

Chapter 4: Conclusions

TECS/ICLEP has shown substantial results on the ground in a very short time frame. After only 18 months, most mid-term targets have been exceeded, six months ahead of time. Some key results:

- Increased school enrolment, and decreased dropouts among primary school children;
- Increased food security among communities participating in irrigation activities;
- The provision of safe drinking water through shallow wells has reduced the incidence of waterborne disease and death due to crocodiles from the river.

The TECS/ICLEP partnership approach has several main advantages:

- The partnership approach allows TECS to harness expertise from the different implementing partners, so that each component of the project can excel;
- The integrated approach of the project points to sustainability as it tackles poverty, the main cause of child labour in Malawi; and
- Implementing partners have been able to scale up their work through other development actors in the districts.

There are strong indicators of ownership of the project as evidenced by the high level of participation, and innovations in terms of community-driven initiatives such as counselling girls to avoid early marriage, the provision of adult literacy classes, and the creation and running of two kindergartens.

TECS/ICLEP has resulted in children having a better quality of life, access to education and significantly reduced workloads. The increase in school enrolment has resulted in decreased opportunities for child labour (as children spend less time at home than they did before). In addition, providing safe water through the shallow wells and communal woodlots results in children spending less time collecting wood, and water. Improved food security among the communities with access to irrigation has resulted in decreased reliance on children's incomes.

The communities interviewed clearly condemn the practice of child labour, and pragmatically observe cultural practices of teaching children household chores while ensuring that they do not overwork, and still have time to attend school. Case studies show that some children who used to undertake full time child labour now are attending school in the morning. Local chiefs in Dowa have banned child labour in their areas of jurisdiction, and in Kasungu district, the community has set up a Child Labour Committee, which is conducting a census on child labour and school attendance.

Efforts are underway to ensure sustainability of the project, through grassroots capacity building, enhancing community ownership of the project, and building capacity and support among district government staff. Crucially there has been change in attitude among some residents in the project area, in that they now have an entrepreneurial approach and feel that they can shape their own futures as opposed to waiting for help from donors or the government.

However, there are some areas that could be improved, as outlined in the recommendations in Chapter 5. Key action areas include:

- Project decisions need to be more transparent and participatory at the grassroots level;
- Tenants and children need to be directly targeted for all activities;
- Children need to be involved in actively combating child labour;
- More efforts need to be made to facilitate women in decision making and self reliance;
- Better communication and cooperation should be developed with other development actors in the project area.

In conclusion, the mid-term evaluation reveals substantial progress and huge potential in reducing poverty and combating child labour. Within the short time frame, significant progress has been made in the Dowa project area, and the high level of ownership and commitment among local communities bodes well for project sustainability.

Although TECS/ICLEP activities in Kasungu district are just getting underway, the area shows great potential. The community mobilisation activities were well attended and resulted in the creation of Child Labour Committee, which is already having an impact. Shallow wells have been built and volunteers come forward for well maintenance teams. Tree nurseries have been established, marker ridges been built and activities underway to improve soil fertility. In addition, TECS/ICLEP may be in a position to multiply its impact through other agencies already working in the area, such as UNICEF.

The addition of the health component in 2004 provides a good opportunity for improved capacity for income generation among adults and poverty reduction, thus resulting in a declining reliance on children's incomes. This, combined with sensitisation activities, should result in the reduction of child labour in the project areas.