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EMPOWERING GIRLS AND WOMEN THROUGH EDUCATION:

A MULTIDIMENSIONAL APPROACH

OPERATIONAL RESEARCH REPORT



M&A

MAKOKA and ASSOCIATES

Consulting Firm – *RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT POLICY*

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We take responsibility for any omissions, misrepresentation of facts or any other errors in this report.

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PROJECT SUMMARY

Project Title:	Empowering Girls and Women through Education: A Multidimensional Approach
Implementer	CAMFED Malawi
Project Duration:	3 years (July 2019 – July 2022)
Donor(s)/Fund(s):	UK Foreign, Commonwealth and Development Office (FCDO)
Location (Districts)	Chikwawa, Dedza, Machinga, Mangochi and Mulanje
Direct -Beneficiaries	29,700 marginalised girls from 675 primary schools (Std 5 to 8) and 163 secondary schools. 675 young women school graduates (Learner Guides)
Project Aim	To increase the numbers of marginalised girls in rural Malawi who complete primary education and successfully transition to secondary school.
Key Project Features	❖ Tailored financial and material support for a cohort of marginalised girls; ❖ Mentoring, life skills, sexual and reproductive health awareness, and social support to students delivered by young women 'Learner Guides', using a bespoke well-being curriculum – My Better World; ❖ Targeted learning interventions including bespoke learning resources and facilitation of peer to peer group learning in school ('Study Circles'); ❖ Community-led delivery model, with trained structures embedded at school, district and community level to lead support for vulnerable children. These include teachers trained in psychosocial support ('Teacher Mentors'), Primary Education Advisers who oversee and support school-level implementation of the school level activities and Community Development Committees made up government officials, school authorities and community leaders.

CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS 2

PROJECT SUMMARY 3

CONTENTS 4

LIST OF FIGURES 7

LIST OF TABLES 8

ACRONYMS/ ABBREVIATIONS 9

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY 10

Introduction 10

Purpose of the Independent Operational Research 11

Methodology 12

Study Findings 12

1. INTRODUCTION 1

1.1 CAMFED 1

1.2 COUNTRY CONTEXT 2

1.3 COVID-19 AND SCHOOL CLOSURES IN MALAWI 4

1.3.1 Prevalence of Early Pregnancies during COVID-19 School Closures 5

1.4 THE CAMFED MALAWI FCDO-FUNDED PROJECT 6

1.4.1 The Project's Theory of Change 8

1.4.2 Key Aspects of the Project 11

1.4.2.1 Tailored material and financial support through CAMFED's Step-Up Fund (SUF) Programme 11

1.4.2.2 The Learner Guide Programme 11

Mentoring, life skills, sexual and reproductive health awareness, and social support to students delivered by young women 'Learner Guides', using a bespoke well-being curriculum – My Better World. 11

1.4.2.3 Targeted learning interventions 11

1.4.2.4 Community-led delivery model, with trained structures embedded at school, district and community level to lead support for vulnerable children 12

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY 12

2.1 PURPOSE 12

2.2 KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS 13

2.3 METHODOLOGY 14
2.3.1 Study Design 14
2.3.2 Sampling Approach & Research Participants 14
2.3.2.1 District Selection – CAMFED FCDO Malawi Operational Research 14
2.3.2.2 School Selection – FCDO Malawi Operational Research 15
2.3.3 Quantitative Survey Tools 15
2.3.3.1 The Learner Guide Survey 15
2.3.3.2 The Student Survey 16
2.3.4 Qualitative Survey Tools 16
2.3.4.1 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs) 16
2.3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions 16
2.3.5 Study Respondents 16
2.4 EVALUATION SCHEDULE / TIMETABLE 17
3. FINDINGS 18
3.1 INTRODUCTION 18
3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLED STUDENTS 18
3.3 ACADEMIC SELF-ESTEEM ASSESSMENT 20
3.3.1 Methodology for Calculating Student Academic Self-Esteem 21
3.3.2 Results - Student Academic Self-Esteem by Gender 21
3.3.3 Results – Student Self-Esteem by Participation in Learner Guide Sessions 22
3.3.4 Results – Academic Student Self-Esteem by District 23
3.3.5 Results – Student Self-Esteem by Type of Student 24
3.3.6 Results – Household Vulnerability and Academic Self-Esteem 25
3.4 INDEPENDENT OPERATIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS – PROJECT IMPACT 28
3.4.1 Progression Rates 28
3.4.2 Transition Rates 28
3.4.2.1 Findings from the Rapid Secondary Students' Survey 28
3.4.3 Drop-out Rates 32
3.4.3.1 Factors that Lead to Girls Dropping out of School 33
3.4.3.2 Factors Causing Boys to Drop Out of School 35
3.5 OPERATIONAL RESEARCH RESULTS UNDER OUTPUT 1 36
3.5.1 Adequacy and Relevance of Resources Provided Under the FCDO-funded Project 36
3.5.2 Other Resources Leveraged within the Community 37

3.6 OPERATIONAL RESEARCH RESULTS UNDER OUTPUT 2 40
3.6.1 Background to the Learner Guide Programme 40
3.6.2 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Learner Guides 41
3.6.3 Contribution of FCDO-funded Project to Learner Guides' Wellbeing 42
3.6.3.1 Incentive Support 42
3.6.3.2 BTEC 43
3.6.3.3 Entrepreneurship 43
3.6.3.4 LGs Support from Teacher Mentors (TMs) 45
3.6.3.5 Material Support 46
3.6.3.6 Motivation and Self-Confidence 47
3.6.3.7 Leadership and Philanthropy 48
3.6.4 LGs' Perceptions of the My Better World (MBW) Programme 50
3.6.4.1 Use of MBW Book and Challenges 50
3.6.4.2 Students' Perceptions of the MBW Sessions 53
3.6.5 Inclusion of MBW into the School Time Table 56
3.6.6 Learners' Participation in MBW Sessions 58
3.6.7 Learner Guides' Services during School Closure 62
3.6.8 Key Challenges Facing LGs 62
3.7 IOR RESULTS UNDER OUTPUT 3 63
3.7.1 Child Protection Policy in Schools 63
3.7.2 Confidence to Report Cases of Abuse 65
3.7.3 To Whom Students can Report Cases of Abuse 65
3.7.4 Confidence of Students that Perpetrators of Child Abuse will Get Punished 66
3.7.5 Students' Awareness of the Re-admission Policy 68
3.8 MAIN ENABLING FACTORS 69
3.9 MAIN HINDERING FACTORS 71
3.10 STUDY LIMITATIONS/CHALLENGES 72
4. CONCLUSIONS 73
5. RECOMMENDATIONS 75
6. REFERENCES 76

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 1: Gross Enrolment in Malawian Primary Schools by Gender of the Learner, 2015-2020 2
Figure 2: FCDO-funded Project's Main Objectives. 7
Figure 3: CAMFED FCDO-funded Project's Theory of Change 10
Figure 4: Proportion of Sampled Learners in Various Age Categories (%) 19
Figure 5: Proportion of Sampled Learners who are Benefiting from Project Interventions 20
Figure 6: Self-esteem by whether Students Regularly Attended Learner Guide Sessions (%) 22
Figure 7: Student Self-esteem for those Who Regularly Attend MBW Sessions by Gender (%) 23
Figure 8: Student Academic Self-Esteem by District (%) 24
Figure 9: Academic Self-Esteem of Students Aged 15 and 16 by Type of Student 25
Figure 10: Proportion of Students coming from 'Vulnerable' Households by Gender and District 26
Figure 11: Academic Self Esteem of 'Vulnerable' Students (%) 27
Figure 12: Academic Self Esteem of 'Vulnerable' SUF and Non-SUF Beneficiaries (Girls only) 27
Figure 13: Drop-out of Upper Primary Girls in 2019/20 and 2021, by District (%) 32
Figure 14: National Drop-out Rates in Malawi Primary Schools by Gender, 2017-2020 33
Figure 15: Sampled Students Who Reported Receiving Material Support from CAMA or SBC Member, by Gender and District (%) 38
Figure 16: Proportion (%) of LGs who Completed MSCE, Passed MSCE and Attained a Tertiary Qualification 42
Figure 17: Proportion (%) of LGs Doing Business by Districts 44
Figure 18: Proportion (%) of LGs Indicating they Receive Support from Teacher Mentors 46
Figure 19: Proportion (%) of LGs Holding Leadership Positions by District 49
Figure 20: Proportions (%) of LGs Indicating How Often they Use MBW Book 51
Figure 21: Proportion (%) of LGs indicating whether MBW has been Integrated Included in the school Time Table 57
Figure 22: Proportion (%) of LGs indicating Times MBW are Conducted 57
Figure 23: Proportion (%) of Learners who Regularly Attend MBW Sessions, by Gender 60
Figure 24: Proportion (%) of Males and Females who Regularly Attend MBW Sessions by District and Gender. 60
Figure 25: Proportion of Students having Knowledge on Existence of CPP, by District and Gender (%) 64
Figure 26: Proportion of Students Having Knowledge on Existence of CPP, by District and Class (%) 64
Figure 27: Proportion of Students Indicating that they are Free to Report any Kind of Abuse by District and Gender 65
Figure 28: Proportion of Students Indicating Confidence that Perpetrators will Get Punished, disaggregated by District and Gender 67
Figure 29: Proportion of Students Aware of the Re-admission Policy, Disaggregated by District and Gender 68

LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: Primary School Completion Rates (%), 2017-2020 3
Table 2: Number of Early Pregnancies March-July 2019 and March-July 2020 by District 5
Table 3: Dropout and Pass Rates in CAMFED Project Partner Schools in the five Districts 15
Table 4: Primary Schools Sampled 15
Table 5: Study Respondents 17
Table 6: Independent Operational Research Timelines 17
Table 7: Gender of the Sampled Learners by District (%) 18
Table 8: Class of the Students by District (%) 19
Table 9: Student Academic Self-Esteem by Gender of Learner (%) 22
Table 10: Proportion of Learners Who have Normal and High Self Esteem by Type of Student (%) 24
Table 11: Perceptions of Secondary Schools Students on the Impact of the FCDO-funded Project 29
Table 12: Reasons for Girls Dropping Out of School in Dedza and Mangochi (%) 34
Table 13: Reasons for Boys Dropping Out of School in Dedza and Mangochi (%) 36
Table 14: Characteristics of Learner Guides 41
Table 15: Support Variables against LGs' Income Status 45
Table 16: Support to LGs and Business Ownership by District (%) 45
Table 17: Reasons for Signing up as an LG 48
Table 18: Support by LGs Rendered to Learners 50
Table 19: Usage of MBW from in-depth Interviews with 28 LGs 52
Table 20: Which Book is the Most Difficult for LGs to Use? 52
Table 21: Aspects of MBW Training and MBW Book 53
Table 22: Utilization of MBW Workbook Over the Past Academic Year by Sampled Students by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%). 54
Table 23: Perception of the Importance of the MBW Topics in Sampled Students' Lives by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%). 55
Table 24: Perception of the Importance of the MBW Topics in Sampled Students' School Work, by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%). 55
Table 25: Proportion of Students who have Indicated that the MBW Programme was Overall Helpful by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%). 56
Table 26: Proportion of Students Reporting Attendance of MBW Sessions by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%). 58
Table 27: Reasons for Regularly Attending MBW Sessions by Type of Students 61
Table 28: Reasons for Not Attending MBW Session among Sampled Girls 61
Table 29: LGs Services Offered during School Closure (%) 62
Table 30: Proportion of Students Indicating Where they Would Report Cases of Violence by District and Gender 66

ACRONYMS/ ABBREVIATIONS

BTEC	Business and Technology Education Council
CAMA	CAMFED Association
CAMFED	Campaign for Female Education
CDC	Community Development Committee
COVID-19	Coronavirus Disease 2019
CPP	Child Protection Policy
CSO	Civil Society Organization
EMIS	Education Management Information System
FCDO	Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPE	Free Primary Education
GASO	Golomoti Active AIDS Support Organization
GPI	Gender Parity Index
GVH	Group Village Head
IOR	Independent Operational Research
KGIS	Keeping Girls in School
KII	Key Informant Interview
LG	Learner Guide
MANEB	Malawi National Examinations Board
MBW	My Better World
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
MSCE	Malawi School Certificate of Education
MSG	Mother Support Group
NGES	National Girls' Education Strategy
NGO	Non-Governmental Organizations
PSLCE	Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education
RSG	Research Steering Group
SBC	School-Based Committee
SSI	Semi-Structured Interviews
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
SUF	Step Up Fund
TA	Traditional Authority
TM	Teacher Mentor
ToC	Theory of Change
YONECO	Youth Net and Counselling
VAWG	Violence Against Women and Girls

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

With support from the UK Foreign, Commonwealth & Development Office (FCDO), CAMFED Malawi is implementing a three-year (2019-2022) project called '*Empowering Girls and Women through Education: A Multidimensional Approach*' (the Project) with an aim to increase the numbers of marginalised girls in rural Malawi who complete primary education and successfully transition to secondary school. The Project's direct beneficiaries are 29,700 marginalised girls from 675 primary schools (Standards 5 to 8) and 163 secondary schools in five rural districts (Chikwawa, Dedza, Machinga, Mangochi and Mulanje) and 675 young women from marginalised rural backgrounds trained and supported to step up as leaders and role models to keep girls in school.

The Project was designed to address the multiple, inter-connected barriers which prevent the most marginalised rural girls from accessing and remaining in school; despite increasing gross enrolment and gender parity at primary level, more than 50% of girls in Malawi do not complete primary education (EMIS, 2020), with the lowest completion rates in the most marginalised rural communities, where poverty is deeply entrenched. Barriers exist on both the demand and supply side and include an inability to meet the direct and indirect costs of education, high prevalence of child marriage and early pregnancy, and under-resourced and unsafe learning environments, all of which compromise girls' ability to attend/remain in school and to learn effectively. The lack of sufficient school places at secondary, allocated based on performance in the end of primary examination, then compounds the barriers for those already disadvantaged at primary level, who – as a result of poor learning outcomes at primary – are also least likely to transition to and complete secondary education.

The Project aims to tackle these challenges through a combination of mutually-reinforcing interventions, in complement to the priorities and strategies of the Malawi government and global development goals. These include material support to address the cost barriers to education faced by the most vulnerable girls; psychosocial support and life skills to increase resilience to wider challenges, strengthen coping mechanisms and boost retention in school; and additional learning support initiatives to improve learning outcomes at primary level. A key feature is the significant expansion of CAMFED's Learner Guide programme, through which young women formerly supported to complete secondary school through CAMFED's programme – members of the CAMFED Association – return to volunteer in local schools as 'Learner Guides' (LGs) and support girls and boys with a tailored life skills and wellbeing curriculum, *My Better World* (MBW). The programme has been shown to have positive impact on girls' retention rates and learning outcomes, particularly among the most marginalised.

The Project builds on the foundations laid under the previous FCDO-funded Project in Malawi as part of the Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) programme, which took place from 2016-18 and provided core school-going support to girls at secondary school, as well as helping to establish and strengthen delivery structures for CAMFED's overall programme. Under KGIS, large cohorts of marginalised rural girls completed school and joined the CAMFED Association, and now represent a significant movement of

young women committed to supporting the next generation, including as Learner Guides. The Project is therefore leveraging the multiper effect of FCDO's previous investment in girls' education to create a sustainable cycle of support for new girls to be supported in school.

All activities are taking place in the context of CAMFED's multi-dimensional, community-led programme in Malawi, which is underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education (MoE), as well as a supportive infrastructure network of stakeholders at school, community and district level, including CAMFED Association members. Within this wider context, the Theory of Change (ToC) posits that the Project interventions will lead to improvements in girls' learning outcomes as a result of a safer more enabling environment, and improvements in girls' transition from primary to secondary school, which are linked to improvements in their learning and will result from increased attendance, retention and participation at school.

It is important to note that much of the Project to date has been conducted in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic, including two periods of school closures during March 2020 to March 2021, as well as wider periodic restrictions, including on travel and gatherings. These restrictions impacted delivery of Project activities, with in-school activity no longer possible and limitations on activities such as training and national monitoring. The impact of the pandemic has also exacerbated the existing challenges and barriers for girls, increasing instances of early pregnancy for example.

Purpose of the Independent Operational Research

Under this FCDO-funded Project, a midterm Independent Operational Research (IOR) was commissioned by CAMFED, in order to evaluate and measure the progress of the Project at the midway point and the impact of the project achievements.

At the Project proposal stage, a baseline and midline study had been planned to fulfil this purpose and, in early 2020, plans for the structure of the midline were under discussion with FCDO Malawi. A quasi-experimental, mixed methods approach was originally planned to enable outcomes from a treatment group to be compared with those from a comparison group, with the mixed-method approach providing rich and robust evidence and analysis, including in-depth explanations of the effect of this FCDO funded project on the context and lived reality of marginalised girls and their communities.

However, this was disrupted by the advent of the global COVID-19 pandemic, which meant that an alternative approach was required to monitoring project progress towards the intended outcomes, as a physical midline research exercise was no longer possible, practical or timely. This was discussed with FCDO Malawi and it was agreed that a midterm mixed-methods Operational Research would be undertaken instead.

A number of Key Research Questions specific to the Project outputs were agreed, with an overarching research question of 'How does the interaction between the different Project initiatives/interventions contribute to better outcomes for marginalised girls?' Given that Project implementation had been affected by the COVID-19 pandemic, the research was also commissioned to capture information on the responsiveness and lesson learning of the Project during the period of COVID-19 restrictions.

Methodology

The IOR had two phases – (i) Desk study and (ii) Primary data collection – and collected both qualitative and quantitative data.

i. The desk study phase included a review of all the literature including the original Project proposal, the Project's Theory of Change and logframe, the Project monitoring reports (quarterly and annual), case studies, and training materials.

ii. The primary data phase involved the use of qualitative stakeholder consultations, Key Informant Interviews (KIIs), Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs), Focus Group Discussions (FGDs), and administering quantitative surveys. The following data collection tools were used:
    a. Student survey questionnaire, which collected data from 501 learners from Standard 7 and 8 in 10 primary schools in Dedza and Mangochi. This also included an Academic Self Esteem test – the *Test de Autoestima Escolar* – which was administered with sampled students aged 11-16. The majority (66%) of the sampled learners were female and 61.5% had been reached with one or more of the Project interventions, including tailored material support and/or participation in MBW sessions.
    b. Learner Guide (LG) questionnaire that was administered to 450 LGs from across the 5 project districts. Of 450 sampled, 204 LGs participated in a longer version of the survey, and the remaining 246 in a shorter version, a subset of the long survey.
    c. In-depth interviews with 28 LGs on the My Better World (MBW) Sessions;
    d. In-depth interviews with 20 Form 1 learners from 15 sampled secondary schools;
    e. FGDs with 20 Standard 7 and 8 learners from the 10 sampled primary schools;
    f. A range of KIIs and/or SSIs with Primary Education Advisors (PEAs), 10 Teacher Mentors (TM), and CAMFED staff.

Study Findings

Impact/Outcome Level

Academic Self Esteem

The Project interventions are designed to improve academic self-esteem and self-confidence, especially of marginalised girls, as a result of improved attendance and learning, and of feeling 'equal' to their peers in school. As part of the research, an academic self-esteem test was administered to measure whether the Project has had any effect on girls' engagement and confidence at school. The findings indicate that the Project interventions are not yet associated with significant impact on levels of academic self-esteem, but that this may increase.

- The study found that a higher proportion of boys have 'high' academic self-esteem than girls (22.7% vs 16.4%), although a higher proportion of boys also have 'very low' academic self-esteem (30.3% vs 26.7%).
- The study further found that household vulnerability is associated with low self-esteem among learners: 65.8% of those classified as 'vulnerable' reported 'low' or 'very low' levels of academic self-esteem.

- Regular attendance at LG sessions was associated with slightly higher levels of academic self esteem overall: of those attending 49.7% had 'normal' or 'high' self-esteem, compared with 43.4% for those not attending regularly.

Retention, Progression through Primary and Transition to Secondary

The Project interventions are designed to reduce drop-out and support marginalised girls in particular to stay in and progress through school. Results so far point to the effectiveness of the CAMFED model in keeping girls in school, particularly those coming from the most disadvantaged economic backgrounds, and in supporting them to progress through upper primary. Some girls are also transitioning to secondary school, although this continues to be limited by the lack of secondary school places.

- Drop-out rates for girls reached with tailored material and financial support by CAMFED for the 2019/2020 academic year were lower (4.5%) than the rate for the whole female population in the target schools (8.4%). 98% returned to school after the school closures in 2020, comparing favourably with a wider return rate of 78% nationally.
- These results are notable given that girls supported by CAMFED are among the most vulnerable in their communities and we might therefore expect the reverse to be the case without intervention, and also that the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic was anticipated to significantly affect rates of drop-out for girls in particular. During COVID-19 induced school closures, LGs also maintained contact with their learners, and this may have helped to keep girls engaged with their education and supported them to return when schools reopened.
- On average, 76% of girls in the target cohort were promoted to the next grade at the start of the current academic year (against a target of 76%). Standard 8 completion rates for the target cohort in 2019/20 were 64%, which is lower than the national average (77.3%) but as above, this could be linked to girls' increased vulnerability and the fact that completion rates in rural districts are frequently lower than the national average.
- Transition rates in the 2019/20 academic year were low, with only 25.2% of the target cohort progressing to Form 1, against a target of 43%. However, this is not necessarily as a result of low pass/completion rates; 60.2% of girls supported in Standard 8 passed the PSLCE in 2020, but only 41.6% of those who passed were awarded places at secondary level.

Output Level

Output 1: Material and financial support provided to marginalised girls to address financial resource barriers to attending school regularly.

The research found that interventions under Output 1 are helping to keep marginalised girls in school by effectively tackling their financial/material barriers to attendance, including through additional support leveraged from the community.

- In Year 1, according to CAMFED data, 29,700 girls in upper primary school (Standard 5 to 8) were reached with tailored school-going support (Step-up Fund – SUF) and 50 girls in secondary school. In Year 2, 28,892 girls were reached with SUF in upper primary school and 1,908 in secondary school.

- Results from FGDs, SIIs and KIIs found that the school-going resources played an important role in keeping girls in school and that these effectively targeted girls' actual needs. Stakeholders reported improvements in attendance, including as a result of having access to sanitary wear, and academic performance as a result of receiving writing materials.
- The research also found that other forms of material/in-kind resources are being leveraged to extend support to marginalised children, in addition and in response to resources provided under this Project. For example, 48.3% of girls and 26.5% of boys surveyed in the sample schools reported receiving material support from a CAMFED Association member or a member of the School-Based Committee[1] to help them stay in school.

Output 2: Learner Guides and Teacher Mentors are trained and provide targeted support to marginalised girls and support regular attendance and learning.

The research found that interventions under Output 2 are having a range of positive impacts for both learners in school and the LGs themselves, and that – anecdotally – LG support is translating into improved attendance and learning. There are areas to focus on to further improve and strengthen implementation of the LG programme, including additional training/support for LGs to increase use of MBW.

Student participation in LG sessions

- To date, according to CAMFED data, 239,150 upper primary students (152,587 girls and 85,563 boys) have attended sessions conducted by LGs in the target schools.
- Of the students surveyed as part of the research, 47.6% reported attending most, all or some of the sessions, while 25.9% had never attended any sessions and 9.8% reported not to have heard about the sessions in their schools. More girls than boys reported attending the sessions (52.2 vs 37.8%) and participation was also higher among girls in the target cohort reached with tailored material and financial support (SUF beneficiaries) than other children (75.3% vs 32.9%).
- When asked why they attended the sessions, the most popular reason (selected by 73.3% of children) was that they enjoyed the topics covered. Similarly, 84.1% of students surveyed 'strongly agreed' that LG sessions covered topics that are relevant/helpful for their lives. Overall the proportion who 'strongly agreed' with this was equally high among girls and boys, and between grades and districts, but higher for SUF beneficiaries (92.6%) than other children (76.2%). 92% of students interviewed agreed the MBW programme was 'helpful' or 'very helpful'.
- The most common reason for lack of attendance by girls, reported by 39.6% of those interviewed, was that they had been ill, followed by the fact that sessions were held outside of school time, reported by 21.7%. The proportion of girls who did not attend for the latter reason was significantly higher among the target cohort of girls supported with SUF than other children (37.5% vs 18.9%). Among Standard 8 learners, there were reports that schools were prioritising academic work, ahead of the upcoming PSCLE examination, rather than encouraging them to attend non-examinable MBW sessions.

[1] Convened to manage implementation of support for vulnerable children at school level, including representation from school authorities, traditional leaders, parents and others in the local community.

LG wider support to learners

- In addition to conducting sessions in school, 100% of LGs interviewed had rendered some form of additional support to learners to keep them in school, including counselling/mentoring, conducting home visits, referring children for financial support from other structures (including MSGs and CAMA members) and making child protection referrals to local authorities.
- LGs have also directly supported children financially/materially with school-going costs. Whether or not LGs were running businesses was found to be positively associated with increased financial support for children in the community: 76.2% of LGs that reported personally providing material and financial support in the last term to help learners attend school were running their own businesses.
- During the COVID-19 school closures, LGs continued their work to support learners. 91.2% of LGs interviewed conducted home visits to vulnerable children, 86.3% supported students with learning/revision, 69.1% organised study groups for students, and 47.5% delivered community-based MBW sessions.

Motivation/incentive and impact on Learner Guides

- Young women were motivated to sign up as LGs for a number of reasons. The reason most commonly cited (by 88.8% of those interviewed) was because of wanting to 'give back'[2], followed by the prospect of raising their status in the community, with access to zero-interest loans for business development through CAMFED's partnership with Kiva and the opportunity to gain a Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualification[3] both less commonly reported as a motivating factor (by around half of LGs interviewed).
- Learner Guides have received material support to deliver their role in the Project, in the form of a bicycle to facilitate access to the remotest schools and follow-up with children in the community, as well as a mobile phone and a monthly allocation of MWK 10,000 for airtime to facilitate communication with CAMFED staff and other stakeholders. LG feedback suggests there are some improvements to be made around the process of repairing or replacing material items, and also that additional items may be valuable to support implementation, including books and markers.
- The research confirmed that LGs were accessing additional opportunities and developing skills as a result of their participation in the programme:
    - 125 LGs were being assessed for the BTEC at the time of the research (against a target of 101), including 26 of the LGs interviewed.

[2] 'Giving back' here refers to the conviction of LGs to reinvest the benefit of their education in their communities and support marginalised girls in the same way that they were supported by CAMFED with material, financial and other forms of support during their school days.

[3] The BTEC qualification is an internationally recognised work-based qualification, which has been developed by CAMFED in partnership with Pearson to recognise the skills and experience young women gain through participation in Guide roles, including as Learner Guides.

- 89 Learner Guides had accessed a Kiva loan (against a target of 70) and 63.7% of the LGs interviewed were running businesses at the time of the research. The majority of LGs interviewed confirmed they had received various types of business support via CAMFED or CAMA – including training/mentoring and loans or grants from CAMFED or other CAMA member. The study found these were associated with increased income for LG businesses.
- 65.8% of LGs interviewed were found to hold a leadership position in the community. Qualitative interviews with LGs also indicated that the opportunity to become a LG was associated with increased status, with LGs feeling more empowered and respected by others, including parents and local leaders, for example as a result of their work to promote girls' education and tackle child marriage.

Implementation of the LG programme

- 91.3% of LGs indicated that they had received support from TMs, including technical support on delivery of the MBW sessions, suggesting there are productive relationships in school to support delivery of the programme. However, feedback from LGs also suggests that more could be done to engage school stakeholders to tackle any misconceptions about LGs and their role, and to increase awareness and understanding of the benefits of MBW, as well as to support LGs in their engagement of parents and community members, given the sensitive nature of the issues they are tackling.
- In general, LGs reported finding the MBW workbook more difficult to use than other resources provided, such as the SRH manual *Kusadziwa Nkufakomwe*; this was reported by 50% of LGs interviewed during focus group discussions. This corresponded with a relatively high proportion of LGs who do not use the MBW book at least most of the time (35.1% of those participating in the survey); 26.0% reported using it in every session. This suggests there is further improvement to be made in this area, as MBW is a core component of the LG programme.
- The research found that LGs' training sessions on how to use the MBW were conducted professionally but were not allocated adequate time and that additional training may be valuable, particularly to support lesson planning and better understanding of the full range of MBW topics.
- On the whole, MBW sessions are not yet formally included in the school timetable; just under half (47.2%) of LGs interviewed indicated sessions were integrated into the timetable and this was echoed by comments from PEAs interviewed, who suggested that COVID-19 measures had slowed the process of integration. The majority of LGs (75.5%) indicated that sessions took place after school, with 14.7% reporting sessions taking place at lunch time. This can be a challenge for learners, who are tired and hungry at the end of the day, and – as reported by students – is negatively affecting participation in the sessions.

