findings from the research in the four countries, combined with our analysis of the situation globally, highlight ten major challenges that are not being adequately addressed by governments.**

These ten issues are all rights that children have, which are enshrined in international human rights law and also contained in the Promoting Rights in Schools Framework. These require fulfilment by governments.

Further, governments have also made political commitments to fulfilling these Rights and addressing education challenges, notably in the Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action. Known as Education 2030, this Declaration was adopted by over 120 Ministers, multilateral and bilateral organisations, and civil society organisations in 2015, and sets out a new vision for education for the next 15 years.

We analyse each of the ten challenges below:

1. Children out of school
2. Cost of education for parents
3. Girls’ education
4. Learning outcomes
5. Infrastructure and sanitation
6. Teachers
7. Violence against children
8. Children with disabilities
9. School governance
10. Government financing for education



## 1 Children out of school

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### The human right

‘Everyone has the right to education’.

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

### The PRS Right

Right to free and compulsory education

(Promoting Rights in Schools Framework)

### The political commitment

‘We commit to providing meaningful education and training opportunities for the large population of out-of-school children and adolescents, who require immediate, targeted and sustained action ensuring that all children are in school and are learning’.

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action )

## ActionAid’s findings

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ActionAid’s research in schools finds disturbingly high levels of children out of school and dropping out. Our figures are estimates based on school records.



The highest rate is in **Malawi**, where the research finds that the number out of school is equivalent to 22% of children enrolled – an extremely high proportion. A higher proportion of boys (24%) is out of school than girls (20%). In 2015, 3.8% of pupils enrolled dropped out of the 20 primary schools analysed. Slightly more girls (4.1%) dropped out than boys (3.6%).

#### **National situation**

In **Malawi**, at least 600,000 children are currently out of school which is over 10% of children of primary school age. Some 40% of all children drop out of primary school, rising to 43% for girls.

In **Mozambique**, the research was only able to record the number of children of school-going age out of school in two schools, which corresponded to 1.9% and 3.5% of those enrolled. These are much lower figures than across the country as whole. However, the research found that across the 14 schools studied, 3.3% of those enrolled dropped out in 2015. This is a significant number, although again much lower than the country average.

#### **National situation**

In **Mozambique**, some 677,000 primary school children were estimated to be out of school in 2014. The clear majority – 58% – were girls. Mozambique suffers from especially high dropout rates – some 68% of Mozambican children drop out of primary school, meaning that less than a third complete it. In rural areas, the ‘dropout’ rate exceeds 80%, according to some sources.

In **Tanzania**, some 4.3% of those enrolled in the two districts are estimated to be out of school. Most (around 55%) are boys. Some 3.7% of children in the schools dropped out in 2015, most of whom are boys. There were four main reasons given for children being out of school.

- Parents in some communities are farmers engaged in shifting cultivation, which requires them to travel to their farms from their homes, leaving behind children of school going-age without any monitoring of school attendance, or sometimes taking them to their farms for work.
- Lack of funds to buy school uniforms and learning materials, and to make other contributions to schools, forces parents to delay registering their children.
- Due to low incomes, some children miss school to work in petty businesses in urban centres while girls often do domestic jobs.
- In many families, people believe that paying for education is an unjustified loss of money and resources.

#### **National situation**

Unesco reports that 1.7 million **Tanzanian** children are currently out of school, of whom 841,000 are girls. This figure is disturbingly high, and amounts to the equivalent of 17% of all children enrolled. There is also a high dropout rate: one third of all children drop out of primary school. Some 38% of boys drop out and 29% of girls do so.

In **Nepal**, an average of 8% of children aged 5–9 years are estimated to be currently out of school; for girls, the proportion is 9.6% out of school. The average annual dropout rate is 4%, and is slightly higher for boys (4.2%) than for girls (3.9%). Major reasons for dropping out are children’s involvement in paid work due to family poverty, inappropriate age of the children (mostly higher age), migration, inability to pass exams, lack of proper guidance in the family, and early marriage. While the reasons for dropping out were similar across districts, girls tend to drop out to work in the household while boys do so for paid work.



### **National situation**

In **Nepal**, figures vary but one source notes that one million children are either not enrolled or have dropped out. There is especially low primary school enrolment among marginalised groups – one source notes that the figure is just 38% of children from indigenous communities, 20% of Dalits and 1% of children with disabilities. Languages other than Nepali (and English) are neglected. Government figures are that 4-5% of pupils drop out every year, roughly equal numbers of girls and boys. Overall, some 40% of Nepali children (slightly more boys than girls) drop out of primary.

## **The global reality**

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Worldwide, 61 million children of primary school age are out of school. Girls comprise 53% of them, the same share as in 2000. Some 9.7% of girls of primary age are out of school compared to 8.1% of boys. Millions will never enter school: In sub-Saharan Africa, half of the out-of-school girls - or 9 million - will never enter a classroom. Worldwide, as of 2014, 25 million children of primary school age will never enrol in school; two-thirds of them are girls.

Millions of children enrol in school but then drop out. In 32 countries, mostly in sub-Saharan Africa, at least 20% of children enrolled are not expected to reach the last grade. Across developing countries as a whole, an average of only 51% of children complete primary school (49% of girls and 53% of boys). Yet this figure masks disparities according to wealth - only 25% of the poorest girls complete primary compared to 75% of the richest girls.

Most of those out of school are those who are hardest to reach, such as children living in poverty, children with disabilities, those in rural areas, and children from marginalised communities. These children need targeted interventions.

## **Recommendation for children out of school**

### ***Governments should:***

Ensure that up-to-date, accurate and gender-disaggregated figures are available on the number and location of children out of school and develop a costed plan to ensure that all children are enrolled for example through inclusive education interventions, cash transfers, school-feeding and active outreach programmes.



**Rajma, 14, and friends, Nepal**  
PHOTO: KISHOR K. SHARMA/ACTIONAID

## 2 Cost of education for parents

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### The human right

‘Education shall be free, at least in the elementary and fundamental stages. Elementary education shall be compulsory.’

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

### The PRS right

‘There should be no charges, direct or indirect, for primary education. Education must gradually be made free at all levels.’

(Promoting Rights in Schools Framework)

### The political commitment

‘We will ensure the provision of 12 years of free, publicly funded, equitable quality primary and secondary education... The provision of free education includes the removal of cost-related barriers to primary and secondary education.’

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action)

## ActionAid’s findings

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ActionAid’s research in schools finds disturbingly high levels of children out of school and dropping out. Our figures are estimates based on school records.

The highest rate is in **Malawi**, where the research finds that the number out of school is equivalent to 22% of children enrolled – an extremely high proportion. A higher proportion of boys (24%) is out of school than girls (20%). In 2015, 3.8% of pupils enrolled dropped out of the 20 primary schools analysed. Slightly more girls (4.1%) dropped out than boys (3.6%).

#### **National situation**

In **Malawi**, although primary education is formally free, as stipulated in the Constitution, parents are expected or compelled to pay a variety of costs for items such as textbooks, school development funds, the mock examination fee, the final exam payment, and others.

**Mozambique** abolished school fees for primary education in 2005 to make education accessible to all children. But the research found that parents make voluntary contributions to school maintenance and school guards, and pay for school uniforms, in most of the 14 schools. However, they are required to pay for school guards in 9 of the schools, for school uniforms in 6 schools and for water/electricity and examination fees in 3 schools. The average amount paid was found to be Mts 300 (\$4.10) for school uniforms but is much lower for school guards (Mts 50 (\$0.69)) and water/electricity (Mts 10 (\$0.14)).

In all 30 schools studied in **Tanzania**, parents have to pay for school uniforms and writing materials. Parents also make compulsory payments for exam fees in 9 schools, for sanitation equipment such as brooms and buckets in 8 schools and for food contributions in 4 schools, among others.

#### **National situation**

In **Tanzania**, some 9 out of 10 parents report paying contributions (michango) to schools, though 80% report paying TZS 50,000 (\$23) or less annually. One survey found that 89% of parents believed that these contributions were collected by teachers to be used as sources of extra income.

In **Nepal**, despite the Constitutional provision of free education until secondary level, all 25 project schools were found to charge fees of some kind which in most cases are compulsory. For example, 22 schools require examination fees to be paid, costing an average of Rs 133 (\$1.24).

