

**Girls access to and Completion of Lower
Secondary Education in Malawi**

**PPA Building Skills for Life for Adolescent Girls
Programme
Mid-term Evaluation Report**

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Acronyms and abbreviations

BS4L	Building Skills for Life
CCCD	Child Centred Community Development
CSP	Country Strategic Plan
DEC	District Executive Committee
DHO	District Health Officers
DSWO	District Social Welfare Officer
FAWEMA	Forum for African Women Educationalists – Malawi Chapter
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GBFSMT	Piloting the Girl Boy Friendly School Monitoring Tool
GVH	Group Village Headman
HSA	Health Surveillance Assistant
PA	Project Area
PPA	Programme Partnership Agreement
PTAs	Parent Teacher Associations
SMC	School Management Committee
SRHR	Sexual and Reproductive Health Rights
TOR	Terms of Reference (s)
VH	Village Headman
YONECO	Youth Net and Counselling

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Executive Summary

This report presents the findings of the mid-term evaluation (MTE) of the Building Skills for Life (BS4L) in Malawi. The BS4L is implemented by Plan Malawi in the programme areas (PAs) of Mzuzu in the Northern Region and Kasungu in the Central Region of Malawi. The project is reaching out to about 8100 pupils in 88 primary and 18 secondary schools from 64 communities. The project was designed with the aim of a) Changing attitudes amongst community members, government officials and teachers to girls' rights and girls' education, particular at secondary level; b) Promoting and developing gender responsive education (in target grades), and in doing so improving overall quality; c) Enhancing knowledge of, and access to, gender appropriate SRHR services for adolescent girls and boys; d) Promoting the participation of boys and especially girls in decision making and accountability process at local, national and international levels, particularly in relation to education, SRHR, and protection issues.

Objectives of the MTE

The evaluation had the following specific objectives:

- To update key outcome level indicators; and collect qualitative data and beneficiary feedback on any changes that have occurred as a result of the project as a follow up on the quantitative household baseline survey.
- To analyse what programmatic strategies have worked well or less well, and what other factors have helped or hindered progress being made
- To identify any other unintended changes, positive and negative, the project has had on the lives of beneficiaries.
- To examine the extent to which any changes brought about by the project have happened in line with Plan's CCCD Principles.
- To identify any emerging lessons learnt and make recommendations on ways to increase the effectiveness of the project for the remaining year and a half of the project.

Methodological approach

The MTE was implemented through two parallel activities. The first was a quantitative questionnaire survey covering a total of 101 households sampled from Malivenji and Gija area. The participants to the survey were selected adolescent boys and girls and male and female parents on a 50:50 ration. The second was a qualitative study which included 12 focus group discussions (FGDs) for adolescent girls, adolescent boys, male parents, female parents, teachers as well as key informant interviews (KII) with selected stakeholders – school managers, religious leaders, traditional leaders and health workers.

Findings of the MTE

Progress made towards the set targets

The project has made some positive achievements in several areas. The following are some of these positive achievements:

- a) The project has contributed towards motivation of adolescent girls to attach more value to their education and start working harder and remain in school

until they complete their education. The percentage of girls in school increased from 90.4% (baseline) to 95.6% (MTE).

- b) The project has also enabled some of the adolescent girls who dropped out of school to re-enrol. The following were the reported re-enrolments: 10 adolescent mothers were re-enrolled in Gija community, one adolescent mother was re-enrolled at Malivenji Primary School and 6 adolescent mothers were reported having re-enrolled in different private secondary schools around Malivenji.
- c) The school environment is becoming increasingly conducive for the adolescents to enrol or continue with school. For example, there is reduction in sexual harassment, Speak Out clubs able to facilitate discussion of issues and take them to relevant authority holders; teachers are increasingly adopting learner centred approaches, and reduction in the use of corporal punishment
- d) The project has facilitated establishment and capacity building of organisational structures - Speak Out clubs in the schools which are crucial for engaging the authority and duty bearers to act on issues affecting them. In the communities, the project has facilitated formation and capacity building of mother groups which conduct campaigns in the communities targeting parents, community leadership and members of the wider community on the importance of adolescent mothers to go back to school.
- e) The project has contributed to the mechanisms through which adolescents access SRHR information particularly through training on SRHR provided by Plan and through the sharing of SRHR information and issues in youth clubs.

Challenges

There are several challenges which the programme needs to overcome if the set targets have to be realised. The following are some the key ones:

- The programme implementation period was shorter than the period stipulated in the project document as implementation started 10 months later. The implementation of planned activities was delayed because the baseline study took too long and there was change of staff. The one who was supposed to coordinate the project passed away. The implementers did not have enough time to effectively engage all the community stakeholders.
- In addition, follow up of implemented processes were not adequately done to allow for joint learning and continued engagement between the project implementation team and the community stakeholders. This happened because the project team has been struggling to complete implementation of activities in all the 106 schools. In addition, the project did not have adequate staff on the ground to effectively follow up the implementation processes and progress.
- While the adolescents are making some progress towards participating in the school governance systems, there is no clear programme strategy to enable the adolescents integrate into the community organisational and management

system in order for them to exert their influence in the wider community where there are more players who affect adolescents' education.

- The key to the provision of SRH information and services to the adolescents is that there are strong opposing views amongst school managers, teachers and parents on whether adolescents should have access to SRH information and services.
- Household poverty limits some of the adolescents to enrol in the upper secondary schools –
- In some of the communities there are no secondary schools within reach to absorb adolescents that would like to continue with their education in the upper secondary schools.

Recommendations

The strategies used in the project to influence attitude change and motivate stakeholder for action has worked well in the school set up, which often has functional governance structures even before the project. This occurs because headmasters / teachers tend to 'push'/ influence– school management committees, PTAs to meet frequently in order to discuss issues affecting the school. In such a set up it was easier for the Speak Out clubs to engage with these forums.

Apparently the project has not contributed much to attitude change amongst some community stakeholders particularly male and female parents and some men that adolescent girls meet on their way to school. The main reason is that unlike the school environment, the community faces many challenges related to its organisation and governance systems. For example structures set up to reach people, such as village development committees, civil protection committees, etc often do not function properly – most of them do not normally convene forums and are disconnected from the community members. The project worked through mother groups. While these were able to effectively engage some stakeholders particularly parents of adolescent mothers and SMCs, they did not effectively mobilise and engage the majority of the community stakeholders which are crucial for girls' education such as traditional leadership, civil protection committees, and VDCs. *Just like in schools, there is need for Speak Out clubs to critically analyse issues that concern community stakeholders such as parents, men, women, families as well as authority and duty holders such as traditional leadership, VDCs, civil protection committees and specific community groups. Through conversations convened by traditional leadership and facilitated by mother groups and civil protection committees, Speak Out clubs needs to engage the various community stakeholders through formal meetings with members of the village community, VDC, civil protection committees, mother groups and traditional leaderships. These forums should be discussing issues related to education, SRHR and their rights in general.*

In addition, Speak Out clubs need to intensify open days using interactive drama in order to effectively engage the village communities in open days where they should table for discussions hot issues such as the provision of sexual and reproductive health information and services to adolescents, adolescent education, protection of adolescents from violence and abuse.

To reduce the high risk of adolescent girls from being sexually abused on their way to or from school, *Speak Out clubs need to organise open days in collaboration with relevant authorities such as group village head persons, civil protection committees in hot spot areas to enable the clubs engage with the potential perpetrators.*

For adolescent girls who may not enrol or fail to continue studying in upper secondary classes because their parents or guardian cannot afford fees and other necessities, qualitative studies revealed that there were vibrant village savings and loan (VS&L) groups in Gija community organised by the Catholic Development Commission (CADECOM) whose members did not face any problems to support their children's education. *There is need for mother groups to engage into a discussion of the concept of VS&L parents who face difficulties in raising finances for their children's education in order to explore possibilities of linking up with VS&L service providers. Plan should explore mechanisms for linking the BS4L project with programmes on VS&L being implemented in the area by other organisations.*

Through mother groups and Speak Out clubs, *Plan should identify needy adolescent mothers and advocate for them to access the Social Welfare bursaries as well as link them up with other organisations offering different facilities.*

At policy level, for adolescents who fail to enrol or continue with school because of their own negligence or that of parents mechanisms at school to ensure that children particularly girls enrol into and stay in lower secondary school. *Plan need to facilitate a process to Speak Out clubs and the Youth networks and forums to advocate for by-laws to be established and re-enforced that will prevent unnecessary school drop. Similarly, the project needs to include interventions to advocate for re-enforcement marriage age to prevent early marriages.*

Where adolescents cannot enrol for upper secondary school (form 1 and 2) because there is no secondary school within walking distance, such as in Malivenji, *Plan needs to facilitate interface meetings between adolescents, duty bearers in the communities and district officials to lobby for construction of secondary school facilities using the constituency development fund or local development fund or funding from any other institution.*

The project approach has been to train peer educators or community based facilitators. For these peer educators to continue learning from their experiences and each other, the project needs to establish forums and exchange visits where these peer educators and facilitators will discuss their experiences and learn from each other.

Similarly the programme has strengthened several community based structures including mother groups, Speak Out clubs, civil protection committees, SMCs, PTAs, teachers and school managers etc. For these to continue learning from each other as well as from their experiences the project needs to facilitate network within and across geographical areas.

The project needs to establish an appropriate participatory monitoring and evaluation system that ensures intensify follow ups in the field by the project implementation teams in order to facilitate interaction, joint progress monitoring and learning between community structures and service providers.

1 Introduction

This report presents the findings of the mid-term evaluation of the Building Skills for Life (BS4L) in Malawi.

1.1 The BS4L in Malawi project

The BS4L is implemented by Plan Malawi in two of the four main Programme Areas (PAs) of Mzuzu in the Northern Region and Kasungu in the Central Region of Malawi. The project is reaching out to about 8100 pupils in 88 primary and 18 secondary schools from 64 communities.

The project is titled: “Improving Access to and Delivery of Quality Basic Education and Sexual Reproductive Health Via Social Accountability”, or PPA.

This project aims to realise the following:

- Changing attitudes amongst community members, government officials and teachers to girls’ rights and girls’ education, particular at secondary level;
- Promoting and developing gender responsive education (in target grades), and in doing so improving overall quality;
- Enhancing knowledge of, and access to, gender appropriate SRHR services for adolescent girls and boys.
- Promoting the participation of boys and especially girls in decision making and accountability process at local, national and international levels, particularly in relation to education, SRHR, and protection issues.