Output 3: Schools, communities and systems have the skills and systems to make schools safe learning environments for girls and boys.

The research found that interventions under Output 3 are effectively helping to create a safer learning environment for both girls and boys. There are areas to further strengthen, including building greater visibility of child protection policies at school level.

- As part of the Project, CAMFED has engaged schools to develop their own school-based child protection policies, particularly through training for PEAs and Head teachers. According to CAMFED data, collected through monitoring by PEAs, at the time of the research 68% of the Project schools had a child protection policy in place, although these are not always displayed publicly. The majority of students surveyed as part of the research (66%) were aware of a child protection policy at their school (whether formal or informal), with awareness higher overall for boys than for girls (73.5% vs 62.2%) and for Standard 8 than Standard 7 (71.6% vs 62.3%), particularly in Mangochi district.
- The research evidence shows that the majority of both boys and girls are aware of both school-based child protection structures (e.g. Head teachers, and Teacher Mentors), as well as community-based structures (e.g. parents, mother support groups and community policing) where they can report cases of child abuse. The greatest proportion of learners across both sample districts indicated they would report cases of abuse or harassment to the head of school (70.5%), followed by a parent/guardian (52.3%), and the Learner Guide (42.5%).
- The significant majority (95.6%) of the sampled learners, both male and female, are confident that those who abuse children will be punished, although in Mangochi boys were more confident than girls (98.7% vs 92.7%). Qualitative data from interviews with learners suggest that confidence stems from having witnessed cases of abuse being dealt with in the past.
- The vast majority (96.6%) of the learners surveyed are also aware of the re-admission policy to allow girls who become pregnant to return to school after giving birth, with broadly similar levels of awareness among girls and boys. However, it is worth noting that this awareness does not automatically translate into effective implementation and that stakeholders must still make sure that girls are able to access the required support made possible by the policy.

Enabling and Hindering Factors

There are a number of factors that are positively contributing to the success of the Project. These include the cordial relationship between CAMFED Malawi and the Ministry of Education; the long-standing relationship between CAMFED and the donor; the strong involvement of CAMA members in the Project; the design of the SUF package; and the multi-dimensional nature of the Project.

The main hindering factors are the impact of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, which has disrupted implementation, and the more limited involvement of Head teachers and class teachers at the school level, which should be addressed – in collaboration with the MoE – in order to ensure the most conducive environment for LGs and TMs in particular to carry out their work.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 CAMFED

The Campaign for Female Education, CAMFED, is an international non-profit organisation established in 1993 with a mission to multiply girls' access to education and accelerate the benefits to individuals, their families and communities in Africa. CAMFED works to tackle poverty and inequality by supporting marginalised girls to go to school and succeed, and empowering young women to become leaders of change. CAMFED invests in girls and women in the poorest rural communities in sub-Saharan Africa, where girls face acute disadvantage. CAMFED was founded simultaneously in Zimbabwe and the UK in 1993 and currently operates in Ghana, Malawi, Tanzania, Zimbabwe and Zambia with offices in each country as well as in the UK, Canada and USA. CAMFED Malawi launched in 2009 and to date is active in 17 districts and 1,139 partner schools. To date it has directly supported 217,463 (cumulative figure) primary and secondary students to go to school.

CAMFED implements a multi-dimensional programme which places the needs of marginalised girls at the centre and engages all the stakeholders which influence a girl's life in order to provide holistic support to keep her in school, from teachers, school administrators and government officials to parents, traditional leaders and members of the wider community. Delivery is community led and underpinned by a Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education (MoE) in Malawi, with district level education officials overseeing programme implementation and delivery structures integrated with existing structures at district, community and school level to increase local ownership and sustainability, and reinforce the capacity of these structures to respond to the needs of vulnerable children. This leads to a joined-up, multi-sectoral approach to tackle problems, one that is integrated with and complementary to other local programmes.

CAMFED's work is increasingly led by the CAMFED Association network of young women leaders who have all completed school through CAMFED's programme. Having been supported through school themselves, CAMA members have a strong motivation and commitment to 'plough back' into their communities and are now committed to giving back to their communities and supporting the next generation of girls in school. CAMFED provides support to CAMFED Association members in the form of training, business capital, and post-secondary education, investing in young women's capacity as leaders, professionals, and entrepreneurs, enabling them to develop more secure livelihoods and establish themselves as powerful role models in their communities. United by their background of rural poverty, CAMFED Association members empathise with the significant challenges faced by vulnerable children in rural communities. They are ideally positioned to identify children in their communities who are most marginalised and in need of support and who are often 'invisible' to local authorities, and they are well placed to deliver sustainable solutions to meet these challenges.

The Association also provides young women with a framework through which to organise and implement the changes they want to make, and a peer support network they can draw on for advice, mentoring, and collaboration. It therefore acts as both a foundation and an incubator of young women's philanthropy, advocacy, and activism. CAMFED's supports young women to realise this by co-creating and funding

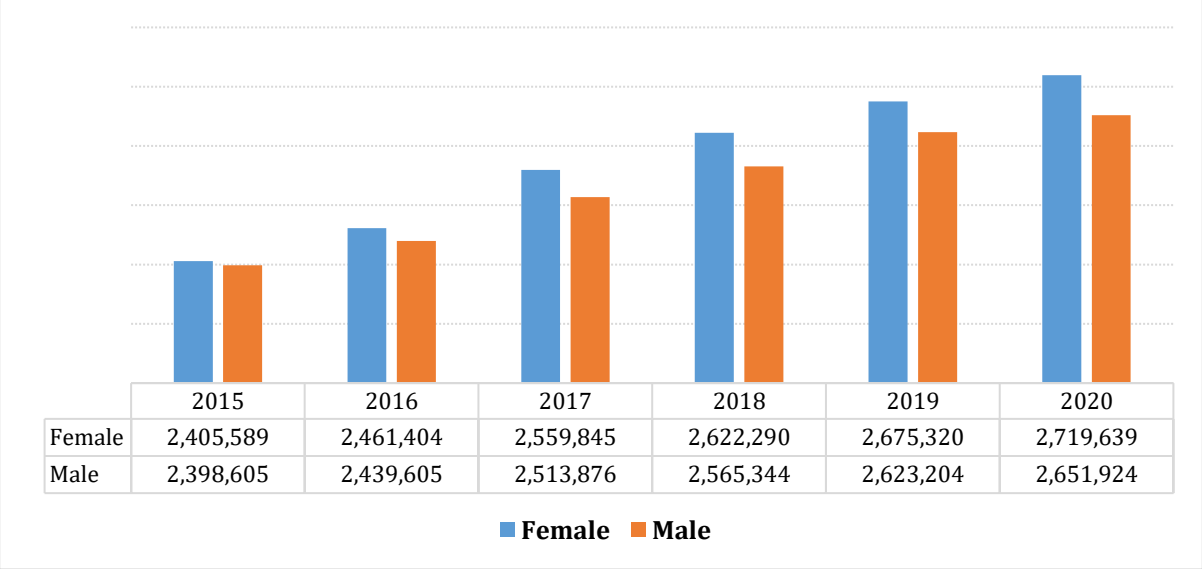
structured programmes of activism. This includes the Learner Guide programme, in which young women return to their local schools voluntarily to deliver a programme of life skills and wellbeing and support the next generation of marginalised girls in school.

This current FCDO-funded project builds on the foundations laid under the previous FCDO-funded Project in Malawi as part of the Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) programme, which took place from 2016-18. This provided core school-going support to girls at secondary school, where the most marginalised girls are disproportionately likely to drop out, and helped to establish and strengthen delivery structures for CAMFED's overall programme. Under this project, large cohorts of marginalised rural girls were supported to complete secondary school across 17 districts in Malawi, and subsequently joined the CAMFED Association, and these young women are now instrumental to the delivery of the current FCDO-funded project, including in their role as Learner Guides.

1.2 COUNTRY CONTEXT

After the introduction of free primary education, which removed school fees, (although school-going costs such as uniforms and stationery are still required) enrolments increased from 1.8 million in 1993 to 4.8 million in 2015 (Roberston *et al.* 2017). The gross enrolment in Malawi primary schools continues to be on the rise for both male and female learners in the past few years (see Figure 1) and and there are almost equal numbers of boys and girls in Malawian primary education institutions, with more girls in some cases: the Gender Parity Index (GPI) for primary education has remained at 1.0 or slightly above between 2008 and 2019 (MoE, 2019).

Figure 1: Gross Enrolment in Malawian Primary Schools by Gender of the Learner, 2015-2020



	2015	2016	2017	2018	2019	2020
Female	2,405,589	2,461,404	2,559,845	2,622,290	2,675,320	2,719,639
Male	2,398,605	2,439,605	2,513,876	2,565,344	2,623,204	2,651,924

Source: EMIS, 2020.

Table 1: Primary School Completion Rates (%), 2017-2020

Year	Completion Rates (%)		
	Girls	Boys	Average
2017	51	55	53
2018	51	54	52
2019	51	52	51
2020	53	53	53

Source: EMIS, 2020.

However, as shown above, primary completion rates have remained low between 2017 and 2020, demonstrating that although enrolment has been increasing since 2017 (as shown in Figure 1), many girls are still dropping out of school.

Both demand- and supply-side barriers exist to prevent girls' successful retention and completion of primary school, and subsequent transition to secondary school.

According to the National Girls Education Strategy (2014), and Chikhungu and Kadzamira (2020), the main demand-side barriers include (i) inability to meet direct and indirect costs of education for girls (ActionAid Malawi, 2016) – despite the lack of formal school fees, costs of education remain a barrier as parents are unable to afford school uniforms, shoes, stationery, bus fares and other school levies; (ii) restrictive gender norms, attitudes and expectations for girls, especially those in the rural areas (Malawi Government, 2018); (iii) gender-based violence; (iv) child marriage; (v) early pregnancies; (vi) lack of role models; among others.

The supply-side barriers to girls' education include (i) limited access to secondary school education due to significant lack of school places and a system of awarading those places which disproportionately disadvantages those who are already marginalised[4]; (ii) poor and inadequate school infrastructure; (iii) unsafe learning environments, for example as a result of abuse – this is a significant problem in the education system, with girls reporting physical, sexual and emotional abuse from both peers and teachers (UNICEF Malawi, 2020); and (iv) poor quality education manifested through poor learning outcomes (low exam pass rates; high drop-out rates, low transition rates, etc).

These issues are all most pronounced in poor rural communities, and particularly for girls, who face additional costs associated with their ability to attend school, particularly at upper primary or the onset of adolescence, such as sanitary wear, and are the most affected by harmful practices such as child marriage. Rural schools are also the most chronically under-resourced and rates of teacher recruitment here are not aligned with population growth (1% vs 3%), leading to higher pupil/teacher ratios. Rural schools also typically lack female teachers who would otherwise act as important and rare role models for rural girls, and provide them with specific support (Chikhungu and Kadzamira, 2020). Additionally, while girls may be officially enrolled and even complete school, they can be 'invisibly' excluded by the factors presented above, which may lead to erratic attendance and poor learning outcomes, and which in turn impact on their self esteem and motivation to learn.

[4] Secondary school places are awarded on the basis of performance in the end-of-primary leaving examination, the PSCLE, compounding lack of access to quality education and poorer outcomes at primary level to keep the most marginalised out of secondary education as well.

There is a demonstrable need for effective interventions to tackle these demand- and supply-side barriers, and keep girls in school and learning at primary level, to better enable them to remain and progress in education.

The Government of Malawi has developed a number of strategies to address this. These include the National Girls' Education Strategy (NGES), which was launched in 2014 to promote girls' education, and includes guidance to all stakeholders working in girls' education. The vision of the NGES is that '*all girls in Malawi access, participate in, complete and excel at all levels of education that empowers them to effectively contribute to the country's sustainable social, economic development by 2018*'. Furthermore, in 2018, the Malawi Government launched the National Strategy for Ending Child Marriage in Malawi (2018-2023) which aims to reduce the prevalence of child marriage in Malawi by 20% by 2022. Another key strategy that was developed in 2018 is The National Strategy for Adolescent Girls and Young Women (2018-2022). The goal of the strategy is to '*ensure that Adolescent Girls and Young Women in Malawi are safe and protected and have equal opportunities to realise their rights and achieve their full potential through unlimited access to quality integrated education, health, employment and social protection services that are provided through a sustainable, coordinated governance framework and a comprehensive referral and linkage system'*.

The FCDO-funded Project is complementing and helping to operationalise these strategies, aiming to promote girls' education and to ensure that girls in the five target districts not only remain in primary school, but that they progress through and transition from primary to secondary school.

1.3 COVID-19 AND SCHOOL CLOSURES IN MALAWI

The Government of Malawi declared a national disaster and a state of health emergency on 20th March 2020 due to the global COVID-19 pandemic and developed the National COVID-19 Preparedness and Response Plan. As a result of subsequent measures put in place, students in Malawi experienced two periods of school closure: from March 2020 October 2020, with phased reopening starting with exam classes in September; and then again from mid-February 2021 to mid-March 2021, following a major surge of COVID-19 infections in early 2021 and including the impact of teacher strikes in early March.[5]

These prolonged closures meant that 7.7 million children in Malawi were out of formal schooling for over seven months (UNICEF, 2021). School closures put girls at greater risk of permanent school drop-out, including through early marriage and pregnancy (see Section 1.3.1 below), as well as lost learning and motivation; during school closures, the government ran online and radio-based education programmes to try and support primary-level children to continue their studies from home while schools were closed, with a particular focus on literacy, numeracy and science. However, these were inaccessible to the majority of learners in remote, marginalised rural communities. Monitoring reports from UNICEF in

[5] Non-boarding schools in Malawi closed on 18th January 2021 for an initial period of three weeks. On 14th February 2021, the Minister of Health announced that schools would remain closed for another two weeks. Schools were re-opened on 22nd February 2021. However, when schools were due to reopen on 22nd Feb, teachers in Malawi's public schools at all levels went on strike for COVID-19 risk allowances, meaning most students had to return home. The teachers' strike was called off on 9th March, although it briefly resumed for a week in early April. Under the strike action teachers and learners remained physically in schools, but teachers did not deliver lessons.

December 2020 suggested that overall, 78% of primary school children in Malawi returned to school after the first period of closure.

After the school closure, the Ministry of Education and its stakeholders were closely monitoring the COVID-19 situation in Malawi and developed guidelines for re-opening of schools, colleges and universities. The COVID-19 school guidelines included (i) disinfecting schools where necessary following the National Disinfection Guidelines; (ii) provision of all necessary preventive measures at school level; (iii) orientation of all teachers on remedial education strategies; (iv) orientation on health and hygiene education; and psychosocial support for learners; and (v) ensuring that learners, students and teachers always put on masks, with learners aged 6 - 11 using masks under strictest supervision.

1.3.1 Prevalence of Early Pregnancies during COVID-19 School Closures

The COVID-19 pandemic has led to an increase in early pregnancies[6] in Malawi according to data from the Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare. This increase was expected, based on the prevailing context and the impact of previous pandemics in the region. Girls are made more vulnerable when the relative protections of school structures are removed. Families facing challenging decisions in a worsening economic context are also more likely to turn to child marriage as a coping mechanism, and girls are more vulnerable to transactional sex in exchange for food and other basic needs as poverty rises; both are in turn linked to increases in levels of pregnancy. The data compiled the number of early pregnancy cases between March and July 2020, and compared it with statistics for the same period last year for 21 districts in Malawi[7].

Table 2 shows the number of early pregnancies in the various districts between the two periods. March-July 2020 is the period when schools were closed due to the first wave of COVID-19 in Malawi.

Table 2: Number of Early Pregnancies March-July 2019 and March-July 2020 by District

REGION	District	March-July 2019	March-July 2020	%Change
SOUTHERN REGION	Balaka	1,848	2,281	23.4
	Blantyre	2,140	2,606	21.8
	Chikwawa	1,805	2,091	15.8
	Chiradzulu	648	1,199	85.0
	Machinga	2,535	2,068	-18.4
	Mangochi	5,764	5,901	2.4
	Mulanje	2,752	2,760	0.3
	Neno	635	776	22.2
	Phalombe	1,287	2,565	99.3
CENTRAL REGION	Dedza	3,681	2,845	-22.7
	Dowa	1,994	2,712	36.0

[6] According to the World Health Organization, early pregnancy, also known as teenage or adolescent pregnancy is a pregnancy in a female below the age of 20.

[7] The districts that are not included in the database include Chitipa and Likoma in the north; Ntcheu and Ntchisi in the centre; and Mwanza, Thyolo, Nsanje and Zomba in the south.

	Mchinji	2,072	2,270	9.6
	Kasungu	1,972	1,374	-30.3
	Nkhotakota	1,542	1,193	-22.6
	Salima	2,263	2,676	18.3
	Lilongwe	5,675	3,717	-34.5
NORTHERN REGION	Karonga	760	887	16.7
	Mzimba North	453	464	2.4
	Mzimba South	1,425	2,480	74.0
	Nkhatabay	1,248	981	-21.4
	Rumphi	605	485	-19.8
	TOTAL	**45,123**	**46,351**	**2.7**

Source: Data from Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare, 2020.

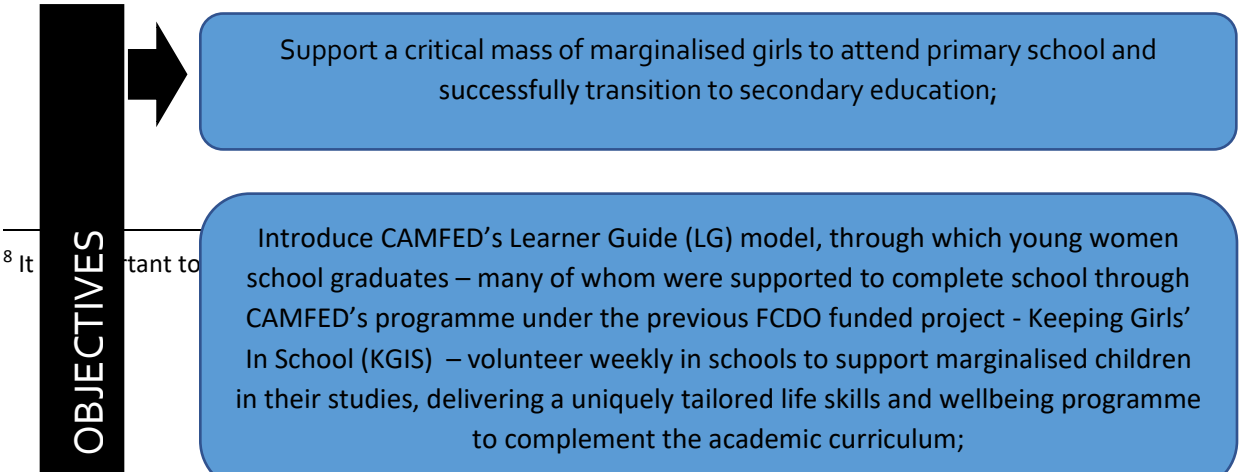
The national level picture[8] shows that Malawi recorded an increase of 2.7% in the number of early pregnancies between March-July 2019 and March-July 2020. Although the proportionate change at the national level appears to be small, there are a number of districts where the increase is very high. As Table 2 shows, districts such as Phalombe (99.3%), Chiradzulu (85.0%) and Mzimba South (74%) all registered significant percentage increases.

1.4 THE CAMFED MALAWI FCDO-FUNDED PROJECT

The FCDO-funded Project implemented by CAMFED Malawi (hereafter referred to as 'The Project') was launched in mid-July 2019. Its aim is to increase the numbers of marginalised girls in rural Malawi who complete primary education and successfully transition to secondary school. The Project is designed to achieve its aim through a combination of interlocking and mutually-reinforcing interventions, including: material support to address the cost barriers to education faced by the most vulnerable girls; psychosocial support and life skills to increase resilience to wider challenges, strengthen coping mechanisms and boost retention in school; and additional learning support initiatives to improve learning outcomes at primary level.

The specific objectives of the Project are highlighted in Figure 2

Figure 2: FCDO-funded Project's Main Objectives.



[8] It tant to





Leverage the value of KGIS investment in existing structures and local capital to mobilise a community of partnerships to rally behind and mobilise sustainable support for generations of marginalised rural girls and young women.

This Project is intended to bring a spotlight to the obstacles girls face in accessing quality education, and provide the catalyst needed for mobilising and reinforcing public accountability around girls' welfare and entitlements - across local communities, school management and government ministries.

The intended impact of the Project is to **achieve gender equality in education, empowering women and girls to step up as leaders of change in their communities**. There are two impact indicators with values established at the start of the Project in 2019. Primary School Leaving Certificate of Education (PSCLE) results used to inform results under impact indicator 1 have been taken from national data provided by the Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB). The MoE's Education Sector Plan II and the Gender Parity Index for Form 1 students from 2019 EMIS enrolment data in five partner districts were used for measurement of impact indicator 2. The targets for both indicators were taken from the Education Sector Plan II.

Four Project outcome indicators and twelve output indicators are being measured at different intervals in the Project through EMIS data provided by MoE, CAMFED monitoring data and data from research/ evaluations.

The Project Outputs are:

Output 1: Material and financial support provided to marginalised girls to address financial resource barriers to attending school regularly.
Output 2: Learner Guides and Teacher Mentors are trained and provide targeted support to marginalised girls and support regular attendance and learning.
Output 3: Schools, communities and systems have the skills and systems to make schools safe learning environments for girls and boys.

The targeted Project interventions include:

- Targeted, responsive financing mechanisms to support the specific needs of 29,700 of the most marginalised girls in target communities, enabling them to access primary school and, later, to take up the places they achieve at secondary school.

- CAMFED alumnae and community networks undertake a key role in identifying and targeting these often 'invisible' girls for support, who will include girls living with a disability and those with caring responsibilities.
- Holistic wraparound support delivered through a coordinated infrastructure including representative stakeholder committees at school, community and district level, trained Teacher Mentors and Learner Guides strengthening home-school links and ensuring that marginalised girls are able to access and stay in primary school, and that they are protected from school-based gender violence and abuse.
- Specific learning interventions designed to push up learning outcomes include primary-level adaptations of tried-and-tested initiatives by CAMFED Malawi, such as Study Circles, support from Learner Guides and provision of tailored learning resources i.e. *Learning to Learn in English,* a guide developed by CAMFED to help students develop learning skills in English, and the *My Better World* wellbeing curriculum, which is used to support the development of broader life skills, delivered in school by Learner Guides.

The Project is also designed to build the capacity of school, community and district stakeholders to protect the most vulnerable learners for the long term and reinforce public accountability around children's welfare and right to education. It leverages existing investment from FCDO in local infrastructure and support systems around CAMFED partner schools as well as the network of young women -CAMFED Association (CAMA) members -who have completed school through CAMFED's programme, including with FCDO support through the Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) programme.

The Project is operating in 675 primary and 163 secondary schools in the rural, under-resourced districts of Dedza, Mulanje, Machinga, Mangochi and Chikwawa. The Project is targeting in particular a cohort of 29,700 marginalised girls with material school-going support from Standards 5 to 8 in 675 primary schools, which feed into 163 secondary schools in the five districts. The Project has a target of 254,137 learners to be reached through Learner Guides (LGs). To date, 239,150 learners[9] have been reached by the LGs with life skills sessions.

1.4.1 The Project's Theory of Change

The Project's Theory of Change (ToC) is positioned within CAMFED's multidimensional approach to address the multiple, interconnected barriers to girls' access and learning. This rests on three interlinked premises:

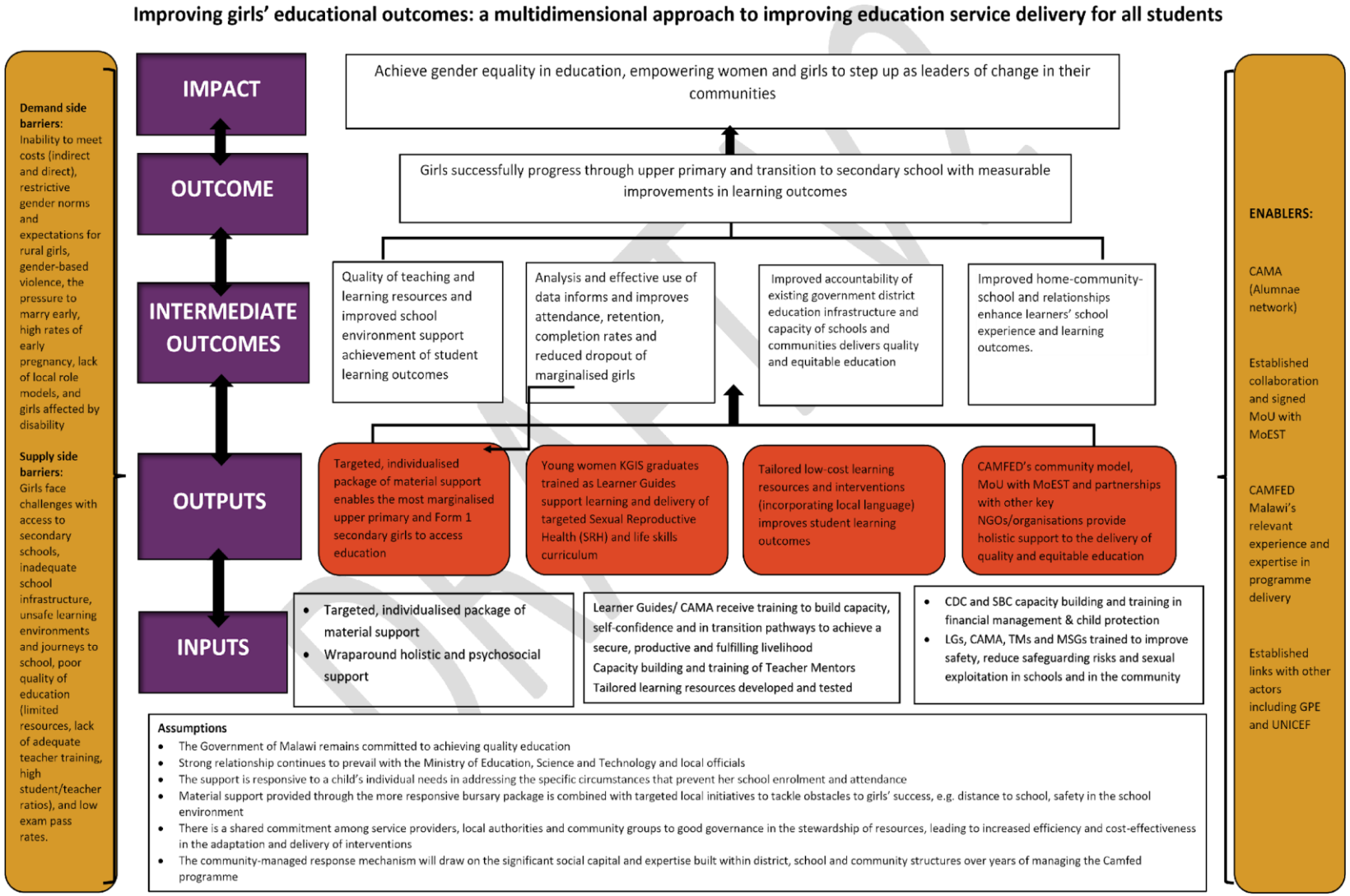
- **Improvements in girls' learning outcomes** will result from targeted interventions to create a safe, enabling environment for marginalised girls, within and beyond the classroom;
- **Improvements in girls' transition** from primary to secondary school are linked to improvements in their learning and will result from increased attendance, retention and participation at school;

[9] This statistic is from the Year 2 Report.

- Young women school graduates **will improve their employability and** gain key entrepreneurship and leadership skills through the creation of a structured volunteering and training scheme through which they provide critical life skills and learning support to learners in school.

The ToC is presented in Figure 3:

Figure 3: CAMFED FCDO-funded Project's Theory of Change[10]



[10] A new ToC has been developed to include the BTEC certification and the report will be updated with the latest version when it has been completed.

1.4.2 Key Aspects of the Project

The Project has the following key components:

1.4.2.1 Tailored material and financial support through CAMFED's Step-Up Fund (SUF) Programme

The SUF is a targeted, responsive financial and material support package that addresses identified needs of the most marginalised girls in target communities, enabling them to access primary and secondary education. Girls are identified and selected for support through a transparent, needs-based process that draws together committees of school, government and community stakeholders. Material items are complemented by wider psychosocial and learning support, as outlined below, recogising the multiple, interlocking barriers to keeping girls in school requires a holistic approach.