## **The global reality**

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While fee-free public primary schooling is enshrined in law in 135 countries, 110 still continue to charge some sort of fee. The abolition of user fees has not guaranteed free education since there are many other fees and costs that go beyond formal user fees. No child should ever be excluded from schooling by the inability to pay – whether this is school costs, other compulsory costs or ‘voluntary’ costs for which parents are often pressured to pay. The removal of all these costs means that governments themselves need to foot these bills and more adequately fund public education (see later section).

Households contribute a much larger share of total expenditure on education in poorer countries than in richer countries. Among 50 low, middle and high income countries in all regions with data for 2005–2012, household education spending accounted on average for 31% of the total. In almost a quarter of the countries, households spent more on education than governments. In Nepal, for example, the government accounts for 38% of spending on education, households for 55%. This household spending often makes up for the fact that governments are not spending enough themselves.

These costs reduce access to education. The abolition of school fees had a strong positive impact on enrolment in the years after its implementation in countries such as Ethiopia, Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda. Importantly, eliminating school fees increased the enrolment of disadvantaged groups such as girls and orphans in countries including Kenya, Malawi, Timor-Leste, Uganda, and Zambia. It has also been shown that providing school uniforms reduces dropouts and absenteeism and encourages progression through grades.

Education 2030 is but the most recent commitment to abolish school costs. At the Dakar Forum in 2000, states also committed themselves to offering ‘free and compulsory primary education in accordance with the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and other international commitments.’ Since then, there has been progress: in sub-Saharan Africa 15 countries have adopted legislation abolishing school fees since 2000. Seven have done so through constitutional guarantees and eight through other forms of legislation. An additional eight adopted free primary education through non-legislative policy measures.

## **Recommendation** for cost of education for parents

### ***Governments should:***

Ensure that all primary education is genuinely free by abolishing all compulsory direct and indirect costs to parents and ensuring that the State covers these costs.







**Zeinab, age 10, Tanzania**  
PHOTO: RACHEL PALMER/ACTIONAID

### 3 Girls' education

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#### The human right

‘States Parties shall take all appropriate measures to eliminate discrimination against women in order to ensure to them equal rights with men in the field of education.’

(Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, 1979)

#### The PRS Right

##### *Right to non-discrimination*

‘Schools must not make any distinction in provision based on sex, race, colour, language, religion, political opinion, nationality, ethnicity status, disability or any other status.’

(Promoting Rights in Schools Framework)

#### The political commitment

‘We recognize the importance of gender equality in achieving the right to education for all. We are therefore committed to supporting gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstreaming gender issues in teacher training and curricula; and eliminating gender-based discrimination and violence in schools.’

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action)

### ActionAid's findings

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The research finds that both girls and boys are losing out in accessing a quality education, but that the situation is worse for girls in some areas.

More boys than girls are estimated to be **out of school** in Malawi and Tanzania, with a higher figure for girls in Nepal, and insufficient data available in Mozambique. The dropout rate for girls is higher than for boys in Malawi and lower than for boys in Tanzania and Nepal.

Girls do less well than boys in **end of primary school exams** in Malawi and Nepal but better than boys in Mozambique and the same as boys in Tanzania.

Girls are particular victims of **violence and abuse**. In Tanzania, corporal punishment against girls was reported as taking place in all 30 project schools, sexual violence and harassment were reported in 11 and physical punishment and bullying in nine. In Malawi, of the 17 schools that provided data, physical violence was reported to take place in 10, affecting girls more than boys, while sexual abuse was reported in 5 schools, affecting girls only. Corporal punishment was reported to take place in 7 schools, affecting boys more than girls. In Mozambique, physical punishment is reported to be widespread, taking place in all 14 schools, while sexual harassment (i.e. bullying or coercion) was reported to take place in eight and sexual abuse (i.e. molestation) in one. The research found that the victims of these abuses were both girls and boys in fairly equal measure.

In terms of accessing **sanitation facilities (toilets)**, the conditions for both girls and boys are extremely poor in the project schools. In Nepal, an average of 87 pupils share each toilet in the project schools; where separate toilets were available for girls, 84 girls shared a toilet compared to 70 boys. In Malawi, there is an average of one toilet for 113 girls and one toilet for 134 boys. In Mozambique, there is a toilet for every 339 pupils across the 14 schools; and one for every 331 girls. In Tanzania, there is, on average, a toilet for every 53 pupils across the 30 schools, split roughly equally between girls and boys – there is a toilet for every 52 girls.

### **National situation**

While the four countries have achieved or nearly achieved gender parity in enrolment, girls tend to drop out of school more than boys. In **Malawi**, while 94% of girls enrol in primary school, some 43% drop out (compared to 37% of boys). A fifth of all girls repeat the year. Dropouts are even higher in Mozambique where 94% of girls enrol in primary school but 69% cent drop out before completing. **Mozambique** had nearly 400,000 primary school aged girls out of school in 2014.

In **Tanzania**, girls' enrolment rates are roughly equal to boys' but they do less well in the primary leaving examination: in 2015, 65% of girls passed the primary leaving exam compared to 72% of boys. Fewer girls make the transition to secondary school and they have lower pass rates in secondary examinations. Low rate of girls' completion at primary and transitioning to secondary is affected by early marriage, pregnancy, house work, and lack of water and sanitation facilities in schools. Poor quality education for girls is compounded by too few female teachers – a survey by Twaweza found that only 24% of teachers in Tanzania are women.

In **Nepal**, the dropout rate in primary is slightly higher for boys than girls. But the lack of adequate sanitation facilities for girls in many schools is a key reason why many girls miss school during their periods. Unicef has said that many girls miss 10-20% of all class days, often because of a lack of privacy, unavailability of sanitary disposal facilities and water shortages.

Child marriage is a major issue in the four countries. Four in 10 Tanzanian girls marry before turning 18. In Mozambique, teenage pregnancy is a big hurdle – some sources suggest the biggest – for retaining girls in school.

## The global reality

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Improvements have been made in gender parity in enrolment in many countries. But in 2014, 38% of African countries and 31% of low income countries had not achieved gender parity in primary school enrolment. In Sub-Saharan Africa, an average of 93 girls are enrolled for every 100 boys.

On many indicators, girls remain disadvantaged compared to boys:

- Girls comprise most (53%) of children out of primary school and most (around 66%) of those children who will never enrol in school .
- The proportion of girls completing primary school is less than boys - 49% compared to 53% across developing countries.
- Girls are the most affected by the poor sanitation facilities that exist in many schools in developing countries (see section below). Adolescent girls' concerns over privacy, particularly during menstruation, influence their education decisions and can act as an obstacle to school attendance.
- Girls are especially exposed to violence in schools and are more vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse (see section below), thus gender-based violence is a significant barrier to girls' education.
- Girls can also be deterred from attending school by the prevalence of fewer female teachers than male teachers - women comprised 43% of primary teachers in sub-Saharan Africa in 2012 and 31% of secondary teachers.

As Unesco has pointed out, gender-responsive teaching is important to a quality education and is guided by curriculum content, textbooks and other learning materials which socialize children and can be used to challenge gender stereotypes. Yet most curricula are silent about issues related to gender equality. A review of over 110 national curriculum framework documents for primary and secondary education in 78 countries for 2005–2015 focused on five topics (human rights, gender equality, peace, non-violence and human security, sustainable development, and global citizenship) found that less than 15% of the countries integrated key terms such as gender empowerment, gender parity or gender-sensitive, while only half mentioned gender equality.

It is crucial to tailor education specifically for the needs of girls. As Unesco also states:

'To ensure gender equality, education systems must act explicitly to eliminate gender bias and discrimination resulting from social and cultural attitudes and practices and economic status. Governments and partners need to put in place gender-sensitive policies, planning and learning environments; mainstream gender issues in teacher training and curricula monitoring processes, and eliminate gender-based discrimination and violence in education institutions to ensure that teaching and learning have an equal impact on girls and boys, women and men, and to eliminate gender stereotypes and advance gender equality. Special measures should be put in place to ensure the personal security of girls and women in education institutions and on the journey to and from them, in all situations but in particular during conflict and crises.'

