

# The state of Malawi's poor: Their education

### Special points of interest:

- There is a strong correlation between the educational attainment of adults and their welfare level.
- However, only in the urban areas can most individuals with higher education derive benefits from their schooling.
- Primary education is available to almost all children.
- However, the quality is poor, leading to poor progress, frustration, and drop-outs, primarily for the rural poor and rural non-poor girls.

## The schooling of children in poor households

The information in this table on school attendance shows that in the earlier years of school a higher proportion of non-poor students are found to be in school than their poor peers. However, the difference becomes less significant as the children get older. Possibly intellectual ability as much as poverty status determines whether an individual remains in school at higher levels.

A large drop in the proportion of girls attending schools occurs in ages 17 to 19. For boys this reduction occurs at age 20 and above. However for

(Percent in school in age group)	Poor		Non-poor	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
5-7 years	41.7	45.6	56.3	61.5
8-10 years	82.9	84.2	92.6	90.3
11-13 years	90.6	90.9	93.9	91.3
14-16 years	86.4	82.3	86.6	79.3
17-19 years	71.3	47.2	75.8	37.7
20-22 years	37.3	9.3	29.1	11.0

neither boys nor girls does the pattern appear linked to poverty status.

## Rural-urban contrasts in welfare benefits from education

The graphs below contrast poor and non-poor heads of household by their place of residence - rural or urban. The only slightly higher bars for the non-poor with increasing educational attainment in the rural graph on the left suggests that in the countryside poverty status is not closely correlated with ones educational level: There is only a slight welfare advantage from higher education. In rural areas other factors than ones education appear to account for whether one is poor or non-poor – landholding size and qual-

ity, entrepreneurial abilities, even luck, for example. There appear to be very few economic opportunities in rural areas for which lack of education is a barrier.

This is not the case, however, in urban areas. In the cities there is a clear welfare advantage to household heads who have attained higher levels of education. It is in the cities where people can use their education to their own economic advantage: In Malawi, as elsewhere, if you are educated, you go to the city.

**PMS**

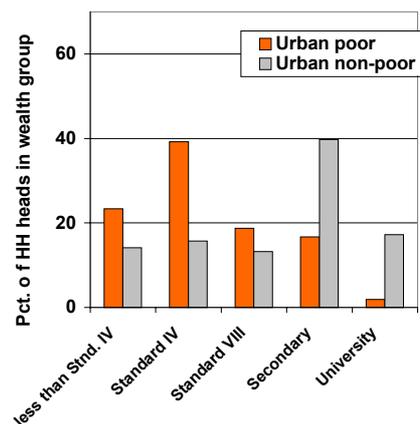
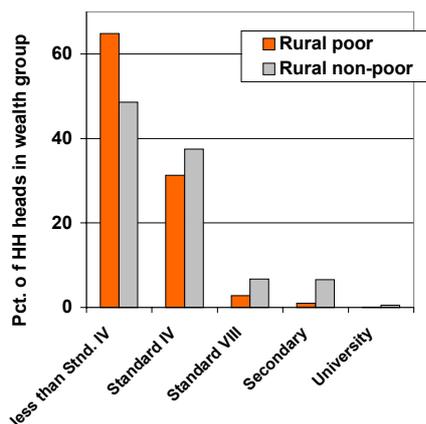
Poverty Monitoring System

The Poverty Monitoring system is an activity under the Poverty Alleviation Programme of the Government of Malawi. The core research activities of the PMS involve four institutions:

- National Economic Council,
- National Statistical Office,
- Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi,
- International Food Policy Research Institute.

The poverty monitoring research program has been designed to gain a comprehensive understanding of poverty in Malawi. The findings presented here are part of a series of briefs designed to inform policy makers about the current state of poverty and the methodologies used to measure poverty.

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## Secondary & university

According to the IHS, 2.8 percent of the population is presently attending secondary school, while 0.04 percent of the population is attending university. Strong sex, wealth group, and rural-urban differences are seen in the levels of attendance at secondary school and university, with urban, non-poor males having the highest levels of enrolment overall. However, it is important to bear in mind the very small proportion of the population that attends university, and to a slightly greater degree, secondary school. The IHS data shows that for adults aged 25 and above, only 6.4 percent completed secondary school, while 1.2 percent completed university.