1.4.2.2 The Learner Guide Programme

Mentoring, life skills, sexual and reproductive health awareness, and social support to students delivered by young women 'Learner Guides', using a bespoke well-being curriculum – My Better World.

CAMFED Malawi have trained young women members of the CAMFED Association as Learner Guides (LGs) building on the investments made under the previous FCDO-funded Project (under KGIS), which supported large numbers of girls from marginalised rural backgrounds to complete secondary school. Learner Guides return to their local schools voluntarily to deliver a programme of life skills and wellbeing – the My Better World programme – as well as sexual reproductive health awareness and study support to both boys and girls. Their volunteering is incentivised through a package of training, access to business finance and the opportunity to gain a formal qualification to recognsie the skills and experience they develop through the programme. Learner Guides strengthen the link between home and school, working in partnership with trained teachers and other stakeholders to identify children at risk of drop out and connecting them with the additional support they need, including through home visits. Learner Guides are supported in their work by trained peers, who act as Core Trainers, as well as CAMFED district staff members and an embedded infrastructure network at school and district level, including District Education Managers, Primary Education Advisors, Child Protection Workers, health officials, police, Traditional Leaders, parents and the wider CAMFED Association network.

1.4.2.3 Targeted learning interventions

To support improved learning outcomes at primary level in the target schools, the Project includes provision of learning resources, including the *My Better World* workbook and a bespoke resource designed to improve English literacy – *Learning to Learn in English* – recognising that, despite English being the official language of instruction in Malawi, for many children in this context English is not a first language. Learning resources are complemented by support for peer-led group learning sessions in school – Study Circles – which were first introduced through CAMFED's programme under the FCDO-funded KGIS programme and have now been mainstreamed throughout the Malawi education system at secondary level. Study Circles provide an opportunity for learners to study together with other students in smaller groups, giving them the opportunity to ask questions and catch-up on subjects or topics they may have found challenging and learn from each other. They are facilitated by adults in the schools, who can step in to provide additional support as needed.

1.4.2.4 Community-led delivery model, with trained structures embedded at school, district and community level to lead support for vulnerable children

The Project has trained a number of key stakeholders and structures to be able to oversee, deliver and monitor implementation and results.

Teacher Mentors (TMs) are existing teachers in the target schools, trained under this Project to: provide counselling, guidance and support to vulnerable children at risk of drop-out; ensure child protection and safeguarding policies, procedures and mechanisms for reporting are embedded in good practice in schools; and support improved learning outcomes. TMs are also an important focal point in schools for LGs, identifying those children at risk of dropping out of school and providing support for them to return to school.

Primary Education Advisors (PEAs) oversee the delivery of primary education in government schools at zonal level across each district. Under this Project, PEAs have been engaged as key members of the Resource Team, to oversee school-level implementation of CAMFED's programme and lead data collection for reporting on the Project specifically.

Community Development Committees (CDCs) CDCs have also been established in each of the Project districts. These operate as a multi-stakeholder district level structure that coordinate and steer this project. Bringing together existing duty bearers, and chaired by the District Education Managers in each district, they provide a critical link with government and non-formal institutions and have representation from ministries, traditional leaders, school authorities, and civil society organisations.

2. RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

2.1 PURPOSE

The purpose of the midterm Operational Research was to evaluate and measure the progress of the Project at the midway point and the impact of the Project achievements. Importantly, it focused on the responsiveness and lesson learning of the Project during the COVID-19 school closures. This included a focus on whether students received effective continued learning and psychosocial support in their communities, from LGs and other locally-based project stakeholders (in the two periods of school closure experienced to date) and what the effect has been in terms of girls' safety, learning, and ability to return to school.

The results of the Operational Research at this midway point in the Project will enable the Project to take stock of lessons learned to improve the management of outputs, outcomes and impact of Project interventions moving forward. Recommendations and lesson learning from the research will form part of the Project's action planning for continued improvement, and the study will be repeated at the end of the Project to measure the overall achievement and impact of Project objectives and outcomes.

The results of the Operational Research will be used to inform and improve programme implementation in the context of COVID-19 and the support to out-of-school learning and holistic support. The results will also inform schools, the MoE, CAMFED and FCDO on the gaps, challenges and lesson learning resulting from the school closures and the impact these have had on the Project, schools and the learners.

2.2 KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

Overarching Research Question for Project Learning	How does the interaction between the different Project initiatives/ interventions contribute to better outcomes for marginalised girls?
Output 1	Material and financial support provided to marginalised girls to address financial resource barriers to attending school regularly.

Key Research Questions under Output 1:

i. Are girls in receipt of Step-up Fund receiving resources targeted to their needs? Are these the right resources? Why? How do we know this?
ii. To what extent did the financial support to marginalised girls in this project contribute to intended Project outcomes?
iii. What in-kind and other resources are leveraged within communities to extend support to marginalised children as a reciprocal response to resources provided under this Project?

Output 2	Learner Guides and Teacher Mentors are trained and provide targeted support to marginalised girls and support regular attendance and learning.

Key Research Questions under Output 2:

i. To what extent is the My Better World (MBW) curriculum, and the Sexual and Reproductive Health (SRH) programme contributing to intended Project outcomes and outputs as planned for participant marginalised girls and boys?
ii. Is the targeted support provided to marginalised girls by Teacher Mentors and Learner Guides meeting the intended Project outcomes and outputs, including during periods of school closure? How do we know this?
iii. To what extent does the design and implementation of the programme equip and motivate Teacher Mentors and Learner Guides to provide effective targeted support to girls and boys including social and emotional?
iv. Has the Project altered medium-term outcomes for the young women who participate as Learner Guides?

Output 3	Schools, communities and systems have the skills and systems to make schools safe learning environments for girls and boys.

Key Research Questions under Output 3

i. Have the interventions and their delivery methods been effective in creating safer school learning environments for girls and boys?
ii. To what extent have systems, procedures and policies been embedded in good practice in schools to make the learning environment safer?
iii. To what extent are components of this Project integrated into existing structures and how likely are interventions to continue when FCDO funding comes to an end?

2.3 METHODOLOGY

2.3.1 Study Design

The IOR had two phases: (i) Desk study, (ii) Primary data collection. The desk study phase included a review of all the literature including the original Project proposal, the Project's Theory of Change and logframe, the Project monitoring reports (quarterly and annual), case studies, training materials, etc. The primary data phase involved the use of qualitative stakeholder consultations, key informant interviews, focus group discussions, and administering quantitative surveys.

The context of the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions informed the design of this research where ensuring the safety of respondents and researchers has been paramount. A blended approach of digital and face-to-face data collection was therefore adopted. Face-to-face interviews were only conducted after a robust assessment of safety, and following the COVID-19 guidelines and restrictions as stipulated by the Malawian Government.

2.3.2 Sampling Approach & Research Participants

2.3.2.1 District Selection – CAMFED FCDO Malawi Operational Research

Data collection from primary school learners was conducted in two out of the five districts where the Project is being implemented. The five districts in which the Project operates are Dedza, Mulanje, Machinga, Mangochi and Chikwawa. One of the driving factors for limiting the number of districts that were sampled was the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions in Malawi and being able to safely conduct this research but also limiting the risk of the spread of infection with researchers travelling between and to and from districts. The purposively sampled districts were Mangochi and Dedza.

Mangochi District was purposely selected because it has the highest dropout rates amongst the 5 project districts (see Table 3) and is a 'hotspot' which was targeted for both the qualitative and quantitative research in exploring causal factors and enablers for keeping girls in school, with the aim of providing robust and clear recommendations to the Project for further impact.

Dedza District was selected because it was noted as the only district from the five where the LG programme had been integrated in the school timetable and this had not yet been consistently seen across the other four districts, yet is something the Project is keen to replicate across the other partner districts. Targeting the quantitative and qualitative research in Dedza also provided a good comparison with Mangochi as the dropout rate is lower in Dedza.

Table 3: Dropout and Pass Rates in CAMFED Project Partner Schools in the five Districts[11]

District	Dropout Rate for Upper Classes (2018/2019)		Pass Rate (PSLCE) 2018/2019	
	Female	Male	Female	Male
Chikwawa	5.1	3.5	60%	78%
Dedza	4.8	4.9	72%	86%
Machinga	4.8	3.3	72%	86%
Mangochi	7.0	6.2	65%	78%
Mulanje	3.4	2.3	86%	94%
ALL	**4.9**	**3.9**	**71%**	**84%**

Source: EMIS, 2019.

2.3.2.2 School Selection – FCDO Malawi Operational Research

The IOR (student survey and FGDs) was conducted in 10 primary schools in Dedza and Mangochi (see Table 4). The educational zones were purposively sampled to ensure that the IOR is comprehensive enough to capture location-specific dynamics that might be impacting the implementation of the Project, while also ensuring that the risk of contracting or transmitting COVID-19 to study respondents was minimised. In each sampled educational zone, one primary school was randomly selected.

Table 4: Primary Schools Sampled

District	Education Zone	Name of School
Mangochi	Monkey Bay	Cape Maclear Primary School
	Chilipa	Chilipa 1 FP School
	Koche	Koche FP School
	Boma	St Augustine II Catholic Primary School
	Chimwala	Nasite Primary School
Dedza	Kalinyeke	Chisiri Full Primary School
	Boma	Kapesi Full Primary School
	Bembeke	Msesa Full Primary School
	Chimbiya	Nthulu Full Primary School
	Thete	Thete Full Primary School

2.3.3 Quantitative Survey Tools

2.3.3.1 The Learner Guide Survey

The Learner Guide survey. The LG survey was conducted virtually using mobile phones and reached 450 Learner Guides (67% of the total number trained by the Project).

The LG survey was designed to be used to measure project indicator 2.4 *Proportion of Learner Guides who are visible leaders in their communities through, for example, representation on local decision-making*

[11] These rates apply generally to all children in the target schools and precede the start date of the Project.

bodies and school management committees, to be able to influence the support provided to marginalised girls. The LG Survey included questions on:

(i) LGs' visibility and advocacy as leaders in their communities through, for example, representation on local decision-making bodies and school management committees, to be able to influence the support provided to marginalised girls;

(ii) The number of students LGs helped to re-enrol after dropping out of school in the month prior to the research being conducted, disaggregated by whether they were receiving Step Up Fund support; their responsiveness to school closures during the COVID-19 pandemic and their support to marginalised girls in their communities to build resilience, provide out of school learning support through Study Circles and My Better World sessions and to encourage girls to return to schools when they reopened.

2.3.3.2 The Student Survey

The student survey was conducted with a sample of 501 Standard 7 and 8 students from across the 10 schools in Dedza and Mangochi. This sampling included (i) female students supported with Step-Up Fund (SUF) (ii) those students (girls and boys) who attend the MBW sessions and (iii) non-supported students who do not attend the MBW sessions or receive material support through SUF. The student survey included an Academic Self-Esteem Test as described in detail in Section 3.3.

2.3.4 Qualitative Survey Tools

Qualitative tools included key informant interviews (KIIs), semi-structured interviews (SSI) and focus group discussions (FGDs). These were based on thematic interview checklists, in which key topics relevant to the research are explored in more depth but which provided the spaces for the respondents to focus on the key points that were important to them. The qualitative tools were used to examine and explain the complex factors that contribute to learning improvements and to a successful or unsuccessful transition from upper primary to secondary school under the Project.

2.3.4.1 Key Informant Interviews (KIIs) and Semi-Structured Interviews (SSIs)

The KIIs and SSIs were administered to a range of key informants. These included: CAMFED staff, teachers, Learner Guides, Teacher Mentors, parents/guardians, community leaders, CAMA members, School Based Committee members and Community Development Committee (CDC) members, and others.

2.3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions

There were two FGDs with students – one for female learners and the second one for the male learners. These were used to collect detailed in-depth information on the various aspects of the IOR from the girls and boys.

2.3.5 Study Respondents

The study respondents are presented in Table 5. The student survey covered 501 students from Standard 7 and 8 in the 10 schools. The LG survey reached 450 LGs, 246 of whom participated in a short survey, while the remaining 204 LGs participated in a longer survey, reflecting challenges experienced with delivering the longer survey to all LGs remotely. The LG short survey was a subset of the longer survey, in that all the questions in the short survey were also available in the longer survey. Detailed challenges and limitations of the research are available in Section 3.10 of this report which provides further detail and information in relation to the LGs who participated in this research.

Table 5: Study Respondents

Type of Respondent	Type of Tool Used	Number Interviewed
Students (Standard 7 and 8)	Quantitative – student questionnaire	501
Learner Guides	Quantitative – LG questionnaire	450
	Qualitative – LG MBW Session Questions	28
Secondary Students (Form 1)	Qualitative – In-depth interview	20
Primary Education Advisors (PEA)	Qualitative – In-depth interview	8
Teacher Mentors	Qualitative – In-depth interview	10
CAMFED Staff	Qualitative – In-depth interview	6

2.4 EVALUATION SCHEDULE / TIMETABLE

Table 6: Independent Operational Research Timelines

Activity	No of Days	Dates	Responsibility
Inception Meeting and collection of programme documents	1	11 May 2021	Consultant/ Research Steering Group (RSG)
Desk study – review of literature.	10	12-21 May 2021	Consultants
Preparation of inception report, including data collection tools.			Consultants/ RSG
Submission of draft inception report, with survey tools and work plan.	1	16 July 2021	Consultant
Review of the Inception Report by RSG	7	17-23 July 2021	RSG
Revision of Inception Report, incorporating Comments from the RSG	4	23-27 July 2021	Consultants
Submission of Final Inception Report	1	27 July 2021	Consultants
Data collection tools development	7	12-19 July 2021	CAMFED/ Consultants
Training of research assistants and pre-testing of questionnaires.	3	23-25 July 2021	Consultants/ Enumerators
Data collection	14	26 July -6 August 2021	Consultants/ Enumerators

Rapid data analysis and preparation of initial findings	5	7-12 August 2021	Consultant
End-of-data collection Debrief/ Presentation of initial findings	1	16 August 2021	Consultant
Data cleaning, analysis and preparation of draft IOR report.	21	17Aug – 6 Sept 2021	Consultant
Submission of first draft report to CAMFED	1	7 Sept 2021	Consultant
Review of the first draft report by RSG	14	8-27 Sept 2021	RSG
Preparation of second draft report, incorporating comments from the client	14	28-Sept – 11 Oct 2021	Consultants
Submission of first draft report to CAMFED	1	12 Oct 2021	Consultants
Review of the second draft report by RSG	14	13-26 Oct 2021	RSG
Preparation of the final report, incorporating comments from the client on the second draft report	5	27-31 Oct 2021	Consultants
Submission of final IOR Report, SPSS/STATA datasets, transcripts, etc.	1	3 Nov 2021	Consultants
A PowerPoint presentation of research findings	1	4 Nov 2021	Consultant

3. FINDINGS

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In this Chapter, we first describe the characteristics of the sampled students, and then in turn discuss findings in relation to the Project Impact, Outcomes and Outputs, as well as key enabling and hindering factors contributing t these findings. This chapter also includes a section focused on the results of the academic self-esteem assessment.

3.2 CHARACTERISTICS OF THE SAMPLED STUDENTS

The study collected data from 501 students from Dedza and Mangochi Districts. In both districts the majority of the sampled learners were female (See Table 7). This is because in most of the schools, CAMFED interventions, including MBW sessions mostly attended by female learners.

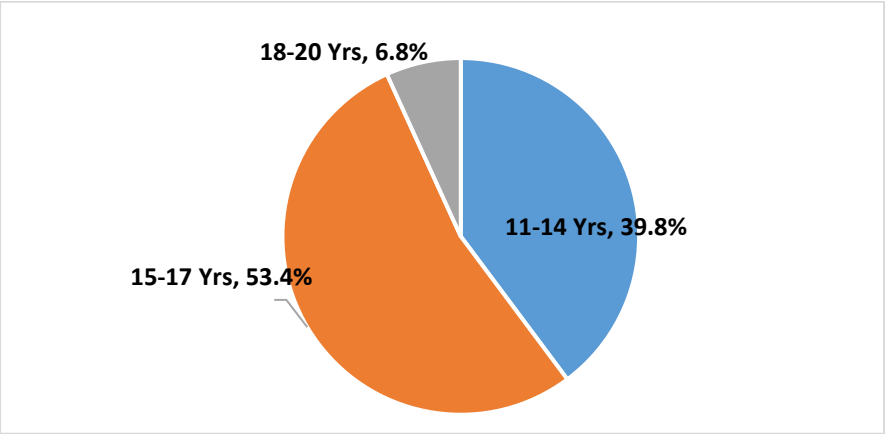
Table 7: Gender of the Sampled Learners by District (%)

GENDER OF THE LEARNER	**DISTRICT**	
	Dedza	**Mangochi**

Female	59.0	71.7
Male	41.0	28.3
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*
*N**	*222*	*279*

*N=501

Figure 4: Proportion of Sampled Learners in various Age Categories (%)



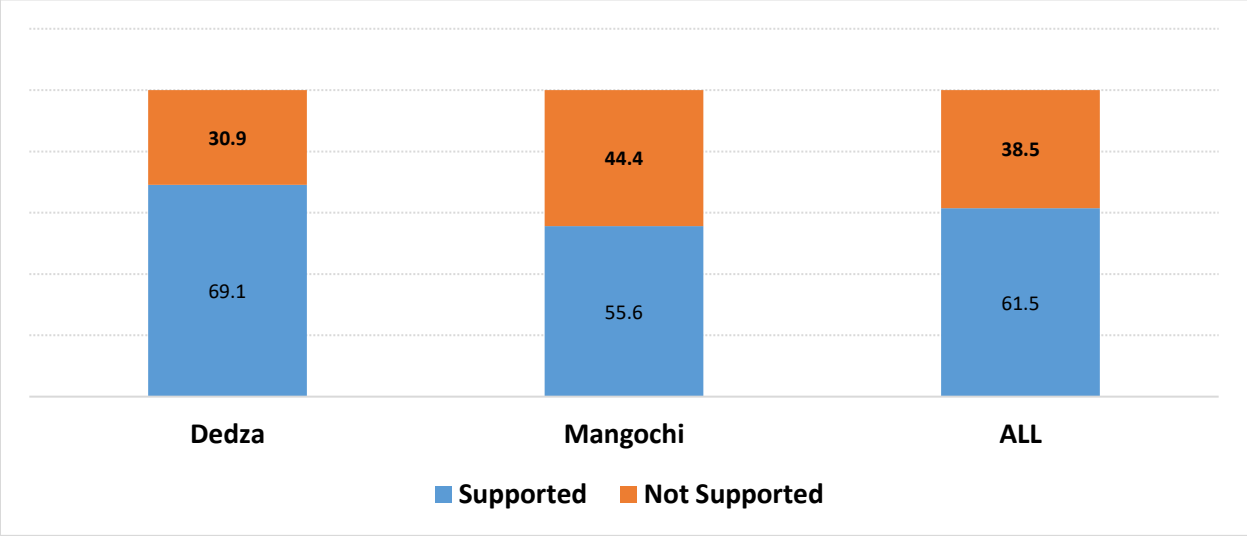
The majority of the sampled learners (53.4%) are in the 15-17 years category. This is because the study only sampled learners from Standard 7 and 8 (see Figure 4). Overall, the average age was 14.9 years. In both districts, the majority of the sampled learners were from Standard 7 (see Table 8). The under-representation of Standard 8 learners was due to the fact that in some schools, Standard 8 learners were being discouraged to actively participate in the survey during class time by the school administration. They felt that the Standard 8 students should concentrate on subjects that are examinable in the upcoming national primary school leaving examinations. As a result, the proportion of Standard 8 learners in our sample was low.

Table 8: Class of the Students by District (%)

CLASS	**DISTRICT**	
	Dedza	**Mangochi**
Standard 7	54.5	64.2
Standard 8	45.5	35.8
Total	*100.0*	*100.0*
N	*222*	*279*

Among the sampled learners, 147 girls (77 girls from Dedza and 70 girls from Mangochi) were beneficiaries of the CAMFED Step-Up Fund (SUF). The SUF beneficiaries represent 44.3% of all the girls that were part of the student survey. The SUF beneficiaries in Dedza were 58.3% of all the sampled girls in Dedza, and in Mangochi they represented 35% of all the sampled girls.

Figure 5: Proportion of Sampled Learners who are Benefiting from Project Interventions



An analysis of the proportion of learners who get any form of support from CAMFED in terms of SUF or participation in MBW sessions show that, overall, 61.5% of the sampled learners are benefiting from the Project interventions (see Figure 5). The proportion was higher in Dedza (69.1%) than in Mangochi (55.6%). The proportion of learners that were not supported was important to be included in the study to provide a good comparison in terms of how the Project is impacting on the welfare of the students – both supported and non-supported.

3.3 ACADEMIC SELF-ESTEEM ASSESSMENT

Self-esteem is defined as the positive or negative reflection that the individual has for himself/herself and the belief of being able to cope with the basic challenges of life (Ganalou *et al.* 2014). Tafarodi and Swann (2001) define self-esteem as consisting of *self-competence* and *self-liking*. The most popular tool for measuring self-esteem is the Rosenberg Self-Esteem Scale (RSES), (1965). It is a one-dimensional tool which concentrates on the perception of self-esteem an individual has for their own value. Self-esteem has previously been associated with other variables in research addressing issues such as the following, among others: academic performance (Serrano, Mérida, & Tabernero, 2016); emotional intelligence (Rodríguez, 2012); school success and socioeconomic level (Muñoz, 2011); perceptions of stress and coping (Verduzco, Gómez, & Duran, 2004); support classes for students at high social risk (Ramírez,

Duarte, & Muñoz, 2005); socioeconomic status (Twenge & Campbell, 2002); and reading skills (De Tejada, 2009), among others.

Many studies highlight the importance of self-esteem as a catalyst for the learning process in the context of education (Villarroel, 2001) and as a key component in the construction of the self in school children; this being understood as a system consisting of three elements: a) our self-concept or view of what we are; b) our self-control or awareness of our own skills and abilities to determine and guide our behaviour; and c) self-esteem or acknowledgement of the feelings we have about ourselves (León, 2007).

The academic self-esteem analysis was done to assess whether there are differences in academic self-esteem between girls and boys in the project schools. Further, the analysis was done to understand whether support from the Project is having an effect on academic self-esteem; and how household vulnerability affects the academic self-esteem of the learners.

3.3.1 Methodology for Calculating Student Academic Self-Esteem

This IOR calculated academic self-esteem using a self-perception tool- the *Test de Autoestima Escolar* - Academic Self-Esteem Test or TAE, developed by Isabel Haeusslear in 1991. The tool was previously used by CAMFED in Primary schools in Zambia (in the FCDO-funded Girls' Education Challenge Innovation Window Project). The instrument (Questions 9 to 32 in the Student Survey [Annex 2]) measures behaviour, intellectual status[12], physical appearance and attributes, anxiety, popularity, happiness and satisfaction related to the age (and normal maturity) of the child. These indicators of self-esteem are critical determinants of the child's ability to function and to learn in the school environment. A detailed methodology on how self-esteem was calculated is available in Annex 4.

Using the methodology provided by CAMFED, a self-estimate performance score is generated. It is important to note that due to the high sensitivity of self-esteem to a child's age, the analysis was done for children aged 11-16[13]. Children are then classified into four categories of performance: high, normal, low, and very low. While high and normal levels do not theoretically discriminate among positive levels of self-esteem, low and very low performances do present an important difference. Low performance indicates the need to support and encourage the pupil inside the learning environment in order to improve their academic self-perception. The results of the academic self-esteem assessment are described in following sections.

3.3.2 Results - Student Academic Self-Esteem by Gender

Table 9 shows student academic self-esteem by the gender of the learner. The results show that overall, a higher proportion of male learners (22.7%) were classified as having a 'high' academic self-esteem than their female counterparts (16.4%). For the male learners a higher proportion (30.3%) also had a 'very low'

[12] This refers to a person's ability to think and understand ideas at a high level.

[13] The TAE calculates self-esteem for children aged 10-16. However, our student dataset did not have individuals aged below 11, since data collection only involved learners from Standard 7 and 8. As a result, the self-esteem measure was done for children aged between 11 and 16. While we had students aged 11-20 who completed the survey, the TAE instrument itself requires children aged 17 and above to be excluded from data analysis.

self-esteem than girls (26.7%). The differences in academic self-esteem between male and female learners were statistically significant (p=0.060).

Table 9: Student Academic Self-Esteem by Gender of Learner (%)

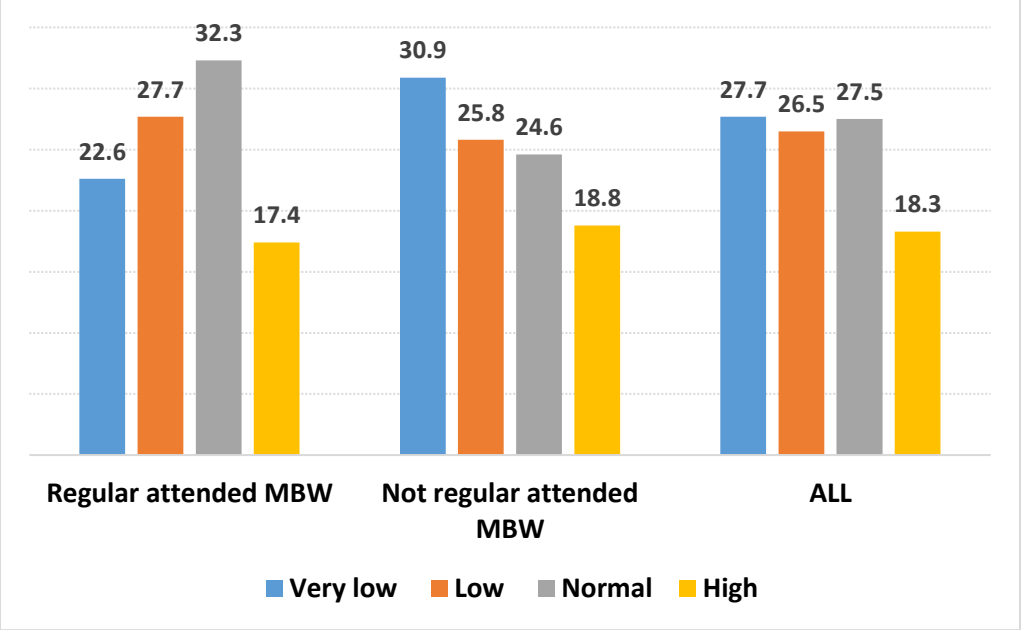
Self-Esteem Level	Female	Male	Test of Significance
Very low	26.7	30.3	$Chi^2 = 7.3893$ P = 0.060
Low	30.1	17.7	
Normal	26.7	29.4	
High	16.4	22.7	
N	*292*	*119*	

These findings are consistent with results from other studies. In particular, studies have shown that adolescent girls tend to have lower self-esteem and more negative assessments of their intellectual abilities than boys have (Kearney-Cooke, 1999; Bleidorn *et.al*., 2005).

3.3.3 Results – Student Self-Esteem by Participation in Learner Guide Sessions

An analysis of student esteem by whether the student regularly attends Learner Guide Sessions or not was also done. The results, presented in Figure 6, show that a higher proportion of students who regularly attended Learner Guide sessions had 'normal' or 'high' self-esteem (49.7% compared to 43.4%). Further, among the girls that were found to have 'normal' or 'high' academic self-esteem, 51.9% were SUF beneficiaries.

Figure 6: Self-esteem by whether Students Regularly Attended Learner Guide Sessions (%)

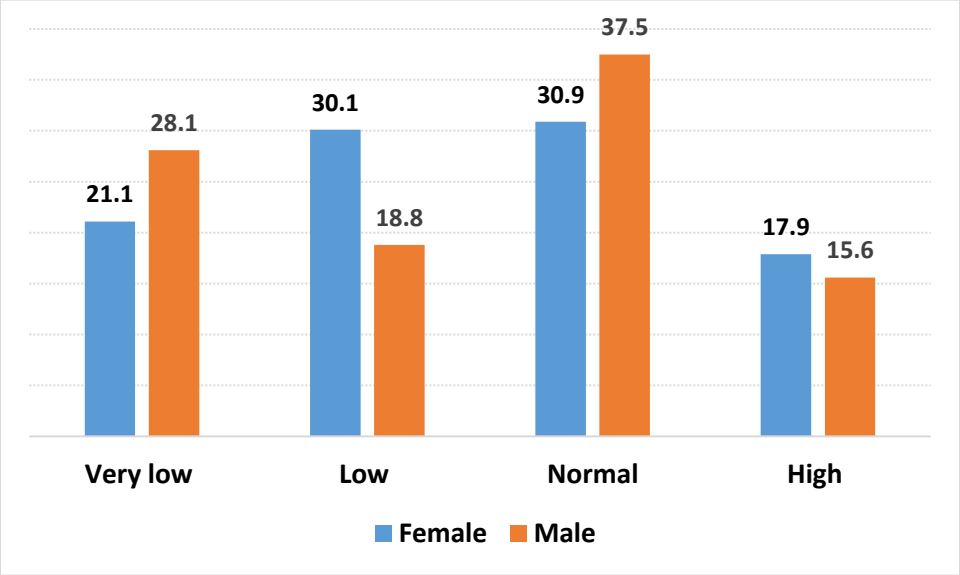


These results point to the fact that participation in CAMFED project interventions is associated with a slightly higher self-esteem than non-participation.