Once girls reach secondary level, child marriage and early pregnancy become major issues in forcing girls to drop out. International human rights law forbids child marriage but the practice is widespread and progress towards eliminating it has been slow: around 15 million girls annually are married before age 18. Since the late 1990s, several sub-Saharan African countries have introduced policies supporting the readmission of girls following the birth of a child. But even where policies exist, education providers and communities are often unaware of these policies or unsupportive due to stigma and discrimination against pregnant girls. Better enforcement of early marriage laws would result in increasing years of schooling in sub-Saharan Africa by 39%.

## Insufficient political will to invest in girls' education

Governments around the world are still not sufficiently committed to investing in girls' education. A recent consultation by the UN Girls' Education Initiative concluded that:

'Lack of political will remains a critical obstacle to investment and action to advance girls' education. The Consultation found that global momentum around girls' education has not sufficiently translated into increased national budgets and donor aid for education targeting girls' education and gender equality. Without sufficient political will at these levels, there is inadequate financial investment in gender outcomes.'

The consultation also found:

'Gender-bias remains a major obstacle for financing and achieving results. Across the Consultation, participants identified gender bias and social norms that undervalue girls and women to be major obstacles to action and investment in girls' education. Where girls are not seen to be inherently valuable to the well-being of society, financing for girls' education was inconsistent or limited to investments that ensure their ability to fulfil socially sanctioned roles.'

## Recommendation for girls' education

### ***Governments should:***

Ensure that girls' education is explicitly prioritised in education budgets, including by devoting some separate budget lines to improving education for girls, taking action on violence in schools and supporting girls clubs.



**Classroom, Tanzania**

PHOTO: EMANUELA COLUMBO/ACTIONAID





**Karuna, age 6, Nepal**

PHOTO: KISHOR K. SHARMA/ACTIONAID

## 4 Learning outcomes

### The human right

‘Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.’

(Universal Declaration of Human Rights, 1948)

### The PRS Right

#### *Right to non-discrimination*

‘Girls and boys have a right to a quality learning environment and to effective teaching processes so that they can develop their personality, talents and physical and mental abilities to their fullest potential’.

(Promoting Rights in Schools Framework)

### The political commitment

‘We commit to quality education and to improving learning outcomes, which requires strengthening inputs, processes and evaluation of outcomes and mechanisms to measure progress’.

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action)

## ActionAid’s findings

Our research found that:

- In **Malawi**, across the 15 schools that could provide data, the average pass rate in end of year primary examinations was 67% - 64% for girls and 70% for boys. These figures indicate that girls are lagging behind in their learning performance. There was a big variation among schools – the best performing school achieved a 92% pass rate while the worst achieved just 12%.

- In **Mozambique**, only 55% of those who sat the final primary school examination in 2015 passed. The pass rate for girls (58%) was far much higher than for boys (40%).
- In **Tanzania**, the average pass rate in end of primary school exams was 68% in 2015, split equally between girls and boys – considerably higher than the national average.
- In **Nepal**, the pass rate in end of primary school exams was relatively high, at 84% in 2015, a rate which was slightly higher for boys (85%) than girls (82%). The pass rate was 76% for project schools in Kailali district and 89% for those in Doti district.

### Summary of ActionAid’s findings

|                   | Number of pupils per toilet in project schools |
|-------------------|--|
| <b>Malawi</b>     | Girls 1:113, boys 1:134                        |
| <b>Mozambique</b> | 1:339 (girls 1:331)                            |
| <b>Tanzania</b>   | 1:87 (girls 1:84, boys 1:70)                   |
| <b>Nepal</b>      | 1:53 (girls 1:52, boys 1:53)                   |

#### National situation

All four countries suffer from low levels of learning in school. Indeed, it is widely reported in Malawi, Mozambique and Tanzania that **the quality of education has fallen** as enrolment has risen.

Tanzania’s Ministry of Education states: ‘Significant efforts have been made to increase access for all, resulting in a huge enrolment expansion over the last 10 years. Over the same period of time quality of education dropped significantly’. It adds: ‘The low performance could be due to too rapid expansion of enrolment without matching it with adequate supply of essential teaching and learning facilities’.

The Mozambican government similarly states: ‘Despite a significant increase in the number of graduates since 2004, from 2008 the sector has noted a problematic drop in academic attainment (pass rate) at all levels’. Again, lower attainment has resulted from increased enrolment: ‘At the post-primary education level the quality of services is hampered even further by the explosive expansion of the school network, which has not been accompanied by sufficient investments in teacher training, procurement and distribution of textbooks and teaching materials, among others.’

**Poor pass rates** are one of the results:

- In Mozambique, primary school attainment rates dropped during 2004-11. For example, the pass rate at grade 5 (end of Lower Primary) was 69% in 2004 but 64% in 2011 while the pass rate for grade 7 (end of Upper Primary) fell from 75% to 63% over the same period.
- In Tanzania, pass rates for end of primary examination fluctuate each year but have averaged just 50% in the five years 2010-15.
- In Nepal, government figures are that only 47% (54% girls, 41% boys) passed the School Leaving Certificate in 2014.

Millions of children are emerging from school **without the basics**:

- In Malawi, after completing up to four years of school, over 70% of children emerge illiterate, according to Unesco. USAID research found that 94% of second-graders could not respond correctly to a single question about a story they read in Chichewa, the national language.
- In Mozambique, only 6.3% of Grade 3 Mozambican students can read at the expected level. Among

children who finish primary school, nearly 2-thirds do so without basic reading, writing and maths skills. Some 59% of third-grade students cannot read a single word per minute nor recognise letters.

- In Tanzania, 40% of second-graders cannot read a word of Kiswahili, according to research led by USAID.

There are various reasons for **poor learning**. One is that many pupils are only taught for a few hours a day, partly due to high absenteeism of teachers. World Bank research in 2010 found that primary pupils in Malawi are taught an average of 3.7 hours a day, with only 3 hours in the lower primary grades. Mozambican schools provided an average of just 30 days of instructional time during the 193 day school year in 2010. A study in one province but accepted by the government as applicable across the country, found that only one-third of class time is used to teach students. In Tanzania, a report by Twaweza found that primary school children are taught an average of only 3.5 classes per day. Twaweza states simply that Tanzanian ‘students are not being taught’.

In Nepal, **some studies suggest that** ‘hardly any learning and teaching occurs in rural public schools’. The key reasons for poor learning outcomes include poor teaching, inadequate participation of children in the learning process, and poor availability of learning materials. There also remains a problem in ensuring equal rights and quality education for all children due to a huge gap in the quality of public schools (community schools) that cater for children from poor households, and private schools that cater for children from wealthier families. The wide and increasing prevalence of private schools (often favoured by people given the poor quality of state schools) is having the effect of undermining the state sector and increasing segregation in Nepali society.

## The global reality

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Being in school in one thing, but learning is quite another. At least 250 million primary school-aged children, more than 50% of whom have spent at least four years in school, cannot read, write or count well enough to meet minimum learning standards.<sup>115</sup> Up to half the primary school population in Africa leave school without having learned to read or write, let alone having acquired the more complex analytical or creative skills that should come with a good education.<sup>116</sup>

Education in the early years is especially important. Unesco notes that children who do not learn to read a text or do basic calculations in the lower grades are likely to struggle throughout their school careers, that their commitment to education is likely to diminish and they are more likely to drop out.

## Recommendation for learning outcomes

### ***Governments should:***

Make improved efforts to raise learning outcomes, through more investment in training for formative assessment by teachers and addressing the underlying reasons for poor learning outcomes such as large class sizes, too many untrained or poorly trained teachers, outdated pedagogy and teaching-learning materials, and inadequate infrastructure.





## 5 Infrastructure and sanitation

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### The human right

‘All institutions and programmes are likely to require buildings or other protection from the elements, sanitation facilities for both sexes, safe drinking water.’

(Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1999)

### The PRS Right

#### *Right to adequate infrastructure*

‘There should be an appropriate number of classrooms, accessible to all, with adequate and separate sanitation facilities for girls and boys. Schools should be built with local materials and be resilient to natural risks and disasters.’

