

MALAWI CASE STUDY: CIVIL SOCIETY COALITION FOR QUALITY BASIC EDUCATION (CSCQBE) EDUCATION SECTOR BUDGET TRACKING

*This is an edited version of a presentation given by the CSCQBE
to international VSO partners during a study tour in March 2007*

1. Why Budget tracking?

- Budget tracking of education expenditure is one of the accountability mechanisms undertaken by the coalition since 2002.
- Aim: to establish whether resources are sufficient to achieve measurable change in equitable access, quality and relevance of basic education.
- To hold government accountable, by finding out whether the national budget is being implemented in line with existing policy guidelines and whether resources are reaching the intended beneficiaries as planned.
- Areas of focus include: teaching and learning materials, salaries, enrolment rates, drop out rates, inspection, gender and disability.

2. Levels of expenditure tracking

Different questionnaires are used to get data from the different levels of the education system, such as:

- Central government (Ministry of Education and Ministry of Finance)
- District assemblies (executive officers)
- Division Education Managers
- District Education Managers
- Schools (head teachers)
- Supplies Unit (procurement of teaching and learning materials)
- Physical Facilities (responsible for buildings and rehabilitations)
- Teacher training colleges

3. Sample design

- Out of a total number of about 5000 primary schools, a sample of 500 schools is surveyed, representing almost 10% of the total schools.
- The schools are further divided according to the education divisions as well as into rural and urban.

- Member organisations that form CSCQBE collect data from the sampled schools, districts and Teacher Training Colleges.
- Before the data collectors go to the field they undergo training on how to administer the questionnaires and interact with respondents during the exercise.

4. Data entry, cleaning, analysis and report production

- Filled questionnaires are sent to the coalition Secretariat for data entry, cleaning and analysis process

Key issues include analysed include:

- Whether there are any increases in resource allocations to the education sector
- Comparison of budget information between different levels
- Analysis of whether schools and colleges had received teaching and learning materials
- Whether teachers received their salaries and in time
- Whether adequate numbers of teachers were trained and recruited according to budget and the year's projection
- Whether teachers were evenly distributed depending on geographical location (rural vs urban) and gender.
- Enrolment of pupils and teachers (male and female); enrolment of children with special disabilities and supply of TLMs for such children.

5. Dissemination of findings

- Draft report produced and circulated to all members for input followed by special Budget monitoring sub committee meeting to validate and adopt the report.

Report is made public through:

- Meetings with: Ministry officials (Ministry of Education and Finance); parliamentarians on the education committee and budget and finance; development partners; and the media.
- Press release on key findings and recommendations
- District level meetings with district assembly officials, district education officials, Civil Society Organisations, Parents Teacher Associations, School management Committees and head teachers are given the results and action plans are developed on the way forward.
- Radio programs and TV programs
- Phone in programs, press conferences
- Report also distributed to key stakeholders i.e. ministers, office of the president, permanent secretaries of relevant ministries, NGO's and donors.
- Report posted on the CSCQBE website

6. Successes

- Increased resource allocation to the basic education sector
- The Civil society advocacy has also influenced government decisions and accountability in the education sector i.e. 2002 teacher training advocacy where the government was forced to open new Teacher Training Colleges, in 2004 government started the first ever public expenditure surveys in education sector based on the successes of CSCQBE.
- Increased civil society visibility at local and international levels. At the local level, the advocacy work has added a voice for CSOs in demanding social services and accountability.
- At international level, the initiative has made the CSCQBE known as one of the few best practices in Africa and the world. As a result the Coalition has been invited to a number of meetings to share budget monitoring experience convened by organisations like the World Bank, UNESCO, Global Campaign for Education (GCE) and others.
- Enhanced citizens understanding of the budget, education policies and political accountability in implementing education policies etc
- Enhanced Civil Society capacity for monitoring and evaluation.
- Budget monitoring findings used by donors to negotiate for more funding for education.

7. Challenge faced in conducting budget monitoring surveys.

- Poor cooperation by government officials in releasing budget/ expenditure data which makes it difficult to meaningfully track the expenditures.
- Delays in questionnaire submission to the secretariat by member organisations due to other commitments in their organisations
- Small sample frame (10% of all schools) due to financial constraints.

8. Lessons Learnt

For successful budget monitoring:

- Capacity /skills to monitor & advocate are necessary
- Quality of data is an issue to produce credible results
- Success of the budget monitoring is enhanced by a sound advocacy and media strategy
- In the Coalition ownership of the budget work matters and there is a need to involve all member organisations apart from Secretariat Staff in all the processes
- Budget monitoring requires adequate resources
- A conducive policy environment is necessary