



## Malawi (Republic of)

Olive Masanza  
Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology (Basic and  
Secondary Education)



*Honourable Olive Masanza, MP. is Deputy Minister of Education, Science and Technology responsible for Basic and Secondary Education. She has vast experience working in government as a civil servant before she joined politics. She is an ardent campaigner for promoting girls participation in education, especially orphans and children from disadvantaged homes. She is one of very few female legislators in Malawi who have achieved a lot in politics in an environment dominated by males. She is a role model to young girls in Malawi and likes giving career talks, and guidance and counselling sessions to young ones.*

### **Inclusive Education: The Way of the Future**

The vision of the education sector in Malawi as stated in our national education sector plan (NESP)<sup>1</sup> is to be a catalyst for socio-economic development, industrial growth and an instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and the voiceless. This, in my view underpins the notion of inclusiveness. My government's priority development agenda as stated in our development strategy document, 'the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy 2006-2011' is to liberate people from the pangs of poverty which is the root cause of exclusion in a developing country like Malawi. Poverty was in the past exacerbated by chronic food shortages at national and household level as well as deteriorating health services and, poor infrastructure coupled with high levels of unemployment. Issues of exclusion/inclusion are developmental and are matters to do with human rights, equity, transparency and democratisation. Efforts to tackle exclusion must go hand in hand with strategies to bring about economic growth and sustainable development to our nations, communities and individuals. My perception of an inclusive education is premised on what is stated in the Guidelines for Inclusion<sup>2</sup>, i.e. "*Inclusion involves adopting a broad vision of Education for All by addressing the spectrum of needs of all learners, including those who are vulnerable to marginalisation and exclusion*".

Economic growth and sustainable development at national, community, family and individual level is pivotal to the ingredients necessary for an effective inclusive education system. To begin with, learners have to come from supportive families. Learners that come from families that are faced with chronic hunger do not meaningfully take advantage of the opportunities that a free primary education system offers. That's why food security at household and national level is one of the top priorities of my government. We have moved from a hunger nation to an exporter of food surplus. Consequently, with our development partners, we have introduced and expanded a school feeding programme to address short term hunger of learners whilst at school. Secondly, learners that

<sup>1</sup> Government of Malawi, National Education Sector Plan, 2008-2007, A Statement, Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, February, 2008

<sup>2</sup> UNESCO, Guidelines for Inclusion: Ensuring Access to Education for All, Paris, 2005, pp. 12-14



live with chronically sick parents/guardians and those that are themselves habitually sick would not take full benefit of the education opportunities offered to them. The health of our citizenry and particularly our learners is also one of our top priorities in the face of HIV&AIDS. We have introduced programmes such as school health and nutrition, guidance and counselling in addition to special needs education programme. Thirdly, grouping together over eighty learners under the care of one teacher, under a tree, in the open or in a shelter that is not conducive to learning, with limited teaching and learning materials is, but a mockery to the concept of inclusive education. Inclusive schooling requires trained and well qualified teachers in reasonable pupil-teacher ratios, adequate teaching and learning materials as well as school infrastructure that meets the diverse needs of learners. We have intensified efforts to recruit and train more teachers by increasing annual in-take and by constructing additional Teacher Training Colleges including a Special Needs Institute. We also encourage the involvement of the private sector in teacher training. We have revised the primary school curriculum and oriented existing teachers to make learning more responsive to the learners' needs and to reduce the repetition and drop out rates.

Though the challenges are plentiful, looking back from where we are coming from, we, however, have reason for optimism for the future. We have a strong political vision committed to turning round our nation into a 'nation of achievers'. We have a highly dedicated public service and a thriving economy that has withstood the ravages of the recent world 'oil crisis' and 'food shortages', growing at an average 8% per annum. This gives us hope for the future of an **Inclusive education system** and an **Inclusive society**.