(Promoting Rights in Schools Framework)

### The political commitment

‘Every learning environment should be accessible to all and have adequate resources and infrastructure to ensure reasonable class sizes and provide sanitation facilities.’

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action)

### ActionAid’s findings

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Our research found especially poor sanitation facilities, most notably for girls.

In **Malawi**, there is an average of one toilet for 113 girls and one toilet for 134 boys. Schools in Lilongwe and Neno districts have especially poor facilities due to their large enrolments. In the worst case, one school’s toilet facilities average one for every 513 girls. In only 12 out of 20 schools do most toilet facilities have doors.



### **National situation**

In **Malawi**, infrastructure has not kept pace with enrolment levels, and the overall primary pupil to classroom ratio has increased from 101-1 in 2010 to 111-1 in 2014. It is estimated that only 23% of schools possess adequate sanitary facilities.

In **Mozambique**, our research found that there are only 38 toilets in the 14 schools – an average of just 2.7 per school. In two schools, it was reported that there were none at all. Thus on average, there is a toilet for every 339 pupils across the 14 schools. For girls, there are 19 toilets available in the 14 schools – one for every 331 girls. None of the schools has a toilet with running water; the only toilets available are pit latrines made of cement. Toilets in only 2 of the 14 schools have doors and none of the schools has any toilets that have been adapted for use by children with disabilities.

### **National situation**

In **Mozambique**, some 45% of primary school classrooms are in precarious conditions. The recent Family Budget Survey found that 69% of school children are dissatisfied with the conditions offered to them by the schools. The biggest cause of dissatisfaction is the lack of school desks, which was reported by 44% of the students; followed by classrooms, which were in poor condition according to 29% of pupils.

In **Tanzania**, only 4 of the 30 schools have flush toilets. On average, there is a toilet for every 53 pupils across the 30 schools, split roughly equally between girls and boys – there is a toilet for every 52 girls. Only 13 of the 30 schools have toilets with doors. Two-thirds of all schools have toilets which are regarded as being in poor condition. As regards girls' toilets, facilities in only 8 of the 30 schools were regarded as good or adequate, while they were regarded as poor in 22. For boys, facilities were regarded as good or adequate in only 9 schools and regarded as poor in 21.

### **National situation**

Most primary and secondary schools in **Tanzania** also have inadequate facilities, significantly undermining the quality of education services. Only 38% of schools meet the baseline sanitation standards. School census data showed that in 2010 all primary and lower secondary schools had single-sex latrines. Yet a 2010 mapping exercise by SNV, WaterAid and Unicef found that only 11% of schools surveyed met the minimum standards of 20 students per girls' latrine and 25 per boys' latrine, 52% of girls' latrines lacked doors, and 92% of schools lacked functional handwashing facilities. Government figures are that the average pupil/classroom ratio in primary is 1:72 (against its target of 1:40) while the average pupil/latrine ratio is 1:55 (against its target of 1:22.5). Only 28% of primary schools and 77% of secondary schools have electricity.

In **Nepal**, an average of 87 pupils share each toilet in the project schools. Where separate toilets were available for girls, 84 girls shared a toilet compared to 70 boys. The research found that respondents regarded toilet facilities as being in good condition in only 4 out of 25 schools, while in 14 schools they were said to be in average condition and in 4 schools in poor condition.

### **National situation**

In **Nepal**, the lack of adequate sanitation facilities for girls in many schools is a key reason why many girls miss school during their periods. Unicef has said that many girls miss 10-20% of all class days, often caused by lack of privacy, unavailability of sanitary disposal facilities and water shortages.

## Summary of ActionAid's findings

|            | Number of pupils per toilet in project schools |
|------------|--|
| Malawi     | Girls 1:113, boys 1:134                        |
| Mozambique | 1:339 (girls 1:331)                            |
| Tanzania   | 1:87 (girls 1:84, boys 1:70)                   |
| Nepal      | 1:53 (girls 1:52, boys 1:53)                   |

## The global reality

Across 126 developing countries with data, the average percentage of primary schools with adequate sanitation coverage rose from 59% in 2008 to 68% in 2012, but only half of all schools met this standard in 52 of the least developed and other low income countries.

Infrastructure projects such as school and road construction have some of the largest impacts on access to education. The Dakar Framework for Action, for example, highlights the provision of safe and separate sanitation facilities for girls as a key strategy in improving school attendance for girls and promoting more equitable school environments. Adolescent girls' concerns over privacy, particularly during menstruation, influence their education decisions and can act as an obstacle to school attendance.

## Recommendation for infrastructure and sanitation

### *Governments should:*

Develop a national policy to ensure that all primary schools have an appropriate number of classrooms, safe drinking water, good sanitation facilities (separate and safe for boys and girls), access to electricity and web-connections.



Aida, age 16, Malawi

PHOTO: SAMANTHA REINDERS/ACTIONAID



**Sonia Carlota Damao, Head Teacher, Mozambique**

PHOTO: ERNANIO MANDLATE/KISAI/ACTIONAID

## 6 Teachers

### The human right

‘The material conditions of teaching staff shall be continuously improved.’

(International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, 1966)

### The PRS Right

#### *Right to quality learning*

‘Girls and boys have a right to a quality learning environment and to effective teaching processes so that they can develop their personality, talents and physical and mental abilities to their fullest potential.’

(Promoting Rights in Schools Framework)

### The political commitment

‘We will ensure that teachers and educators are empowered, adequately recruited, well-trained, professionally qualified, motivated and supported within well-resourced, efficient and effectively governed systems.’

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action)

## ActionAid’s findings

Our research in the project schools found that:

In **Malawi**, there are 73 children for each qualified teacher and 71 children for each teacher overall in the 20 schools. The highest ratio was 126 children per teacher in one school while the lowest was 53 pupils per teacher. The research findings are similar to the situation across the country.

### National situation

In **Malawi**, the primary school pupil/teacher ratio is 74:1, which is too high for effective teaching and much worse than the sub-Saharan African average of 42:1.

In **Mozambique**, the average pupil/teacher ratio in the schools is 45:1, much lower than the country average of 62:1. However, the ratio varies from 24:1 in one school to 59:1 in another. The better PTR is probably explained by the prevalence of more trained teachers in schools which are close to the major city of Maputo. Of the 276 teachers in the 14 schools, the research found that nearly all were well qualified, with 27 being university graduates and 241 Diploma graduates, and that the teachers are split roughly equally between women and men.

### National situation

In **Mozambique**, government figures are that 21% of teachers in Lower Primary and 17% of teachers in Upper Primary have not had pedagogical training. Although these numbers have been decreasing, thanks to new teacher training programmes, they are still very high. Mozambican teachers are often absent: a recent World Bank study found that 45% of teachers were not in school during an announced visit. Low salaries partly explain the problem of low teacher quality - the average basic salary of the highest paid primary school teacher is around Mts 144,000 (US\$1,860) in 2016.

In **Tanzania**, there is an average of 59 pupils per qualified teacher in the 30 schools, below the country benchmark of 1:40 set by the government in 2000.

### National situation

Teachers in **Tanzania** generally lack teaching skills and motivation and are poorly managed. Their rate of absenteeism is high and the amount of school time in which children are learning is low. One survey found that 38% of children reported their main teacher was absent the previous day. Government figures are that only 4.3% of teachers in primary are graduates, with only 25% having diplomas and 69% with Grade A.

In **Nepal**, the pupil/teacher ratio is, on average, relatively low, with an average of 25 pupils per teacher. However, counting only the teachers funded fully or partially by the government, the ratio was 41:1, which is slightly more than the government declared minimum pupil/teacher ratio of 40:1. While 91% of teachers have the minimum qualification requirement, a quarter do not meet the government requirement of holding teaching licences. Only 65% of teachers in the project schools receive a full salary based on the government scale. While 71% of male teachers receive a full salary only 53% of female teachers do so.

### Summary of ActionAid's findings

|            | Number of teachers per pupil in the project schools (all teachers) |
|------------|--|
| Malawi     | 71   |
| Mozambique | 45   |
| Nepal      | 25   |
| Tanzania   | 59   |



## The global reality

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In many countries there are simply too few teachers educating children, meaning pupils sit in grossly over-crowded classrooms. As of 2012, 24 countries in sub-Saharan Africa with data had pupil/teacher ratios in primary education exceeding 40:1. Many countries also suffer from poorly qualified teachers; in one-third of the countries with data, less than 75% of primary school teachers are trained to national standards.