1.1.1 Main activities

The project uses the issue of girls’ education to bring into focus several related issues:

- SRHR information and services
- Access and delivery of quality education
- Child protection issues
- Governance and accountability in schools, as well as in communities and at the district level
- Opportunities are sought for young people to engage with power holders on SRHR, education and protection locally and internationally through:

1.1.2 The BS4L implemented structures and activities

a) Speak Out Clubs formed in schools – each club has 50 members, with a desired ratio of 35 girls to 15 boys; b) Mothers’ Groups – formed or existing groups trained in gender, SRHR, and the importance of girls’ education, in the target areas; c) Authority holders including teachers, village leaders, district officials, and members of the schools’ Parent Teacher Associations (PTAs) and School Management Committees (SMCs) sensitised in project interventions

Activities for young people to engage with power holders on SRHR, education and protection

- Interface meetings through open days in schools, and a Theatre for Development process which includes interactive drama opportunities and discussion of issues and the development of action points in a closing session.

- Leadership and advocacy training
- Training of youth peer educators for SRHR information
- Policy analysis, currently being undertaken by a consultant to map government policies relevant to adolescent girls, including the Code of Conduct for teachers; the National Youth Policy; the National Gender Policy; the HIV/Aids Policy; Child Protection Policy; the National Policy for Education; 50/50 Policy for equitable access to higher education and secondary education; and Girls Re-entry Policy after pregnancy.
- Implementing Girl Boy Friendly School Monitoring Tool (GBFSMT).

1.2 Country Context

Malawi is a small land locked country in Southern Africa with a population of about 14,901,000. An estimated 51% of the population are female and 49% male. Over 85% of this population lives in rural areas. About 52% of the population are below 18 years of age. Adolescents in the age range of 10 to 19 constitute about 23% of the total population. About 52% of Malawians live below the poverty line: 40% are classified as poor and an additional 15% as ultra poor.

Politically, since independence from colonial rule, the country has transitioned from one party rule under Dr Kamuzu Banda to multiparty democracy under Bakili Muluzi, Bingu wa Mutharika and now Joice Banda. The incumbent is the first female present in Malawi and second in Africa.

In the past three years, the economy of Malawi has suffered several setbacks including shortage of foreign exchange resulting in shortage of fuel, soaring prices of commodities and unbearable economic hardships. Many parts of the country are currently suffering from food shortage resulting from poor rainfall and the after effects of floods which affected up 30% of the country's districts.

With the introduction of free primary education in the mid 1990s, the enrolment rates increased dramatically resulting in many challenges in the education system such as shortage of classrooms, desks, children learning outside in the open, inadequate sanitary facilities and inadequate learning materials and many. A big proportion of the children enrolled in schools have ended up dropping out of school before reaching standard 6.

The BS4L in Malawi targets adolescents in the age ranges of 14 to 19 years. These are mostly in the lower secondary school (standard 7 to 8) and upper secondary school (forms 1 and 2). The project targets this group because they face several issues concerning their access to education. According to the results of a situation analysis carried out by Plan Malawi as part of its country strategic plan (CSP) development, only 35% adolescent girls and boys completed upper primary education and the net enrolment ratio in secondary education was 13.4% for males and 12.9% for females.

The results of the 2011 Welfare Monitoring Survey reveal several reasons why in Malawi adolescents in the school going ages of 14 to 19 years do not want to attend school. These include early marriages particularly for girls; some children, particularly boys find school uninteresting, while others think school is useless. There

are some children who find it expensive to go to schools. Some girls drop out of school because of early marriage.

1.3 Community Contexts

The MTE was conducted in two communities in namely Gija and Malivenji. These are described below:

Gija

Gija community is located in the Traditional Authority Pitala under Group Village Headman Gija in Kasungu PA, Kasungu district. In Gija, many households participate in small scale businesses at Jenda Trading Centre. Jenda lies on the boundary between Mzimba and Kasungu and forms the hub of trading activities for Malawians and those from the neighbouring Zambia. It is one of the fastest growing rural growth centres and displays bee hives activities every Thursday of the week though located in the remote area. It has negatively affected adolescent education because most boys abscond from school to buy and resell various merchandise for fast money. Like Chinjoka, the community is also predominantly patriarchal but it differs from Chinjoka in the sense that the adolescent boys and girls in Gija are spoiled by influence of Jenda Market. The qualitative data reveals that many boys abuse substance while girls have tendency of having sexual relationships with vendors at Jenda market.

Malivenji

Malivenji community is located in the Traditional Authority Kampingo Sibande and largely belongs to Group Village Headman Chibisa Chisi and it is found in Mzimba district in the northern region of Malawi. But this community is very close to the City of Mzuzu; precisely lying at a distance of 10 km from the City. Mzuzu is the only but fast growing City in the Northern Region of Malawi and has got an influence not only to Malivenji but also to other surrounding communities. Consequently, in Malivenji the major source of differentiation in the community is that the commonest source of income is making and selling of burnt bricks to Mzuzu City where there is plenty of construction. The brick selling business has an impact on access to secondary education by adolescents. For instance, the qualitative data revealed that many boys drop out of school and embark on brick selling or piece work to load bricks on tracks. The girls on the other hand end up selling foodstuffs in Mzuzu City. There is a belief in Malivenji that people make more money by selling bricks than what a primary school teacher earns per month, however the evaluation did not verify this claim. Like Chinjoka and Gija, Malivenji is also predominantly patriarchal where decision making process about girls' education is less participatory.

1.4 Objectives of the MTE

1.4.1 Research questions and objectives

The Mid-Term Evaluation sought to assess if any changes had occurred in the project targeted communities since the baseline survey was conducted and the start of the project. The evaluation had the following specific objectives:

- To update key outcome level indicators; and collect qualitative data and beneficiary feedback on any changes that have occurred as a result of the project as a follow up on the quantitative household baseline survey.
- To analyse what programmatic strategies have worked well or less well, and what other factors have helped or hindered progress being made
- To identify any other unintended changes, positive and negative, the project has had on the lives of beneficiaries.
- To examine the extent to which any changes brought about by the project have happened in line with Plan's CCCD Principles.
- To identify any emerging lessons learnt and make recommendations on ways to increase the effectiveness of the project for the remaining year and a half of the project.

In order to fulfil the requirements of the objectives outlined above, the MTE tried to explore and get answers to the following key questions:

- What has changed in the project targeted communities amongst parents / community members; in the schools in terms of policies, practices, culture and behaviour of students; that relate to access to and retention in school for adolescent boys and girls?
- What benefits have parents, young people, teachers and the wider community realised from the project activities?
- Which aspects of the programme strategy are working well and why?
- Which aspects of the programme strategy need to be improved if the project goal and objectives have to be realised?

2 Study design and limitations

2.1 Methods and tools

In order to fulfil the requirements of the MTE of the BS4L the following tasks were undertaken:

Discussion of the TORs between the Local Consultant in Malawi and Plan Malawi, recruitment and training of data collectors and data entry clerks, household sampling, field quantitative data collection, focus group discussions, data entry into the computer, data analysis and report writing.

Discussion between the Consultant in Malawi and Plan International

These discussions were held in order for the Malawian Consultant and Plan International to have a common understanding of the scope of the consultancy assignment as specified in the Terms of Reference (TORs) and all other relevant study

tools and documents. During the discussions the consultant sought clarifications on a number of issues specified in the data collection tools.

Recruitment and training of data collectors and data entry clerks:

The Malawian consultant worked with a team of 17 experienced research assistants in related studies including: 6 quantitative data collectors, 1 supervisor for quantitative data collection, 2 data entry clerks for quantitative data, 6 qualitative data collectors, 2 data entry clerks for qualitative data.

The data collectors were divided into two teams: one for quantitative data and another for qualitative data collection and processing. Members of both teams had an initial briefing about the scope of the MTE, the use of the data collection tools and the data collection processes. During this briefing session, the team discussed the translation of the data collection tools into the local language used in the PAs (Tumbuka).

The team pre-tested the data collection tools in Godogodo and Chikoya Villages in Mzimba District. The training of the data collectors was conducted between 3rd and 5th December 2012.

Sampling

The villages for quantitative data collection were randomly selected from the two sites (Malivenji in Mzimba District and Gija in Kasungu District) which the international consultant sampled for the midterm evaluation. In each village quantitative data collectors sought consent from the village chief before randomly selecting households for adolescent and significant adult interviews. A total of 101 households were sampled for collection of quantitative data.

Qualitative data collectors booked for meetings for Focus group discussions and Key informants through head teachers of schools in the centres of two study sites. Participants to the FGDs with teachers, parents, adolescents, and key informants were selected based on their availability. Eight participants were targeted for participation in each FGD.

Quantitative data collection

Quantitative data was collected using already prepared study tools by the international consultant. A team of 6 people worked in pairs of a male and a female in order to collect quantitative data. In each household a male data collector interviewed male while a female interviewed female household members (either significant adult or adolescent). Before interviewing any household member data collectors followed the protocols specified in the Survey Manual

Focus group discussions

A total of 12 FGDs were conducted as follows:

- 6 FGDs with adolescents as follows: In Malivenji 1 FGD with each of the following: girls 11-16 years old, girls 15-17 years old and boys 14-18 years old. In Gija 1 FGD with each of the following three groups of adolescents: girls 12-14 years old, girls 14-15 years old and boys 12-14 years old.

- 4 FGDs with parents as follows: In Gija 1 FGD with a group of 8 female parents aged between 38 and 59 years and another FGD with a group of 6 male parents aged between 26 and 48 years. In Malivenji 1 FGD with a group of 7 male parents aged between 36 and 64 years and another FGD with a group of female parents aged between 35 and 40 years.
- 2 FGDs with teachers: One FGD in Malivenji with a group of 4 female and 3 male teachers and one FGD in Chankhomi with a group of 4 male and 4 female teachers.
- All the FGDs were conducted as per the tools prepared by the international consultant and by following the protocols outlined in the documents titled “Qualitative Data Collection Guidance Note”. All the data were recorded in the note takers form for each group of the FGD participants.

Key informant interviews

A total of 6 interviews were conducted with the following groups of key informants:

Male head teacher in Malivenji, female church elder in Malivenji, male health surveillance assistant (HSA) in Malivenji, head teacher in Gija, a supervisor of 7 HSAs in Gija, Group Village Headman Venge in Gija.

Data entry

Quantitative data were entered into Epidata Software data entry screens prepared by the international consultant. Qualitative data from note takers form were entered into Microsoft Excel FGD spreadsheets for each group of FGD participants.

Data analysis and report writing

Qualitative data were analysed using Microsoft Excel by identifying themes and sorting them according to study site, group of interviewees, gender, and age as per the “Guide to quantitative data analysis” document.

The international consultant analyzed quantitative data the outputs from which some data presented in this report were extracted.

The report has been compiled following the format provided by the international consultant.

Both quantitative and qualitative data collection and analysis methods were used in the implementation of the MTE of the BS4L.

2.1.3 Limitations of the study

The study had one main limitation. The focus group discussion guide for adolescents was too long. After the holding the adolescents for some time, some of them started losing patience. Each FGD took between 4 to 5 hours.

