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**Evidence Use in Child Friendly Budgeting: The Case Study of Parliament of Malawi**

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Malawi

**Objectives/aims**

Malawi’s 51% population is under the age of 18 while 60% is below the age of 24. This has created a high dependency ratio. Enrolment in early childhood development, basic and secondary education has not been in tandem with increases in investments in social service delivery. Malawi can reap from this population structure if government improves its investments in children. With evidence on demographic dividend, Members of Parliament (MPs) committed to increase budget allocation to social service delivery as well as raising marriage age from 15 to 18 to achieve sustainable development goals.

**Methods**

Malawi Parliament developed and launched guidelines in 2017 on assessing child friendliness of government budgets. This helped the MPs to access, analyse and synthesize demographic dividend data to understand the demographic dividend and the need for increased budget allocation to social service delivery. The MPs also committed to monitor 100% expenditure of child focused programmes such as education and health. This resulted in the MPs committing to increase budget allocation to education and health budget lines and raise marriage age from 15 to 18 to achieve sustainable development goals.

**Main findings**

Using the guidelines, 2017/2018 budget meeting parliamentary debate was characterised by MPs, assessing if children’s issues were reflected in budget; extent to which national and sectorial plans and budgets correlated; and how much government had allocated to specific sectors and programmes benefiting children. Where budgets for specific child focused programmes were lumped up with others, MPs sought break down to assess adequacy. Use of evidence helped the MPs to increase resources allocated to education (3%) and health (2%). To make children remain in school, MPs passed a bill that increased marriage age from 15 to 18.