

Mamie Martin Fund

pupils - data analysis



Appendix to '*Girls' education - why it matters and what impact MMF makes.*'

A quantitative analysis of the MMF's data on the girls they have supported, between the academic years 2014/15 and 2019/20 was conducted and the key results are presented here. This document forms an appendix to the research report on the MSc work undertaken by Anna Freidenfeld (2020) while on placement with the Mamie Martin Fund in 2020. It will be of interest to those who are keen to look more closely at the figures involved in her research.

Data collection

The MMF's Malawian manager asks the students questions when they first begin MMF support, recording the information on a paper document, which is later transferred into Excel format.

Research population

Across the last six years, the MMF has supported a total of 283 girls in seven different schools in Northern Malawi, namely:

- Four boarding schools managed by the Church of Central Africa Presbyterian (CCAP) Synod of Livingstonia:
 - Bandawe Girls' Secondary School,
 - Elangeni Secondary School,
 - Karonga Girls' Secondary School and
 - Embangweni Secondary School for Deaf Children;
- Amazing Grace, a school which was only supported by the MMF for the academic year 2015/16;

- Mchengautuba Community Day Secondary School in Mzuzu;
- St Mary's Karonga, a boarding school managed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Karonga.

As of 2020, the MMF supports 138 students at six of the schools above. The database contains information on which school each student goes to, the year and their age when they began MMF support, their family size, the resources they requested, and their contact details. It also specifies whether or not they are supported by one of the MMF's distinct funds, such as the Thompson Fund which supports girls with hearing impairments.

Findings

Most of the girls supported by MMF are in need of help with the necessities of school life as well as many personal needs. These needs are identified by the Malawi Manager on her termly visits to the schools when she sees each of the girls supported by MMF.

Practical needs – extra funds

Many children throughout Malawi are in need of extra funds to attend school. As shown by Figure 1 below, the largest area of need identified by the girls themselves was for school uniform/clothing/shoes. Books, notebooks and other study essentials were also highly requested, with 49 students asking for books and 46 students asking for maths instruments. The need for these school supplies is great because they are expensive and are considered to be luxury items in most Malawian households (Zimmerman, 2005). Understandably, poor households cannot prioritise buying new uniforms and calculators, for example, when they are struggling to afford essential resources like food and medicine. As Zimmerman notes, foster homes, in particular, struggle to provide school supplies for orphaned children because their financial resources are already stretched to accommodate the needs of other household

members. As the MMF’s database reported, one girl lives with her aunt who already supports six children. Large, extended households like this are common in Malawi, especially since the HIV/AIDS crisis (Ansell & Van Blerk, 2004). In these cases, the strain on household resources is certainly comprehensible.