3 Analysis of Findings of the MTE

These analyses are based on qualitative data collected through FGDs with adolescent boys and girls, female and male parents, female and male teachers and key informant interviews with a wide range of stakeholders including school managers, religious leaders, traditional leaders and government health extension workers. The analyses are also informed by quantitative data collected through a survey that covered adolescent boys and girls as well as male and female parents.

3.1 How has the programme worked to improve attitudes and support for girls' education?

To answer this question, the evaluation examines whether there have been any changes in attitudes of adolescent boys and girls, parents, teachers and other community stakeholders resulting from the project interventions. The evaluation also tries to examine the factors which contributed to these changes in attitudes. The findings of the evaluation show that the project has made some contributions towards changes in the attitudes of the adolescents, parents / guardians, teachers as well as members of the wider community.

3.1.1 Changes in the attitudes of adolescent girls

According to adolescent boys and girls, the project has made some contributions towards motivating girls to work harder to complete the last two years of primary school (lower secondary school). The project has also motivated some adolescent girls that dropped out of school to re-enrol particularly in the first two years of secondary school as well as work harder to complete their secondary school education. In Gija community adolescents reported that more than 10 girls who dropped out of school were able to re-enrol; while at Malivenji primary school one adolescent mother was reported having re-enrolled. There were reports of more than 6 adolescent mothers who had re-enrolled in the various private and government secondary schools in Malivenji community. Some of the notable changes in the attitudes of adolescent girls include the following:

a) The project has motivated some girls to value school and start working harder and remain in school until they complete their education. This is backed by both qualitative and quantitative findings of the MTE. Quantitatively the percentage of girls in school increased from 90.4% (baseline) to 95.6% (MTE). Qualitative assessment revealed that one of the key project interventions which contributed to this motivation, were events organised by FAWEMA and Plan Malawi to facilitate interactions between adolescent girls and role models. After participating in one such interventions one of the adolescent girls from Malivenji made this declaration: *“Bringing in role models has motivated girls to work hard in class. I will not have any relationship with a boy until I finish my school at the College of Medicine”*. According to one boy at Gija: *“The number of girls attending classes is increasing since they participated in awareness campaigns discouraging early and arranged marriages. This is helping to retain girls in school”*.

Some parents too (not assessed quantitatively) observed that children, girls in particular have started valuing education as a result of the project interventions. *“Students are putting much concentration on studies. FAWEMA and YONECO have*

been teaching us as parents and our children on importance of school. This time both parents and children are able to see what is good and what is bad in terms of children's education" (Female parent Malivenji). One male parent at Gija comments: *"We are observing some positive changes in attitudes of girls towards education; we just need to encourage them just like what FAWEMA is doing."*

Both adolescents and parents are optimistic that this motivation will really enable more adolescent girls to complete their last two years of primary school. They are however sceptical that this motivation would have noticeable impact on adolescent girls in secondary schools (forms 1 and 2). The adolescent girls and boys noted that there are challenges associated with secondary school education, which would demoralise even the most motivated of the girls. These challenges included inability by some of the parents to pay fees and provide all the necessities; in Malivenji community the absence of a community day secondary school within walkable distance discourage some girls to enrol for forms 1 and 2. In addition, there are situations where some girls are forced to stay in self-boarding facilities away from their villages in terrible conditions which are often not bearable. Some of them are therefore either forced to drop out of school or others end up having risky sexual partnership with older men hoping to get financial support.

"The few girls who are selected to go to the nearest secondary school cannot manage to walk to and back from the school every day as the distance is too long. They either drop out of school or go and stay at the school under self-boarding facilities. The conditions in these self boarding facilities are terrible, little or no food, poor sanitation, no proper beddings.... The girls are either forced to drop out of school or end up having sexual affairs with older men to earn extra money. Such practices put the girls lives at risk of STIs, early pregnancies as well as conflicts with the wives of the men who date them"; narrates a female church elder at Malivenji.

b) Mother groups with support from FAWEMA mounted aggressive campaigns to convince not only the adolescent mother to go back to school but also their parents and guardians to provide educational support for these young mothers. These campaigns have motivated some of the girls who dropped out of school because of early pregnancies or early marriages to go back to school. As one boy at Malivenji observes: *"There is increase in number of girls re-enrolling in school who were once impregnated or married"*. According to a 14 years old girl at Gija, *"Plan messages encouraged more than 10 girls who had been pregnant to go back to school"*. There might be several factors which contributed to particular girls deciding to go back to school. First, would be the realisation that she still has a chance to go back to school and that there are no regulations to prevent her from doing so. This comes from a background that when girls become pregnant at school, there is tendency for school management to sent them away because they have 'broken rules'. Second, would be the assurance by parents that they would resume provision of financial and material support for her education after she had 'misused her privileges' by becoming pregnant. Third, would be the assurance by parents that they would take care of her child when she goes back to school. Fourth, would be assurance that the school environment will be safe for her; she will not be discriminated against.

c) More girls realised that adolescent girls have the right to access secondary education the same way as the boys. This is evidenced by the decrease in the

percentage of adolescent girls who believed that it is more important for a boy than a girl to finish secondary school from 12.2 (baseline) to 9.1 (MTE).

3.1.2 Changes in the attitudes of parents

Qualitative assessments showed mixed reaction about the contribution of the project towards changing the attitudes of the parents / guardians towards the girl child's education. Adolescent boys and girls argued that parents were increasingly beginning to recognise the importance of letting adolescent girl children continue with lower and upper secondary school education. *"Parents have now changed their mindset towards adolescent girls' education. Incidents of forcing girls into early marriage have declined and both girls and boys are sent to school"*; (adolescent girl, Malivenji). *"There is reduction in early marriages due to awareness campaigns that aim at sensitising parents on the benefits of sending girls to school"*; (adolescent boy, Gija). Some of the parents have realised the importance of treating the girl child the same way as they treat the boy child as the following revelation shows: *"We need to learn to treat all children equally regardless of gender"* (male parent, Gija). Apparently this observation is true amongst female parents as shown by the increase in the percentage of the female parents who believe that all children must be educated regardless of sex from 95.7% (baseline) to 98.2% (MTE).

There are however some adolescents, parents and members of wider community who think there has been little or no change in the attitude of the parents particularly to start valuing girls' education. *"So far I have seen no change; I am optimistic that there is going to be some changes in attitude towards education if the NGOs continue the way they have done this month"* (Female church elder, Malivenji). *"As for me, I see no change since most of us still value education for boys more than that for girls"*; (male parent, Malivenji). This view is supported by the findings of the quantitative assessments which show a slight decline in the percentage of parents who believe that all children must be educated regardless of sex from 96.2% (baseline) to 96.0% (MTE). There is a higher proportion of male parents who are still opposed to girls' education. This is shown by the declining percentage of male parents who believe that all children must be educated regardless of sex from 97.3% (baseline) to 93.3% (MTE). Some male parents believe that they lose out by educating their daughters because when the daughter gets married she belongs to her husband's family and all the benefits from her education will go to that family. This issue has been further discussed below (sub section 3.1.4.1).

These conflicting opinions imply that there are still strong gender issues related to traditional customs that have to be sorted out in these communities if the majority of the parents have to support adolescent girls' education. These further imply that while the current strategies have made significant impact in changing the attitudes of adolescent girls, there still a lot which needs to be done to change the attitudes of the majority of the parents, particularly the males.

3.1.3 Attitudes of members of the wider community

Apparently the project is influencing some changes in the attitudes of the members of the wider community. More and more stakeholders are beginning to appreciate the issues that affect adolescent girls and start playing some roles to address them. *"Many*

community members and teachers are concerned about issues affecting girls. For instance community policing, village heads now take action on girls concerns” (Adolescent girl, Gija). “At school teachers are now taking care of most of girls concerns” (adolescent girl, Gija). The tendency for parents to take their children to markets during school days seems to be reducing. “Nowadays parents do not take children to the market during school days” (adolescent girl, Malivenji).

However, there are still many people in the communities whose attitudes towards girls’ education have not changed. There are men who sexually or verbally harass girls on their way to or from school particularly the girls who look older or adolescent mothers going back to school. *“The community still perceive a girl after puberty as someone who is suppose to be somebody’s wife, not to still go to school” (adolescent boy, Malivenji).* Apparently the project interventions have not reached some of the people who interact with the girl children particularly members of the wider community. In Malivenji there is a centre where young men gather as they wait to be hired to load trucks with bricks. This group of young men often verbally abuse the older girls and adolescent mothers on their way to and back from school. There is need for special interventions to target this group so that they stop violating the rights of the adolescent girls.

“There were three girls who dropped out from school because of early pregnancies and marriages, they were encouraged to go back to school and they were taken back to school. All the time they are coming to school people mocked them, especially the group of young men who wait to be hired to load bricks on tracks. The three girls have been forced to drop out of school again, running away from shame of being mocked every day” (Female church elder, Malivenji).

These findings imply that the project strategies have not reached some of the members of the wider community who have influence on the adolescent girl’s education. These will continue to harass the adolescent girls and enable some of the girls drop out of school or even cause some psychological or physical harm on the girls.

3.1.4 Gender Stereotypes and discrimination of adolescent girls

This sub sections provides some statistics, which show the magnitude of change in the attitudes of both parents and adolescents.

3.1.4.1 Changes in parental attitudes towards adolescent girls’ education

Somehow, for all the views considered, there was an overall increase in the proportion of parents discriminating against adolescent girls’ education as follows:

a) The percentage of parents who believed that it is more important for a boy than a girl to finish secondary school increased from 15.0% (baseline) to 16.9% (MTE). The percentage of male parents who agreed with this discriminatory view increased from 11.0% (baseline) to 22.2% (MTE), while that for female parents decreased from 17.1% (baseline) to 12.5% (MTE).

b) The percentage of all parents who believe that if there are not enough resources boys should have preference of schooling increased from 7.5% (baseline) to 10.9% (MTE). Similarly, the percentage of male parents with this discriminatory view

increased from 5.5% (baseline) to 17.8% (MTE) while that of female parents decreased from 8.6% (baseline) to 5.4% (MTE).

c) The overall percentage of both male and female parents who believed that in a marriage it is better if the man has more education increased from 16.0% (baseline) to 23.8% (MTE). The percentage increase in male parents with this view was from 13.7% (baseline) to 31.1% (MTE), while that for female parents was from 17.1% (MTE) to 17.9% (MTE) (Annex 1).

In conclusion, these findings agree with qualitative assessments above (sub section 3.1.2) and imply that there is still generally an increasing trend of male parents discriminating against adolescent girls' education

These findings can be explained by the fact that both Malivenji and Gija communities are predominantly patrilineal with Ngoni tribal influence. Traditionally the Ngoni society is male dominated and often a son is highly regarded in the family as '*mwenekaya*' meaning 'owner of the home'. The daughter does not belong to her father's family when she gets married; she belongs to her husband's family. Her father will only benefit from *lobola* (dowry) paid by her husband. The men therefore opt to invest in their sons' education hoping to get more support in future. For the daughters men are more interested to see them get married so that they benefit from *lobola* (dowry).