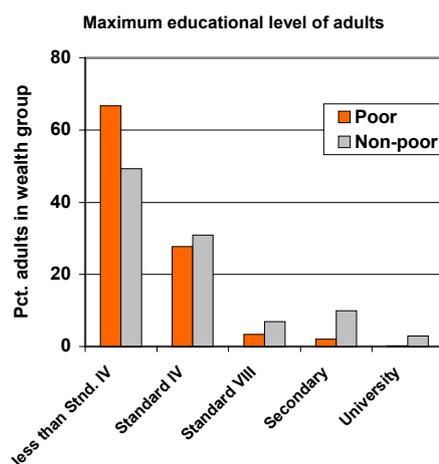
## The educational attainment of adults in poor households

The table presents the educational attainment of adults. Two strong, if unsurprising, patterns are seen:

1. There is a strong correlation between attaining higher levels of education and being non-poor. High educational attainment is an important determinant of the fact that one is non-poor.
2. Women in the past are less likely to have attained higher levels of education than men.

The graph presents the maximum educational attainment of adults by poor and non-poor. In contrast to the table, these categories are exclusive. What emerges is that completion of a Standard VIII primary school education generally is sufficient for the individual to raise his or her welfare level above the poverty line. Unfortunately, few attain that level of education.

<i>(Adults aged 25 and older, percent)</i>	Poor		Non-poor	
	Male	Female	Male	Female
<b>Attended school</b>	71.8	46.9	84.4	60.8
<b>Completed Standard IV</b>	45.9	22.5	61.9	37.5
<b>Completed Std. VIII</b>	9.3	2.4	25.4	13.1
<b>Completed Secondary</b>	3.9	0.8	16.9	8.0
<b>Completed University</b>	0.3	0.1	3.8	1.8



## Primary school enrolment measures

Net enrolment rates, the percentage of primary school-aged children who are actually in primary school, are quite consistent across rural-urban and wealth groups: Universal free primary education in Malawi does seem to provide opportunities for all.

However, this optimistic finding is not reinforced by the statistics on gross enrolment - any student in primary as a percentage of primary school-age children. What we see is that a very high proportion of primary school students are over-age: 39 percent of all boys and 31 percent of all girls. Over-age students result from students making little academic progress due, in part, to the poor quality of the instruction they are receiving.

However, the pattern of the gross enrolment figures is not consistent. In urban areas, there is little difference in the gross enrolment rates, although poor children, both boys and girls, are more likely to be over-age primary school

students than are non-poor children. Rural areas, in contrast, find that non-poor boys are disproportionately likely to remain in primary school when they are older.

What this pattern of gross enrolment implies is that, in urban households, pupils (or their parents) view continuing with education in spite of setbacks to be a good economic choice. There are rewards to higher education that merit continued attempts at advancing academically. The same rationale might explain the high net enrolment rate for rural non-poor boys. However, for girls and poor

boys in the countryside, there appear to be large opportunity costs involved with continuing to go to school when one is not making progress. This would support the statement made earlier that education is not a good determinant of welfare in rural areas.

<i>(as a percent of all children aged 6 - 13)</i>	Poor		Non-poor	
	Boys	Girls	Boys	Girls
<b>Rural</b>				
<b>Net enrolment</b>	74.5	77.0	81.6	83.6
<b>Gross enrolment</b>	120.9	111.4	141.0	123.7
<b>Urban</b>				
<b>Net enrolment</b>	87.9	86.7	85.9	77.9
<b>Gross enrolment</b>	127.7	123.6	122.9	115.0

## Other policy briefs

- *Activities of the Poverty Monitoring System*
- *The state of Malawi's poor: The incidence, depth, and severity of poverty*

- *The state of Malawi's poor: Who they are*
- *The state of Malawi's poor: Their health*
- *The state of Malawi's poor: Their economic characteristics*
- *The state of Malawi's poor: Agriculture and making a living from the land*