Teacher absenteeism, which combines absence from school with absence from the classroom while at school, is typically between 40% and 50%. One study in Ethiopia, Guatemala, Honduras, Mozambique and Nepal, found that after combining time losses due to schools being closed, teachers being absent and students being either absent or, especially, off task, schools used less than 50% of the available time for instruction.

The proportion of female teachers is an important indicator of progress towards gender equality and critical in the education of girls. Women comprised 43% of primary teachers in sub-Saharan Africa in 2012 and 31% of secondary teachers. Increasing the presence of female teachers has been shown to have a positive effect in countries where girls face disadvantage in participation in education. Many countries, such as Bhutan, Burkina Faso, Cameroon, Mozambique and Nepal, have sought to increase female teachers, who now make up a majority of new teachers in those countries. On average between 2009 and 2012, 60% of new teachers in Nepal and 62% in Mozambique were women.

## Recommendation for teachers

### *Governments should:*

Ensure that all children are taught by a properly trained and qualified teacher, investing in more female teachers, better quality training, more equitable deployment, incentives for working in remote areas and domestically competitive salaries for teachers.



Zione, age 10, and friends, Malawi

PHOTO: PAUL WU/ACTIONAID

**Schoolgirl, Tanzania**

PHOTO: EMANUELA COLOMBO/ACTIONAID



## 7 Violence against children

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### **The human right**

‘Education must also be provided in a way that ... promotes non-violence in school’

(Committee on the Rights of the Child, 2001)

### **The PRS Right**

#### ***Right to a safe and non-violent environment***

‘Children should be safe on route to and in school. Clear anti-bullying policies and confidential systems for reporting and addressing any form of abuse or violence should be in place.’

(Promoting Rights in Schools Framework)

### **The political commitment**

‘Special measures should be put in place to ensure the personal security of girls and women in and on the journey to and from education institutions and to eliminate gender-based violence in schools with policies against all forms of gender-based and sexual violence and harassment.’

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action)

## **ActionAid’s findings**

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Our research reached a number of very disturbing findings on stakeholders’ perceptions of the prevalence of violence in schools.

In **Malawi**, of the 17 schools that provided data, physical violence was reported to take place in 10, affecting girls more than boys, while sexual abuse was reported in 5 schools, affecting girls only. Corporal punishment was reported to take place in 7 schools, affecting boys more than girls.

#### **National situation**

In **Malawi**, violence, including gender-based violence, is prevalent in schools, and is a major barrier to quality and equality in education. One survey cited by Unesco found that around one-fifth of teachers said they were aware of teachers coercing or forcing girls into sexual relationships.

In **Mozambique**, physical punishment is reported to be widespread, taking place in all 14 schools, while sexual harassment (i.e., bullying or coercion) was reported to take place in eight and sexual abuse (i.e., molestation) in one. The research found that the victims of these abuses were both girls and boys in fairly equal measure. The perpetrators were reported to be mainly other pupils themselves but teachers and parents and teachers were also identified as perpetrators.

#### **National situation**

ActionAid research in **Mozambique** in 2011 found that 66% of girls surveyed reported some sort of violence against them in the previous year, with 29% reporting sexual abuse. Physical punishment at school and home was found to be very common and frequently taken for granted by both girls and boys.

In **Tanzania**, corporal punishment against girls was reported as taking place in all 30 project schools, sexual violence and harassment were reported in 11 and physical punishment and bullying in nine. Teachers are identified as the main perpetrators of corporal punishment but boys and peers are mainly responsible for other forms of violence.

#### **National situation**

In **Tanzania**. A recent study by Unicef found that more than half of girls experienced physical violence by teachers before turning 18 years of age. Corporal punishment is lawful in Tanzania.

In **Nepal**, physical violence was reported to take place in 16 of the 25 schools while sexual abuse was reported to exist in 2 schools. Teachers, boys, and peers were reported as the key perpetrators.

#### **National situation**

In **Nepal**, studies have found widespread corporal punishment, which is widely considered acceptable in the country, and sexual abuse in schools, which one study found to be 'frequent but mostly unreported'.

One problem is the lack of training received by teachers to respect children's rights. Our research found that, in **Tanzania**, only 57% of teachers in the schools were reported to have received this training. In **Malawi**, the proportion was found to be just 7%. In **Mozambique**, 5 of the 14 schools do not have teachers who have been trained to respect children's rights and in **Nepal**, only 10 of the 24 schools which reported have at least one teacher trained to respect child rights including protection against corporal punishment.

The prevalence of violence is often despite the existence of laws or policies. In **Malawi**, for example, of the 16 schools that could provide information, all said there was a law or policy in place aimed at protecting children, particularly girls, from violence and abuse by teachers, such as a school code of conduct. However, the research found that, in **Nepal**, out of 25 project schools, only 13 schools have a law or policy in place aimed at protecting children, particularly girls, from violence and abuse by teachers. In none of the schools had any teacher ever been punished for committing violence or abuse, despite widespread prevalence.

### Summary of ActionAid’s findings

|                   | Number of teachers per pupil in the project schools (all teachers)  |
|-------------------|---|
| <b>Malawi</b>     | Physical violence in 10/17 schools<br>Sexual violence in 5/17 schools                                     |
| <b>Mozambique</b> | Physical punishment in 14/14 schools<br>Sexual harassment in 8/14 schools<br>Sexual abuse in 1/14 schools |
| <b>Nepal</b>      | Physical violence in 16/25 schools<br>Sexual abuse in 2/25 schools  |
| <b>Tanzania</b>   | Corporal punishment in 30/30 schools<br>Sexual violence in 11/30 schools                                  |

## The global reality

Many children are constantly exposed to violence in schools. While some countries have well-established monitoring mechanisms, evidence on the global prevalence of school-related violence is hard to pinpoint precisely. Yet Unesco estimates that 246 million girls and boys are harassed and abused in and around school every year. The onset of puberty makes girls more vulnerable to sexual violence and abuse. Boys are more likely to experience particular forms of psychological and physical abuse, such as bullying and corporal punishment, and to be involved in physical fights, whereas girls are more likely to experience sexual violence.

Ensuring that girls feel safe in their learning environments is key to continuing their education and school-related gender-based violence is a significant barrier to girls’ education. Threats to personal safety on the way to and from school, as well as in school, obstruct girls’ and boys’ access to education. Evidence from Botswana, Ghana and South Africa suggests that bullied students perform worse academically than non-bullied students. Other pupils are the source of much violence against children, but in many countries teachers are regular perpetrators of corporal punishment, which is often legal, and teachers can also commit sexual abuse and exploitation, often with impunity.