In reality however, there are probably more married women providing financial support to their biological parents than men. After all, when a man gets educated and starts working, he does not stay in his father's villages he goes away where the work is. Similarly when a woman gets educated she does not stay in her husband's village she too goes where the work is.

The results show that on the other hand, female parents have responded more positively towards interventions to address discrimination of adolescent girls' education. Probably having been victims of this discrimination themselves, they have felt the pinch and are able to see the importance of ensuring that the girls' rights to education are fulfilled. The women, both the educated (role models) and those in the village (mother groups), are therefore in better positions to fight for the adolescent girl's right to education.

3.1.4.2 Changes in adolescents' attitudes towards adolescent girls' education

Overall, there was generally an increase in the percentage of both adolescent boys and girls for all the views that discriminate against adolescent girls' education except one for girls. This implies that the project had not done enough to transform the discriminatory attitudes towards adolescent girls' education. The comparisons between the baseline and MTE values for these views are as follows:

- The percentage of adolescent boys who believed that it is more important for a boy than a girl to finish secondary school increased from 24.1% (baseline) to 25.8% (MTE) while that for adolescent girls decreased from 12.2 (baseline) to 9.1 (MTE).
- The percentage of adolescents with the view that male students should be given preference, if resources at school are not enough increased from 13.8% (baseline) to 19.6% (MTE) and 4.3% (baseline) to 11.4% (MTE) for adolescent boys and girls respectively.

- The percentage of adolescent boys with the view that in a marriage, it is best if the man has more education than the woman increased from 20.7% (baseline) to 30.3% (MTE) and from 12.2% (baseline) to 13.6% (MTE) for adolescent girls.

In conclusion, just like adult males and females, there was an increasing trend for adolescent boys and girls to discriminate against adolescent girls' education. This too is a reflection of how the family, particularly male members perceive a female child compared to a male child. Adolescent boys share the views of their fathers of discriminating against adolescent girls' education. Unlike their mothers, however, adolescent girls agree with these negative stereotypes and have put themselves in inferior positions compared to their male counterparts. This implies that these girls are not aware of their own rights particularly in relation to their cultural set up.

There was generally an increase in the percentage of both adolescent boys and girls that supported views that promote equality of adolescent boys and girls in school class as the comparison of baseline and MTE values for these views summarised below show:

- The percentage of adolescent boys with the view that my teacher should give equal attention to boys/girls increased from 83.7% (baseline) to 88.5% (MTE) while that for adolescent girls decreased from 79.6% (baseline) to 83.3% (MTE).
- The percentage of the adolescent boys with a view that girls take leadership in activities in the classroom increased from 87.2% (baseline) to 90.4% (MTE) while the percentage of adolescent girls with a similar view decreased from 93.8% (baseline) to 83.3% (MTE).
- The percentage of adolescents with a view that girls receive same rewards as boys increased from 88.1% (baseline) to 98.1 (MTE) and from 85.8% (baseline) to 85.7% (MTE) for adolescent boys and girls respectively.
- There was an increase in the percentage of both adolescent boys and girls with a view that a teacher encourages boys and girls to talk from 83.3% (baseline) to 98.1% (MTE) and 85.8% (baseline) to 97.6% (MTE) respectively.

These results show that in class, there is a neutral arena for adolescent boys and girls where male and female parents do not exist, both adolescent boys and girls are able to see the importance of treating adolescent girls as equals to adolescent boys. In the earlier discussion above however, the same adolescent boys and girls discriminate against adolescent girls' education in the context of the family and society as a whole. This shows that the concept of 'the rights of adolescent girls to education' is not yet clear in the minds of both adolescent boys and girls particularly in the context of the family and society as a whole.

In addition, these findings probably are a reflection that the project has done more work to promote the rights of the adolescent girls in the context of the school environment.

3.1.4.3 Changes in attitudes about and perceptions of violence in schools amongst adults

Comparing baseline values with MTE values overall the percentage of adults who would tolerate a boy hitting a girl if insulted decreased from 98.1% (Baseline) to 91.1% (MTE). This decrease was from 100% (baseline) to 93.3% (MTE) for adult males and from 97.1% (baseline) to 89.3% (MTE) for adult females. In other words, there was an increase in the promotion of both adult males and females who recognised physical violence by boys on adolescent girls as an issue.

Overall the percentage of adults who would report the teachers who hit their child increased from 17.8% (baseline) to 49.5% (MTE). This increase was from 15.1% (baseline) to 44.5% (MTE) for male adults and 19.1% (baseline) to 53.6% (MTE) for female adults. In other, words there was a reduction in the proportion of adult males and females who would sympathise with a teacher who physically abuses a child. This probably happened because of increased awareness amongst parents that corporal punishment is an act of physical abuse on children. Historically in Malawi, corporal punishment was commonly used not only in schools but also in homes where it is tolerated.

However, the overall percentage of adults who would report a school employee making sexual approaches to their children decreased from 7.5% (baseline) to 2.0% (MTE). This constituted a decrease from 2.7% (baseline) to 2.2% (MTE) for male adults and from 9.9% (baseline) to 1.8% (MTE) for female adults. This implies more adults would sympathise with a teacher who makes sexual approaches to their children. In other words they would tolerate sexual harassment on their girl child. The results of the qualitative assessment show that when a girl is harassed sexually there is a general tendency to blame her for being responsible either by not dressing properly or having displayed some behaviour which seduced the perpetrator. Probably parents opt not to report a teacher making sexual approaches to their children for the sake of protecting the integrity of their daughters otherwise they would become the centre of ridicule.

The overall percentage of adults with a view that teachers who hit children should lose the right to teach increased from 50.9% (baseline) to 68.3% (MTE); while the percentage for adult men increased from 53.4% (baseline) to 66.7% (MTE), the percentage for women increased from 49.6% (baseline) to 69.6% (MTE).

The overall percentage of adults with a view that if a teacher hits my child it is probably because my child deserves it, decreased from 56.1% (baseline) to 40.6% (MTE). The decrease in the percentage of male adults was from 52.1% (baseline) to 24.4% (MTE) while that for adult female was from 58.2% (baseline) to 53.6% (MTE). This implies that the proportion of adult males and females who would not tolerate acts of violence by teachers on their children decreased.

In conclusion, the adult males and females are beginning to recognise the various forms of violence on adolescent girls and boys as issues that need to be dealt with. However, the proportion of these adults who have discriminatory attitudes towards adolescent girls' education is still on the higher side. There is also a tendency for these adults to tolerate some of the acts of violence and sympathise with the perpetrators at the expense of the rights of the adolescents.

3.1.4.4 Changes in attitudes about and perceptions of violence in schools amongst adolescents

The percentage of adolescent boys that felt safe in schools declined from 90.7% (baseline) to 86.3% (MTE) while that for girls increased from 82.1% (baseline) to 100% (MTE). The decrease in the percentage of boys who felt safe in school can be attributed to physical abuse from fellow boys, which was high and verbal abuse mostly from teachers, which was on the increase. Apparently when boys are physically abused by fellow boys, sometimes when the victims report to teachers, the perpetrators continue to threaten them. *“If peers abuse us, we don’t report because we are not protected, hence, if we report we end up suffering more”* (adolescent boy Malivenji).

Adolescent girls mostly suffered from sexual harassment and verbal abuse. Qualitative assessment indicated that there was significant reduction in cases of sexual harassment in schools. This might have contributed to the increase in the percentage of girls who felt safe in schools.

The percentage of adolescent boys who would report to authorities if a teacher hit a child declined from 74.7% (baseline) to 42.3% (MTE); while that of adolescent girls declined from 84.3% (baseline) to 57.1% (MTE). Probably the percentage of adolescents who would report to authorities if a teacher hit a child declined because there is tendency for some teachers to threaten the children that they would deal with them if they reported. *“Some teachers threaten us that... if we report him to anyone he will make sure that we are dealt with, or dismissed from school first before he is punished...”* (adolescent boy Malivenji). In addition sometimes the children do not bother to report to authorities if a teacher abuses a child because no action is taken if they do so. *“A teacher was fondling a school girl and she reported the matter to the school administration. No action was taken by the administration”* (adolescent boy Malivenji)

The percentage of adolescent boys who agree/strongly agree with the view that teachers who hit children should lose the right to teach increased from 28.7% (baseline) to 69.2% (MTE) while that of adolescent girls increased from 35.7% (baseline) to 81.0% (MTE).

The percentage of adolescent boys who agree/strongly agree with the view that if a teacher hits a child, it is because the child deserves it, declined from 26.4% (baseline) to 9.6% (MTE) while the percentage of adolescent girls increased from 23.5% (baseline) to 42.9% (MTE).

In conclusion, the declining percentage of adolescent boys who felt safe in school implies that there are still serious issues regarding violence of adolescent boys in schools that need to be addressed. In addition, declining percentage of both adolescent boys and girls who would report a teacher who hits a child is a serious situation that needs to be addressed because it is happening because either some teachers are threatening the adolescents if they report to their parents or authorities do not take action on reported cases.

3.2 How has the programme worked to improve girls' and boys' experience of education?

To answer this question, the evaluation tried to identify factors which have changed in the school environment and associated contributors to these changes. The analyses also look at how the changes in the school environment affect enrolment and completion of adolescent girls in the lower and upper secondary school. Analyses of qualitative data identified the following key positive changes, which have occurred in the school environment: declining trend of use of corporal punishment by teachers, reduction in sexual harassment, increasing adoption of learner-centred approaches by teachers and establishment of organisational structures that facilitate participation of adolescents in decision making and accountability as well as school based advocacy activities.

3.2.1 Reduction in use of corporal punishment and abuse of learners

Both adolescent boys and girls reported that teachers are increasingly avoiding use of corporal punishment. They have observed that teachers have stopped beating learners or using excessively tough punishments. *“There is a great change in the conduct of teachers on their attitude towards learners. They are no longer using physical means of punishments like beating or heavy punishments; instead they just talk to us...”* (Adolescent boy, Gija).

Teachers have stopped sending learners to do private work in their homes or gardens. *“Teachers have stopped abusing their powers by sending learners to do work for their personal benefit”* (adolescent girl, Malivenji).

It is clear that these positive developments have created conducive environment that attracts adolescents to schools and enables them work harder. Adolescent children however observed that while corporal punishment was disappearing, some of the teachers have resorted to verbal abuse. *“...verbal abuse is on the rise in our school as this is the only way teachers punish us”* (adolescent boy, Malivenji). Some teachers still give tough punishments. *“Some teachers are deliberately violating children’s right by giving tough punishments...”* (female teacher, Malivenji).