A higher proportion of female learners (62.6%) participate actively in the Learner Guide sessions than male learners (37.7%). In the student survey, it was found that among the girls aged between 11 and 16 (who are part of the Self-esteem analysis), 42.1% have been regularly attending Learner Guide sessions. These sessions are critical in improving life-skills and decision-making capacities amongst all students. Our results show that among the students that reported that they regularly attended MBW sessions[14] last academic term, 79.4% were female, with the remaining 20.6% being male.

An analysis of self-esteem for students who regularly participate in Learner Guide sessions by gender shows that a higher proportion of boys (52.1%) had 'normal' or 'high' self-esteem than girls (43.2%) (see Figure 7). On the other hand, among students who were found to have 'normal' or 'high' self-esteem, 47.8% were attending MBW sessions.

Figure 7: Student Self-esteem for those who regularly attend MBW sessions by Gender (%)



Our results further show that among the girl students who were found to have 'normal' or 'high' self-esteem, 47.3% reported that they were attending MBW sessions and among boys who had 'normal' and 'high' self-esteem, 49.1% were attending MBW sessions.

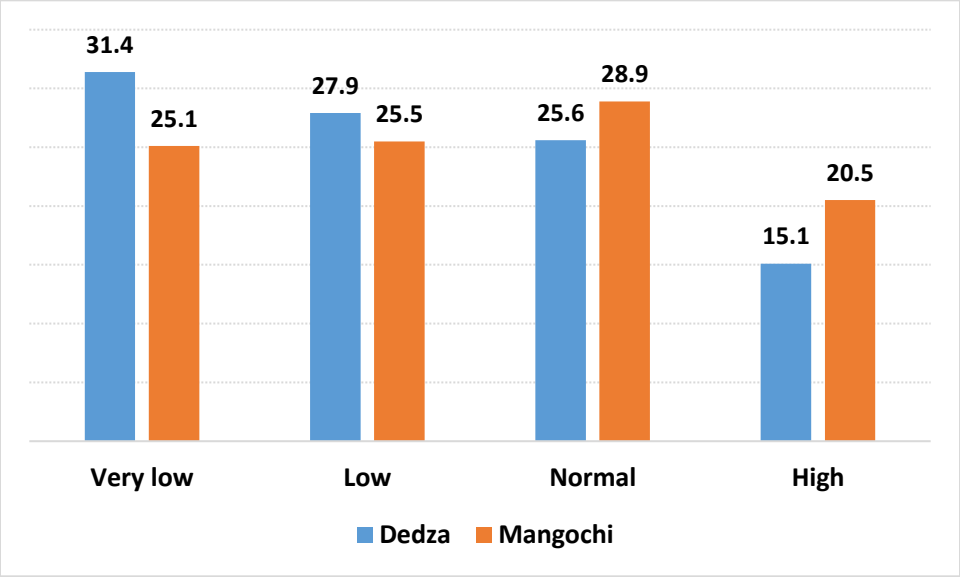
3.3.4 Results – Academic Student Self-Esteem by District

The study also analysed whether academic self-esteem varied by location (district). The results, presented in Figure 8, show that a higher proportion of learners from Dedza District (59.3%) had either *'very low'* or

[14] To classify students into whether they regularly attend MBW sessions or not, we aggregated all students that reported (i) attending all MBW sessions; (ii) attending most of the MBW sessions; and (iii) attending some of them; in question 34 of the Student Survey (Annex 2). For all the remaining students, they were classified as 'not regularly attending MBW sessions'.

'low' self-esteem, while for Mangochi District the proportion was 50.6%. For the learners with either *'normal'* or *'high'* self-esteem the proportion was higher in Mangochi District (49.4%) than in Dedza District (41.7%)

Figure 8: Student Academic Self-Esteem by District (%)



3.3.5 Results – Student Self-Esteem by Type of Student

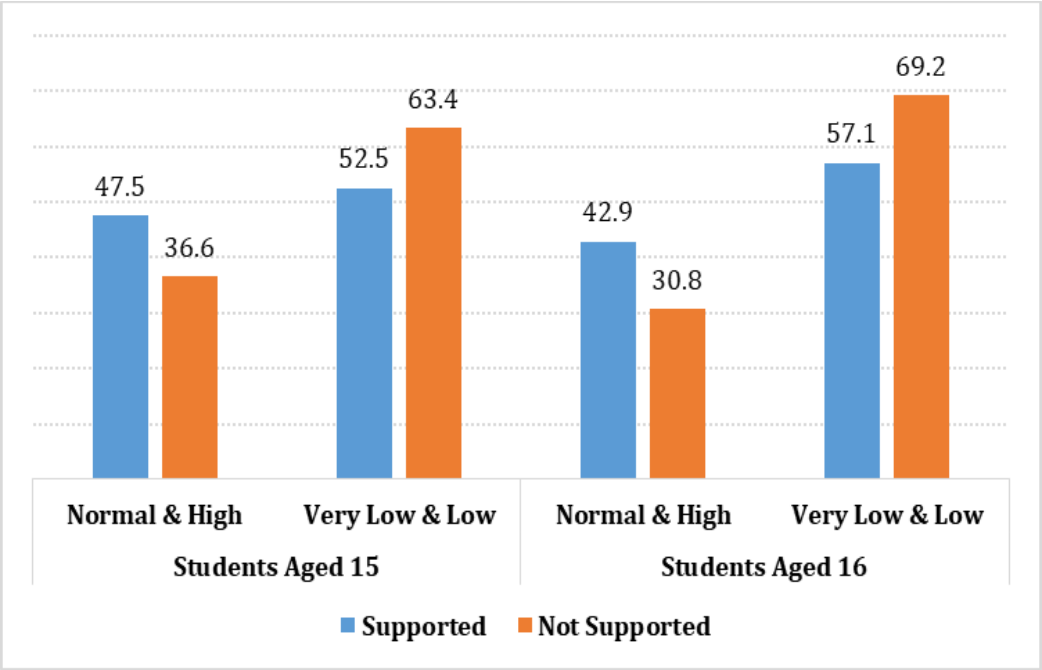
We further analysed self-esteem by the type of learner (i.e. whether the student is supported or not supported by CAMFED). As described in Section 3.2 above, a learner was classified as 'supported' if she or he reported getting support from CAMFED to go to school or receiving support from CAMA members or attending Learner Guide sessions. As Table 10 shows, 45.7% of all female learners who had been supported by the Project (aged between 11 and 16) had 'normal' and 'high' self-esteem, compared to 31.7% of female learners who had not received support. Similarly, 53.8% of male learners (aged between 11 and 16) who had received support had 'normal' and 'high' self-esteem, compared to 38.5% of male learners who had not received support. These differences, however, were not statistically significant.

Table 10: Proportion of Learners Who have Normal and High Self Esteem by Type of Student (%)

Type of Student	Female	Male
Supported	45.7	53.8
Not supported	31.7	38.5
N	126	62

Due to the fact that self-esteem measurement and analysis is age-sensitive, additional analysis was conducted on age-groups 15 and 16 that were included in the self-esteem analysis. The results, presented in Figure 9, show significant variation in academic self-esteem between 15 and 16 year-old students that are supported by CAMFED and those that are not.

Figure 9: Academic Self-esteem of Students Aged 15 and 16 by Type of Student (%)



Among the 15 year old students that are not supported by CAMFED, the proportion with 'very low' and 'low' self-esteem was 63.4%, with the remaining 36.6% having 'normal' and 'high' self-esteem. For the students that are supported by CAMFED, the picture is somehow different. Those with 'normal' and 'high' esteem was 52.5%.

Among the 16 year old students that are not supported by CAMFED, the proportion with 'very low' and 'low' self-esteem was 69.2%, with the remaining 30.8% having 'normal' and 'high' self-esteem. For the students that are supported by CAMFED, with 'normal' and 'high' esteem was 42.9%.

The reason why supported students aged 15 and 16 appear to have lower academic self-esteem than their counterparts could be attributed to the fact that some of the students who fall in the 'supported' category are the recipients of the SUF. As already indicated in Section 1.4.2, the SUF targets poor and vulnerable girls. The fact that most of the 'supported' children are coming from disadvantaged backgrounds could contribute to their low self-esteem, as Section 3.3.4 below further shows.

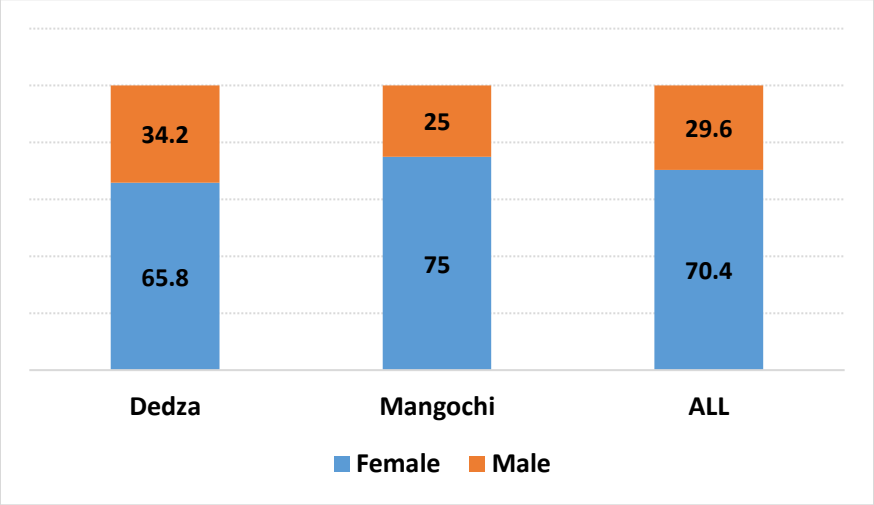
3.3.6 Results – Household Vulnerability and Academic Self-Esteem

Child poverty leads to various negative consequences, including low self-esteem, which is a risk factor for mental illness, suicide, or poor academic achievement (Doi *et al.* 2019). The study assessed whether students' low self-esteem is associated with household vulnerability to poverty. In the absence of household-level income or expenditure data with which students could be classified as coming from poor or non-poor households, a vulnerability proxy indicator was generated using the available data.

To generate the household vulnerability proxy indicator, the following question from the student questionnaire was used: *"Are you facing any of the following challenges in studying and learning at your school? Please select either 'Yes' or 'No' for each statement: (i) There are not enough resources and learning materials at school; (ii) My teacher has been absent; (iii) Lack of food in my household; (iv) Distance to school; (v) Lack of school uniform; (vi) I have been ill; (vii) Lack of school uniform; (viii) Inability to pay school development fund; (ix) Inability to pay examination fees; (x) Household chores.*

Using this question, students were classified as coming from a vulnerable household if they reported facing the challenge of lack of food in the household AND inability to pay school the development fund[15]. Using this definition, the study classified 44.2% of students from Dedza and 31.8% of students from Mangochi to be coming from 'vulnerable' households. Among all students aged between 11 and 16 who were 'vulnerable', 70.4% were girls, and the remaining 29.6% were boys (see Figure 10). The results in Figure 10 show that the majority of 'vulnerable' students are girls in both districts[16].

Figure 10: Proportion of Students coming from 'Vulnerable' Households by Gender and District

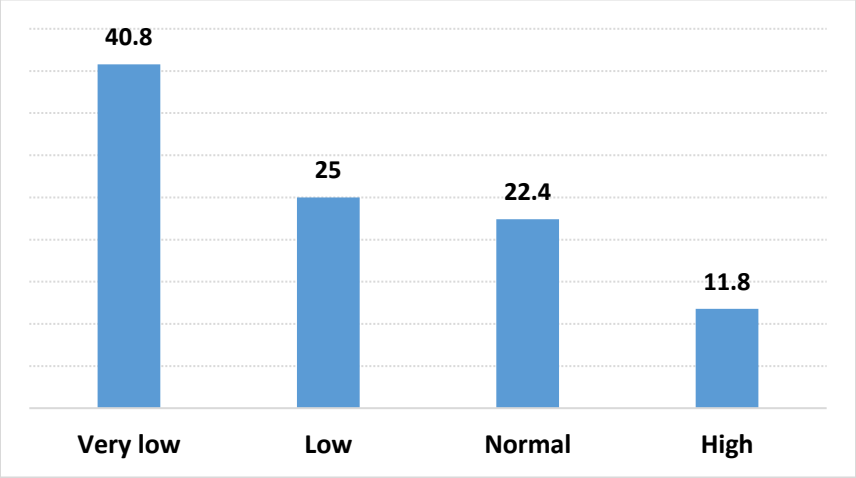


The analysis of whether household 'vulnerability' is associated with low academic self-esteem of the students, presented in Figure 11, show that the majority (65.8%) of the 'vulnerable' students had 'very low' and 'low' self-esteem, and the remaining 34.2% had 'normal' and 'high' self-esteem.

[15] Using this vulnerability proxy indicator, the study found that 54 out of 131 girls supported with SUF were classified as 'vulnerable' (i.e. 42.1%). The proportion (41.2%) is lower than one would expect (since SUF targets poor and marginalised girls) and may be due to the fact that SUF support could be contributing towards reducing the vulnerability for these girls; the money that these vulnerable households would have spent on school-related costs, is instead being channelled towards acquiring food for the household for example.

[16] This finding is consistent with existing traditional power structures that perpetuate VAWG and encourage the violation of girls' rights in the rural communities of Malawi. Girls are often not prioritised in the home when there is shortage of food; neither are their education needs, including payment of school development fund, prioritised. Most rural households prefer to pay school development fund for boys and not girls, if resources are limited. Since the 'vulnerability' indicator has been generated using 'lack of food in the home' and 'inability to pay 'development fund', it is not surprising that a higher proportion of the 'vulnerable' students are girls.

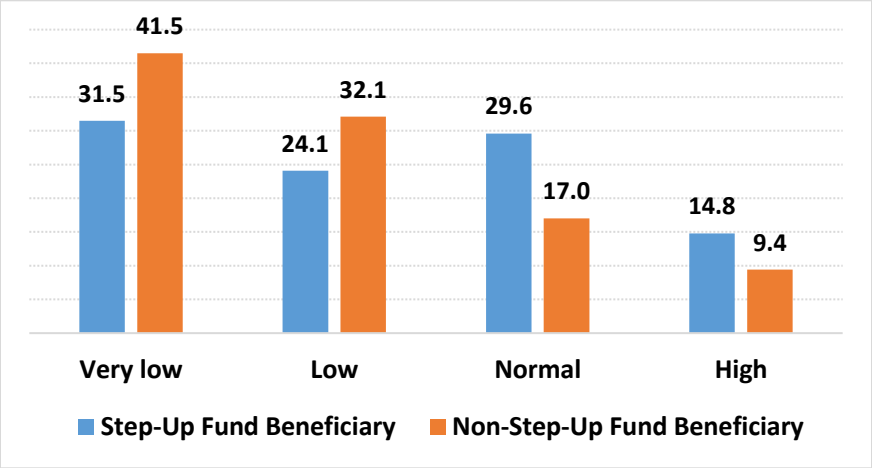
Figure 11: Academic Self Esteem of 'Vulnerable' Students (%)



*N = 152

The analysis of the academic self-esteem of 'vulnerable' girls, classified by whether the girls are recipients of SUF or not, presented in Figure 12, shows that 44.4% of SUF beneficiaries who were classified as 'vulnerable' had 'normal' or 'high' self-esteem. For those that were not recipients of the SUF, but were 'vulnerable' only 26.4% had 'normal' or 'high' self-esteem. The ANOVA Test that was run showed that there is no significant difference of means on 'high' and 'normal' self-esteem between SUF and non-SUF vulnerable students[17].

Figure 12: Academic Self Esteem of 'Vulnerable' SUF and Non-SUF Beneficiaries (Girls only)



*N=107

This result shows that household 'vulnerability' is associated with low self-esteem for the learners and is consistent with findings of Doi *et al.* (2019); and Bean *et al*. (2003). The step-up fund (SUF) that the Project is providing to children from poor and vulnerable households is therefore an important intervention to

[17] F=7 .95 , P=0.000

address this problem. The SUF is contributing towards promoting the self-esteem of the learners, by addressing some of their critical school-related needs, including learning material, school uniform, and sanitary pads.

3.4 INDEPENDENT OPERATIONAL RESEARCH FINDINGS – PROJECT IMPACT

The Project, which is being implemented in 675 primary and 163 secondary schools, aims to increase the numbers of marginalised girls in the 5 districts who complete primary education and successfully transition to secondary school. To achieve this aim, the Project is undertaking a combination of mutually-reinforcing interventions. These include material support to address the cost barriers to education faced by the most vulnerable girls; psychosocial support and life skills to increase resilience to wider challenges, strengthen coping mechanisms and boost retention in school; and additional learning support initiatives to improve learning outcomes at primary level (CAMFED, 2021). The study assessed the progress being achieved at the midpoint of the Project implementation in line with the research questions (see Section 2.2). This section presents the Project achievements under each impact, outcome and output indicators.

3.4.1 Progression Rates

Data from Project monitoring reports (Year 2 Annual Report) show that on average, 76% of girls in Standards 5-7 were promoted to the next grade at the start of the current academic year (2020-2021[18]). The project was able to meet its progression rate target of 76%. Furthermore, the Standard 8 completion rate for girls was 64% in the 2019-2020 academic year. This was lower than the national average for girls (77.3%). This could be due to the fact that the Project is implemented in rural districts, where education outcomes are lower than the national averages.

3.4.2 Transition Rates

Project monitoring reports show that transition rates to secondary school in the 2019-2020 academic year were low, with only 25.2% of the cohort transitioning to Form 1 against the target of 43%. However, out of the 1,855 girls selected to secondary school in January, 10% were selected to boarding schools (including 25 at national secondary schools), the top two tiers of schools in Malawi. It is important to note that the low transition rate of 25.2% was not necessarily due to low pass/completion rates of students, but largely due to limited places available at secondary school in Malawi. Many students passed but were not granted a place at secondary school (in the 2019/20 academic year, for example 4,419 students passed their PSLCE (60.2% of overall Standard 8s supported), however, of these only 1,855 were given places at secondary school (41.6% of those that passed).

3.4.2.1 Findings from the Rapid Secondary Students' Survey

In order to understand how the Project is contributing towards the transitioning of girls from Standard 8 to Form 1, the IOR included a rapid survey of secondary school students who transitioned from primary

[18] This began in January 2021.

school in the 2019/2020 academic year and are now being supported at secondary school in the current academic year with support from the Project. The interviews were conducted virtually one-on-one using mobile phones. Out of the 20 students, 3 were from national secondary schools; 4 from district secondary schools; and the remaining 13 students were from community day secondary schools[19]. Geographically, 8 students were from Dedza; 4 from Machinga; 6 from Mangochi; and 2 from Mulanje[20].

Table 11: Perceptions of Secondary Schools Students on the Impact of the FCDO-funded Project

Research questions	**Yes**	**No**	**Total**
Apart from CAMFED, were there any other organizations or individual(s)/ community that were supporting you in your education since 2019?[21]	1	19	20
Apart from LGs' support, did you get any support from CAMA members **since 2019?**	6	14	20
Do you think your interaction with the **TEACHER MENTOR** assisted you to successfully get selected to secondary school?	19	1	20
Do you think your interaction with the **LEARNER GUIDE** assisted you to successfully get selected to secondary school?	20	0	20
Do you think your participation in **MY BETTER WORLD SESSIONS** assisted you to successfully get selected to secondary school?	19	1	20
Were there any challenges that you faced that were not addressed through CAMFED support?	9	11	20

The students were asked whether there was any other organization or individual (outside their own household) that was supporting them in their education apart from CAMFED since 2019 (when the Project started)[22]. The results, presented in Table 11, show that only one of the 20 students was supported by another person. The support was in the form of guidance and counselling.

The CAMFED Association (CAMA) is a unique and powerful constituency of young women from rural areas for CAMFED graduates that is active in all of the countries in which CAMFED works. It provides a platform where CAMFED graduates make learning opportunities more widely available to other girls and young

[19] There are 3 tiers of secondary schools in Malawi. The first is the national; followed by the district; and the last is the community day secondary schools. The first two tiers are boarding schools.

[20] We were not able to interview any student from Chikwawa District due to challenges in reaching out to the students through mobile phones.

[21] This question excluded CAMFED Association members, who were covered in the following question.

[22] The analysis did not include any support from the extended family system. It only included external support from individuals or organizations, excluding CAMFED.

women in their communities. They use their experience and expertise to support more children to attend school, especially girls. The secondary school students were, therefore, asked whether they received any support from CAMA members since 2019. As Table 11 shows, six of the 20 students reported receiving support from a CAMA member. Of the six girls that received support, none of them reported receiving any material or financial support[23]. Instead all of them indicated that they received guidance and counselling from the CAMA members.

Teacher Mentors (TM) are a critical component of the CAMFED FCDO-funded Project. They play an enhanced mentoring role to vulnerable children, creating an educational environment that is sensitive to the needs of the most disadvantaged children including, but not limited to, girls supported by the programme. The secondary school students were asked whether their interaction with the TM assisted them to successfully get selected to secondary school. The results, shown in Table 11, were that 19 of the 20 learners indicated that the interaction with TMs assisted them to transition to secondary school. All the 19 students indicated that the TMs encouraged them to work hard in school and to excel. The quote below from one of the students sheds some light on this issue:

> "*Our TM was always encouraging us to work hard in school. She would always encourage us to remain in school after class time and do group discussions and solve mathematics. These sessions made a huge difference to me*" (Female secondary student, Mulanje District)

The students were also asked whether their interaction with the LGs assisted them to successfully get selected to secondary school. The results, as presented in Table 11, show that all the 20 students reported that the interactions with the LGs assisted them to successfully complete primary school and transition to secondary school. The students indicated that LGs were encouraging them to work hard in school; following up on students who were absent in schools; and they were providing guidance and counselling to the learners. The quote below from a student who is now studying at Mangochi Secondary School, explains how the LG made a difference to her academic life:

> *"My LG is a role model to me. She would always tell me of how her own life situation changed with support from CAMFED. She would then encourage me to grab the opportunity of being supported by CAMFED to realize my dreams. She is always encouraging me and I want to follow in her footsteps*" (Female secondary school student, Mangochi District).

My Better World (MBW) sessions are critical in the Project to help students to build self-knowledge, as well as to develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy. The sessions also assist students to set goals and learn how to achieve them. The IOR therefore asked the sampled secondary students whether their participation in MBW Sessions assisted them to successfully get selected to secondary school. Out of the 20 students, 19 reported that the sessions helped them to transition to secondary school (see Table

[23] Although the IOR found that none of the interviewed secondary students received any financial support from CAMA members, it does not mean that CAMA members do not financially support other students. More data is required to determine the extent of financial support from CAMA members to primary and secondary school students.

11). They cited that the sessions taught them to have self-confidence; and how to work towards achieving life goals. One of the students from Dedza District had this to say on this issue:

> *"The sessions really helped me and many other students. We were taught to focus on school and not sexual relationships with boys. This really helped us because we did not want to disappoint our LG. The sessions were very helpful"* (Female secondary school student, Dedza District).

The students were further asked whether they would have made it to secondary school had it not been for the support from CAMFED. The results show that 6 out of the 20 students reported that they would not have made it had it not been from the support from the Project (see Table 11). One of the 6 students from Mangochi indicated that:

> *"CAMFED assisted me to get selected. I am a hard worker but I would have had challenges to get school supplies and school uniform in Standard 8. I don't think I would have remained in school because my parents would not have afforded them"* (Female Secondary School student, Mangochi District).

Learners cited that while the support from CAMFED made a difference, there were other contributory factors that supported their successful transition to secondary school. One student from Dedza District had this to say:

> *"It was not only the Learner Guide or the Teacher Mentor that used to guide us, other teachers could also encourage us to work hard in class"* (Female secondary school student, Mangochi District).

The students acknowledged that the material support they received from the Project assisted them during their time in primary school. However, they indicated that they wished the support that the Project provided to them during their time in Standard 8 included food in their homes and bathing soap and body lotion.

The IOR has shown that the Project is making steady progress in ensuring the girls are progressing through the upper classes of primary school. The progression target for upper primary school girls was met in Year 2 (76%), while the target (43%) for Standard 8 girls transitioning to secondary school was not met, with the Project meeting a transition rate of 25.2%. It is important to emphasise that the lower than anticipated transition rates are due to a range of factors, some of which are beyond the reach of the Project. For instance, secondary data show that 68% of girls in Standard 8 in the target schools passed the PSLCE in 2020, but only 25.2% of the girls in Standard 8 progressed to secondary school[24]. Transitioning from primary to secondary school is limited by structural issues in the Malawi education system which does not have enough places at secondary for all those who pass the PSLCE, particularly in the poor rural communities where CAMFED works.

[24] This information is from the Year 2 Annual Report.

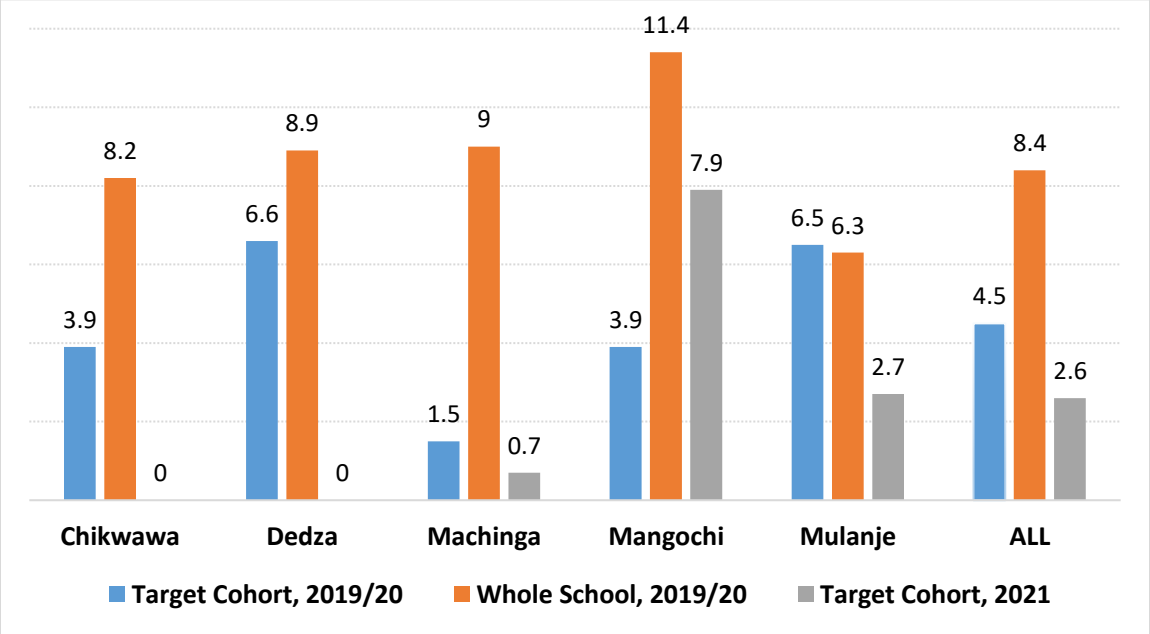
A number of key informants that were interviewed showed their appreciation on how the Project is contributing towards promoting the transitioning of girls from primary to secondary school in the Project schools – see for example the quote below from a Primary Education Advisor in Dedza:

> *"Results are showing that there is a transition of these girls supported by CAMFED and that there is a good number of them being transitioned. Even though the number is smaller than expected, and for the fact that change is a gradual process and it cannot just start at 100%, but things are now working"* (KII with PEA, Dedza District).

3.4.3 Drop-out Rates

The study found that the total drop-out rate among the target cohort for the 2019/2020 academic year was 4.5%, compared to 8.4% among the whole-school female population in the target schools and average drop-out rates for the target cohort in the current academic year (2020/2021) is 2.6% (see Figure 13)[25]. These rates are lower than the national drop-out rate for girls, which was at 3.6% in 2019/2020, according to 2020 EMIS data (see Figure 2). Data from CAMFED's programme also found that 98% of the girls supported under this Project returned to school in September/October 2020 (CAMFED Q6 Report, January 2021), comparing favourably with a wider return rate of 78% among primary-school students in Malawi (UNICEF, 2020).