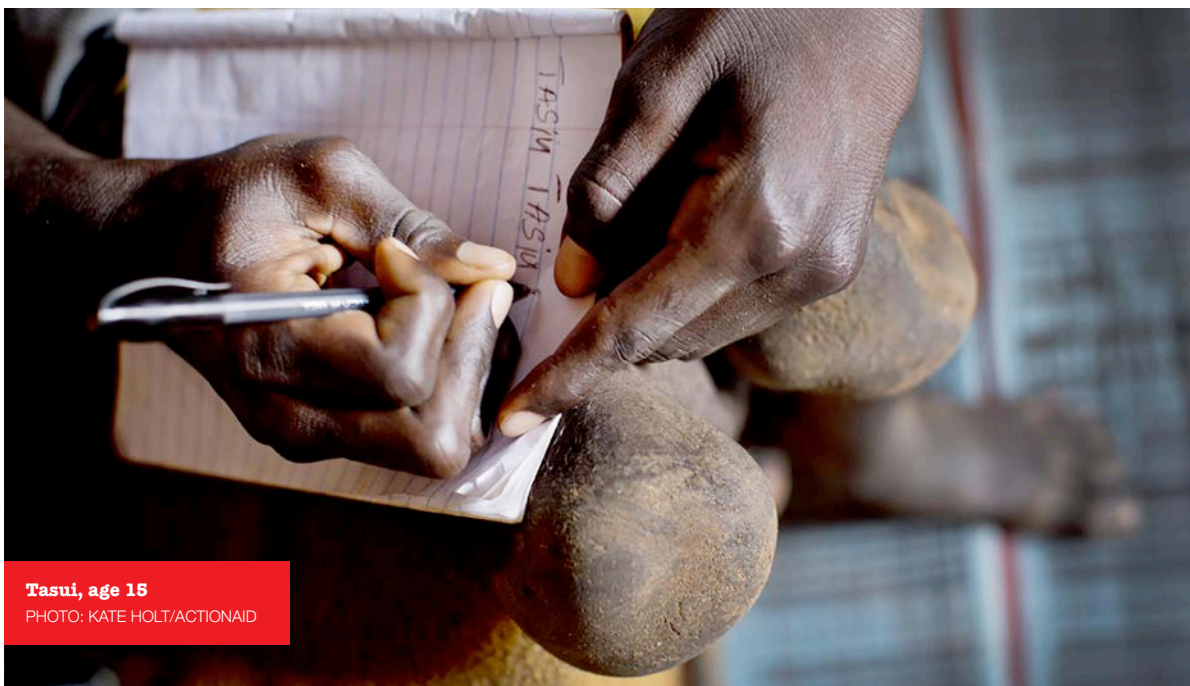
Over the past decade, there has been a marked increase in policy and action to tackle violence in schools, including in sub-Saharan Africa. But these steps have not gone far enough to end the problem.

## Recommendation for a non-violent environment

### **Governments should:**

Announce zero tolerance for violence in and around schools and take steps to ensure this is implemented, making corporal punishment in schools illegal, training all teachers in human rights standards and ensuring all schools have clear policies to prevent violence, with confidential reporting processes for children linked to the police and courts.





**Tasui, age 15**  
PHOTO: KATE HOLT/ACTIONAID

## 8 Children with disabilities

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### The human right

‘States Parties shall ensure that persons with disabilities are not excluded from the general education system on the basis of disability.’

(Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, 2006)

### The Right

#### **Right to non-discrimination**

‘Schools must not make any distinction in provision based on sex, race, colour, language, religion, political opinion, nationality, ethnicity status, disability or any other status.’

(Promoting Rights in Schools Framework)

### The political commitment

‘Given the significant challenges faced by persons with disabilities in accessing quality education opportunities and the lack of data to support effective interventions, particular attention is needed to ensure access to and outcomes of quality education and learning for children, youth and adults with disabilities.’

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action )

## ActionAid's findings

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Our research found an exceedingly small percentage of children enrolled in the project schools with disabilities. Less than 1% of all those enrolled were disabled in the project schools in Nepal, Malawi and Tanzania, while 1% of children were recorded as disabled in Mozambique. This is likely to be the result both of poor recording by schools as well as children with disabilities simply not attending school.

### **National situation**

In **Malawi**, some 2.4% of those enrolled in primary school have special needs, according to the 2014/15 Education Sector Performance Report.

In **Mozambique**, some 14% of children between 2 and 9 years old are disabled but face major barriers to education. Indeed, Unicef estimates that 75% of children with disabilities in Mozambique are not in school.

In **Tanzania**, participation in school by children with disabilities is very low: it is estimated that less than 5% of children with disabilities in Tanzania are currently attending school. This is despite the commitment in the National Policy on Disability 2004 to provide basic education to all children with disabilities.

In **Nepal**, the precise number of children with disabilities is unclear but may be around 150,000. Research by Human Rights Watch in 2011 found that half of the disabled children surveyed were not in school. Another estimate is that only 30% of Nepali children with disabilities receive an education.

## **The global reality**

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In 2015, it was estimated that 19 million out of the then 58 million children out of school were disabled – around one third. Children with disabilities are often kept at home, without access to opportunities available to other children. Girls with disabilities can be especially marginalised, and often face increased isolation, stigmatisation and discrimination and are at particular risk of abuse, including sexual violence. Children with disabilities who attend school are more likely to be excluded in the classroom and to drop out. Analysis from 51 countries found a 10% gap in primary completion rates between children with and without disability, a likely underestimate given the undercounting of people with disabilities.

Yet the issue of inclusion of children with disabilities in education has received minimal prioritisation in most countries, in part due to the lack of data on children with disabilities. Without reliable data, children with disabilities are frequently invisible in policy discussions, and when they are addressed, this is usually through mainstreaming efforts that lack resources, funding and political will.

As well as being a right, and therefore a duty of governments to provide a quality education to children with disabilities, there are compelling economic arguments. Educating children with disabilities reduces welfare costs and future dependence, releases other household members from caring responsibilities, and increases children's potential productivity and wealth creation which in turn helps to alleviate poverty.

## **Recommendation for children with disabilities**

### ***Governments should:***

Ensure that schools have a mechanism to record the numbers of children with disabilities in school (and out of school in their catchment area) and that national inclusive education provisions are implemented, including in relation to infrastructure and teacher training.



## 9 School governance

### The PRS Right

#### *Right to transparent and accountable schools*

‘Schools need to have transparent and effective monitoring systems. Both communities and children should be able to participate in accountable governing bodies, management committees and parents’ groups.’

(Promoting Rights in Schools Framework)

### The political commitment

‘Strengthen the efficiency and effectiveness of institutions, school leadership and governance through greater involvement of communities, including young people and parents, in the management of schools.’

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action)

### ActionAid’s findings

ActionAid’s research sought to find out w the SMCs were active and fully functioning, whether they comprised all members of the community, the extent to which women were members, and the extent to which they were monitoring key aspects of education.

#### Is the SMC active?

In **Tanzania**, the large majority (91%) of stakeholders believe that SMCs are ‘active and fully functioning’ in their schools, with only 9% saying that the SMC is ‘occasionally active’. In **Malawi**, the SMC was found to be ‘actively and fully functioning’ in 15 of the 20 schools, occasionally active in 4 and not active in 1. In **Mozambique**, the

SMC was judged to be active in 13 out of 14 schools. The exception to this pattern is **Nepal** where, despite SMCs being present in all the project schools, in only 3 schools was the SMC reported to be ‘active and fully functioning’. In 14 out of 25 Nepali schools, the SMC is only ‘occasionally active’ and in 8 schools it is in existence but ‘never active’.

**Is the SMC inclusive?**

In **Tanzania**, nearly all (94%) of stakeholders say that the SMC was either ‘fully inclusive of all main groups in the local community’ or ‘fairly broad and diverse’. In **Malawi**, all project schools the SMC was found to be inclusive of all the main socio-economic and cultural groups in the community. In **Mozambique**, respondent groups in 11 out of the 14 schools said that the SMC was inclusive of all the principal groups in the local community. However, in **Nepal**, SMCs are regarded as inclusive of all groups in the community in only 4 out of 25 schools.

**Does the SMC include equal representation of women?**

Women are much less represented than men in the SMCs in each of the four countries. For example, in **Tanzania**, only around a third of members are women and in only 5 of the 30 schools is the chair of the SMC a woman. In **Nepal**, only around 1 in 5 members of SMCs are women. In the other two countries, **Tanzania** and **Malawi**, the precise proportion of women could not be estimated but was described as minimal.

ActionAid also asked stakeholders in the schools the extent to which the SMC is monitoring children’s participation, their learning outcomes and education rights and whether it monitors the school budget. The results are presented below.

|                   | Number of schools where SMC monitor’s children’s participation | Number of schools where SMC tracks children’s learning outcomes                | Number of schools where SMC monitors education rights in school                | Number of schools where SMC monitors the school budget |
|-------------------|--|--|--|--|
| <b>Malawi</b>     | 11 out of 20   | 13 out of 20   | 16 out of 20   | 18 out of 20   |
| <b>Mozambique</b> | 10 out of 14   | 13 out of 14   | 8 out of 14  | 9 out of 14  |
| <b>Nepal</b>      | 8 out of 25  | 12 out of 25   | 10 out of 25   | 20 out of 25   |
| <b>Tanzania</b>   | 19 out of 30   | 21 out of 30 (according to SMC members)<br>17 out of 30 (according to parents) | 26 out of 30 (according to SMC members)<br>18 out of 30 (according to parents) | 22 out of 30   |

**National situation**

All four countries under analysis have systems in place which encourage SMCs. For example:

In **Tanzania**, SMCs comprise parents and teachers though members of village councils can also be represented. The head teacher acts as the secretary for the committee while the chair is elected by committee members. The law says that the elections must be democratic but elections are usually not undertaken by secret ballot but through consensus. A school committee can have 9 to 11 members, of which 7 are elected members (5 from parents and 2 from teaching staff). The remaining 2-4 are ex-officio or co-opted members. There is no requirement that authorities should formally approve the members.

