



**Office International de l'Enseignement Catholique (OIEC)**  
**Catholic International Education Office**

## **Submission for**

HUMAN RIGHTS COUNCIL

## **Universal Periodic Review (UPR)**

22<sup>th</sup> session (April – May 2015)

## **MALAWI**

### **Key issue: right to education**

#### **I. Introduction**

**Catholic International Education Office (OIEC)** is a NGO with special consultative status to the Economic and Social Council of United Nations (ECOSOC). Founded in 1952, OIEC represents world-wide Catholic education and its aim is to promote educational catholic projects in relation with the principles of the United Nations. OIEC is present in 103 countries and represents about 50 millions pupils and students in more than 210.000 schools around the world. OIEC's priorities issues are: Education for all (and its application in the field of human rights education, peace, justice, solidarity and sustainable development); Freedom of education; Freedom of religion; and Dialogue of cultures.

On UPR's process, OIEC is focused on two issues: right to education and freedom of education. The information contained in this submission had been provided by the Catholic Schools in Malawi. The last mentioned has 48.000 students.

## II. Right to education issue

Since 22th December 1993, Malawi is party to the international Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights which provides in its article 13 (2) that:

*“the States Parties to the present Covenant recognize that, with a view to achieving the full realization of this right: (a) Primary education shall be compulsory and available free to all;*

*(b) Secondary education in its different forms, including technical and vocational secondary education, shall be made generally available and accessible to all by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;*

*(c) Higher education shall be made equally accessible to all, on the basis of capacity, by every appropriate means, and in particular by the progressive introduction of free education;*

*(d) Fundamental education shall be encouraged or intensified as far as possible for those persons who have not received or completed the whole period of their primary education;*

*(e) The development of a system of schools at all levels shall be actively pursued, an adequate fellowship system shall be established, and the material conditions of teaching staff shall be continuously improved”.*

OIEC welcomes the progress achieved by Malawi State to promote the right to education, specially regarding the equal access to higher education. However, education is still not yet the top priority. There are many points that need to be improved: learning conditions, primary education compulsory and available free for all, reduction of school dropouts, and funding secondary schools and schools for deaf children.

### 1) Equal access to higher education

OIEC gives responses to UPR's recommendations 60 (see Malawi Mid-term Implementation Assessment of UPR).

*Recommendation n°60: “Make education one of its top priorities, and reinforce - equitable access to higher education - based on academic and educational standards”:*

Education is not yet top priority. The current government has indicated it will provide equitable access to higher education based on merit; furthermore the State plans to establish a couple of new universities

There is little interference in university curriculum. In the past, the government used to dictate what the university should include in the curriculum; it would also ask the university to stop teaching certain courses. Now, it is no longer the case.

## 2) Learning conditions

Learning conditions remain very poor, especially in primary schools: with over 4 million learners in primary schools, **textbooks** remain inadequate in all subjects. Government rarely provides textbooks. In general, each school is expected to purchase textbooks from school fees.

Thousands of pupils sit on the floor due to the **lack of desks and chairs**.

Teachers fail to teach effectively because of **overcrowded classrooms**. The teacher-pupil ration in primary and secondary schools is still very high. In many primary schools, the teacher-pupil ratio is one teacher for eighty pupils (1:80) on average in the countryside, whereas in big towns it is well over one teacher for one hundred pupils (1:100). There is still also a big shortage of classrooms. In many secondary schools, the ration is one teacher for sixty pupils (1:60) on average.

**School uniform in primary schools:** CSOs are lobbying for the elimination of school uniform in primary schools. Over half of Malawi's population survives on less than two dollars per day. Many families have more than five children in Malawi. School uniform is expensive by the average Malawian family; so parents struggle to buy uniform for children. It is not uncommon to see pupils sent home if they have no school uniform in primary schools. In secondary schools students are obliged to have uniform or face some other measures as punishment.

## 3) Primary education compulsory and available free for all

OIEC gives responses to UPR's recommendations 123, 125, and 126 (see Malawi Mid-term Implementation Assessment of UPR).

*Recommendation n°123 "Make primary education compulsory, in conformity with article 28 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child.":* primary education is not yet compulsory. The recommendation is still on the agenda.

*Recommendation n°125 "Strengthen the education system by making it mandatory and free of cost":* CSOs are lobbying the government to make primary education mandatory and eliminate hidden costs (such as school uniform, notebooks, pens and pencils, and even textbooks).

*Recommendation n°126 "Take all necessary measures for the realization of effective compulsory and free-of-cost primary education for all.":* little political will in this area, there is nothing tangible happening. Political leaders talk of passing a law making education compulsory in primary school, but to date no law has been passed.

## 4) Reduction of school dropouts

OIEC gives responses to UPR's recommendations 61, and 127 (see Malawi Mid-term Implementation Assessment of UPR).

*Recommendation n°61 "Consider promoting and strengthening vocational education and training opportunities to reduce the high number of school dropouts":* current government plans to introduce "Community Colleges" using established technical colleges in order to address this problem.

*Recommendation n°127 "Continue efforts to ensure that all children finish primary school and make primary education compulsory":* government and CSOs are engaged in serious campaign to ensure that all children finish primary school.

### **5) Funding secondary schools and schools for deaf children**

Regarding grants to secondary schools and to schools for deaf children, the nonprofit private schools, notably catholic schools remain underfunded in comparison to public schools. The Malawi State should increase the grants because of the needs of those schools.

## **III. Recommendations**

Regarding the right to education and freedom of education, Malawi State should:

- Increase budget for education in order to finance teaching and learning materials, to build more classrooms, to increase the number of teachers and to provide them decent salaries.
- Include all education stakeholders in the curriculum planning/ development.
- Eliminate school uniform in primary schools.
- Adopt adequate textbooks for each subject and provide textbooks to teachers and schools.
- Increase grants to secondary schools and to schools for deaf children, notably for nonprofit private schools such as catholic schools.

## **IV. Question**

What are the plans of the Malawi State with regards to the vocational training for students with special needs, with certain disabilities such as deaf and blind children, and those with learning difficulties?