Education is a key investment for child survival, growth, development and well-being.

Education also contributes to higher income, individual empowerment and decreased poverty levels. Improving the quality of learning contributes to economic growth.

In Malawi, primary education is free up to Standard 8, but for secondary education, families must pay tuition fees and often transport and accommodation costs. For most deprived children, school fees and related education expenses, are amongst key barriers to access secondary education. UNICEF is advocating for affordable secondary education and increased investment in the sector.

**Investment in secondary education is key to youth development.** Malawi’s population is projected at 18 million. 18 percent of these are children under five, 44 percent are under the age of 15 while 24 percent are adolescents of secondary school age (10-19 years).

**There are very few children who make it to secondary.** Whilst primary school enrolment is currently at 98 percent, one of the highest in the region, secondary school enrolment is very low, estimated at 15 percent in 2016 for both boys and girls (EMIS, 2015/16).

Out of nearly 5,000,000 learners in primary school, only around 400,000 learners make it to secondary school. Unless reversed, low secondary school enrolment has significant impacts on social and economic development of Malawi.
UNICEF welcomes the recent decision by the Government to remove certain fees in secondary school: namely tuition fees, textbook fees and the general-purpose fund. This reduces the burden of cost of education, particularly for the poorest students. However, UNICEF believes that more needs to be done to achieve affordable quality secondary education for all children in Malawi, as follows:

**Cost of secondary education**
School level costs, boarding and other fees are beyond the reach of many poor families living below the poverty line.

**Inadequate infrastructure**
There are only 1,513 secondary schools compared to 5,864 primary schools (EMIS 2015/16). Only 37 percent of primary school children transition to secondary school.

**Poor quality of learning**
There are over 5,000 primary school teachers in secondary school. This, along with limited professional development, high student textbook ratio, insufficient teaching and learning materials compromises quality of learning. Inadequate housing particularly in rural areas affects teacher morale. Many schools, especially Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs) operate without libraries and laboratories, despite the roll out of the new curriculum.

### The problem

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### What should be done?

- **Subsidize remaining costs** (school level fees and boarding) for the poorest students through scholarships.
- **Increase access to secondary education** by opening more double shift schools and constructing more classrooms.
- **Safeguard the quality of secondary education** by recruiting more secondary school teachers and providing more textbooks.
- **Reduce school level costs in Community Day Secondary Schools** by providing direct transfers from within the national budget.

### Cost estimates

- Over 30,000 children from the poorest families are unable to meet the cost of secondary education and currently on average only 15,000 students access bursaries.
- **4,457,990 textbooks** are required in secondary school at an approximate cost of **MK27.5 billion**.
- **13,000 more secondary school teachers** are required and this would cost **MK36.85 billion** in wages.
- There are about **733 Community Day Secondary Schools (CDSSs)** and each needs **MK10 million** for operational costs.
- The total annual requirement is **MK7.33 billion**.

### The average annual cost of educating one secondary school student is about **MK130,000** with **77%** of all secondary school students in CDSSs.