In **Nepal**, SMCs have existed for a very long time but their formation was highly bureaucratic and political until 2001, with SMC members either handpicked by bureaucrats or local politicians. There was little or no opportunity for parents or local community members to be represented on the committee. In 2001, the government amended the Education Act making the formation of SMCs compulsory and requiring parent representatives to be elected. This prevents local elites or non-parents becoming officials of the SMC.



## The global reality

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While governments must take the lead in ensuring a good quality education, participation of families and communities can boost transparency and guarantee good governance in the administration of education and individual schools. The active engagement of parents in schools can improve teacher and school performance and learning outcomes for pupils. Most countries' education systems encourage or require School Management Committees (SMCs) or Parent Teacher Association (PTAs), which include a role for parents, to be involved in school governance. These groups can also assist schools in practical matters such as repairing classrooms and other school infrastructure.

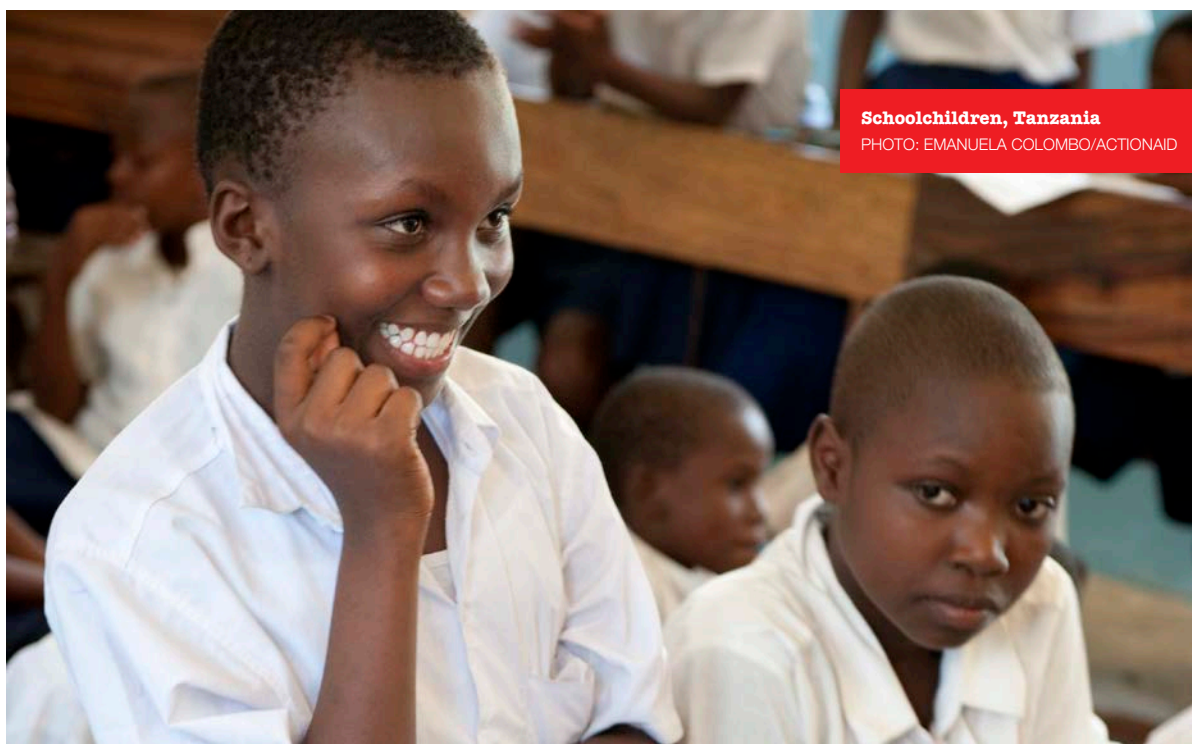
The performance of SMCs varies. In a survey in one region of Ghana, for example, SMCs were found to be ineffective in the monitoring and supervision of head teachers', teachers' and pupils' attendance and not doing enough to assist teachers to improve teaching and learning. But they were seen as very effective in improving school community relations and for promoting community participation in the provision of quality education.

SMCs sometimes do, but often do not, adequately represent the interest of all members of the local community and often include more men than women. ActionAid research in northern Tanzania in 2011 found that women were under-represented on school committees but that higher levels of female membership translated into higher gender parity in school enrolment, attendance, progression and completion at schools.

## Recommendation for school governance

### ***Governments should:***

Review national policies to ensure that all schools have an effective school management committee, which is well resourced, representative (50% women), empowered to monitor school performance, learning and budgets, and fully transparent and accountable to the local community (for example by ensuring schools budgets and spending are posted publicly).



**Schoolchildren, Tanzania**

PHOTO: EMANUELA COLOMBO/ACTIONAID



**Birendra, age 8, Nepal**

PHOTO: NAYANTARA GURUNG KAKSHAPATI/ACTIONAID

## 10 Government financing for education

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### The human right

‘Human and financial resources ... should be available to the maximum extent possible... resource constraints cannot provide a justification for a State party’s failure to take any, or enough, of the measures that are required.’

(Convention on the Rights of the Child, 2001)

### The political commitment

‘We are determined to increase public spending on education in accordance with country context, and urge adherence to the international and regional benchmarks of allocating efficiently at least 4 - 6% of Gross Domestic Product and/or at least 15 - 20% of total public expenditure to education.... Least developed countries need to reach or exceed the upper end of these benchmarks if they are to achieve the targets laid out in this framework.’

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action )

‘Increase public funding for education: This requires widening the tax base (in particular, by ending harmful tax incentives), preventing tax evasion and increasing the share of the national Budget allocated to education.’

(Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action)

## National situation

ActionAid's research sought to find out whether the SMCs were active and fully functioning, whether they comprised all members of the community, the extent to which women were members, and the extent to which they were monitoring key aspects of education.

### Inadequate education budgets

The four countries under analysis are largely failing to adequately promote the right to education. In order to change this, they must allocate adequate resources to the task. The answer to education gaps in developing countries is not to promote private education but to adequately resource and manage public education. Yet all four countries are failing to allocate 20% of their national budgets to education:

- **Malawi** plans to continue spending 17-18% of the national budget on education in the coming years.
- Since 2011, **Mozambique's** allocation to education has been in the region of 17-19%.
- **Tanzania** is spending around 17% of the government budget on education, and the budget has been static in recent years: investment in education has not expanded in line with the large increases in enrolment in primary and secondary school.
- **Nepal's** spending on education is much lower, at just 12% of the government budget. Moreover, the education budget has been falling (as a proportion of the budget) in recent past years, from 16-17% during 2009-2013.

### Poor allocation of funds within education budgets

There are also problems of the allocation of funds within the education budget. In **Tanzania**, for example, the education 'development' (capital) budget, as opposed to the recurrent budget, is very low and highly dependent on donor funding. Most of the budget allocated to primary schools goes to pay teachers' wages and there is little money available to provide essential books and other teaching and learning materials in schools.

Similarly, in **Malawi**, there is also very little money in the education budget for development and investment projects since so much finances recurrent spending. Further, 25% of Malawi's education budget goes to tertiary education even though only 1% of all learners are enrolled at that level.

In **Mozambique**, only 7% of the 2013 education budget was available for investment while staff costs accounted for 70%. In 2015, the amount for investments rose to 20%, but still the greatest costs are salaries.

## The global reality

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Developing country governments as a whole are failing to meet their education spending commitments. On average, low income countries spend 3.9% of their GDP on education (Sub-Saharan Africa 4.3%) and allocate 16.7% of the national budget to education (Sub-Saharan Africa 16.6%). Thirteen countries in Africa spent less than 15% of their total expenditure on education in 2014. This is well below the 20% target agreed by world leaders.