Figure 13: Drop-out of Upper Primary Girls in 2019/20 and 2021, by District (%)

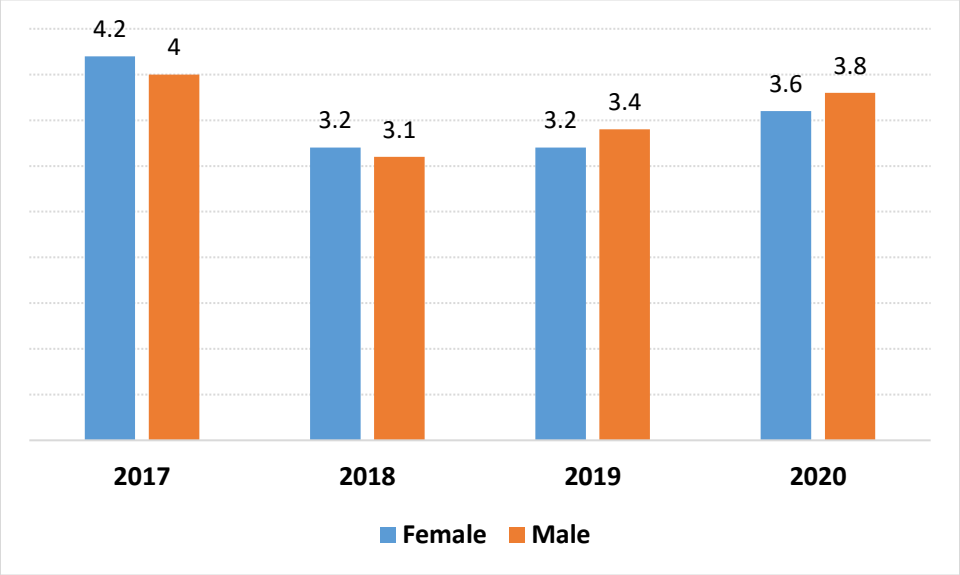


Source: CAMFED FCDO-funded Project Q8 Report

NOTE: The 2021 figures reflect data available up to end of July 2021

[25] It is important to note that the dropout rate for 2021 (2.6%) was calculated at midway through the academic year. It is, therefore, very likely to increase as the remainder of the academic year takes place.

Figure 14: National Drop-out Rates in Malawi Primary Schools by Gender, 2017-2020



Source: EMIS, 2020.

In 2021 to date, drop-out rates for the target cohort[26] are highest in Mangochi (7.9%), followed by Mulanje (2.7%) and Machinga (0.7%). Chikwawa and Dedza did not report any girls from the target cohort dropping out in 2021. Some of the contributing factors to a high drop-out rate in Mangochi, as compared to the other districts is the high prevalence of cultural practice, especially '*chinamwali*' (marriage initiation for adolescent girls). According to the National Girls' Education Strategy (2014), these cultural practices act as a deterrent to girls' education in Malawi. The high dropout rate in Mangochi could be attributed to the effect of the prolonged school closures due to COVID-19 and the teachers' strike (see section 1.3)[27].

3.4.3.1 Factors that Lead to Girls Dropping out of School

In order to understand the factors that cause students to drop out of school, the student survey contained a question on factors that lead to girls dropping out of school. The question read: *"In your school, which of the following are the three most common reasons that girls drop out of school?"* The main reasons for girls dropping out of school as reported by the sampled students are indicated in Table 12 below. The table has only reported the first eight common reasons why girls dropout of school from Dedza and Mangochi district, respectively.

Table 12: Reasons for Girls Dropping Out of School in Dedza and Mangochi (%)

[26] Please note comparative district/whole-school data is not available for the 2021 academic year at the time of writing.

[27] Initiation ceremonies *(chinamwali)* are only permitted during school holidays for the fear of interfering with the education of the concerned children. The prolonged school closures was seen as an opportunity for communities to undertake these ceremonies frequently. Since initiation ceremonies are associated with increased drop-out rates, the 2021 dropout figures for Mangochi is therefore not surprising.

Reasons for Girls Dropping out of School	Dedza (%)	Mangochi (%)	ALL (%)
Pregnancy	78.8	79.9	79.4
Forced marriage	58.6	69.2	64.5
Voluntary marriage	21.2	23.3	22.4
Death of a parent or guardian	23.9	15.8	19.4
Peer pressure	18.9	15.1	16.8
Drug and Substance abuse	12.6	17.2	15.2
Sickness	14.9	12.9	13.8
Hunger	14.4	8.6	11.2
N	**222**	**279**	**501**

The main factors in both districts include early pregnancy, forced marriage, voluntary marriage, hunger, death of a parent or a guardian and peer pressure (see Table 12). It is important to note that forced marriage was reported by a higher proportion of the sampled students from Mangochi (69.2%) than from Dedza (58.6 %). The difference could be attributed to differences in the cultures of the two districts. In Mangochi, it is common for girls to be forced into arranged marriages after undergoing initiation ceremonies ('*chinamwali*') (See Densly, 2019).

These findings are similar to the causal factors for girls in the target cohort (i.e. those supported with SUF) dropping out of school as reported in the CAMFED Malawi FCDO-funded Project Year 2 Annual Report. The report cites marriage and pregnancy as being the main factors.

The Malawi 2020 Education Statistics paints a slightly different picture, with marriage and pregnancy not being among the leading factors. Instead, the Report shows that the main factors for girls dropping out of school across Malawi include poverty (26%); family responsibilities (22%); truancy (13%); long distance to school (9%); marriage (7%); and early pregnancy (7%). Nevertheless, these results may still support the findings from this IOR because poverty is a root cause of other drivers such as early marriage and pregnancy and can also manifest itself through other factors such as hunger and sickness. Furthermore, death of a parent or a guardian usually pushes a household into poverty, especially if the parent/guardian was a breadwinner. Malawi Education Statistics data also relates to all children, rather than the most marginalised rural girls in particular, for whom drivers of drop-out may be different than the overall picture, because of their particular context. This is consistent with wider research; for example, according to Chikhungu and Kadzamira (2020), while pregnancy is the leading cause of girls dropping out of school, poor household socio-economic status remains the major underlying cause. The study found that girls from households with better socio-economic status were less likely to drop out of school.

Qualitative data also points to early pregnancies and child marriage as among the main factors behind girls dropping out of school. A quote below from a Primary Education Advisor (PEA) in Dedza is one example:

> *"In my zone, eight female learners dropped out of school despite receiving support from CAMFED. Six girls dropped out due to pregnancy while the remaining two got married. These*

cases are common among both supported and non-supported students" (KII with PEA, Dedza District).[28]

Family responsibilities were also indicated as a factor causing girls to drop out of school. Girls tend to have a lot of chores to do at home, including looking after their siblings. The quote below from an FGD with boys in Mangochi confirms this issue:

> *"Sometimes girls stop going to school because they want to attend to their children or their siblings especially in the child-headed households where most learners are orphans. This happens even to girls who are being supported by CAMFED"* (FGD with boys, Koche Primary school, Mangochi District).

Overall, the study has found that drop-out rates for CAMFED-supported girls were lower than the drop-out rates for the student population across all the 5 districts in 2019/2020. These results demonstrate the effectiveness of the CAMFED model in ensuring that poor and marginalised girls do not drop out of school. Most of the factors that cause girls to drop out of school, such as peer pressure, early pregnancy, and child marriage are issues that are being addressed during MBW sessions and the sessions are working to empower the girls and build their resilience to be able to withstand these pressures. The Project interventions are also designed to tackle other factors that lead to CAMFED-supported girls dropping out of school to some extent, such as hunger in the home, and family responsibilities, particularly through the work of Learner Guides and Teacher Mentors, who are conducting home visits and strengthening links to support networks such as social welfare for the most vulnerable children. CAMFED's wider programme also does aim to support with these issues; for example, the mother support groups (MSGs) in the schools are running school meals programmes and CAMFED Association members are engaging parents on the importance of girls' education and providing food and other material support to girls and their families.

3.4.3.2 Factors Causing Boys to Drop Out of School

The student survey also contained a question on factors that lead to boys dropping out of school. The question read: *"In your school, which of the following are the three most common reasons that boys drop out of school?"*

Table 13: Reasons for Boys Dropping Out of School in Dedza and Mangochi (%)

Reasons for Boys Dropping out of School	Dedza (%)	Mangochi (%)	All (%)
Drug and alcohol abuse	68.5	68.8	68.7
Death of a parent or guardian	37.8	33.7	35.5
Peer pressure	29.3	36.9	33.5

[28] Based on the average numbers of schools per zone (8) and the average number of SUF beneficiaries per school (44), each zone has approximately 352 SUF beneficiaries under this Project. The example cited here therefore represents an estimated drop-out rate of 2.3% for girls reached with financial and material support in this zone.

Marriage	29.3	27.2	28.1
Need to make money	14.9	21.9	18.8
Couldn't afford school development fund	20.3	15.1	17.4
Sickness	15.3	10.8	12.8
Hunger	16.2	6.8	11.0
N	*222*	*279*	*501*

The study found that the main factors contributing to boys dropping out of school in both districts include drug and alcohol abuse, peer pressure and corporal punishment in school (see Table 13). There are contrasting results between the two districts, with the need to make money being a more important factor in Mangochi (reported by 21.9%), compared to Dedza (reported by 14.9%). Indeed, in Mangochi, teen boys often join the fishing business along Lake Malawi or migrate to South Africa to earn money. In Dedza, on the other hand, hunger, sickness and marriage remain the main factors.

Some of the factors leading to boys dropping out of school such as drug and alcohol abuse, and peer pressure are issues that are addressed during MBW sessions. Regular participation of boys in MBW sessions could help reduce boys' vulnerability to these pressures.

3.5 OPERATIONAL RESEARCH RESULTS UNDER OUTPUT 1

Output 1	Material and financial support provided to marginalised girls to address financial resource barriers to attending school regularly.

3.5.1 Adequacy and Relevance of Resources Provided Under the FCDO-funded Project

Output 1 of the Project is concerned with the provision of material and financial support to marginalised girls in the Project schools to address financial barriers to attending school regularly. Data from Project's monitoring report (Year 1 and Year 2 annual reports) show that the Project has been able to reach 29,700 primary school girls in Year 1 and 28,892 primary school girls in Year *2*.

In Year 1, 29,700 girls from Standard 5 to 8 were selected and they received a responsive package of material and financial support, known as the Step-Up Fund (SUF); 50 of these were also supported in Form 1. In Year 2, 28,892 girls from Standards 5-8 received the termly package and 1,908 girls in Forms 1 and 2. In the current academic year to end July 2021, 23,805 girls have received targeted support at primary level, including 6,979 girls who are repeating the year across all grades. Furthermore, in the current academic year to end July 2021, 1,905 girls have been supported with the SUF package at secondary level, including 1,855 girls in Form 1 and 50 girls in Form 2.[29]

[29] Overall, 1,908 girls were supported at secondary level in Year Two, but three girls dropped out at secondary level prior to the end of the 2019/2020 academic year.

The primary school package differed according to individual needs but included as a maximum (i) Stationery; (ii) Sanitary wear; (iii) School-going items, including school uniform; (iv) Individual copies of the My Better World (MBW) workbook; (v) COVID-19 personal protective equipment (face masks). Standard 8 learners also received (vi) a copy of the *Learning to Learn in English* book. The secondary school package included (i) Laundry detergent; (ii) Hand soap; (iii) Sanitiser; (iv) Face masks; (v) Sanitary wear; (vi) Pocket money; (vii) Exercise books; (viii) Pens; (ix) Beddings and carry bags for learners in boarding schools.

The IOR assessed whether the girls that are in receipt of SUF are receiving resources targeted to their needs. The study gathered qualitative information from both boys and girls through FGDs, as well as KIIs with stakeholders. It was found that the material support that girls receive play an important role to ensure that poor and marginalised girls remain school, as the three quotes below illustrate:

> *"The Project's support to the needy students is adequate. I am able to follow up on the needs of absent students and these have improved after receiving CAMFED support. Sanitary pads have helped with girls' attendance as now they are able to come to school even during their menstruation periods"* (KII with Teacher Mentor, Mangochi District).

> *"Yes, it's helping in improving the attendance rate of the girls. For example, the sanitary pads are helping the girls to attend classes all the time comfortably. The writing materials are also helping to improve the girls' performance academically"* (KII with PEA, Dedza District).

> *"The death of my parents created so many problems in my academic life. My dream to a bright future was shattered. I had challenges to get exercise books, school uniforms, shoes, pens, sanitary pads and school uniforms. But I am very grateful to CAMFED for the support that it has been providing me. After writing my PLSCE, I was selected to one of the national secondary schools. I am a very happy student at our school because of CAMFED's support."* (KII with secondary student, Mangochi District).

The study found that apart from the material support, the Project has been providing non-material support. The non-material support includes counselling and guidance. This has been effective in encouraging girls to remain in school and reducing their vulnerability to sexual relationships and early marriages. A quote below from boys and a quote from a Teacher Mentor in Mangochi District shed light on this issue:

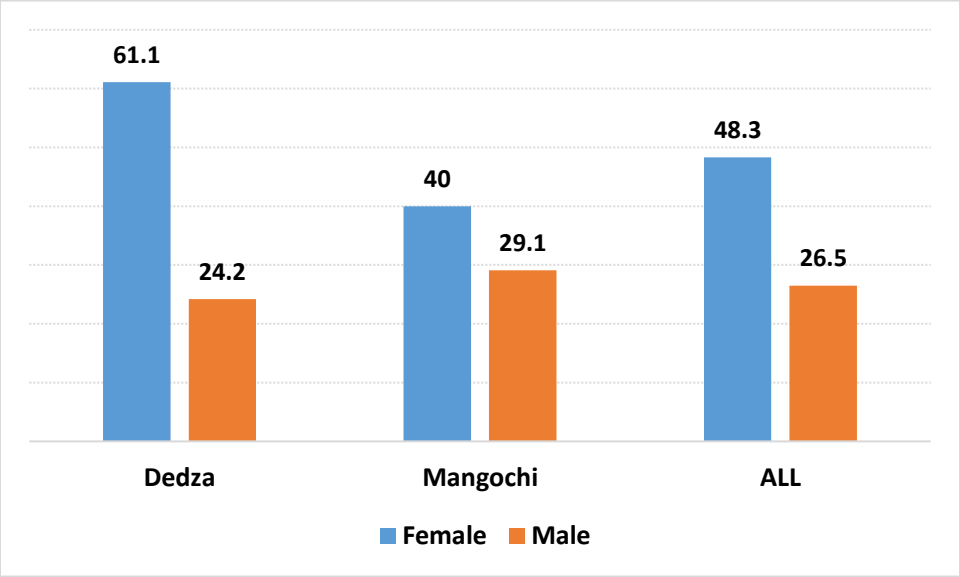
> *"CAMFED is supporting girls who had dropped out from school because they fell pregnant and have children to re-enrol back in school. Girls are encouraged by the Learner Guide and School-Based Committee members"* (FGD with boys at Koche Primary School, Mangochi District).

3.5.2 Other Resources Leveraged within the Community

The IOR also assessed whether there are in-kind and other resources that are leveraged within communities to extend support to marginalised children as a reciprocal response to resources provided under the Project.

Respondents of the student survey were asked whether they had been given any material support to go to school (e.g. support with stationery, sanitary wear, books, etc.) from a CAMFED Association (CAMA) member or the School-Based Committee. The results show that, overall, 102 learners from Dedza and 103 learners from Mangochi reported receiving such material support. These students include those that receive SUF and those that do not. As Figure 15 shows, the majority of learners that received material support from CAMA members or school-based committees (SBC) in both districts were girls.

Figure 15: Sampled Students Who Reported Receiving Material Support from CAMA or SBC Member, by Gender and District (%)



*N = Dedza=102; Mangochi=103.

Data from qualitative sources show that CAMA members play an important role in providing material and non-material support to learners. As alluded to earlier in this report, this represents a continuing cycle of impact founded in FCDO's original investment through the KGIS programme (wth the majority of CAMA members in Malawi being KGIS beneficiaries); the investment in girls' education prior to the onset of this Project is now leveraged to support other girls and vulnerable children to access education.

The quote below from a key stakeholder in Dedza District explains how CAMA members support girls' education in the district:

> *"CAMA members are supporting girls' education through material support, such as the provision of books, and school uniforms. Other CAMA members organize talks with students to encourage them to remain in school"* (KII with PEA, Dedza District).

The IOR results show that while the Project remains the main form of support for marginalised girls, including the support from CAMA members, there are other initiatives that are taking place within the communities to complement the support from CAMFED. In particular, the following initiatives were identified:

i. There are some community-based organizations that are also supporting marginalised female learners with learning materials in Dedza District. These are needy female learners who do not directly benefit from CAMFED's SUF support. The quote below from a key informant explains this issue further:

> *"Other community-based organizations like Golomoti Active AIDS Support Organization (GASO) that support these marginalized children by providing them with notebooks and pens. Most of the times when resources are provided by these institutions, we do not target CAMFED beneficiaries but we target other needy students so that they also benefit"* (KII with PEA, Dedza District).

ii. Some community members, especially highly influential figures in the community provide support to girls, as the quote below indicates:

> *"Members of Parliament and Ward Counsellors also help in paying school fees for some girls"* (FGD with girls, Msesa Primary School, Dedza District).

iii. Coaching, mentorship and counselling are some of the in-kind support girls receive from community members towards their education. Mother Support Groups also help the girls to make reusable sanitary pads to reduce absenteeism among girls. The following quote illustrates this issue further:

> *"Mother Support Groups provide training to these girls on how to make reusable sanitary pads which has helped to reduce absenteeism of girls to school during menstruation. They also provide face masks to those learners that do not have them"* (KII with PEA, Mangochi District).

iv. School-based committees (SBC) provide financial and material support to marginalised children in some school. For example, according to FCDO Malawi Jan-March 2020 Report indicates that "the SBC at Lauderdale Primary School in Mulanje organised a 'Big Walk' event in January, raising funds from the local community to procure 43 solar lamps for CAMFED-supported learners to help them study at home. They were also able to purchase 300 exercise books and 150 pens for 30 other vulnerable children at Lauderdale Primary School (15 boys and 15 girls) and uniforms for six boys and six girls".

In some schools, however, students complained that many community members do not take an active role in providing any form of support to education, even for girls. It was reported that community members and even community-based structures wait for NGOs, like CAMFED, to support girls' education. The quote below from Mangochi indicates that:

> **"***There is no one that supports girls' education in this area. People just see CAMFED coming and supporting the girls*" (FGD with girls, Koche Primary School, Mangochi District).

3.6 OPERATIONAL RESEARCH RESULTS UNDER OUTPUT 2

Output 2	Learner Guides and Teacher Mentors are trained and provide targeted support to marginalised girls and support regular attendance and learning.

3.6.1 Background to the Learner Guide Programme

This section presents results on Learner Guide aspect of the Project and examines the performance of the LG model as outlined in the Project document. It also puts forth results from interviews with Teacher Mentors. Primarily, it assesses the performance of output number two of the Project. These results are generated from the analysis of both quantitative and qualitative data solicited from various key informants and survey participants including the LGs themselves.

Learner Guides are young women school graduates, formerly supported through school by CAMFED under a previous FCDO-funded Project (KGIS), and are now active members of the CAMA alumnae network. LGs return to their local schools, volunteering at least 2-3 hours a week to support marginalised children in their studies. LGs are trained by CAMFED to deliver a uniquely tailored life skills and wellbeing (My Better World-MBW) programme to complement, but not replace, the formal academic curriculum. The MBW programme was first launched by CAMFED Zimbabwe and CAMFED Tanzania, and has since been adapted and rolled out in each of the countries where CAMFED operates, most recently in Malawi under this project. It is endorsed by the Ministry of Education in each country, and is commonly integrated into the school timetable: in Malawi this has already taken place in some districts, such as Dedza.

According to the Year 1 Project Annual Report, 675 CAMFED Association members were recruited and trained as LGs and have been actively volunteering in the target schools[30]. These are young women who were supported by CAMFED to complete secondary school (mostly under the KGIS Project) and then returned to their local schools voluntarily, in the 5 targeted Project districts, to deliver a programme of life skills, – the My Better World programme - sexual reproductive health awareness, and study support to boys and girls through Study Circles. Their volunteering is incentivised through a package of training, as well as access to start-up business finance and a formal, internationally recognised, qualification to recognise their skills/experience gained as a LG, in the form of a BTEC. According to CAMFED Malawi FCDO-funded Project Year 2 Annual Report, a total of 675 LGs are actively involved in the Project.

The LG model forms one of the premises of the Project's Theory of Change. It envisages that through creation of a structured volunteering and training scheme, they will provide critical life skills and learning support to girls and boys in school. Trainings and various incentives provided to LGs will also increase their own employability and will enable them to gain key entrepreneurship and leadership skills with which they can forge their own pathways to greater economic independence and security.

[30] Although 675 LGs were active in schools during Year 1, 698 LGs were recruited and trained, per the logframe result. This is because 23 LGs in the first cohort were replaced at the end of 2019.

3.6.2 Socio-demographic Characteristics of the Learner Guides

In total, 450 LGs were interviewed. The interviews were done through phone calls, with Chikwawa recording the highest number of interviews (99) and Mangochi the least number of interviews (61). Of the 450 interviews, 204 interviews were done using the 'long survey' which sought to have an overview of their experience as LGs. The remaining 246 LGs were interviewed using a short survey. As compared to the short survey, a long survey was designed to seek more detailed information about the LGs and their work. Sample distribution and key characteristics of the Learner Guides are laid out in Table 14 below.

The average age of the LGs interviewed was 23.4 years (with a median age of 23 years), and there was no significant difference in mean age of LGs across the districts. The analysis of data shows that most of these LGs had served for close to 2 years, implying that they were recruited when they were about 21 years old (and that retention rates of Learner Guides are high). Chikwawa registered the highest mean age of 24.1 years while Mulanje registered the lowest mean age of 22.9 years.

The findings further show that half (50.5%) of the LGs were married. Across the districts, there were not many differences in the proportion of LGs who reported to be married apart from Mulanje which recorded a relatively lower (32.7%) marriage rate. It is important to note that this information was only asked in the long survey, which was not conducted in Chikwawa.

Noting that the proportion of LGs who are married and those who were not married was almost the same (50.5 %, married and 49.5%, not married), a further analysis was conducted to assess whether marital status had an effect on number of hours spent on the delivering of CAMFED activities with the assumption that married women would be faced with conflicting activity commitment. Results show that there was no significant difference (p=0.7730) in mean number of hours (mean = 2.9 hrs) that married LGs spent on doing MBW sessions including time spent travelling as compared to non-married LGs (2.9 hrs).

Table 14: Characteristics of Learner Guides

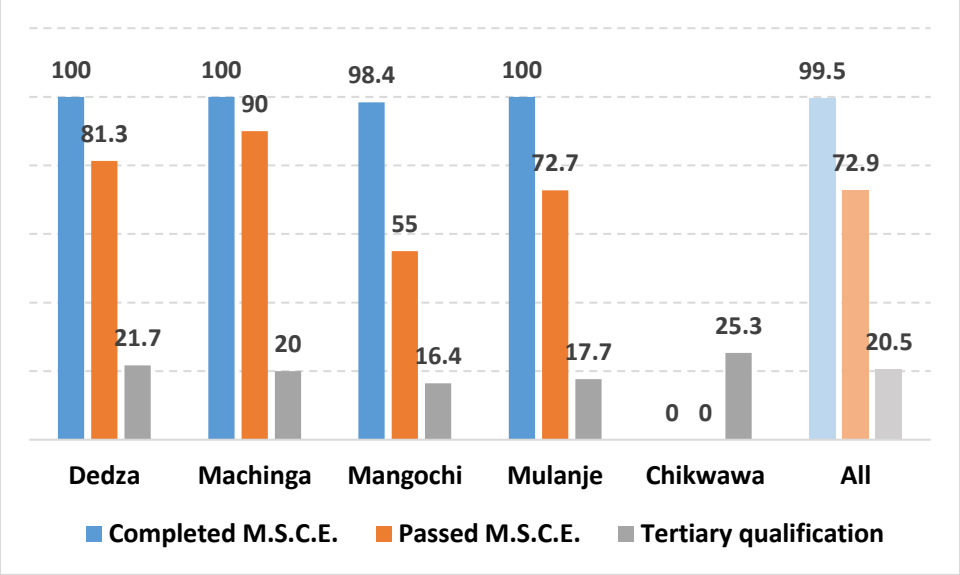
District	Sample Distribution	Median Age (N= 450)	Married % (N= 204)	Ever had a child % (N=204)
Dedza	92	23	58.3	39.6
Machinga	85	23	57.5	60
Mangochi	61	23	55.7	67.2
Mulanje	113	23	32.7	43.6
Chikwawa	99	24	*	*
All	450	23	50.5	52.9

*Information in this column was extracted from the short survey which was not administered in Chikwawa

As highlighted in Figure 16 below, nearly all LGs completed Form Four. Of these, 72.9% passed MSCE. Across the districts, Machinga reported the highest (90%) MSCE pass rate among LGs while Mangochi reported the lowest (55%).

Further, 20.4% reported to be pursuing a tertiary qualification. The analysis by district shows that the proportion of those undergoing (or have attained) a tertiary qualification was highest in Chikwawa (25.3%) and lowest in Mangochi (16.4%) (see Figure 16). It is worth noting that LGs are more likely to be undertaking tertiary qualifications than their peers (other young rural women of a similar age and background), as a result of earlier FCDO support in their education, ongoing opportunities to access tertiary qualifications through membership of the CAMFED Association, and continuing support through the LG training etc.

Figure 16: Proportion (%) of LGs who Completed MSCE, Passed MSCE and Attained a Tertiary Qualification



The next paragraph examines the extent to which the LGs were provided with support with regards to training in formal and informal institutions.

As already alluded to in Figure 16 above, nearly all the LGs indicated that they completed secondary school, and the results show that all the LGs were supported by CAMFED at secondary school level. The results further indicate that extension of support to tertiary level is quite substantial though lower than at secondary school. Nearly 80% of those who reported to have attained tertiary qualification reported that they were assisted with their tertiary education by CAMFED.

3.6.3 Contribution of FCDO-funded Project to Learner Guides' Wellbeing

3.6.3.1 Incentive Support

Key incentives provided to LGs are in the form of provision of training, and the opportunity to access business capital, as well as a formal Business and Technology Education Council (BTEC) qualification, to help them pursue further education at tertiary level, or access employment.

3.6.3.2 BTEC

CAMFED International and Pearson worked together to develop the Pearson SRF BTEC Level 3 Advanced Diploma for CAMFED Guides for young women who have been trained by CAMFED to deliver a range of community- and school-based learning programmes. CAMFED Guides work in schools or community learning spaces to support learners in the completion of a range of CAMFED programmes focused on helping young people to achieve, to develop and to improve their quality of life, to be safe, to make good choices and to develop employability skills (Pearson, 2019).

BTEC is an internationally recognised work-based and customised qualification. CAMFED Malawi FCDO-funded Project documents point out that a BTEC qualification is meant to be used as a stepping stone to tertiary-level education such as teacher training. This qualification also acts as a differentiator for future employers. Consequently, it is envisaged that the attainment of this certificate would build young women's confidence and status and respect in their community (CAMFED, 2020).

Under the CAMFED Malawi FCDO-funded Project, the first cohort of 125 LGs have been undertaking the BTEC qualification – against a target of 101 – and are due to be awarded their certificates before the end of 2021. The second cohort of LGs will be recruited during Quarter 1 of Year 3. All 675 LGs who are part of the Project were oriented on the BTEC qualification, the modules that are covered and the type of skills that one would gain by participating in the BTEC programme.

3.6.3.3 Entrepreneurship

Learner Guides have the opportunity to access zero-interest loans through CAMFED's partnership with Kiva in order to start, maintain or grow rural businesses and support themselves and their families. Loan amounts are determined by the business stage/type and capability of the particular Learner Guide, as well as their experience in managing and repaying loan finance.