The teachers too, alleged that some of the children have taken advantage of the interventions to promote rights to become unruly. *“We are facing huge challenges on how to discipline unruly students as these rights that Plan and its partners are promoting are over protecting learners”* (female teacher, Malivenji). Some of the adolescents agree with this observation. *“The more we are being taught of our rights, the more we are becoming rude towards our teachers, like coming to class while drunk and challenging a teacher claiming it is our right”*(Adolescent boy, Malivenji).

The continuation of verbal abuse by teachers as well as the display of rude behaviour by adolescent children, hiding behind ‘rights’, implies that the concept of rights is not being properly institutionalised in order to create a school environment that is conducive to both adolescent children and teachers.

3.2.2 Reduced sexual harassment

The adolescents reported about reduced incidences of sexual harassment particularly for adolescent girls in schools. *“Sexual harassment has been reduced in schools; we don’t hear more incidents on males, both teachers and peers touching girls’ buttocks and breasts”* (adolescent boy, Gija). *“Incidents of violence for girls have changed (declined) ever since one man was imprisoned for committing an act of sexual violence against a girl”* (adolescent girl, Malivenji). Even traditional leaders have observed some improvements. *“Nowadays we don’t hear our girls complaining about teachers ...abusing girls sexually than before which mean that there is change for the better”* (traditional leader, Gija).

Some of the adolescents attribute reduction in sexual harassment to changes in the way learners and teachers relate. *“I think there is now a social distance between male teachers and female students”* (adolescent boy, Malivenji). According to a 16 year adolescent in Malivenji interventions by Plan and other organisations to promote children’s rights in schools, *“have helped to reduce sexual harassment”*. In addition *“each school has a child protection officer to which all young people can report all incidents of violence, abuse or harassment”*. *This makes most of us feel protected* (adolescent boy, Gija).

However there is still some form of sexual harassment in schools mostly perpetrated by boys. *“The violence faced in schools is mainly sexual and physical type from fellow students”* (adolescent girl, Gija). Apparently, the school management and teachers are effectively addressing the incidences of sexual harassment by boys that occur from time to time. *“A boy proposed me when I denied his proposal, he started beating me whenever we met until I reported the matter to my teacher and he was punished”*. (adolescent girl Malivenji).

Furthermore, the girls continue to be at high risk of being sexually abused on their way to or from school. *“..children are vulnerable to sexual abuses such as rape because they walk long distances to/from school. Nothing has changed children are at risk of being raped or sexually abused”* (female parent, Malivenji).

Some stakeholders such as health workers and traditional leaders argue that sexual harassment continue to persist because some of the key stakeholders have not been proactive in trying to address it. *“Very little is being done by parents, community leaders and religious to address the issues”*, (health worker, Malivenji). In addition there is still some tendency to blame the victims of sexual harassment. *“....when a woman has been sexually harassed, we normally assume she is the cause, ...by poor dressing, being alone or even question where she was....”* (health worker, Malivenji).

While sexual harassment in the school environment seems to be on the decline, adolescent girls are still at high risk on their way to and from school as well as within their communities. Sexual harassment, regardless of where it occurs – schools, on the way to or from school, or even homes; affects adolescent girls’ education.

3.2.3 Increasing adoption of learner-centred approaches by teachers

There is increasing tendency for teachers to use learner-centred approaches and to become more responsive to the needs of adolescent children. There are several

examples which demonstrate this claim: a) some teachers have adopted some new practices in class in favour of adolescent girls. *“Girls are allowed to answer questions while seated to allow them participate freely in class as they sometimes fail to do so”* (Adolescent boy, Gija); b) Instead of the common top-down approaches, there has been *“increased cooperation between teachers and pupils leading to increased pass rates”* (Adolescent girl, Gija); c) *“At school teachers are now taking care of most of girls concerns”* d) *“FAWEMA gave us some pads to use during monthly menstrual cycles so that we should not fail to attend classes because of menstrual cycles. Nowadays teachers are becoming serious with class putting much effort on it”* (adolescent girl, Malivenji).

Not only are the teachers changing, but also the adolescent boys and girls. *“a number of students especially boys now follow the rules of proper dressing when at school”* (adolescent girl, Gija). *“Children are now becoming focussed on school because they are now realising the importance of school. There is no much absenteeism and drop outs. They want to go far with school and achieve their objectives”* (adolescent girl, Malivenji).

These positive changes are attributable to the interventions on promotion of children’s rights and education of the girl child by Plan and FAWEMA. *“Plan has been advocating for equal treatment of girl and boy children within the community and schools”* (adolescent girl, Gija).

3.2.4 Establishment of organisational structures.

The project has supported formation of organisational structures in the schools (Speak Out clubs) which are crucial for the involvement of the adolescent boys and girls in management of issues that affect their education. These clubs create platforms for the adolescent girls and boys to discuss a wide range of issues such as those that relate to sexual harassment, equal treatment of boys and girls in schools, abuse of adolescents by teachers, creation of environment conducive for adolescent mothers to go back to school and issues related to the rights of the adolescents in general.

The clubs use drama, songs and poems to promote the rights of adolescent boys and girls, as well as pick up issues affecting adolescents and refer them to relevant authorities for action. In particular the clubs have also used drama, poem and songs as tools to address the issue of stigmatisation and discrimination of the adolescent mothers when they re-enrol in schools.

The club representatives have been having formal meetings with SMC, headmasters and mother groups to present issues affecting them so that decisions are made at this level to address these issues.

The clubs also offer counselling services. *“Most girls who are members of Tuseme clubs have been trained as counsellors to help other girls to speak out when they experience any form of violence”* (adolescent boy, Gija).

In addition, clubs have provided mechanisms for the adolescents particularly adolescent mothers to report to relevant authorities any acts of harassment. *“...formation of Speak Out Clubs has helped to improve environment in schools such*

that they know what to do when they are harassed...” (adolescent boy, Gija). *“These clubs identify problems which affect the girls and solve them through drama, poems and songs”* (adolescent boy, Malivenji).

Mother groups have been conducting campaigns in the communities targeting parents, community leadership and members of the wider community on the importance of adolescent mothers to go back to school. These campaigns motivate the girls to go back to school as well as the parents or husbands to allow them to go back to school despite existing challenges such as – who takes care of the child and stigmatisation in both communities and schools. *“FAWEMA counsellors (mother groups) are helping greatly in re-enrolment of young mothers after delivery. They have also withdrawn some girls who were forced into marriage by parents and sent them back to school”* (adolescent boy, Malivenji).

However adolescent mothers continue to face more challenges when they are re-enrolled in schools. First in some cases they are harassed on their way to or from school. *“On the way to school, we pass through a place where young men gather to be picked for piece works. This place is so horrible to girls as they are chased, jeered at or get insulted ... you are just hiding behind school...you are supposed to be married only that men are not marrying you....you are just running away from the responsibilities of taking care of your child. Most girls stop going to school”*(female church elder, Malivenje).

There have been cases of adolescent mothers dropping out from school again after they had been supported to re-enrol. *“Plan introduced a system of sending dropouts back to school. It is unfortunate that some of these mothers did not take this opportunity serious”* (female parent, Malivenji).

As already discussed above, there are several factors that need to be done to support an adolescent mother if she has to continue with education – the parents have to allow her go back to school as well as provide moral support, the parents have to put in place a mechanism for caring for the adolescent mother’s baby, and the parents have to provide financial and material support for her education. Within the school environment fellow learners and teachers need to be aware of the ills of stigmatisation and discrimination of adolescent mothers. The adolescent mother also needs to be protected from any form of abuse through enforcement of regulations. The school environment needs to have psychosocial facilities.

3.3 How effectively has the programme delivered sexual and reproductive health rights (SRHR) information and services?

To answer this question, the analyses focused on examining the views of adolescents on SRHR information and services and their associated benefits, views of parents, teachers and members of wider community on SRHR information and services for adolescent children.

3.3.1 What are adolescent girls’ and boys’ views on what is being delivered?

Conversations with adolescents indicate that there is high level of awareness on SRHR information amongst the adolescents in the project area. These adolescents

access SRHR information from different sources – they are taught in class as part of the school curriculum, through training provided by Plan, through sharing information in youth clubs as well as through health facilities in their areas. *“We are taught in class and we were once taught by plan at our school about SRHR issues, and we have youth clubs where issues to do with SRHR are discussed”* (adolescent girl, Malivenji). In addition, through youth clubs in schools, some of the adolescents are actively involved not only in discussions of SRHR information for their own benefits, but also dissemination of the information to fellow youths in schools and communities. The information that the girls access on SRHR helps them to make informed decisions about how to prevent early pregnancies and sexually transmitted disease infections. *“We were taught about how to prevent STIs and early pregnancy”*, (adolescent girl, Gija). The girls also learn about safe motherhood, family planning and how they can maintain good sexual and reproductive health. *“I have been involved in Safe motherhood session in a village meeting where we learnt that we need to be mature enough to become pregnancy so that we can have all the potential to deliver safely”* (adolescent girl, Malivenji).

3.3.2 What are parents’ views on SRHR for adolescent children?

Parents have mixed views about the way SRHR information is currently disseminated to adolescent children. There are some parents who are of the view that children should not be exposed to all information about SRHR, as this enables them to start practicing sex at an earlier age. *“Some of the content of the messages on SRHR should be revised because it can be counterproductive i.e. teaching children how to use a condom can promote promiscuity”* (female parent, Gija).

Quantitatively the percentage of adults that agreed / strongly agreed that sex education encourages young people to have sex increased from 30.8% (baseline) to 31.6% (MTE). While the percentage of females that agreed that sex education encourages young people to have sex increased from 31.8 (baseline) to 37.5% (MTE), the percentage of male adults decreased from 28.8% (baseline) to 24.4% (MTE). These results agree with the findings from FGDs above

In reality however, even though the parents may censor the information provided to the children’ they (children) have many other means through which they access information on sex including through videos, television, magazines as well as through peers. Then, there are those parents who believe that the children should be openly exposed to SRHR information as early as possible as this is beneficial and enables the adolescents make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health. *“These days there is reduction in early pregnancies. Our daughters are able to go on with school until they finish; this is because they know about family planning services and they confidentially access the services”* (female parent, Gija). Even some of the traditional leaders, the custodians of traditional beliefs and customs are of the view that adolescents should be fully exposed to SRHR information: *“Sex education is very important for children, very good. It is better for the adolescent to have all the information so that they can be able to maintain healthy life through information given”*; (traditional leader, Gija).