The *Incheon Declaration and Framework for Action* notes that the annual financing gap between available domestic resources and the amount necessary to reach the new education targets is projected to average \$US39 billion between 2015 and 2030 in low and lower middle income countries. The gap is particularly large in low income countries, where it constitutes 42% of annual total costs.

## One solution - Abolishing tax incentives and using the resources to promote education

One major way of finding the extra resources needed to fund education is to reduce the tax incentives that governments currently give to corporations. These are very large in many countries, but there are no official estimates of global revenue losses from tax incentives. In 2013, ActionAid estimated that developing countries lose US\$139 billion a year just from one form of tax incentive – corporate income tax exemptions: even this would be more enough to fund the \$39 billion financing gap noted above more than 3 times over. Indeed, US\$139 billion is enough revenue to put every primary school aged child in school, meet all the health-related Millennium Development Goals and leave enough change left over to invest in the agricultural programmes needed to end hunger.

### Revenue losses from tax incentives in the four countries

The four countries under analysis in this report all lose vast amounts of revenues from tax incentives given by their governments to corporations, as outlined below. These revenues could significantly boost education spending. Most stark is Nepal, which is losing more revenues from tax incentives than it is spending on education. The other 3 countries could increase their education budgets by over a quarter if they were to abolish tax incentives.

### Tax incentives revenue losses and how they could fund education

|            | Number of teachers per pupil in the project schools (all teachers)  | The education it could fund                 |
|------------|---|---|
| Malawi     | Unclear since government does not publish a tax expenditure figure. Estimate for average during 2008-12: MK20 billion (\$117.6 million) a year. | Could increase the education budget by 27%  |
| Mozambique | MT 17.6 billion (\$561 million) in 2014 (3.3% of GDP)   | Could increase the education budget by 31%  |
| Nepal      | Rs106 billion (\$990 million) in 2014/15 (5% of GDP).   | Could more than double the education budget |
| Tanzania   | Shs 1.32 trillion (\$760 million ) (1.5% of GDP) in 2014/15.  | Could increase the education budget by 28%  |

## The importance of increasing tax collections

Currently, tax revenues in low- and middle-income countries fall short of both what is needed to adequately fund public services, and are lower than in richer countries. The average tax-to-GDP ratio in OECD countries is 33%, compared to 16% of GDP in low-income countries. Beyond reducing tax incentives, governments need to increase their tax collections more generally. The Education for All Global Monitoring Report has documented that if governments in 67 low and middle income countries modestly increased their tax-raising efforts and devoted a fifth of their budget to education, they could have raised an additional US\$153 billion for education spending in 2015, increasing the average share of GDP spent on education from 3 to 6% by 2015. Spending in Africa would have increased by over US\$27 billion. This increase would have more than doubled education spending per child, from US\$209 per year to US\$466 per year.

Education is a long term investment that requires predictable financing. It is not a short-term, one-off, quick win. The major returns to investment in education accrue over 10 or more years (when a child completes their education and contributes to their society).



Another fundamental reason why education requires predictable financing is that the biggest single costs are recurrent costs – especially for teacher salaries. To achieve the first target of the UN's Sustainable Development Goals, universalising access to primary and secondary education, will require the employment of millions more trained teachers. The quality of a country's education system depends on the extent to which the country has committed to ensuring all its teachers are trained, qualified and motivated. Multiple studies have demonstrated that teachers – and the level of teacher knowledge about their subject – are the most important determinant of education quality.

Critical to the process of improving education spending is involvement of people in monitoring and tracking budgets. This comes back to the Promoting Rights in Schools framework, which encourages active citizens' participation in tracking budgets at school level. Governments need to be committed to championing these participatory processes and providing the necessary transparency in their budgeting to support them.

## Recommendation for increased finance for education

### **Governments should:**

Announce a timetable to reach, within three years, a tax-to-GDP ratio of 20% (e.g. through ending harmful tax incentives and promoting other progressive tax reforms) and an allocation of at least 20% of government spending to education (publishing a clear breakdown of budget allocations by sub-sector online).

### **Summary - Are the four countries adequately promoting the right to education?**

The findings of the research suggest a mixed picture but overall it is clear that many aspects of the right to education are currently being violated in the schools under study in the four countries.

- The **Right to Free and Compulsory Education** is being supported in the high enrolment rates for girls but is being violated by the high numbers of children out of school and who drop out, and in requiring parents to pay for various school costs.
- The **Right to Quality Learning** is being compromised by a high pupil/teacher ratios in Malawi and Tanzania (but relatively low ratios in Mozambique and Nepal) and relatively low pass rates for end of primary school (except in Nepal, which has relatively high pass rates).
- The **Right to Adequate Infrastructure** is being compromised by poor and inadequate sanitation (toilet) facilities, especially for girls.
- The **Right to a Safe and Non-Violent Environment** is being violated by widespread corporal punishment and sexual and other forms of violence in many schools and by an insufficient number of teachers trained to respect children's rights. These adversely affect girls in particular.
- The **Right to Participate** is being supported by children reported to be able to participate in class and in clubs or councils, by mainly equal participation of children and by the SMC listening to children's views (except, for the latter, in Mozambique).
- The **Right to Transparent and Accountable Schools** is being supported by a large number of SMCs being active and fully functioning (except in Nepal) and by SMCs monitoring school budgets and children's participation in many schools. It is being compromised, however, by school governance structures not playing these roles in some schools and women's under-representation in SMCs.

Underlying all these issues is a lack of adequate financing.



Campaigning to stop tax dodging in Malawi

PHOTO: ACTIONAID

## Recommendations

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*Fundamental to addressing the broken promises and rights violations is to increase the financing available to education in a sustainable way. For this reason we put our recommendation on increasing financing first, because it is this which will enable the other recommendations to be achieved.*

### Government financing for education

- Announce a timetable to reach, within three years, a tax to GDP ratio of 20% (e.g. through ending harmful tax incentives and promoting other progressive tax reforms) and an allocation of at least 20% of government spending to education (publishing a clear breakdown of budget allocations by sub-sector online).

### Children out of school

- Ensure that up-to-date, accurate and gender-disaggregated figures are available on the number and location of children out of school and develop a costed plan to ensure that all children are enrolled for example through inclusive education interventions, cash transfers, school-feeding and active outreach programmes.

### Cost of education for parents

- Ensure that all primary education is genuinely free by abolishing all compulsory direct and indirect costs to parents and ensuring that the State covers these costs.

### Girls' education

- Ensure that girls' education is explicitly prioritised in education budgets, including by devoting some separate budget lines to improving education for girls, taking action on violence in schools and supporting girls clubs.

## Learning outcomes

- Make improved efforts to raise learning outcomes, through more investment in training for formative assessment by teachers and addressing the underlying reasons for poor learning outcomes such as large class sizes, too many untrained or poorly trained teachers, outdated pedagogy and teaching-learning materials, and inadequate infrastructure.

## Infrastructure and sanitation

- Develop a national policy to ensure that all primary schools have an appropriate number of classrooms, safe drinking water, good sanitation facilities (separate and safe for boys and girls), access to electricity and web-connections.

## Teachers

- Ensure that all children are taught by a properly trained and qualified teacher, investing in more female teachers, better quality training, more equitable deployment, incentives for working in remote areas and domestically competitive salaries for teachers.

## Violence against children

- Announce zero tolerance for violence in and around schools and take steps to ensure this is implemented, making corporal punishment in schools illegal, training all teachers in human rights standards and ensuring all schools have clear policies to prevent violence, with confidential reporting processes for children linked to the police and courts.

## Children with disabilities

- Ensure that schools have a mechanism to record the numbers of children with disabilities in school (and out of school in their catchment area) and that national inclusive education provisions are implemented, including in relation to infrastructure and teacher training.

## School governance

- Review national policies to ensure that all schools have an effective school management committee, which is well resourced, representative (50% women), empowered to monitor school performance, learning and budgets, and fully transparent and accountable to the local community (for example by ensuring schools budgets and spending are posted publicly).

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