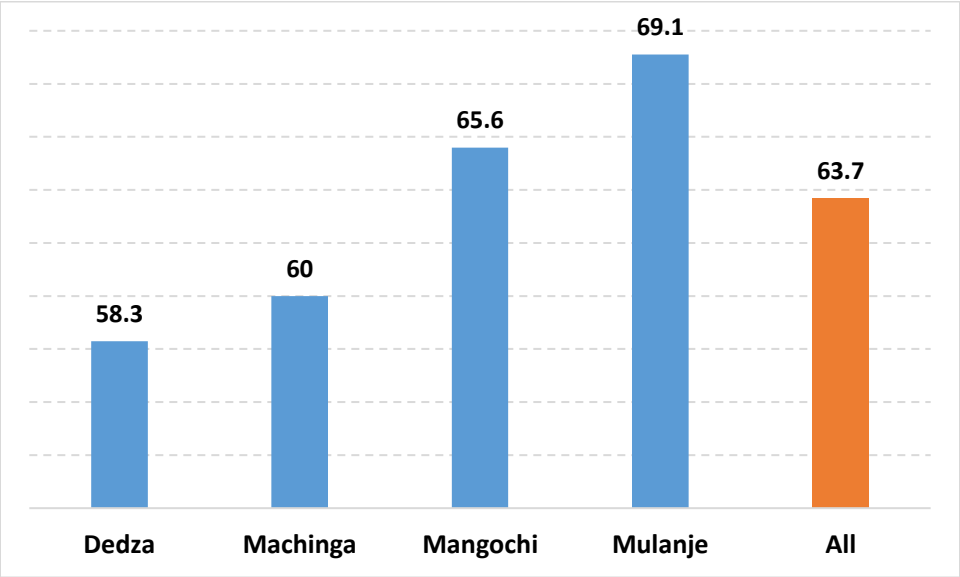
Core Trainers[31] work with CAMA committees to oversee the administration of Kiva loans. According to the Project Monitoring Reports, in Year 1 a total of 32 LGs received Kiva loans[32]. At the end of Year 2, a cumulative total of 89 LGs had accessed Kiva loans (surpassing the target of 70 LGs). The LGs are using these loans to run small-scale business enterprises such as selling food items and clothes, and providing hair-dressing services, among others.

The LG survey asked whether sampled LGs were running their own business in the past month or had ever run a business of their own. The results show that of all the LGs, 63.7% are currently running a business, while 64.9% had run a business before. This means that only 12.7% of the sampled LGs have never run a business. The mean number of years they had run a business was found to be 4.4 years. This entails that most of the LGs had run businesses before the CAMFED Project commenced. Of all the LGs surveyed, 63.7% indicated that they are currently running a business. By district, Mulanje recorded the highest proportion as 69.1% LGs indicated that they were running a business at the time of the survey. On the other hand, Dedza recorded the least (58.3%). See Figure 17 below.

[31] Core Trainers are CAMA members who have been identified as leaders and have received training to lead the training of other CAMA members.

[32] This was against a Year One target of 40 LGs. The target was not met due to a lower uptake of loans due to COVID-19 which negatively affected rural businesses (see Project Year 1 Annual Report for more details).

Figure 17: Proportion (%) of LGs Doing Business by Districts



The effect of running a business on the LGs with regards to provision of support to learners was examined and it was found that there was a significant association (Chi^2 = 4.4908, p= 0.034) between running a business and providing financial support to learners. Proportionally, 76.2% of the LGs that reported to have personally provided material and financial support to help learners attend school were running their own businesses. Qualitative data also supports this finding as shown in the excerpt below:

> *"At one time a Learner Guide brought a carton full of notebooks at the school where I was working. She bought the notebooks using the proceeds from her business" (*KII with PEA, Dedza District).

Furthermore, for LGs who indicated that they currently owned a business, a cross tabulation was run between their income status and a number of forms of support they received as shown in Table 15 below. The general picture is that various support received from CAMFED, other CAMA members and others led to an increase in income status of the businesses run by the LGs. Specifically, 50% of the LGs who received financial support from other CAMA members to help with their business reported that their income status had increased, against 33.3% who indicated that their income status decreased. Amongst the LGs that received training or mentoring from CAMFED, 64.5% reported that their income status had increased, whereas 11.8% reported that it had decreased. Lastly, 71.4% of the LGs that received a loan or start-up grant from CAMFED reported that their income status had increased and 5.7% reported that it had decreased. In-depth interviews with LGs also confirm the narrative that the LGs are making profits.

These results show that various forms of business support to LGs were associated with LGs registering increased income from their businesses. Since the LG programme is designed to ensure that LGs are positive role models for girls and other community members, these forms of business support are important to ensure that LGs have improved incomes and can use this, as well as ther other expertise, to support more children to attend school.

Table 15: Support Variables against LGs' Income Status

Business Support	Income Status			N
	Increased (%)	Stayed the same (%)	Decreased (%)	
Received training or mentoring from CAMFED	64.5	23.7	11.8	76
Received a loan or start-up grant from CAMFED	71.4	22.9	5.7	35
Received financial support from CAMA member	50	16.7	33.3	12

The support rendered to LGs was further analysed alongside business ownership as shown in Table 16 below.

The understanding is that various support rendered was meant to assist LGs to start new businesses or boost businesses which were already running. Regarding support, the most common form of support provided to LGs was business training or mentorship provided by CAMFED. Over60% of the LGs reported to have received this support. 30.0% of the LGs reported to have received a start-up loan whereas 8.4% reported that they received financial support from CAMA members, such as through pass-on grants made by other CAMA entrepreneurs. Overall, 63.7 % reported that at the time of the survey they were running businesses. By district, Mulanje shows the highest (79.2%) proportion of those who received training or mentorship and who received financial assistance from CAMA members (12.5%). It also has the highest proportion (69.1%) of LGs who reported to have been running a business. Machinga has the lowest proportion (33.3%) of LGs that received training or mentoring from CAMFED and it also has the largest proportion (30.3%) of LGs who received loan or start-up grant, including KIVA loans . Dedza has the lowest proportion of LGs who received financial support from CAMA members (4.7%).

Table 16: Support to LGs and Business Ownership by District (%)

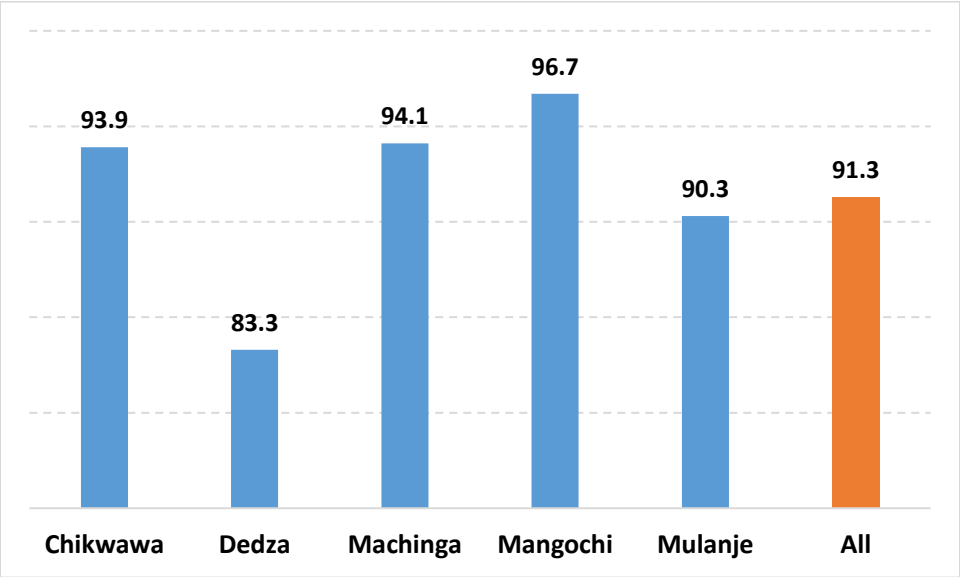
District	Received training or mentoring from CAMFED	Received loan or start-up grant	Received financial support from CAMA member	Owning a business
Dedza	55.8	11.6	4.7	58.3
Machinga	33.3	30.3	6.1	60
Mangochi	63	27.8	9.3	65.6
Mulanje	79.2	22.9	12.5	69.1
All	60.1	23.0	8.4	63.7

3.6.3.4 LGs Support from Teacher Mentors (TMs)

Unequivocally, Teacher Mentors are shown to have supported and cooperated with the LGs across the districts, which in turn serves to create a 'team' of support to marginalised girls. An overwhelming proportion (91.3%) of LGs indicated that they received support from TMs. This support includes technical support on how the LGs can teach the MBW classes and how to organise the sessions. According to Figure 18, Dedza deviates to the lower side in proportion (83.3%) of LGs who received support from TMs while

Mangochi tops the list (96.7%). A few of those who indicated that they never received support from TMs indicated lack of understanding of the whole programme; jealousy in (incorrectly) thinking that they (LGs) receive a lot more money than the teachers; and lack of commitment from some TMs, as key reasons for not being supported. This is the perception of some LGs that were interviewed.

Figure 18: Proportion (%) of LGs Indicating they Receive Support from Teacher Mentors



*N= 408

3.6.3.5 Material Support

In addition to access to a formal qualification and business capital, LGs also receive bicycles, mobile phones and a monthly allocation of MKW 10,000 to be used for communication (airtime). The bicycles are provided to help them overcome challenges relating to distance to their target schools and also to enable them to conduct home visits more quickly. The mobile phones are provided to enhance communication with the Core Trainers and other CAMFED officials, and also for report writing purposes since pictures of their sessions are sometimes required.

Overall, LGs expressed appreciation with the material support they receive from CAMFED and timely response on a number of issues. The quote below from an LG in Mulanje demonstrates how the material support from CAMFED has assisted her in her work as an LG:

> *"My school is quite far from my home. The bicycle that was given to me has really helped me to be able to reach my school and conduct my sessions on time. I never dreamt of having a smart phone and a bicycle in my life. My life has changed because of my affiliation to CAMFED.*" (Interview with Leaner Guide, Mulanje).

Some of the LGs through qualitative interviews highlighted a number of issues which need attention. These include:

- Repairs and spares for the bicycles and cell phones. They indicated that due to their financial limitations, repairing equipment becomes challenging.

- Lack of adequate teaching materials. They indicated that they lack books, markers, special books for schemes of work among others.
- Delayed or ignored handover process. Some of the LGs deplored the delayed or ignored handover process between LGs who withdraw and those who take over. They indicated that some of the outgoing LGs do not hand over the materials they were given. As a result, the newly recruited ones find it difficult to work due to lack of materials.

3.6.3.6 Motivation and Self-Confidence

The LGs were asked a series of questions regarding motivation and self-confidence.

On self-confidence, results show that a large proportion of LGs indicated that they now feel more confident as compared with the time they were joining the LG programme. Almost all (99%) LGs said they were more confident about themselves now.

Regarding motivation, they were asked to list various factors which very strongly motivated them to sign up to be a LG. As shown in Table 17 below, a larger proportion of LGs (88.8%) reported to have signed up as a result of wanting to show appreciation to what CAMFED did for them when they were beneficiaries, by giving back to the society voluntarily. This is known as the "multiplier effect" whereby women who have been supported by CAMFED through school provide social and economic support to the next generation of girls (CAMFED, 2020). This viewpoint appears to have greatly resonated with LGs. As depicted from their narrations below there is deep commitment to give back:

> *"I am committed to supporting girls from my community through my role as a Learner Guide. This I shall do until I see that the girls have realized their dreams. CAMFED supported me to be where I am and I just have to pay back through this noble cause"* (In-depth Interview with LG, Dedza District).

The opportunity to gain a BTEC qualification was reported as the least type of motivation that prompted LGs to sign up (49.0%), possibly due to limited understanding of the qualification and uncertainty around its value in providing a stepping stone to further opportunities; in turn, this may be because the BTEC is not yet perceived as sufficiently well recognised in Malawi.

Table 17: Reasons for Signing up as an LG

Very Strong Motivation for signing up as LG	Freq	Very Strongly Motivated (%)	% of LGs that have been able to Achieve the Motivation
Opportunity to gain a BTEC qualification	96	49.0	9.4
Opportunity to access a KIVA loan	105	53.6	25.0
Idea of gaining more status	168	85.7	67.6
Wanting to give back	174	88.8	71.3
Wanting to take part in CAMA activities	163	83.2	-

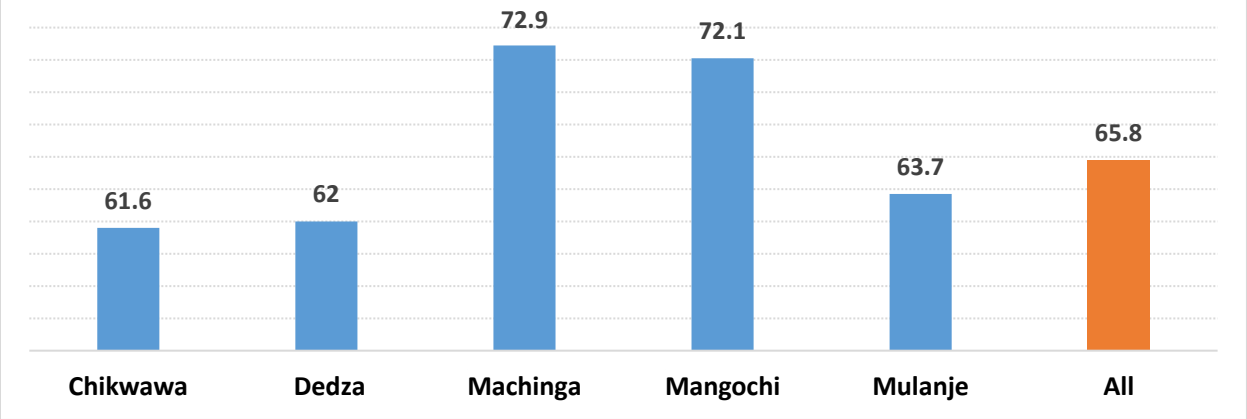
The reasons that prompted the LGs to sign up were further analysed to establish the proportion of LGs that have been able to realise them. The motivated '%' was computed by calculating the proportion of those who indicated that a particular aspect was a motivation for them to sign as an LG. Achieved motivation was computed by generating the proportion of those who indicated that they had attained a particular aspect from those who indicated that that aspect was a motivation. As Table 17 shows, the most reported factor for signing up as an LG was 'wanting to give back' which was reported by 88.8% of the sampled LGs. Of these 71.3% indicated that they have 'managed to give back'. The least reported factor was an 'opportunity to gain a BTEC qualification'. Of these, 9.4% indicated that they were on course to gain the BTEC qualification, as they were currently undergoing assessment.

3.6.3.7 Leadership and Philanthropy

Enhancing leadership skills and encouraging philanthropic behaviour were notable elements in the Project. In this regard, CAMFED worked with other partners such as Youth Net and Counselling (YONECO), Partners in Hope and Malawi Red Cross to impart skills to the LGs to tackle a variety of issues - some cross-cutting such as COVID-19 – that affect the learners and the society at large. In the Project's year 2 annual reports, a number of issues were reported. These include; training of 20 LGs in COVID 19 prevention, awareness and case management. This was given in collaboration with YONECO. Further, In Mulanje, eight LGs attended training in youth empowerment and child case management organised by other partners, and they were trained in youth empowerment, child case management and U-Reporting by the National Youth Council (CAMFED, 2021).

The attainment of leadership is further confirmed by quantitative data from the LGs. Results show that above half (65.8%) of the LGs interviewed indicated that they hold a position of some sort in the society. Within district analysis shows that Machinga has the highest proportion (72.9%) of LGs that hold positions in various organizations and associations whereas Chikwawa has the lowest (61.6%), refer to **Figure 19** below.

Figure 19: Proportion (%) of LGs Holding Leadership Positions by District



Holding a position in the society was significantly associated with marital status[33]. Proportionally, 73.9% of those who were married and 61.4 % of those who were not married reported that they held a position in the society. While there was no significant[34] association between passing MSCE and holding a position in the society, having a tertiary qualification is strongly associated[35]with having a position in the society. The results are not that surprising as being married in Malawi cultural space symbolises being mature and being responsible hence a married person is more likely entrusted with social positions than the unmarried ones. Again, with lower literacy levels particularly in the rural areas attaining an academic qualification attracts respect, thus increasing likelihood of being accorded a position in the society. Other factors such as age were not significant. While age may be important with regards to attracting respect vis-à-vis being given a position, the increasing presence of projects that promote youth participation, government overall policy direction of creating a youth driven economy might explain why age showed no correlation with having a position in the society.

Ascending to leadership roles is highly revered among the LGs and the society at large. This is arguably one of the success stories of the Project as it has brought empowerment to the LGs. Narrations from qualitative interviews clearly demonstrate a sense of pride and power among the LGs, as the quote below indicates:

> *"I am an important figure in my community. Parents and local leaders always consult me when there is an issue to do with early marriages and teenage pregnancy. I provide the necessary steps and directions to have the girl child withdrawn from marriage. This year alone we have managed to withdraw 3 girls from marriage and they have gone back to school"* (In-depth Interview with Learner Guide, Mangochi District).

Acts of philanthropy by LGs and CAMA members have been widely observed and reported in the Project reports, including annual reports. Extracting from the Year 2 Annual Report, a number of activities were carried out. Some of the excerpts from 2021 Annual Report on philanthropy are; distribution of 157 bars of soap at Mkumba and St Augustine Primary Schools in Mangochi District; distribution of cloth face masks to 22 non–supported girls in Majuni cluster; and distribution of 1000 face masks to needy learners both boys and girls across 100 schools in Dedza.

On the same issues of philanthropy, LG survey data reveals that most (95.0%) LGs rendered support to learners in terms of mentoring or counselling. On the other hand, the least (28.1%) proportion of LGs indicated that they had referred learners for financial support (Table 18 below), including to MSGs and other CAMFED Association members, who provide additional support to vulnerable children through their own philanthropy. The relatively low proportion who referred children in this way may be explained by the fact that that the material and financial support provided by CAMFED was already helping address this issue.

Table 18: Support by LGs Rendered to Learners

Support Given to Individual Students	%

[33] (Chi^2 =3.3115, p=0.069)
[34] Chi^2 =1.7801, p=0.182
[35] (Chi^2 =26.4371, p=0.000)

Referred needy child for financial support	28.1
Mentored or counselled a student	95.0
Reported any cases of abuse to CDC or other officials	29.2
Encouraged a student to return to school	83.4
Encouraged a student to attend school more regularly	91.0
Visited a student in their home	83.4

*N= 199

Narrations from qualitative data also concretise the observation that LGs are engaged in a various philanthropic activities as can be seen in the following quote:

> *"I use part of my profit to support both needy boys and girls who show interest in school. This year, I have managed to help 2 boys and 3 girls who are in secondary school. I bought them notebooks and writing materials just to make sure that they continue with their education" (*IDI with LG, Mulanje District).

Not only are the LGs narrating for themselves, other stakeholders are also witnessing the good works LGs are undertaking. The excerpt below underscores the appreciation PEAs are pouring on CAMFED and LGs works to the communities at large:

> *"As CAMFED assist[s] LGs with loans, the community is also being assisted at large. Using profits that they are generating from businesses they help other students in their respective communities"* (KII with PEA, Dedza District).

3.6.4 LGs' Perceptions of the My Better World (MBW) Programme

This section focuses primarily on the MBW programme as delivered by LGs. It analyses the LG experiences and perceptions on the programme, and synthesises it with the learner's perspective from quantitative interviews. It also benefits from qualitative interviews with other study participants. Intermittently, it brings forth narratives from learners who have transitioned to secondary schools. Lastly, it presents the experiences of the learners currently attending the MBW sessions in primary schools.

The Project, among its key components, implemented the My Better World programme (MBW). The MBW is a life skills curriculum-based programme and, in Malawi, CAMFED adapted it to target adolescent girls in upper primary school (Standards 5-8). The curriculum and workbook is designed to help students build self-knowledge, develop self-confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy, improve students' confidence, discover their talents, build resilience, select role models and set goals and learn how to achieve them. It is also designed to improve their critical thinking and problem-solving skills, and encourages children to become more aware of their rights, responsibilities, and values. It is tailored to local needs, including life skills, sexual and reproductive health, and literacy and study skills. Learner Guides deliver the *My Better World* curriculum in weekly sessions as part of the school timetable.

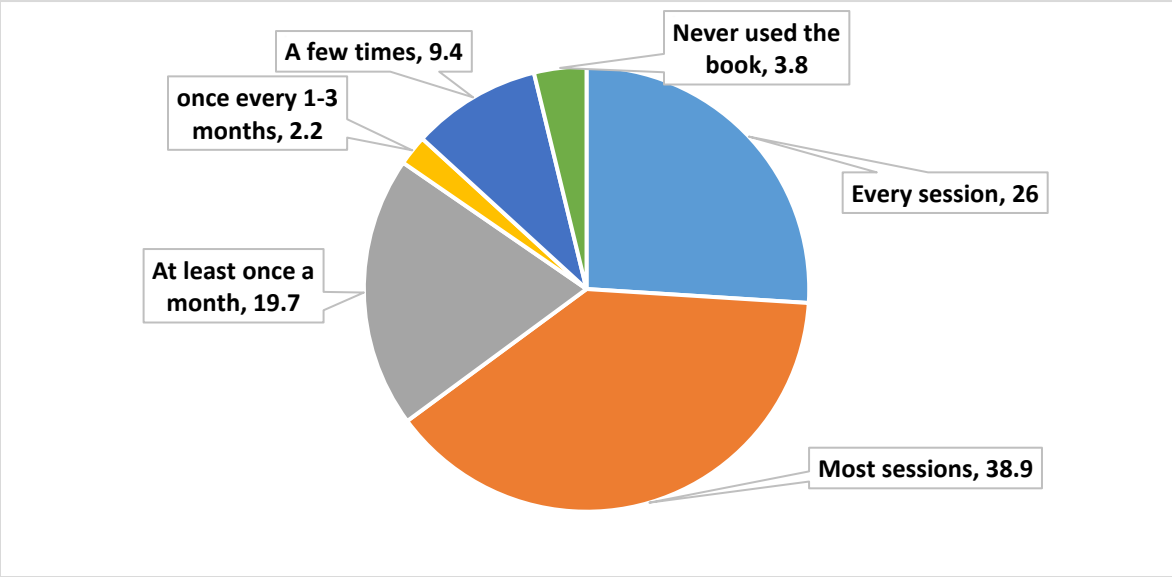
3.6.4.1 Use of MBW Book and Challenges

Regarding the use of the MBW book during sessions, results show that 64.9% of LGs frequently use the MBW book in their sessions: 26.0% reported using the MBW book in every session and 38.9 % reporting

using it in most sessions. A smaller proportion (13.2%) reported to have never used it or only used it a few times. There was also a considerably bigger proportion (19.7%) who reported to use it at least once every month. While the majority are using it regularly, the fact that a significant proportion of LGs are not using the MBW book in at least most of the sessions suggests there is further improvement to be made in the use of MBW, as this is a core component of the LG programme.

Figure 20 below shows the breakdown according to the frequency of use of the MBW book.

Figure 20: Proportions (%) of LGs Indicating How Often they Use MBW Book



*N=447

Triangulating the results from Figure 20 above with data from 28 LGs interviewed in a special survey, shows almost similar results for those who indicated that they were using the book in every session (26% in Figure 20 and 29% in Table 19)[36].

Table 19: Usage of MBW from in-depth Interviews with 28 LGs

MBW Book Usage	N	Freq	% Score
Learner Guides indicating NOT having difficulties in delivering the sessions using MBW book	28	3	10.7
Learner Guides using MBW book in all sessions	28	8	28.6

[36] It is important to note that the two LG datasets (main survey with 451 LGs and the short in-depth survey with 28 LGs) are not directly comparable. As indicated in Section 2.3.5, the survey with 28 LGs was meant to provide in-depth information on the MBW sessions, based on the initial feedback on MBW sessions during the main survey.

Learner Guides not using the MBW book in all sessions	28	20	71.4
Learner Guides not using MBW book during the sessions with students	28	9	32.1

Besides a good proportion (28.6%) reporting using the MBW book every session, qualitative data gathered from LGs during the in-depth survey suggested they did not find it the easiest book to use; 50% (14) of the 28 LGs that were interviewed ranked the MBW book as the most difficult to use book of those they work with.

Table 20: Which Book is the Most Difficult for LGs to Use?

Book	N	Score	Score %
Kusadziwa Nkufakomwe (SRH Manual)	28	0	0.0
MBW Book	28	14	50.0
Learning to Learn in English	28	1	3.6
Learner Guide companion book	28	0	0.0

In looking further at the use of the MBW book, a number of questions were asked to the 28 LGs which were sampled for this special in-depth survey. Table 21 summarises various aspects of the MBW training. The general message is that an overwhelming majority attended trainings (96.4%) from CAMFED. Similarly, a majority (96.5%) attended training on how to deliver MBW sessions. The table also shows that LGs were generally impressed with the quality of the training and the knowledge imparted on to them. However, it was a general view that the training was allocated fewer days, hence it did not adequately cover all the topics. The quote below from Machinga District illustrates this point:

> *"The number of days for the MBW training was not enough. The MBW book has over 300 pages and we did not finish all the topics"* (KII with LG, Machinga District).

Table 21: Aspects of MBW Training and MBW Book

RESEARCH QUESTION	YES	NO	TOTAL	% YES	% NO	% TOTAL
Did you attend any training with CAMFED?	27	1	28	96.4	3.6	100
Did you attend any special training on how you can deliver MBW sessions with Learners?	27	1	28	96.4	3.6	100
Do you feel that training was able to equip you with knowledge, skills and abilities for you to effectively deliver MBW sessions with Learners?	23	5	28	82.1	17.9	100
Learner Guides who indicated that quality of training was good	27	1	28	96.4	3.6	100

Learner Guides who indicated that training was not adequately covered due to duration (days of training)	27	1	28	96.4	3.6	100
Did you receive the MBW book?	21	7	28	75	25	100

Further, qualitative data explored reasons why LGs find the the MBW book more difficult to use, as compared to other resources. Some of the reasons are as listed below.

- The MBW book is not simple to use because it has a series of stories that are difficult to follow (unless trained).
- The English used in the MBW book is hard and requires specialist skills for a Learner Guide to simplify and understand the meanings.
- In some cases Learner Guides also felt the book was not sufficiently relatable to the Malawian context: *"As a Learner Guide, I am supposed to use Malawian examples and characters. These are not available in the MBW Book"* (KII with LG, Mangochi District).

On why *Kusadziwa Nkufakomwe* is an easier book to use (as compared to MBW and others), LGs stated the following as reasons:

- They *found Kusadziwa Nkufakomwe* easier to use because the book is designed with lessons and plans outlined. The activities which a LG needs to use are well defined and exemplified. The organization of the contents is good and easy to understand.
- Another reason is that adequate training on how to deliver this book was provided to the Learner Guides.
- The book has simple English.
- The book has topics similar to those that are covered in class i.e. life skills, Social Studies and Science.
- The book has a lot of interesting stories and attracts fun and excitement from learners.

Feedback from Learner Guides during the KIIs also indicated that they would value more support in being able to plan sessions using both books, combining the lesson plans from across *My Better World* with *Kusadziwa Nkufakomwe:*

> *"As a Learner Guide, using My Better World Book on its own is not enough but I am also supposed to combine the contents from the MBW book with those from Kusadziwa Nkufakomwe so as to find it easy to use and also develop lesson plans. I am supposed to understand the book and also know the right skills to use when teaching the students"* – (KII with LG, Machinga District).

3.6.4.2 Students' Perceptions of the MBW Sessions

Under the FCDO-funded Project, students participate in MBW sessions that are led by the LGs. The My Better World Curriculum and workbook help students to (i) build self-knowledge; (ii) develop self confidence, self-esteem and self-efficacy; (iii) discover their talents; (iv) build resilience; (v) select role

models; and (vi) set goals and learn how to achieve them. Sessions focusing on Sexual and Reproductive Health encourage (i) equal responsibility for making healthy sexual choices; (ii) mutual respect and decision making among boys and girls; and (iii) provide information on preventing HIV/AIDS and keeping girls safe from exploitation.

The student survey also asked learners about the utilization of the MBW Workbook. This was provided as a priority to the target cohort of SUF beneficiaries, with additional copies purchased with available funding and provided to other children in school during the course of the project. Table 22 shows the proportion of students that reported using the MBW Workbook during the current term. Overall, 20.6% of the sampled students reported using it daily, but about 67.3% reported never to have used the workbook within that term. This includes 47.9% who reported that they never received a copy of the Workbook, although it is worth noting that it has not been possible with the available resources to provide an individual copy to all of the children in the 675 target schools, and per the above, the commitment was only to provide this to the target cohort of SUF beneficiaries.

Table 22: Utilization of MBW Workbook in the Current Term by Sampled Students by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%).