3.3.3 What are teachers' views?

The idea of providing SRHR information and services to adolescent youths, not only by Plan but also through the school curriculum, is highly contentious amongst teachers and school managers, just as it is amongst parents. School managers believe that the promotion of SRHR information and services to adolescents was done prematurely before thorough consultation with all the stakeholders. The majority of teachers and school managers are of the view that it is not good for teachers to provide SRHR information and services to adolescent children in schools. They advance several reasons for this view:

a) Some say introducing SRHR information and services to adolescents through teachers would spark conflicts between school teachers/managers and parents/community as a whole as it lacks cultural sensitivity. *“Just imagine we are asked to provide sexual reproductive and family planning service in our lessons, i.e. I am asked to distribute condoms to adolescent, an act that will put us in conflict with the community we are serving”*; (school managers, Malivenji).

b) Some school managers and teachers argue that exposing adolescent boys and girls to SRHR information and services would enhance early sexual activities amongst adolescents. *“It is not proper to give sex education in school because culturally sex is sacred and for married people only... as a school we don't support giving SRHR information or service to adolescents... we have donation of condoms which we are supposed to distributed to learners on need basis but we are just keeping them in the locker...”* (school manager, Gija).

c) Others say it is taboo and embarrassing for teachers to talk about sex in front of adolescents: *“I don't agree, it is embarrassing on the side of the teacher to engage in dialogue with learners, as student will interpret it as what we do in our houses with our wife's”*. (male teacher, Malivenji). *“I can't manage to stand in front of adolescent and talk about sex and sexuality”* (female teacher, Malivenji). *“It is a taboo; let's not just adopt everything western, when are we going to learn to say no?”* (male teacher, Malivenji).

There are a few teachers who agree with the view that SRHR information and services should be provided to adolescents in schools. These too advance several reasons for doing so: a) *“Sexual and reproductive rights is important to learners because in reality, they are already involved in sexual activities, so if we provide them with information on reproductive health services it will help them to prevent HIV and early pregnancy”*; (female teacher, Gija); b) *“Learners should not get information from fellow learners, videos, radios and other materials, lets open up to them so they are not mislead”* (female teacher, Gija).

c) *“We should tell learners basic facts about sex and the factors that lead to it, even the dangers associated with early indulgence in sex”* (male teacher, Gija).

Sex education is part of the life-skills topic covered under the school curriculum. One wonders how this topic is delivered with these differences in opinions and beliefs amongst teachers and school managers. Other government sectors have also observed the challenges of promoting SRHR information and services amongst adolescents through teachers and school managers. *“We still have a long way for school teachers and managers to accept that sexual and reproductive health information and services be provided to learners despite overwhelming evidence through numbers of school going girls being impregnated every year”*; (health worker, Malivenji).

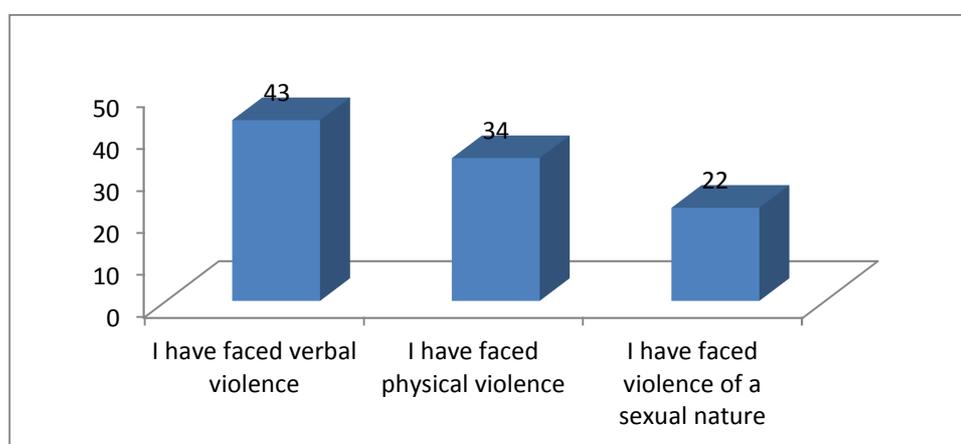
Unfortunately even amongst the health workers, this view of not exposing adolescent children to SRHR information and services is prevalent as the following opinion demonstrates: “When I am aware that am dealing with students I do not give them condoms I just advise them about abstinence” (health worker, Malivenji).

The controversy associated with the promotion of SRHR information and services to adolescent boys and girls indicates that more work needs to be done on how the parents, teachers and members of the wider community should approach interventions on SRHR for adolescent boys and girls. This shows that the strategies currently used for the promotion of SRHR amongst adolescents have not been widely accepted by all stakeholders and may therefore not yield the expected results.

3.3.4 What is the situation with respect to violence adolescent girls and boys face in schools?

The results of the blind voting exercise by adolescent boys and girls showed that verbal violence was the commonest form of violence affecting both adolescent boys and girls (Figure 1). This verbal violence is mostly committed by teachers and fellow adolescents.

Figure 1: Different forms of violence faced by adolescent boys and girls

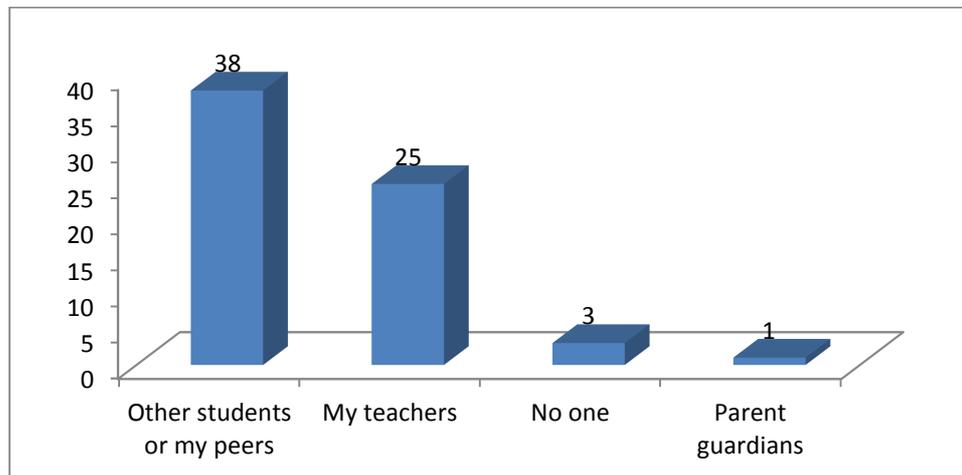


The second commonest form of violence was physical violence. This was most prevalent amongst adolescent boys; and violence of sexual nature was the third commonest form of violence. This was almost predominantly common amongst adolescent girls (Figure 2). Adolescent boys, teachers and other men including those the girls meet in their way to and from school and some of those they closely associate with in their homes were responsible for the violence of sexual nature.

“...there are still a lot of violence that take place within our campus and also on their way to school.... girls are being sexually harassed by boys sometimes even male teachers...” (school manager, Gija).

“...these act of sexual violence are perpetrated by the very close members of the family who are supposed to protect the children, example a father defiles her own daughter...” (school manager, Gija).

Figure 2: Who commits violence on adolescent boys and girls



The results of a blind voting exercise reveal that most of the violence on adolescent children is committed by fellow children. This is true for both adolescent boys and girls. “...when I denied his proposal, he started beating me whenever we met...” (adolescent girl, Malivenji). Teachers come second in terms of committing violence on both adolescent boys and girls (Figure 3).

As already discussed above, there has been some decrease in some form of violence that both adolescent boys and girls face. Apparently, the most prominent have been decline in use of corporal punishment by teachers on adolescents, particularly beating and sexual harassment.

3.4 Perceptions / knowledge of SRHR

The evaluation examines the perceptions of adolescent boys and girls as well as adult males and females.

3.4.1 Perceptions amongst adolescents on SRHR

The percentage of adolescent girls that knew about menstruation before their first period increased from 42% (baseline) to 43.3% (MTE). The percentage of adolescents who knew where to get HIV test increased from 50% (baseline) to 87.3% (MTE) for male adolescents but decreased from 63.1% (baseline) to 60.6% (MTE). Overall for 77.3% (MTE) of the adolescents knew where to go for HIV test.

The percentage of adolescents who knew where to get contraceptives increased from 25.5% (baseline) to 61.8% for male adolescents and from 15.7% (baseline) to 27.3% for female adolescents. Overall 48.9% (MTE) of the adolescents knew where to get contraceptives. The percentage of adolescents who cannot afford contraceptives

increased from 12.8% (baseline) to 36.4% (MTE) for male adolescents and that for female adolescents increased from 7.3% (baseline) to 15.2% (MTE). The overall percentage of adolescents who cannot afford contraceptives was 28.4% (MTE). As adolescents often do not earn any money but depend on their parents / guardians for all their needs, and that some parents are against any SRHR information or services provided to adolescents; the percentage of the adolescents who said that they cannot afford SRHR services might have increased because of increased realisation by adolescents that their sponsors were not ready to pay for SRHR services.

Overall 14.1% (MTE) of the adolescents strongly disagreed/disagreed that SRH be taught at school. The percentage of male adolescents that strongly disagreed / disagreed that SHR be taught at school increased from 12.2% (baseline) to 14.6% (MTE) while the percentage of female adolescents that disagreed with the view that SHR be taught at school declined from 15.5% (baseline) to 13.7% (MTE).

The overall percentage of adolescents who disagree that parents should support access to SHR services was 23.2% (MTE). The percentage of adolescent boys who disagree that parents should support access to SRH services decreased from 33.8% (baseline) to 23.6% (MTE), while the percentage for adolescent girls declined from 35.5% (baseline) to 22.7% (MTE).

Overall 88.8% (MTE) of the adolescents indicated that their school had SRHR classes. The percentage of male adolescents whose schools had classes increased from 86.7% (baseline) to 96.3% (MTE); while that for female adolescents increased from 73.2% (baseline) to 79.5% (MTE).

Overall the percentage of adolescents who had attended SRHR classes was 97.7% (MTE). The percentage of adolescents who had attended SRHR classes increased from 89.2% (baseline) to 100% (MTE) for male adolescents; while for the female adolescents the percentage increased from 87.5% (baseline) to 94.3% (MTE). The classes were both school based as well as those provided by the project.

In conclusion, amongst adolescents, the key issues that are yet to be addressed regarding access to sexual and reproductive health information and services include affordability of contraceptives, inadequate support from parents on issues of SRHR, and unresolved issues of who should provide information and services.

3.4.2 Perceptions / knowledge of SRHR amongst adults

Overall the percentage of adults that agreed / strongly agreed that SRH should be taught at school increased from 69.5% (baseline) to 76.2% (MTE). The increase in the percentage for male adults was from 77.8% (baseline) to 86.7% (MTE) while for female adults the increase was from 65.2% (baseline) to 67.9% (MTE).

Overall the percentage of adults who don't want their daughters to be taught sex education at school decreased from 29% (baseline) to 27.6% (MTE). However the percentage of adult men who do not want their daughters to be taught sex education at school increased from 23.3% (baseline) to 25.6% (MTE); while that of female adults also declined from 31.9% (baseline) to 29.1% (MTE).