	Gender		**Class**		**District**		**Type of students**		**Total**
	Female	**Male**	**Standard 7**	**Standard 8**	**Dedza**	**Mangochi**	**SUF Bene**	**Non- SUF students**	
Daily	27.8	6.5	24.7	14.4	22.5	19.0	54.2	5.5	20.6
Weekly	4.2	1.2	2.3	4.5	4.5	2.2	8.4	0.9	3.2
Monthly	4.5	2.9	3.7	4.5	5.4	2.9	8.4	2.0	4.0
Rarely	6.0	2.9	4.7	5.5	6.3	3.9	11.0	2.3	5.0
Never	16.3	25.3	19.0	19.9	14.9	22.9	9.0	24.0	19.4
I have not received a copy**	41.1	61.2	45.7	51.2	46.4	49.1	9.0	65.3	47.9
N	*331*	*170*	*300*	*201*	*222*	*279*	*155*	*346*	*501*

**Note: There were some students who never received a copy of the MBW workbook, but were still borrowing from their friends or relatives.

The analysis by gender shows that a higher proportion of girls (27.8%) were using the MBW Workbook daily than boys (6.5%). The proportion that were using the workbook daily was also higher for Standard 7 learners (24.7%) than Standard 8 learners (14.4%). It was also higher among sampled students in Dedza (22.5%) than in Mangochi (19%). Finally, it was higher among SUF-supported students (54.2%) than their counterparts (5.5%). These findings are broadly consistent with the fact that more girls and, in particular, SUF beneficiaries are regularly attending the LG sessions and therefore may be more motivated to regularly use the Workbook. It is also consistent with the fact that more girls and SUF beneficiaries have their own individual copy of the book and are therefore more able to use it on a daily basis. The findings also suggest that some learners are using the MBW workbook outside the MBW sessions because they reported using it daily.

Table 23: Perception of the Importance of the MBW Topics in Sampled Students' Lives by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%).

QUESTION: The My Better World sessions covered topics that are relevant/helpful for my life.

	Gender		Class		District		Type of students		Total
	Female	Male	Standard 7	Standard 8	Dedza	Mangochi	SUF Bene	Non- SUF students	
Agree strongly	84.2	83.8	84.8	82.6	84.0	84.2	92.6	76.2	84.1
Agree slightly	7.9	8.1	7.9	8.1	9.2	6.7	4.1	11.5	8.0
Neither agree nor disagree	2.3	2.7	2.4	2.3	0.8	4.2	2.5	2.3	2.4
Disagree slightly	0.6	0.0	0.6	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.8	0.4
Disagree strongly	0.6	1.4	1.2	0.0	0.0	1.7	0.0	1.5	0.8
Not sure	4.5	4.1	3.0	7.0	6.1	2.5	0.8	7.7	4.4
N	177	74	165	86	131	120	121	130	251

The student survey data show that 84.1% 'strongly agreed' to the assertion that the MBW sessions covered topics that are relevant/helpful for their lives. The proportion that 'strongly agreed' was very high for both female and male learners; standard 7 and 8 learners; and it was high in both districts; but higher for SUF-supported students (92.6%) than their counterparts (76.2%) (See Table 23).

Table 24: Perception of the Importance of the MBW Topics in Sampled Students' School Work, by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%).

QUESTION: My Better World sessions covered topics that are helpful in my school work

	Gender		Class		District		Type of students		Total
	Female	Male	Standard 7	Standard 8	Dedza	Mangochi	SUF Bene	Non- SUF students	
Agree strongly	86.4	87.8	89.1	82.6	85.5	88.3	92.6	81.5	86.9
Agree slightly	2.8	5.4	4.2	2.3	3.8	3.3	2.5	4.6	3.6
Neither agree nor disagree	2.8	2.7	2.4	3.5	2.3	3.3	0.0	5.4	2.8
Disagree slightly	2.8	1.4	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.5	1.7	3. 1	2.4
Disagree strongly	1.1	1.4	0.0	3.5	2.3	0.0	1.7	0.8	1.2
Not sure	4.0	1.4	1.8	5.8	3.8	2.5	1.7	4.6	3.2
N	177	74	165	86	131	120	121	130	251

Students were further asked whether the topics covered in the MBW sessions are helpful in their school work. The results, presented in Table 24, show that overall 86.9% of the students 'strongly agreed' that the MBW sessions covered topics that are helpful in their school work. These proportions were similar across gender, class of student, district and the type of student (see Table 24).

The study further found that among the learners that reported attending MBW sessions, the majority (85.7%) *'agreed strongly'* that they enjoyed attending MBW sessions; 5.6% '*agreed slightly'*; 4.0% '*neither agreed nor disagreed'* and 0.8% '*disagreed slightly'* that they enjoyed attending the MBW sessions.

The majority of the sampled students (90.4%) *'strongly agreed'* with the assertion that the MBW sessions have helped them to focus on and shape their goals and targets; 4.4% '*agreed slightly'*; 1.6% neither agreed nor disagreed'; 0.8% '*disagreed slightly'* and 2.8% were '*not sure'*. There were no significant variations across gender, class of student, district or whether the student was a beneficiary of SUF or not.

Similarly, the majority of the sampled students (90.8%) *'strongly agreed'* that the MBW sessions helped them to better know their rights; 3.6% '*agreed slightly'*; 2.4% neither agreed nor disagreed'; 0.8% '*disagreed slightly'* and 2.4% were '*not sure'*. The data show similarities across gender of the student, class, district and type of student. Further, 90.4% of all the sampled students *'strongly agreed'* that the MBW sessions helped them to do better in their exams.

Students were further asked to assess how helpful the MBW programme has been to them personally. The results, presented in Table 25, show 92.0% reported that the MBW programme is overall either *'very helpful'* or *'helpful'* to them personally. The proportions were similar across the gender of the learners, class and district.

Table 25: Proportion of Students who have Indicated that the MBW Programme was Overall Helpful, by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%).

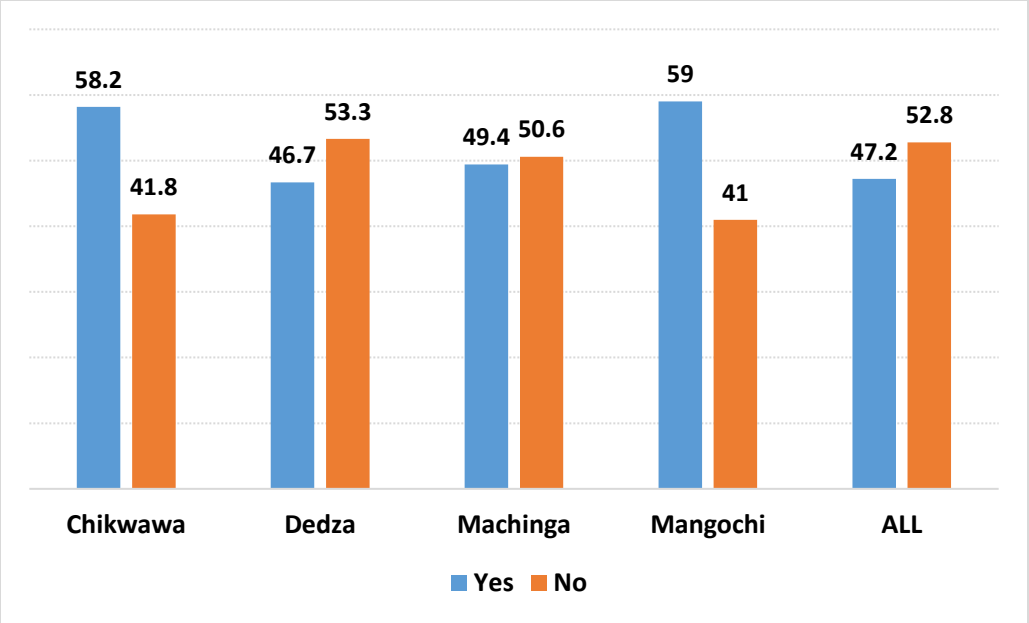
QUESTION: How helpful, overall, has the My Better World programme been for you personally?

	Gender		Class		District		Type of students		Total
	Female	**Male**	**Standard 7**	**Standard 8**	**Dedza**	**Mangochi**	**SUF Bene**	**Non- SUF students**	
Very helpful	79.7	77.0	82.4	72.1	79.4	78.3	83.5	74.6	78.9
Helpful	12.4	14.9	12.1	15.1	12.2	14.2	14.9	11.5	13.1
Not helpful	4.0	6.8	3.6	7.0	5.3	4.2	1.7	7.7	4.8
Not sure	4.0	1.4	1.8	5.8	3.1	3.3	0.0	6.2	3.2
N	*177*	*74*	*165*	*86*	*131*	*120*	*121*	*130*	*251*

3.6.5 Inclusion of MBW into the School Time Table

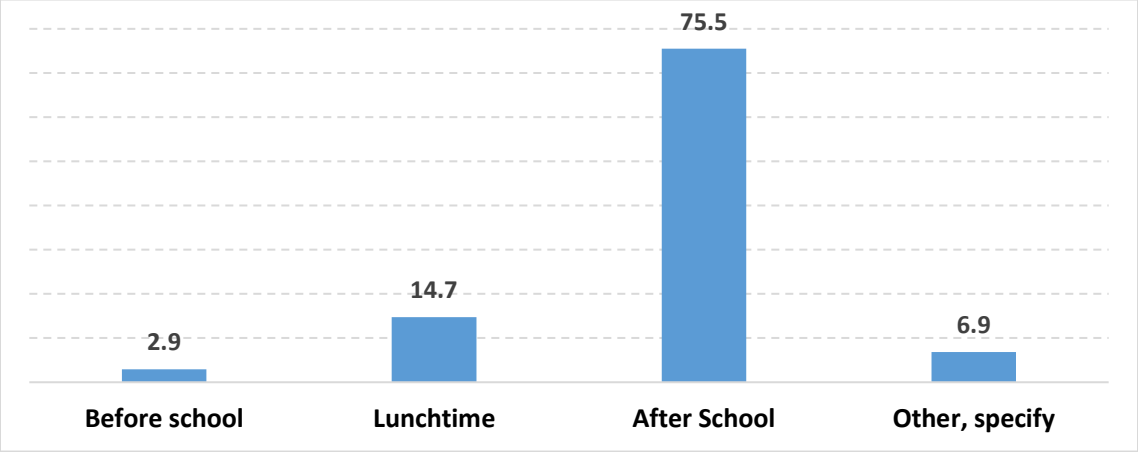
One of the key steps in ensuring that the MBW effectively reaches out to learners is the formal inclusion of MBW sessions into the school timetable. While CAMFED Malawi can influence the integration process, the discretion of doing so rests in the hands of school structures. When asked whether the MBW was included in school timetables at their respective schools, LG responses yielded varying results. The proportion of those who said it was included was the highest in Mangochi (59%) and the lowest in Mulanje (30.1%). Further, Dedza District recorded the second lowest proportion of (46.7%) (see Figure 21). The results are rather surprising as expectations were that Dedza would have shown higher proportions of inclusion since it was the district which was portrayed to be ahead in terms of inclusion. What ensued was that the definition and process of inclusion was not clearly universal among the LGs and in all districts. From KII with CAMFED staff, the onus of inclusion did not wholly rely on CAMFED staff but the school administration which could vary in their decision to include formally in the school timetable from school to school.

Figure 21: Proportion (%) of LGs indicating whether MBW has been included in the school timetable, by District



Inclusion of the MBW in the timetable has a bearing on the time the sessions are conducted and from earlier analysis it shows it also has an implication on commitment of students to participate. Figure 21 confirms that the majority of LGs do not have their MBW sessions included in the school schedule, which is why almost 80% of them indicated that they deliver their classes after school.

Figure 22: Proportion (%) of LGs indicating times MBW sessions are conducted



Discussions with PEAs through key informant interview shed some further light on the inclusionof MBW sessions in school timetables in their respective schools. For instance, in Dedza District, one PEA indicated that the COVID-19 pandemic has affected the process of integration, as the quote below shows:

> *"In the past before COVID-19, LGs were delivering these MBW sessions in the afternoons after classes for about 1 hour 30 minutes. However, due to the overlapping of classes because of COVID-19 which is amidst us, some learners were coming to school to attend morning class sessions while others do come around 10 am, so they agreed to be doing MBW sessions in the morning hours.*

Doing sessions in the afternoon after classes was so difficult for learners to be fully participating as many of them were tired with classes." (**KII with PEA, Dedza)**

A similar issue was raised by a PEA in Mangochi, as the quote below indicates:

"In my zone, most schools are integrating CAMFED sessions within the school timetables. However, they have their own specific times to which they can meet as agreed with both the Learner Guide and Teacher Mentor. This is preferably the last period of teaching. This is so because of COVID-19. As such, now instead of meeting with all the senior classes, it can be that, Wednesday is scheduled for standard 5 pupils and Friday for standard seven pupils so that they don't meet in large groups as one way of adhering to the COVID-19 preventive measures". (**KII with PEA, Mangochi**).

3.6.6 Learners' Participation in MBW Sessions

According to the Annual Report for Year 1, a total of 114,101 (42,118 male and 71,997 female) upper primary school students benefitted from the Learner Guide programme in Year 1. In Year 2, a total of 239,150 students attended sessions with LGs, according to the Year 2 Annual Report.

The student survey collected information on students' participation in MBW sessions. In particular, students were asked about the number of MBW sessions they have attended. The results, presented in Table 26, show that overall, 24.9% of the sampled learners reported attending all the MBW sessions, and 17.8% have attended most of the sessions. On the other hand, 25.9% reported not attending the sessions. These include 2.9% that were not sure, and 9.8% that indicated that they had never heard of the MBW sessions.

Table 26: Proportion of Students Reporting Attendance of MBW Sessions by Gender, Class, District and Type of Student (%).

	Gender		Class		District		Type of students		Total
	Female	**Male**	**Standard 7**	**Standard 8**	**Dedza**	**Mangochi**	**SUF Student**	**Non- SUF students**	
I have attended all of them	27.3	19.7	28.8	19.4	31.3	19.8	46.5	13.5	24.9
I have attended most of them	19.9	13.4	20.5	14.1	18.7	17.2	24.6	14.2	17.8
I have attended some of them	5.0	4.7	3.3	7.1	6.6	3.5	4.2	5.2	4.9
I have only attended one or two	10.6	20.5	16.3	10.0	15.4	12.3	9.9	15.7	13.7
I have not attended any	24.8	28.3	18.4	36.5	17.0	33.0	11.3	33.7	25.9
Not sure	3.2	2.4	2.9	2.9	1.6	4.0	1.4	3.7	2.9
I haven't heard about the My Better World sessions	9.2	11.0	9.6	10.0	9.3	10.1	2.1	13.9	9.8
N	*282*	*127*	*239*	*170*	*182*	*227*	*142*	*267*	*409*

The results further show that a larger proportion of girls reported regularly attending the MBW sessions than boys. In particular, 52.2% of the sampled girls reported attending all of the sessions, most of the sessions or some of the sessions. For boys, on the other hand, the proportion is 37.8%. In terms of the class of the learner, a larger proportion of Standard 7 students (52.6%) reported attended regularly than

their Standard 8 counterparts (40.6%). This difference could be attributed to the fact that standard 8 students were required by their schools to be more involved in preparing for their national examinations, bearing in mind that they had lost a lot of learning time during the COVID-19 induced school closures.

Furthermore, as Table 26 shows, a larger proportion of sampled learners in Dedza (56.6%) reported regularly attending MBW sessions than their counterparts in Mangochi (40.5%). Attendance by whether the student is supported by SUF shows that a larger proportion of SUF students (75.3%) reported attending MBW sessions than the students that are not supported by SUF (32.9%).

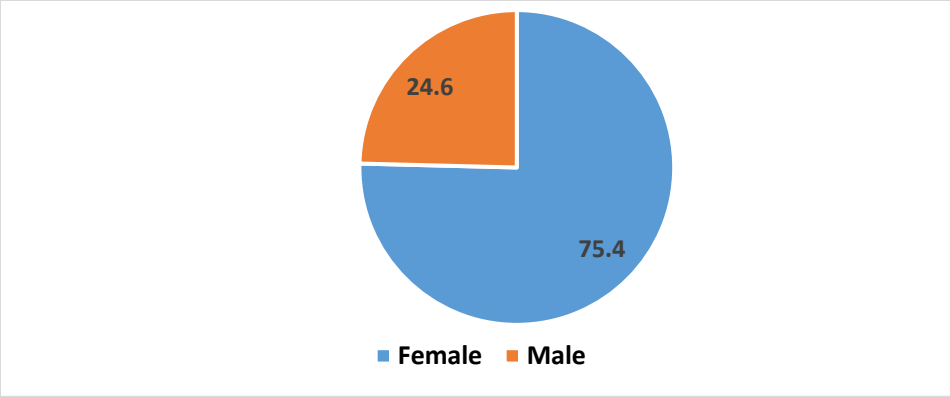
Qualitative data shed some light on why attendance to MBW sessions was found to be lower among learners that were not supported by SUF. For instance, TMs in some schools indicated that students that were not recipients of SUF tend to be reluctant to participate in the MBW sessions, as the quote below indicates:

> "*Although the MBW sessions are open to every learner, many students that have not benefited from the material support from CAMFED such as exercise books and uniforms refuse to attend them. They say that CAMFED does not recognize them and they do not find a reason why they should be attending CAMFED sessions. I work very hard with my LG to encourage all students to take part in these sessions because they are very beneficial to their personal lives*" (KII with TM, Dedza District).

CAMFED 2021 Annual Report noted that the MBW sessions have also attracted participation by girls and boys outside the target group. Data from sampled learners show that 75.4% of the sampled learners were females and 24.6% were males (see Figure 23). Regarding attendance, overall, it was found that 47.7% of all the students with knowledge of a LG in their school indicated that they regularly attend MBW sessions[37].

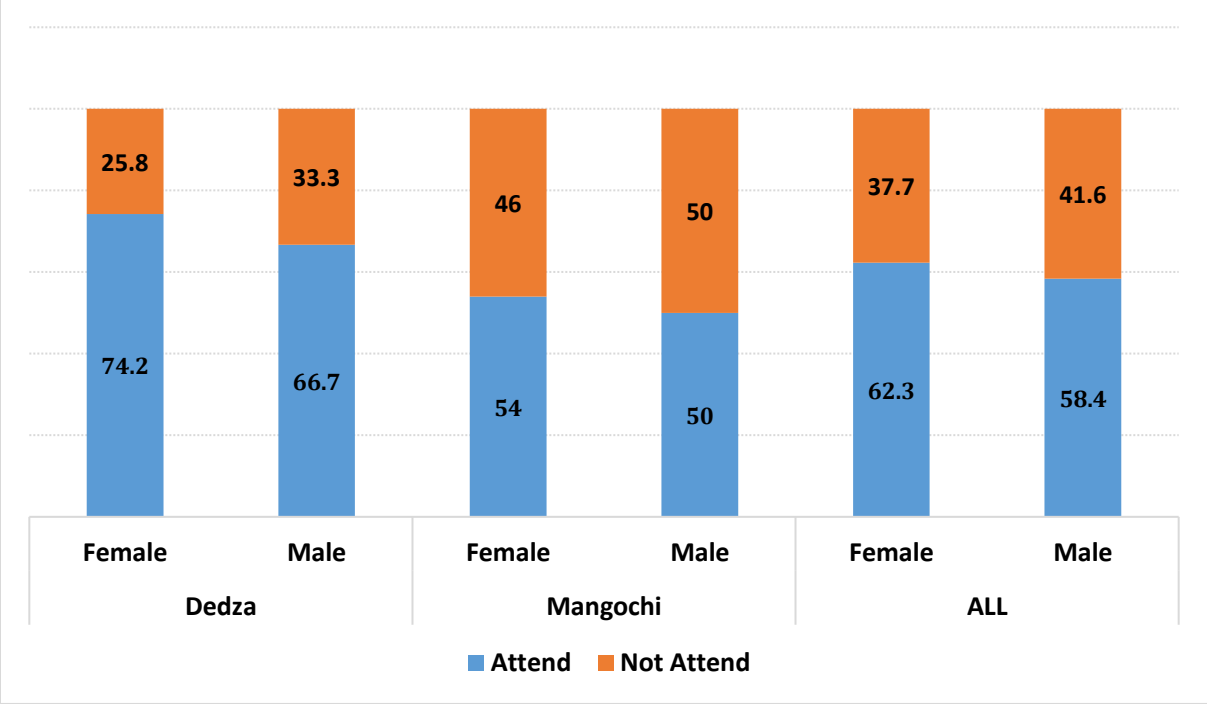
Figure 23: Proportion (%) of Learners who Regularly Attend MBW Sessions, by Gender

[37] To identify students that regularly attend MBW sessions, we used the student survey data. In the survey, students were asked:*"How many of the My Better World sessions have you attended? Tick only one box*. In our analysis we have included those that reported (a) I have attended all of the sessions; (b) I have attended most of them; and (c) I have attended some of them; It excludes those that answered (d) I have attended one or two.



After disaggregating by district and gender, the data show that among males in Dedza, 66.7% do attend MBW while 74.2% of females do attend. On the other hand, in Mangochi, exactly half (50%) of the male sample learners indicated that they attend MBW sessions while 54% of the female learners do attend (see Figure 24 below).

Figure 24: Proportion (%) of Males and Females who Attend MBW sessions by District and Gender.



There were a number of reasons that contributed towards the choice of regularly attending or not attending MBW sessions among the girls. The reasons were further analysed by whether the respondent was a SUF beneficiary or not. Table 27 below focuses on those who indicated that they attended the sessions. Among both SUF-supported and non-SUF-supported the higher proportion (76.0% and 69.0%, respectively) said that they attend MBW sessions regularly because they enjoy the topics they learn about.

Again, in both cases the second most mentioned (32.2% and 32.2%, respectively) reason for regularly attending the sessions was that they like the Learner Guide.

Table 27: Reasons for Regularly Attending MBW Sessions by Type of Students

	SUF Beneficiaries		*Non-SUF Students*	
Reason for Attending Sessions	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
I like the Learner Guide	39	32.2	40	32.2
I enjoy the topics we learn about	92	76.0	89	70.6
The sessions are compulsory at my school	13	10.7	20	15.9
I like going to the sessions with my friends	21	17.4	30	23.8
Other (specify)	0	0.0	6	4.7
**N*	*121*		*126*	

Note: The SUF beneficiaries are girls only, while the non-SUF students include both girls and boys.

On the other hand, among the girls who indicated that they did not regularly attend the MBW sessions, the major reason for not regularly attending among both SUF-supported and Non-SUF-supported (37.5% and 40.0%, respectively) was that they had been ill[38]. The second most commonly reported reason among all groups (37.5% and 18.9%, respectively) was that the sessions are conducted outside the normal school hours. Among other reasons which were mentioned, though by smaller proportions, included not liking the way the LG teaches (see Table 28).

Table 28: Reasons for Not Attending MBW Session among Sampled Girls

	SUF beneficiaries		**Non-SUF beneficiaries**	
Reason for not attending sessions	**Frequency**	**%**	**Frequency**	**%**
I am not interested	1	6.3	7	7.8
I have been ill	6	37.5	36	40.0
I don't like the way the LG teaches	1	6.3	7	7.8
I am busy with household chores	1	6.3	4	4.4
The sessions are outside of school time	6	37.5	17	18.9
The topics are not relevant for my life	0	0.0	2	2.2
My parents/guardians are not in support	0	0.0	2	2.2
Other (specify)	5	31.3	25	27.8
*N	16		90	

Those who did not regularly attend the sessions indicated many reasons for not attending including; the time the MBW sessions are conducted is after formal classes when its already late and learners are hungry; and some of them especially those in examination classes like standard eight indicated that their school prioritises examinable subjects instead of non-examinable MBW sessions.

[38] This was rather kind of a questionable response for those frequencies. We take it that it was the easiest reason they could give they felt would appeal.

3.6.7 Learner Guides' Services during School Closure

Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, schools were temporarily closed in March 2020 and reopened in September, 2020. After reopening for the current academic year in January 2021, they were forced to close again and subsequent teachers' strikes meant that they did not fully reopen until March 2021. Data shows that, despite having disruptions to learning, LGs did not stop providing their services to learners. As shown in Table 29, 91.2% of the 209 LGs that were interviewed using the long survey tool reported to have conducted home visits and 47.5% reported to have delivered MBW sessions in person.

Table 29: LGs Services Offered during School Closure (%)

LG Activities during School Closure	%
Organise study group sessions for students	69.1
Deliver MBW sessions in person	47.5
Contact one or more students to check on their welfare	82.8
Support students with their learning/revision	86.3
Conduct home visits	91.2

*N= 19

3.6.8 Key Challenges Facing LGs

A lot of progress on the part of LGs and support rendered to them has been presented and looks impressive in many aspects. However a number of challenges were highlighted by a number of stakeholders with regards to LGs. These include;

i. *Reluctance by some school structures to include LG sessions in the formal lesson schedules.* This was mentioned in interviews in at least three out of ten schools surveyed. This is due to a number of reasons including little support to LGs, in some cases due to the perception by other school staff members that the LGs receive a lot of money from CAMFED. There was also a general observation that the Project engagement with some stakeholders at school level was somehow lacking. For instance, some members of staff in schools are not well aware of the rationale for CAMFED sessions when there is already a life-skills in formal curriculum;

ii. *Classes tend to be conducted in the afternoon after the end of school day* when learners are tired and hungry which affects participation levels;

iii. *Lack of appropriate teaching materials for the LGs.* This was reported by 11.1% of the 451 LGs that undertook the LG survey;

iv. *Challenges in the relationship between LGs and parents/community members.* During the FGDs with learners and interviews with other stakeholders it kept on recurring that there is a lack of cordial environment between some parents and LGs which has rendered their efforts challenging. Further, occasions of friction between parents/community members and LGs have been reported.

For instance, 19.2% of LGs reported that they had a misunderstanding with parents or communities on issues regarding their work.

v. *Being ridiculed for being volunteers*. Synthesizing the narrations from LGs there is a general message that indicates that LGs more often get ridiculed by the community on why they are volunteers instead of doing something meaningful such as farming. In the LG survey, 15.5% of the 451 LGs reported this.

vi. *Lack of financial resources*. By the virtue of their role as LGs they are essentially supposed to be role models. They indicated that it does not deliver any positive aspirations to learners when they appear poor, wearing shabby clothing. These sentiments were very common from qualitative responses such that over 90% of LGs interviewed presented those sentiments.

3.7 IOR RESULTS UNDER OUTPUT 3

Output 3	Schools, communities and systems have the skills and systems to make schools safe learning environments for girls and boys.

3.7.1 Child Protection Policy in Schools

Output 3 of the FCDO Malawi Project focuses on child protection, by ensuring that schools and communities are safe and have a favourable environment for girls and boys to learn. The Project's monitoring data collected by PEAs and CAMA members[39] indicates that 68% of the schools visited in June 2021 had Child Protection Policies (CPPs), with 29% of the schools with CPPs having their CPPs displayed where students could see them. Rates varied by district, with Machinga having the highest rates (72% with CPPs, 22% displayed) and Chikwawa the lowest (52% with CPPs, 14% displayed (see Year 2 Annual Report).

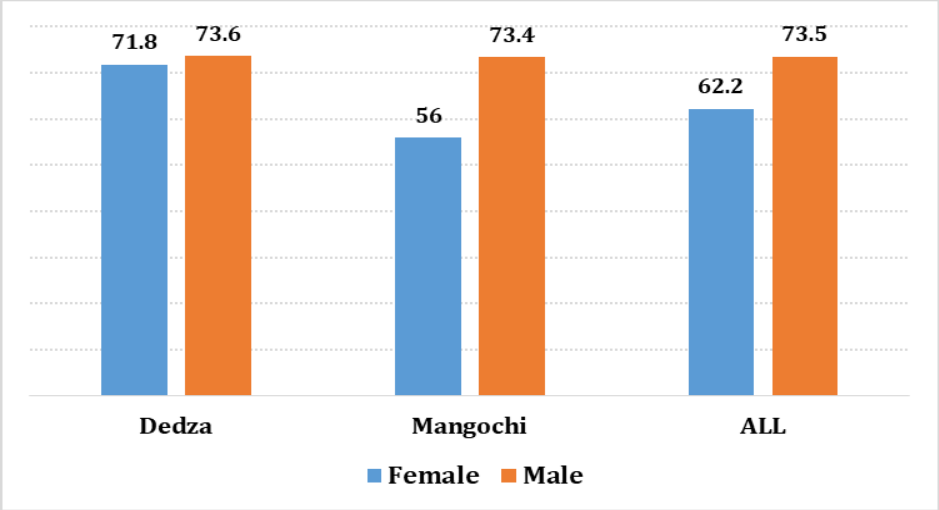
Data from qualitative sources indicated that some of the schools that were visited during the IOR have developed the CPP and that they are displayed, as the quote below shows:

> *"We have developed our own child protection policy through consultations with all teachers and learners and this is displayed at the school"* (KII with Teacher Mentor, Primary School, Mangochi District).

To explore further, respondents of the student survey were asked whether they were aware of the existence of a child protection policy (CPP) at their school. Of the 501 students that participated in the student survey, 66% had awareness of any child protection policy at their schools either formally or informally within the existing child protection structures, while the remaining 170 students (33.8%) were not aware. An analysis of the level of awareness by the gender of the learner shows that overall a larger proportion of boys were aware of a CPP at their school (73.5%) than girls (62.2%) (see Figure 25).

[39] This is reported in the Year 2 Annual Report for the Project.

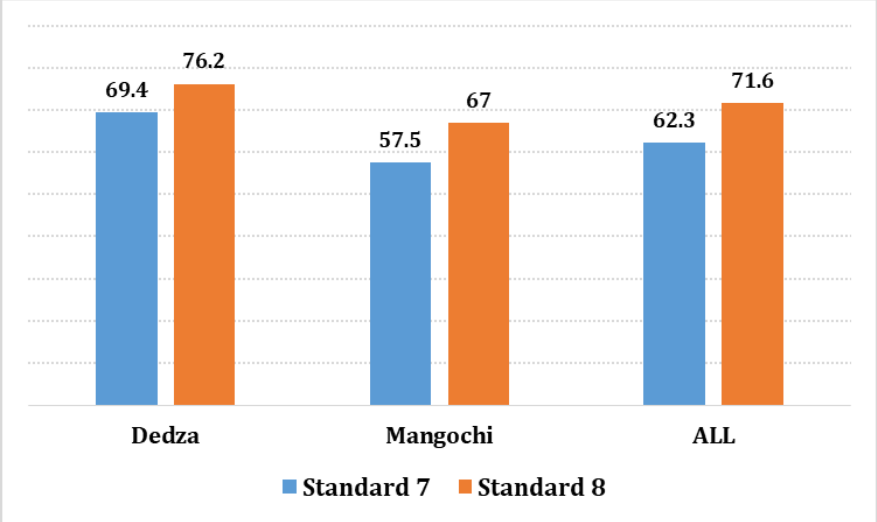
Figure 25: Proportion of Students having Knowledge on Existence of CPP, by District and Gender (%)



The results show that among all the sampled girls, 62.2% were aware of the existence of CPP. For boys, the proportion that was aware was 73.5%. The difference was statistically significant[40]. Between the districts, the proportion of male and female students that were aware of CPP in Dedza was similar, but in Mangochi the proportion was higher among males than females (see Figure 25).

We also analyzed knowledge of the existence of CPP by class of student. The results, presented in Figure 26, show that, overall, a higher proportion of Standard 8 learners (71.6%) were aware of the existence of the CPP than Standard 7 learners (62.3%). This difference was found to be statistically significant[41]. This same difference was also found in both Mangochi and Dedza District (see Figure 26).

Figure 26: Proportion of Students Having Knowledge on the Existence of CPP, by District and Class (%)

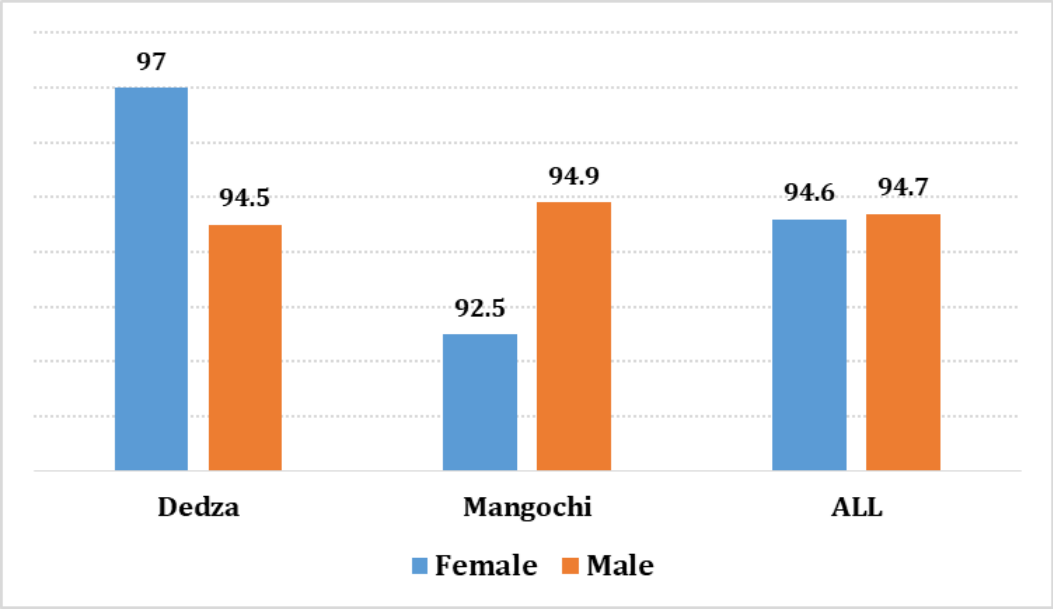


[40] $\chi^2(1) = 6.2746$, Pr = 0.012
[41] $\chi^2(1) = 4.6093$, Pr = 0.032

3.7.2 Confidence to Report Cases of Abuse

Respondents of the student survey were further asked the question: "*If you or a friend was being abused in any way, would you feel able to report it?".* The results, presented in Figure 27, show that, overall, the majority of both male and female learners feel able to report any form of abuse which they or their friends might experience. We found that 94.6% of all the interviewed students reported that they were free to report any kind of abuse. When disaggregated by gender, 94.6% of female students stated that they were free to report any kind of abuse and that 94.7% of male students stated the same. The difference between male and female students who felt free to report any form of abuse was not statistically significant[42]. When the data were disaggregated by district, the proportion for girls is higher in Dedza than in Mangochi (see Figure 27).

Figure 27: Proportion of Students Indicating that they are Free to Report any Kind of Abuse, by District and Gender



3.7.3 To Whom Students can Report Cases of Abuse

Students were also asked to whom they would report the case of abuse or harassment. The results are reported in Table 30. As the results show for both male and female students, the most important individual to report to is the Head teacher, followed by parent/guardian, and then the LGs.

[42] $\chi^2(1) = 0.0392$, P = 0.843

Table 30: Proportion of Students Indicating Where they Would Report Cases of Abuse or Harassment by District and Gender

Where to Report To	Dedza		Mangochi		ALL	
	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male
Friend	13.0	13.2	6.5	16.5	9.1	14.7
Parent/Guardian	59.5	60.4	43.5	48.1	49.8	54.7
Learner Guide	54.2	38.5	37.0	44.3	43.8	41.2
Teacher Mentor	35.1	31.9	30.4	29.0	31.4	31.2
Other Teachers	27.5	23.1	9.5	25.3	16.6	24.1
Head of School	74.0	81.3	59.0	69.6	65.0	75.9
Mother Group	35.1	36.3	33.0	31.6	33.8	34.1
School Management Committee	23.7	27.5	15.0	26.6	18.4	27.1
Community Policing	51.1	41.8	32.5	41.8	39.9	41.8
N	*131*	*91*	*200*	*79*	*331*	*170*

A similar pattern emerges when the data are disaggregated by district. These results suggest that learners are aware of both school-based child protection structures (e.g. Head teachers, and Teacher Mentors), as well as community-based structures (e.g. parents, mother groups and community policing) where they can report cases of child abuse. This is important because when cases of abuse occur within the community, the students would be able to turn to community-based CP structures to report. In the same vein, when cases occur within the school, they can report to school-based CP structures.

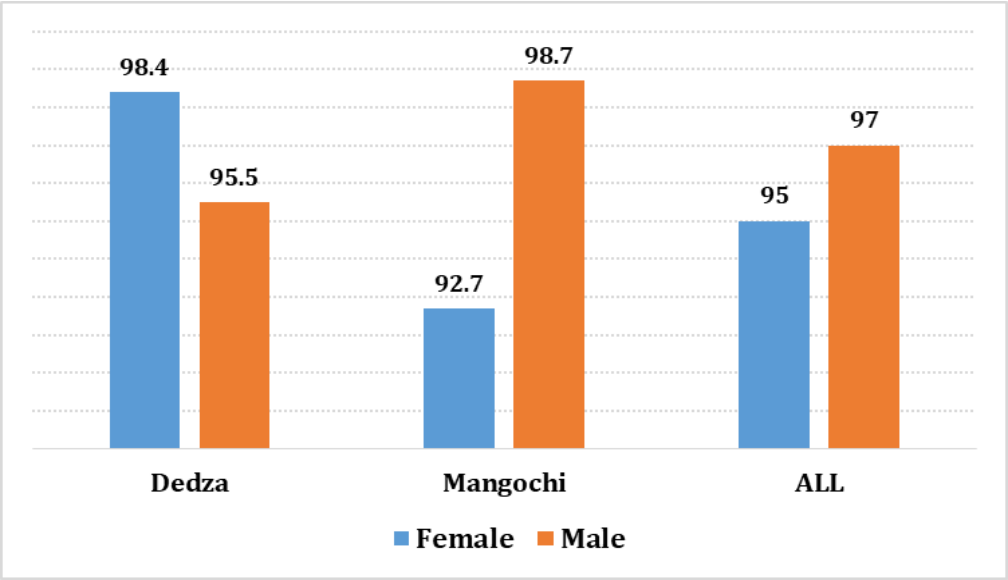
3.7.4 Confidence of Students that Perpetrators of Child Abuse will Get Punished

Child protection is concerned with preventing and responding to specific situations where children are at risk of abuse, violence, torture, armed conflict, physical, sexual, mental and emotional abuse, exploitation, discrimination, persecution, exclusion, neglect or deprivation of parental or other family care (Government of Malawi, 2014). The Project is concerned with creating a safe and protective environment for children, by ensuring that children are living in safety and dignity. It helps ensure that children are in school, laws are in place to punish those who exploit children, and that communities are aware of the risks which children face.

As a way of determining children's confidence in the child protection system, respondents of the student survey were asked about their confidence that those who abuse children will be punished. The results, presented in Figure 28, show that both girls and boys are confident in the child protection system and that perpetrators that exploit children will be punished. Overall, 95.6% of all the sampled learners were confident that those who abuse children will be punished. Among the girls, 95% were confident, while

among the boys, 97% were confident. The test of significance shows that overall there was statistically significant differences[43] between male and female students.

Figure 28: Proportion of Students Indicating Confidence that Perpetrators will Get Punished, disaggregated by District and Gender



Our analysis by district shows that while in Dedza, the proportions were similar for both girls and boys, in Mangochi, a larger proportion of boys (98.7%) were confident that perpetrators of abuse would be punished, as compared to girls (92.7).

Results from FGDs with learners indicate that their confidence is high because they have experienced past perpetrators being punished, as the two quotes from Dedza and Mangochi below indicate:

> *"We are very confident because the communities are aware of what the consequences of abuse are as they have learnt from previous perpetrators".* (FGD with girls, Primary School, Dedza District).

> *"We feel very confident because whenever a child violation case happens in our communities, the local leaders and police work together. They ensure that the perpetrator is apprehended and the survivor is assisted"* (FGD with girls, Primary School, Mangochi District).

The FGDs with boys also showed that they, too, were confident that perpetrators will be punished, as the quote below indicates:

[43] $X^2(1)=2,8702$, p=0.090

"We feel confident because we know that people are afraid of the rule of law. The police has set examples in the previous cases". (FGD with boys, Primary School, Mangochi District).

However, there were a few FGDs where participants indicated that they were not confident, citing widespread corruption as the main reason. The following two quotes from Dedza and Mangochi shed light on this issue:

"We are not confident because there is so much corruption in this country. Most perpetrators end up paying money to the Police to avoid being sentenced" (FGD with boys, Primary School, Dedza District).

"We are not confident. If a poor child is victimized by a rich or well-known person, the perpetrator will bribe the police and get away with the crime. Meanwhile, my rights have been violated" (FGD with girls, Primary School, Dedza District).

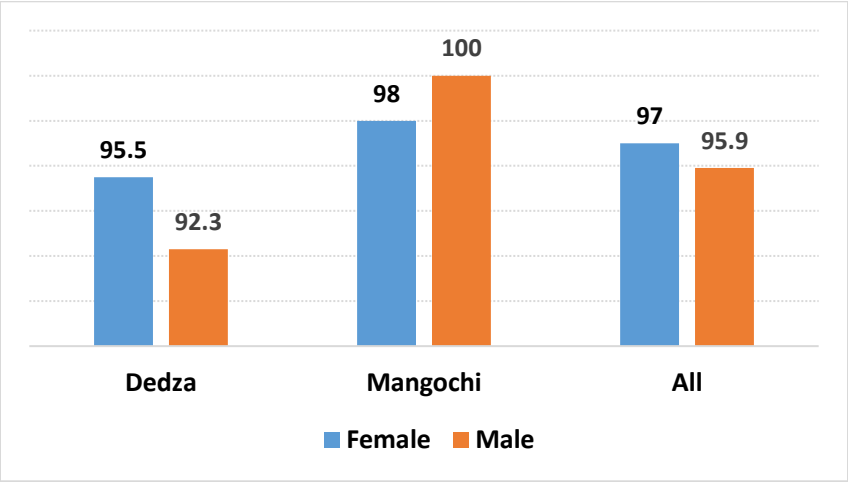
Nevertheless, the majority of the learners, both male and female, are confident that those who abuse children will be punished. This points to the overall effectiveness of the child protection system at school and in the home to be able to respond to cases of child rights violations. The Project is playing an important role to strengthen this system by ensuring that it is creating a protective environment for children.

3.7.5 Students' Awareness of the Re-admission Policy

Malawi developed its re-admission policy in 1993 that permitted pregnant girls to return to school after they have had their baby. The policy was revised in 2006. In 2018 the Ministry of Education reviewed the readmission policy again to make it much easier at the school level to implement. The purpose is to increase enrolment, retention and completion of the education phase. The policy also ensures that special backing mechanisms at family and community levels are put in place to assist the teenage parents (Kapasule and Kumar, 2020).

The IOR assessed the extent of awareness of the existence of the school re-admission policy. In particular, each respondent was asked whether they believed the following statement to be true or false: "*If a student gives birth, she is allowed to come back to school after the baby is born*". The results are presented in Figure 29, which indicate that almost all the students are aware of the re-admission policy. Overall, 96.6% of the sampled students were aware of the re-admission policy. There were no significant differences in awareness by gender of the learner.

Figure 29: Proportion of Students Aware of the Re-admission Policy, Disaggregated by District and Gender



These findings indicate a high level of awareness among girls of their right to return to school post pregnancy. However, the interviews with key stakeholders suggests there is still more work to be done by different stakeholders to ensure that the policy is enacted and that when a girl becomes pregnant she is able to access the support she needs made possible by the policy. This is an important measure to ensure increased retention and completion of education phases.

The IOR has shown that the interventions under output 3 have been very effective in creating a safer learning environment for boys and girls. According to the Year 2 Report, the Project schools have been conducting awareness meetings on child rights and how to report cases of abuse. Furthermore, LGs and other CAMFED stakeholders have been conducting home visits to at-risk learners in order to ensure that they do not drop out of school. Some LGs have been conducting meetings with parents; and there have been engagement meetings with traditional leaders. School- Based Committees (SBCs) and mother support groups (MSGs) have remained active to spearhead child protection in the schools and the homes.

These interventions and their delivery methods have been effective in creating safer school learning environments for girls and boys. The IOR has shown that most of the schools have a child protection policy in place and that the majority of the learners are aware of the existence of the CPP. Furthermore, the majority of the students are confident that they would be able to report cases of abuse, and that they are aware of where to report such cases. Finally, the majority of the students are confident with the system that perpetrators of child abuse will be punished.

3.8 MAIN ENABLING FACTORS

The IOR has identified the following factors that are positively contributing to the success of the Project. These include:

i. **Strong relationship between CAMFED Malawi and the Ministry of Education**

CAMFED Malawi has a longstanding Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) with the Ministry of Education, which reinforces the capacity of the various CAMFED structures (LGs, TMs, CAMA, etc.) to respond to the needs of vulnerable children, and underpins a joined-up, multi-sectoral approach to tackle challenges that affect girls' education in Malawi.

The IOR found that there is a cordial relationship between CAMFED Malawi and the Ministry of Education, which has led to the smooth running of project activities even in the midst of COVID-19. The Project is able to leverage resources from within the Ministry of Education to ensure that the girls are supported to perform and transition. The quote below illustrates this point:

> *"The relationship with the Ministry of Education is very long standing. Starting from on the onset of the Project, the CAMFED National Director had various meetings with officials, key stakeholders, government and other NGOs and cooperating partners to tell them about this Project on what was happening; how will it be happening and so they were well informed and sensitized about this Project"* (KII with CAMFED Staff).

This cooperation has made it easy for the Project to work with PEAs and teachers (as Teacher Mentors) in the project.

ii. Strong relationship between CAMFED and the Donor (FCDO)

The IOR found that the relationship between CAMFED and FCDO is long standing. The donor previously supported another CAMFED Malawi intervention – Keeping Girls in School (KGIS) Project and this long term support has enabled the establishment of a sustainable and multiplying cycle of support; for example the existing LGs were supported to complete secondary school through CAMFED under the KGIS Project. Through this long-term relationship the Project staff also know the requirements of the donor and are able to meet the expectations of FCDO, thereby ensuring that the Project is able to remain on target to achieve its objectives.

A quote below from CAMFED staff sheds light on this issue:

> ***"F****rom my perspective, I think we have a really good relationship with FCDO. They are very supportive of scaling the Learner Guide model. Part of that is to try and help with any relationship- building that we might need and support in whatever way they can with that."* (KII with CAMFED staff).

iii. Involvement of CAMA members as LGs and the mobilization of support to the girls by CAMA members

The design of the Project ensures that past beneficiaries of CAMFED Malawi interventions are given an opportunity to support other marginalised girls. These include the involvement of past CAMFED beneficiaries as LGs, and the mobilization of support to girls by CAMA members, as the quote below illustrates:

> ***"****I think for me, the positiveness comes in the responses of CAMFED in that CAMA members are able to mobilize support to our girls and I think they are doing a good job"* (KII with CAMFED Staff).

iv. The composition of the SUF package addresses critical needs of female learners

It was noted that the girls who are in receipt of Step-Up Fund (SUF) are receiving resources that are targeted to their needs, as the quote below indicates:

> *"The provision of school uniforms, shoes, sanitary pads, exercise books, pens and other essentials are basic needs for students. The challenges they had are no longer there, making the Project to be fruitful"* (KII with PEA, Mangochi District).

v. Provision of Incentives to LGs

The design of the intervention has ensured that LGs are motivated to perform their role in the Project. The IOR has found that provision of trainings, leadership, and loans to LGs is playing an important role to motivate them and even for them to be able to provide additional material support to the learners.

vi. The Multi-dimensional nature of the Project ensures active participation of various structures to promote girls' education

The IOR has found that the Project follows a multi-dimensional approach involving various education stakeholders at the school and community levels. At the school level, the Head teachers, teachers, Teacher Mentors and the school-based committees all have a role to play in the Project. At the community level, parents and guardians, community leaders, and the mother support groups also play their roles to ensure that the Project is able to achieve its results. This ensures that the Project remains holistic enough to address all the barriers to girls' education in Malawi.

3.9 MAIN HINDERING FACTORS

The IOR found the following factors that have negatively affected Project implementation, so far:

i. Effects of COVID-19 on Project Implementation

COVID-19 remains the main factor that has negatively affected the Project. Since most of the interventions, such as the MBW sessions, provision of SUF, etc. are school-based, the prolonged school closures due to COVID-19 meant that most of the interventions could not be implemented as designed during that time. The Project had to make adjustments to ensure that LGs were able to visit learners in their homes. The majority of LGs continued to deliver sessions and remained in contact with the learners during the COVID-19 induced school closures.

ii. Limited Role Played by Head Teachers and Class Teachers

The IOR found that while the relationship between the Project and the PEA and the District Education Managers was strong, the relationship between the Project and Head teachers was found to be weaker. In six of the 10 schools that were part of the IOR, the Head teachers and other school teachers were not actively involved in the Project and were not certain of the activities that were being undertaken by the Teacher Mentors. The quote below illustrates this point further:

> *"The Head teacher is not involved by CAMFED at all in its activities at the school. He is therefore uncooperative. He even refuses to have Standard 8 learners join the MBW sessions"* (KII with Teacher Mentor, Mangochi District).

The issue of a teacher preventing Standard 8 students from attending MBW sessions was also reported by LGs from Chikwawa, Dedza and Mulanje. It is important to note that at the time of the survey Standard 8 teachers were focused on preparing their students for the national exam in September 2021. This was done to cover up for the lost time due to COVID-19 prolonged school closures.

Due to lack of regular involvement in the Project, some Head teachers are not providing a conducive environment for the LGs and the TMs to work effectively. The quote below illustrates this point:

> *"My Head teacher thinks that I earn a salary. He has been asking money from me in order to be allocated time to meet the learners in the school"* (KII with LG, Chikwawa District).

3.10 STUDY LIMITATIONS/CHALLENGES

There are a number of challenges that affected the study implementation. As the results are being used it is important to be aware of the following limitations:

i. Data collection in Mangochi District, which is predominantly Muslim, coincided with Muslim day of prayer (Friday). As a result, there were challenges with the availability of learners in some schools.

ii. At the design stage, the student survey was planned to reach 800 learners to be drawn from Standard 7 and 8 students from across 10 sampled schools in Dedza and Mangochi Districts. During the actual data collection, however, fewer numbers of Standard 8 learners were available to be interviewed than originally planned and 501 learners were actually interviewed. Some schools discouraged Standard 8 learners from participating in the survey given the pressures of upcoming examinations which was a key priority for schools at the time of the data collection. The research team was unaware of this issue when it developed the sampling methodology and it only became apparent when the researchers arrived at the schools to conduct the research and therefore the proportion of the Std 8 learners was lower than predicted in the original sampling.

iii. Due to COVID-19 restrictions, the interviews with LGs were done by phone. However, the research team experienced significant difficulties to reach LGs by phone due to poor mobile phone network in some areas (especially Mangochi), and due to the fact that some of the LGs phones were out of power. As a result only 450 LGs out of 675 LGs who are part of the Project were interviewed.

iv. Interviewing the LGs by phone meant that the research team could not read the body expression of the interviewees, thereby missing out on an important aspect of data collection.

v. The student questionnaire was completed by student themselves on Android tablets, as a way of promoting their empowerment. However, there were delays in utilization of tablets by some learners, thereby affecting the timelines for data collection.

4. CONCLUSIONS

The FCDO Malawi Project is being implemented with the ultimate goal of improving learning outcomes for targeted poor and marginalised girls from 5 districts in Malawi, thereby enabling them to successfully progress through upper primary and transition to secondary school. The IOR was commissioned at the mid-point of the Project implementation. The purpose of the IOR was to evaluate and measure the progress of the Project at the midway point and the impact of the Project achievements.

At the Impact Level, the IOR has shown that the FCDO Malawi Project is making great strides in supporting poor, marginalised rural girls to remain in school and progress through upper primary school, with some transitioning to secondary school. In particular, the SUF, TMs, LGs and the MBW sessions have shown to be effective in ensuring that supported girls are able to progress through upper primary, with some transitioning from primary to secondary school. (*This is in line with Finding 3*). Furthermore, the Project has made significant contributions to reducing the drop-out rates among supported girls, pointing to the effectiveness of the CAMFED model in keeping girls, especially those coming from disadvantaged economic backgrounds in school *(This is in line with Finding 4).* The main factors that lead to girls dropping out of school include forced marriage, voluntary marriage, hunger, peer pressure, death of a parent or guardian, and sickness. The MBW sessions are, however, working to empower the girls and build their resilience to withstand most of these pressures *(This is in line with Finding 5).* The study found that a higher proportion of boys have '*high*' academic self-esteem than girls.. The study further found that household vulnerability is associated with low academic self-esteem among learners but that for those who are vulnerable, SUF support correlates with significantly increased academic self-esteem (*This is in line with Finding 2*).

At Output 1 Level, the IOR has shown that The FCDO Malawi Project provided SUF support to 29,700 primary school girls from Standard 5 to 8 in Year One of the Project; 50 girls at secondary school in Year One; and 28,892 primary school girls in Year Two. In Year Two, the Project has also provided support to 1,908 students in secondary school. The resources provided are the right resources, targeting girls' urgent school needs. The resources have reduced school dropouts and absenteeism, while promoting better education outcomes for rural poor and marginalised girls *(This is in line with Finding 7).* Furthermore, the study has found that apart from support from CAMFED and CAMA members, there are other forms of material and in-kind resources that are leveraged to extend support to marginalised children as a reciprocal response to resources provided under this Project. Community-based organizations and mother support groups provided material and in-kind support to learners, especially girls. *(This is in line with Finding 8).*

At Output 2 Level, the study has found that LGs play an important role in ensuring that the Project's objectives are achieved. Most LGs are running small-scale businesses and are using some of the proceeds from their businesses to support learners *(This is in line with Finding 9*). The businesses are empowering them economically, with 64.5% of those that received training or mentoring reporting that their income status has improved (*This is in line with Finding 10).*

The study also found that the main reasons why CAMA members decided to become LGs include wanting to give back to others in their communities; the prospect of gaining a higher status in society; and the opportunity for further training.

On the MBW Sessions, the qualitative research has found that the MBW book is not the most used book among the LGs during the MBW sessions because they find it difficult to use. The IOR has also found that trainings on the use of MBW were conducted professionally but were not allocated adequate time. The study further found that 61.3% of sampled Standard 7 and 8 learners attend MBW sessions and that the majority of those that attend are girls.

During school closures, LGs conducted home visits; supported students with revision/learning; organised group sessions for students; and delivered MBW sessions in person. The flexibility and the willingness of LGs to adapt to the changes due to COVID-19 school closures ensured that they are able to continue providing the much needed support to the learners to ensure that the Project remains on course to achieve its intended objectives.

At Output Level 3, the study found that around 68% of the Project schools have a child protection policy in place. A higher proportion of boys (73.5%) are aware of the existence of a child protection policy in their schools than girls (62.2%). The majority of both male and female learners feel able to report any form of abuse which they or their friends might experience *(This is in line with Finding 17).* Furthermore, the majority of both female and male learners are aware of both school-based child protection structures (e.g. Head Teachers, and Teacher Mentors), as well as community-based structures (e.g. parents, mother group and community policing) where they can report cases of child abuse. The study has also found that the majority of the learners, both male and female, are confident that those who abuse children will be punished *(This is in line with Finding 18).*

The study found that the main enabling factors include the cordial relationship between CAMFED Malawi and the Ministry of Education; the long-standing relationship between CAMFED and the donor; the strong involvement of CAMA members in the Project; the design of the SUF package; and the multi-dimensional nature of the Project *(This is in line with Finding 19).* The main hindering factors are the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic and the limited involvement of Head teachers and class teachers at the school level. *(This is in line with Finding 20).*

The IOR has shown that the interaction between the different Project initiatives/ interventions are contributing to better outcomes for marginalised girls. The active involvement of LGs, TMs, CAMA members, mother support groups and other community child protection structures are ensuring that there is a protective environment for learners, especially girls to be able to remain in school. The provision of life skills training through MBW sessions, as well as the SUF have proven to be effective so far to enable students to progress and transition from primary to secondary school. The ability of the Project to make quick and effective adjustments has ensured that the Project remains on course to achieve its intended outcomes even in the midst of the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic.

5. RECOMMENDATIONS

Based on the study findings, the following recommendations are provided to further guide the implementation of the Project

1. There is a need for greater involvement of Head teachers in the Project. It is recommended that in all the Project schools, Head teachers should be directly involved in the planning of school-related activities under the Project. They could also take a lead in monitoring attendance in LG sessions, as is already the case in some schools[44]. This would ensure that TMs and LGs are able to work effectively in schools.
2. CAMFED to provide more opportunities for CAMA members to give back to provide more support to girls in order to ensure a multiplier effect of the initial investments that were made under the KGIS project.
3. There is a need to strengthen the trainings for LGs to be able to deliver MBW sessions more effectively with the MBW manual. There might also be a need to simplify the MBW manual to make it more user friendly to the LGs.
4. The Project should ensure that all the remaining Project schools have developed their child protection policies and are able to display them so that learners can access them freely.
5. The FCDO Malawi Project, through the LGs and TMs should continue to engage with parents, community child protection structures and other child protection stakeholders to address the causal factors of school dropouts among girls, including early marriages and pregnancies. Developing or strengthening community by-laws that outlaw early marriages and pregnancies could contribute towards reducing school drop-out rates, especially among girls. There is also potential in the roles of Parent Support Groups to support LGs engagement with parents.

[44] This was reported to be taking place in some schools in Mangochi, according to Year 2 Annual Report.

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