Overall the percentage of adults that said I would give consent to my daughter(s) to access family planning services increased from 14% (baseline) to 32.7% (MTE). The percentage of adult men who said I would give consent to my daughter(s) to access family planning services increased from 14.5% (baseline) to 32.6% (MTE); while the percentage of female adults increased from 13.8% (baseline) to 32.7% (MTE).

The percentage of adults who did not want their son(s) to be taught sex education at school increased from 29% (baseline) to 31% (MTE). While the percentage for adult men decreased from 23.3% (baseline) to 22.7% (MTE) the percentage for adult women increased from 31.9% (baseline) to 37.5% (MTE).

The overall percentage of adults who would give consent to their son(s) to access family planning services increased from 14% (baseline) to 29.9% (MTE). The percentage of adult men increased from 14.5% (baseline) to 27.2% (MTE), while the percentage for adult females increased from 13.8% (baseline) to 30.4% (MTE).

In conclusion, there are still controversies amongst adult men and women regarding providing adolescent boys and girls' sex education as well as allowing them to access SRHR information and services. These controversies have to be resolved if the SRHR for adolescents have to be assured. Nevertheless while more parents believed that sex education encourages adolescents to have sex, somehow increasingly both male and female parents want adolescents to be taught sex education at school and the percentage of those willing to give consent for their adolescent children to access SRHR is also increasing. This implies that sex education and SRHR service provision to adolescents are perceived as essential.

3.5 Awareness of Plan activities, and participation in Plan activities.

Overall 15% (MTE) of the adolescents comprising 21.8% (MTE) of the male adolescents and 6.7% (MTE) of the female adolescents in the project areas indicated that they had not heard of the Plan activities.

An overall 15% (MTE) of the adolescents comprising 16.4% (MTE) of the male adolescents and 13.3% (MTE) of the female adolescents indicated that they had heard of the Plan activities but know nothing about them. 55% (MTE) of the adolescents comprising 60% (MTE) of the male adolescents and 48.9% (MTE) of the female adolescents indicated that they has heard of and know some of the Plan activities. Overall 15% (MTE) of the adolescents comprising 1.8% (MTE) males and 31.1% of the females indicated that they had heard of and know a lot about Plans' activities.

Amongst adults, only 3% (MTE) comprising 4.4% (MTE) of males and 1.8% (MTE) females indicated that they had not heard of the Plan activities. Overall 19.8% (MTE) of the adults constituting 24.4% (MTE) of the males and 16.1% (MTE) indicated that they had heard of but know nothing about the Plan activities. 57.4% (MTE) of adults constituting 66.7% (MTE) of males and 50% (MTE) of females have heard of and know some things about Plan's activities. Overall 19.8% (MTE) constituting 4.4% (MTE) males and 32.1% (MTE) of females indicated that they heard of and know a lot about Plan activities.

3.6 What policies have been implemented or changed?

The government of Malawi has adopted several policies and strategies that promote access to quality education by both adolescent boys and girls. The baseline study identified three key Government policies / strategies which are relevant for the promotion of education amongst the adolescent boys and girls. These include the following:

- a) The 50-50 selection policy (strategy) to ensure that equal numbers of boys and girls access education.
- b) Gender sensitive subjects introduced through Life Skills as a subject that tackles issues on HIV/AIDS, gender and special needs in Primary and Secondary schools as well as Teacher Training Colleges.
- c) Deployment policy (training and recruitment of more teachers)

The findings of the MTE show that the project is contributing to implementation of all the three policies outlined above as well as one of the government education strategies in the Malawi National Strategy for Sustainable Development.

In addition, the project is having some influence on government policies / strategies particularly in terms of formal representation of adolescents in the SMC.

3.6.1 Government policy / strategy that allows girls to re-enrol in schools after dropping out due to pregnancy, marriage or any other reasons.

The project is directly contributing to the implementation of this government policy / strategy through campaigns by mother groups and Speak Out clubs to encourage adolescent girls who dropped out of school because of early pregnancies or marriage or any other reasons to go back to school. *“FAWEMA counsellors (mother groups) are helping greatly in re enrolment of young mothers after delivery. They have also withdrawn some girls who were forced into marriage by parents and sent them back to school”* (adolescent boy, Malivenji).

3.6.2 Mainstreaming of gender sensitive subjects into school curriculum

The project is also directly contributing to the implementation of the Government policy which promotes mainstreaming of gender sensitive subjects mainly through the Life Skills as a subject, which has been integrated into the school curriculum and tackles issues on HIV/AIDS, SRHR, gender and special needs in primary and secondary schools and teacher training colleges. In this regard the project is using a wide range of strategies to promote SRHR, interventions to deal with issues of violence, sexual harassment, stigma and discrimination, gender equality in the delivery of education services and many more. *“There are girls clubs that have been formed to help girls voice out their issues and let them be known to the community. The club is known as TUSEME. The group patron brings the issues to the staff member and appropriate action is taken”* (adolescent boy, Gija).

3.6.3 Promote education and outreach focused on children, as agents of behavioural change (Malawi National Strategy for Sustainable Development 2004).

The project has been supporting establishment of youth clubs which play very active roles of promoting the rights of the adolescent children in the schools and

communities. Some of the adolescents have been trained as counsellors to offer counselling services to adolescents. *“A certain standard 6 girl of 15 years old from this school planned to get married to a boy aged 17 from the same school but due to intervention by Tuseme club ... she is now still at school continuing with her education”* (adolescent girl Malivenji). *“I have benefitted a lot being in these groups because I have learnt so many things from my colleagues in terms of their experiences in life, attitudes and behaviour of people”*; (adolescent girl, Malivenji).

3.6.4 Deployment policy (training and recruitment of more teachers)

Girls from one school with support from mother groups visited the DEMs to lobby for additional teachers including female teachers. The DEM managed to allocate two teachers to the school - one male and one female. The female teacher refused to go to the school because she felt it was in the remote area. Most schools in remote rural areas do not have or have few female teachers because the female teachers refuse to live in these areas. Plan needs to advocate for an innovative strategy on the part of the government to ensure that female teachers stay in rural areas. This could include special conditions of service for these teachers.

3.6.5 Project influence on Government Policies

The Government Policy and strategies have elaborated mechanisms for participation of adolescents in the decentralisation structures. By advocating for formal representation of Speak Out clubs in SMC, PTAs, mother group etc, and other duty and authority bearers, the project is influencing policy by enabling adolescents to participate in decision making processes.

3.7 Review findings on decision making and involvement of adolescent girls and boys

The project seeks to put in place a mechanism that enables adolescent girls/boys groups to influence decision making at school level, local and national government level. At the school level, the project is in a process of facilitating formation and training of youth Speak Out (*Tuseme*) clubs. Through these clubs as well as through sending some representatives to the school management forums, adolescent boys and girls try to influence decision making within the school management (head masters, teachers, school management committee (SMC) and parent teacher associations). *“...one boy from the school represents other students in school management committee meetings”* (adolescent girl, Gija).

As discussed above, these clubs create platforms for the adolescents to discuss issues. The clubs isolate issues discussed in these platforms and take them to the relevant authorities – headmasters, SMC etc. *“we ask adults and teachers if we have an issue or a message to present to them or our fellow students on what our group is all about”* (adolescent girl, Malivenji). At Malivenji, the Speak Out clubs raised an issue with a mother group that the adolescent girls did not have appropriate facilities for menstrual hygiene. This issue was first discussed with the mother group and was later taken to the SMC. The SMC was able to mobilise the community to organise bricks and construct a special latrine with facilities for menstrual hygiene for adolescent girls.

During the time of the MTE, construction of the super structure of the latrine had almost been completed.

The project used the Girl Boy Friendly School Monitoring Tool (GBFSMT) accountability tool in 8 schools to enable the adolescents and key stakeholders particularly parents and teachers assess their school in different areas such as violence and access to education. Together the stakeholders identified the issues and came up with action plans for addressing the issues identified.

At national level and international levels, the project has been facilitating engagement of young people in the Global Youth Speakers Network. The project also sent delegates to forums such as the Strategic planning meeting co-hosted by Girls Not Brides and Graca Marcel Trust which drew together experts on issues affecting women and girls and other organizations interested in engaging on girls' development from across Sub-Saharan Africa. The delegates were able to share information and best practices at these meetings and discussions on how to better work together towards ending child marriage in Sub-Saharan Africa.

At school level these initiatives have brought about some changes particularly in influencing the behaviour of teachers and adolescents. *"I am a head girl in my school, adults do listen to the decision we have made and agreed as a group"* (adolescent girl Malivenji).

At community level too, the youth clubs have influenced some decision making. *"There is reduction in force marriages at this time comparing to the past just because people listen to what we are preaching to them for girls education continuity"* (adolescent girl Malivenji). *"At church people like church elders are able listen to decisions made by youth committee"* (adolescent girl Malivenji).

In conclusion the project has made some efforts to enable adolescent boys and girls participate in decision making at national / international, within the local community as well as within the school. The adolescents have made significant contribution within the school, as well as influenced some change at community level.

4 Major recommendations for the BS4L Programme for Malawi

4.1. What is innovative?

In the approach adopted by the project, when a Speak Out club is formed and trained, it convenes a platform for adolescents where they discuss various issues which affect them. The Speak Club tables these issues at the forum of the authority or duty bearers who are supposed to act on the issues. This system seems to work very well in the school set up where the Speak Up club would want to influence school management decisions. The forum for adolescents created by the Speak Up club and the ability of the club to engage the authority and duty bearers is an innovation. These platforms empower adolescents and create conduits for them to participate proactively not only in school governance systems, but also in the community. In so doing the adolescents are in a better position to influence and shape their environment in both the schools and the community they live. *"Some students become rude claiming they have their*

rights. We are sometimes challenged openly while teaching in class” (male teacher, Malivenji). The complaint from a teacher above may sound negative, it however shows that the project has enabled the adolescents to stand up and openly fight for their interests. If more of this ‘power’ can come out from the adolescents particularly the females, and be channelled responsibly, the adolescents would effectively challenge any oppressive norms and attitudes that currently exist in the schools and communities and fight most of the issues that currently affect their education such as sexual harassment and other forms of abuse.

By adopting an integrated approach – that brings together gender responsive promotion of education for adolescents alongside gender responsive promotion of SRHR, as well as gender responsive interventions for dealing with gender based violence, as well as promoting engagement of the adolescents in the school and community governance systems. The project is trying to address real issues; and root causes of the problems that affect adolescents’ education from different angles. However, there is one outstanding issue that the project is not adequately addressing – household poverty. This comes out as one of the key challenges that limit most adolescents to enrol and continue with their lower and upper secondary school education.

The strategies used to promote gender responsive SRHR amongst the adolescents are an innovation. The interventions used enable the adolescents to openly engage with their teachers and parents on sex education, which is often considered as taboo. Sexual and reproductive health problems such as sexually transmitted infections, early pregnancies, menstrual hygiene, etc have not only prevented adolescents particularly girls to complete their education, but also some of them have contributed to premature death.

The strategy to combine support to mother groups to motivate more adolescent mothers to go back to school and the establishment of Speak Out clubs in the schools, is an innovation. This approach does not only motivate the adolescent mothers to go back to school, but it also creates a favourable environment for them to remain in school by addressing their psychosocial needs through counselling services offered by Speak Out clubs, as well as trying to deal with issues of stigma and discrimination by fellow learners and teachers.

4.2 What progress is being made towards expected results? What explanation does the data offer for any variances?

The findings of both qualitative and quantitative analyses show that the project has made some progress in some areas. There are also several challenges which affect the realisation of the expected results. The following is an outline of some of the progress made and the challenges that still exist.

4.2.1 Attitudes towards adolescent girls’ education

a) Progress made

There is some evidence that the project has motivated adolescent girls i) to attach more value to their education and start working harder and remain in school until they

complete their education; ii) to enable adolescent girls who dropped out of school to re-enrol.

b) Challenges

The following are the key challenges faced by adolescent girls to enrol and complete their secondary education:

- There is a relatively large proportion of adult men and women who have discriminatory attitudes towards adolescent girls' education.
- Some of the adolescent girls may not enrol in upper secondary classes (forms 1 and 2) because their parents / guardians are unable to pay for school fees and provide all the other materials required by the girls at school such as appropriate clothing and writing material.
- In some of the communities such as Malivenji, the day secondary school is too far for the adolescent girls and boys to walk to and from every day. For some of the families which do not have financial resources to send their children to two private secondary schools nearby – Star and Rafiki; it will be difficult for the children to enrol in forms 1 and 2. Some may end up dropping out of school.

4.2.2 Creation of environment conducive for adolescent girls to study in schools

a) Progress made

The school environment is becoming increasingly conducive for the adolescents because of the following i) reduction in the use of corporal punishment ii) reducing incidences of sexual harassment particularly for adolescent girls in schools; iii) Declining incidences of violence and acts of abuse; iv) increasing tendency for teachers to use learner-centred approaches and to become more responsive to the needs of adolescent boys and girls.

b) Challenges

- Adolescent girls are still at high risk of being sexually abused on their way to and from school as well as within their communities.
- Violence is still a serious issue in schools particularly amongst adolescent boys. Most violent acts are committed by adolescents. In addition there is an increasing trend for adolescents and adult men and women to tolerate acts of violence and sympathise with perpetrators.

4.2.3 Establishment and capacity building of the organisation and governance structures

a) Progress made

The project has facilitated establishment and capacity building of organisational structures Speak Out clubs in the schools which are crucial for the involvement of the adolescent boys and girls in management of issues that affect their education. In the communities, the project has facilitated formation and capacity building of mother groups which conduct campaigns in the communities targeting parents, community leadership and members of the wider community on the importance of adolescent mothers to go back to school. Through these governance structures, adolescents have

made significant contribution within the school in the provisions of services to fellow adolescents, as well as in influencing change amongst teachers, SMC and parents.

b) Challenges

While the adolescents are making some progress towards participating in the school governance systems, there is no clear programme strategy to enable the adolescents integrate into the community organisational and management system in order for them to exert their influence in the wider community where there are more players who affect adolescents' education.

Through its initial activities the project tried to reach out to the district level by sensitising the district executive committee (DEC) to enable the stakeholders understand what the project was about. There was also a key stakeholder meeting involving the District Education Managers (DEM), the District Social Welfare Officer (DSWO) and the District Health Officer (DHOs), the idea of this meeting was to enable these stakeholders discuss the project and determine how each will support the project. This was a head of district level interface meetings where young people would engage with local government on various issues that affect them – hold them to account for service provision and consequently influence decision making on resource allocation.

4.2.4 Adolescent boys' and girls' awareness on SRHR information.

a) Progress made

The project has contributed to the mechanisms through which adolescents access SRHR information particularly through training on SRHR provided by Plan and through the sharing of SRHR information and issues in youth clubs.

b) Challenges

The key to the provision of SRH information and services to the adolescents is that there are strong opposing views amongst school managers, teachers and parents on whether adolescents should have access to SRH information and services or not; whether the parents should be involved in the provision of SRHR information to their children or no.

4.3.5 Project management

a) Progress

The project has made tremendous progress in terms of implementing the planned interventions.

b) Challenges

The programme implementation period was shorter than the period stipulated in the project document as implementation started 10 months later. The implementation of planned activities was delayed because the baseline study took too long and there was change of staff. The one who was supposed to coordinate the project passed away.

There has been inadequate follow up of the implemented interventions. As the implementation of the interventions started late, the project team has been struggling to complete implementation of activities in all the 106 schools. Apparently Plan does

not have adequate staff on the ground to follow up the implementation processes and progress. However partners have received adequate support to fill this gap.

4.3 In what areas is the programme likely to meet expected targets?

The programme is likely to meet most of the expected targets on the set indicators for the following expected outputs:

- Girls, boys, community members and leaders, and government officials have positive attitudes towards girls' rights, and especially towards girls' education
- Adolescent girls and boys have knowledge of, and access to, gender appropriate SRHR services

4.4 Review risks to the programme and mitigating factors

Description of Risk	Impact	Probability	Existing Controls	Action Required	Responsibility
External risks					
Incidences of floods, hailstorms likely to affect school attendance and implementation of activities	High	Medium	Disaster Preparedness / Response Plan in place which would be used in case of a disaster. Civil Protection Committees present in the communities	There is need to include members of the Civil Protection Committees in say the GBFSM process.	PPA Coordinator
Scarcity of fuel likely to affect field work.	High	High	Schools / committees plan and implement activities Plan provides support remotely	Use telephone communication Bulk purchase of fuel	PPA Coordinator
Nationwide demonstrations like to affect project implementation and ultimately expenditure.	Medium	Medium	Ensure that most of the work is covered during the quiet periods	Provide room for adjustment of programme activities in case the worst happens	PPA Coordinator
Internal Risks					
Failure by some of the households to provide fees and material needs for motivated adolescent	Medium	Low	Plan has some programmes that provide scholarships to support needy students.	Link up with the village savings and loan facility promoted by Linking up with VS&L facilities promoted by Plan and other	PPA Coordinator

Description of Risk	Impact	Probability	Existing Controls	Action Required	Responsibility
External risks					
girls				organisations work with schools to explore other sources of fees and other materials from other organisations	
Lack of infrastructure such as secondary schools to absorb the motivated adolescents	Medium	Low	Include in the programme strategy some lobby work with the government	In case the government does not act link up with other Plan programmes to build infrastructure	PPA Coordinator

4.5 Recommendations of changes that the programme might make in order to hit its targets and address its challenges

The strategies used in the project to influence attitude change and motivate stakeholder for action has worked well in school set up, which often has functional governance structures even before the project This occurs because headmasters / teachers tend to ‘push’/ influence– school management committees, PTAs to meet frequently in order to discuss issues affecting the school. In such a set up it was easier for the Speak Out clubs to engage with these forums.

Apparently the project has not contributed much to attitude change amongst some community stakeholders particularly male and female parents and some men that adolescent girls meet on their way to school. The main reason is that unlike the school environment, the community faces many challenges related to its organisation and governance systems. For example structures set up to reach people, such as village development committees, civil protection committees, etc often do not function properly – most of them do not normally convene forums and are disconnected from the community members. The project worked through mother groups. While these were able to effectively engage some stakeholders particularly parents of adolescent mothers and SMCs, they did not effectively mobilise the majority and engage the majority of the community stakeholders which are crucial for girls’ education such as traditional leadership, civil protection committees, and VDCs. *Just like in schools, there is need for Speak Out clubs to critically analyse issues that concern community stakeholders such as parents, men, women, families as well as authority and duty holders such as traditional leadership, VDCs, civil protection committees and specific community groups. Through conversations convened by traditional leadership and facilitated by mother groups and civil protection committees, Speak Out clubs needs to engage the various community stakeholders through formal meetings with members*

of the village community, VDC, civil protection committees, mother groups and traditional leaderships. These forums should be discussing issues related to education, SRHR and their rights in general.

In addition, Speak Out clubs need to intensify open days using interactive drama in order to effectively engage the village communities in open days where they should table for discussions hot issues such as the provision of sexual and reproductive health information and services to adolescents, adolescent education, protection of adolescents from violence and abuse.

To reduce the high risk of adolescent girls from being sexually abused on their way to or from school, Speak Out clubs need to organise open days in collaboration with relevant authorities such as group village head persons, civil protection committees in hot spot areas to enable the clubs engage with the potential perpetrators.

For adolescent girls who may not enrol or fail to continue studying in upper secondary classes because their parents or guardian cannot afford fees and other necessities, qualitative studies revealed that there were vibrant village savings and loan (VS&L) groups in Gija community organised by the Catholic Development Commission (CADECOM) whose members did not face any problems to support their children's education. There is need for mother groups to engage into a discussion of the concept of VS&L parents who face difficulties in raising finances for their children's education in order to explore possibilities of linking up with VS&L service providers. Plan should explore mechanisms for linking the BS4L project with programmes on VS&L being implemented in the area by other organisations.

Through mother groups and Speak Out clubs, Plan should identify needy adolescent mothers and advocate for them to access the Social Welfare bursaries as well as link them up with other organisations offering different facilities.

At policy level, for adolescents who fail to enrol or continue with school because of their own negligence or that of parents mechanisms at school to ensure that children particularly girls enrol into and stay in lower secondary school. Plan need to facilitate a process to Speak Out clubs and the Youth networks and forums to advocate for by-laws to be established and re-enforced that will prevent unnecessary school drop. Similarly, the project needs to include interventions to advocate for re-enforcement marriage age to prevent early marriages.

Where adolescents cannot enrol for upper secondary school (form 1 and 2) because there is no secondary school within walking distance, such as in Malivenji, Plan needs to facilitate interface meetings between adolescents, duty bearers in the communities and district officials to lobby for construction of secondary school facilities using the constituency development fund or local development fund or funding from any other institution.

The project approach has been to train peer educators or community based facilitators. For these peer educators to continue learning from their experiences and each other, the project needs to establish forums and exchange visits where these peer educators and facilitators will discuss their experiences and learn from each other.

Similarly the programme has strengthened several community based structures including mother groups, Speak Out clubs, civil protection committees, SMCs, PTAs, teachers and school managers etc. For these to continue learning from each other as well as from their experiences the project needs to facilitate network within and across geographical areas.

The project needs to establish an appropriate participatory monitoring and evaluation system that ensures intensify follow ups in the field by the project implementation teams in order to facilitate interaction, joint progress monitoring and learning between community structures and service providers.

References

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