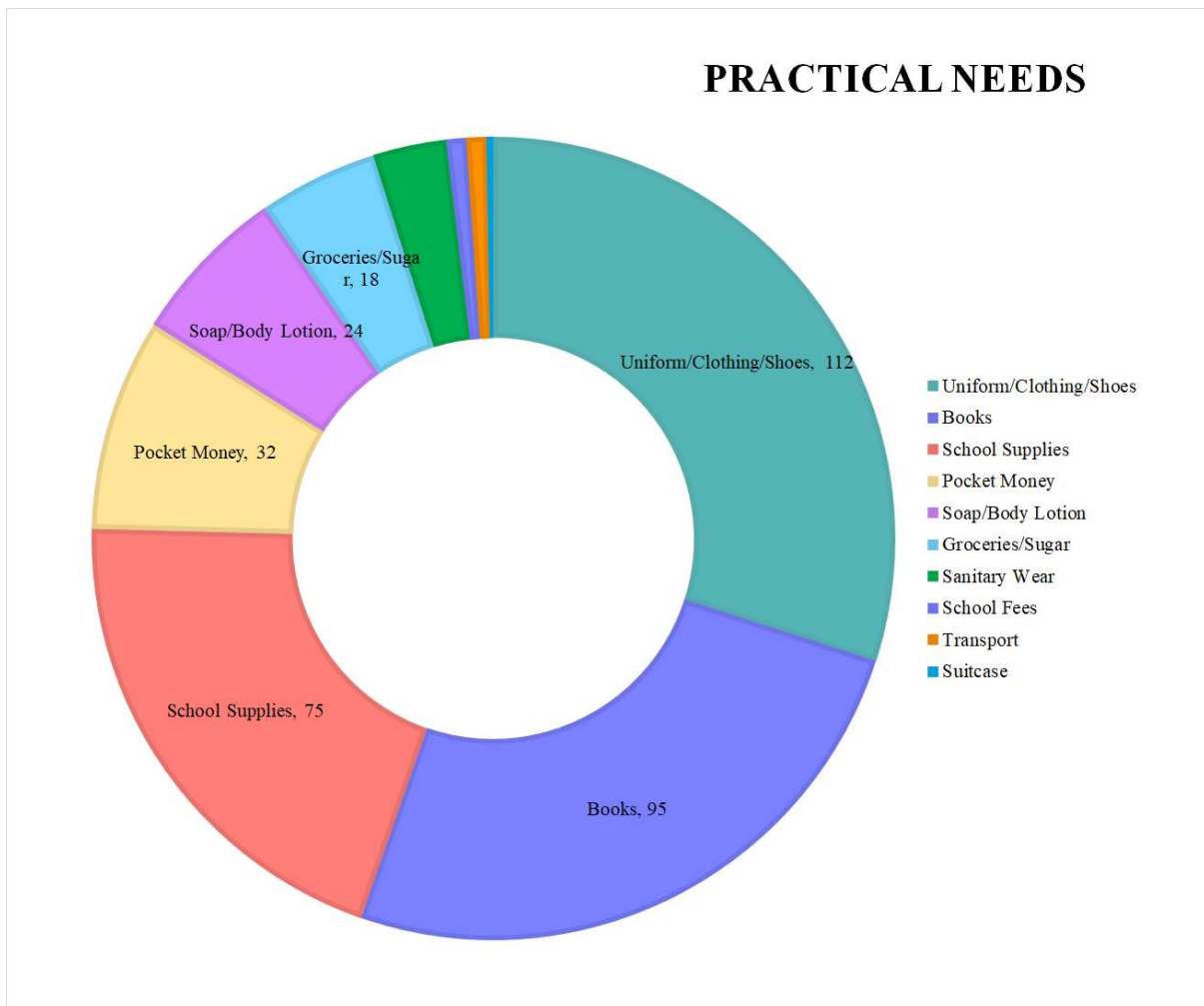


Figure 1 Practical needs of MMF pupils

Pocket money

The 'pocket money' the MMF provides to its students is intended to be used for the purchase of resources that are needed to make school attendance possible. Similarly, a US-based NGO, International Partners for Education (IPE), provides orphaned students in Malawi with pocket money so they can buy 'uniforms, books, and hygiene products'

(Lingenfelter et al., 2017: 143). The items on which children in the UK might spend their pocket money would be unheard-of luxuries to these needy children.

Geography

It is also necessary to consider the geographical dimensions of education-barriers. The demand for travel money needed for the journey to and from school, is likely to be higher in rural regions of Malawi as secondary schools are often very far from students' homes (Laurie, 2015). The MMF's database reported that one girl was only able to make the journey to school at the start of Term 1 because her 'community gave her transport'. Moreover, while travel is an issue for girls at boarding schools, it presents even more of a barrier to girls at day schools, as highlighted by the MMF case-study of one pupil who had to walk eight-kilometres to school and back every day. Evidently, especially in rural areas, both means-for-travel and travel money are important education-enablers.

Menstruation

As there is a culture of both 'etiquette' and 'taboo' in many sub-Saharan African countries 'inhibiting open discussion on the topic' of menstruation, many girls will not explicitly say if they are in need of sanitary products when asked (Jewitt & Ryley, 2014: 142). Therefore, while sanitary wear only makes-up a small section of the pie-chart in Figure 1, the extent of period poverty is significantly higher in reality. MMF visits to the schools in 2017 revealed that most of the girls did not have enough money to buy sanitary wear at all. Evidently, sanitary-wear provision is important to prevent the poorest girls who cannot afford it from missing school, thus helping them to break free of the 'cycle of vulnerability' (Crankshaw et al., 2020: 2).

Family size

In 2018, Malawi's birth rate was on average 4.30 children-per-woman (World Bank Data, 2019). In comparison, the mean number of children per family for the MMF's beneficiaries is 4.86. The nationwide birth rate has consistently decreased since 2014, while the size of the MMF-supported families has remained fairly consistent from 2014 to 2019, with peaks for the academic cohort which started in 2016/17 (Figures 2 & 3). As the MMF relies on the schools identifying the girls they wish to receive support on a needs basis, one can argue that children from larger families face more barriers to education. In addition, priority may be given to some siblings over others when the financial and practical resources of large households are more stretched (Marteleto & Souza, 2012). Most of the MMF pupils come from families of between 3 and 5 children and that proportion has remained constant during the years examined (Figure 3).

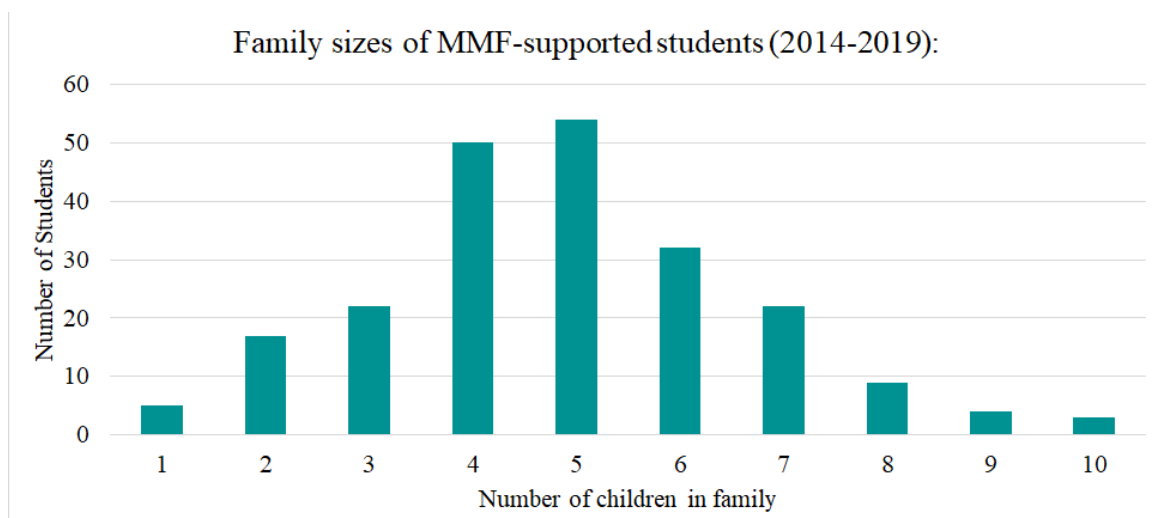


Figure 2 Family size of MMF pupils

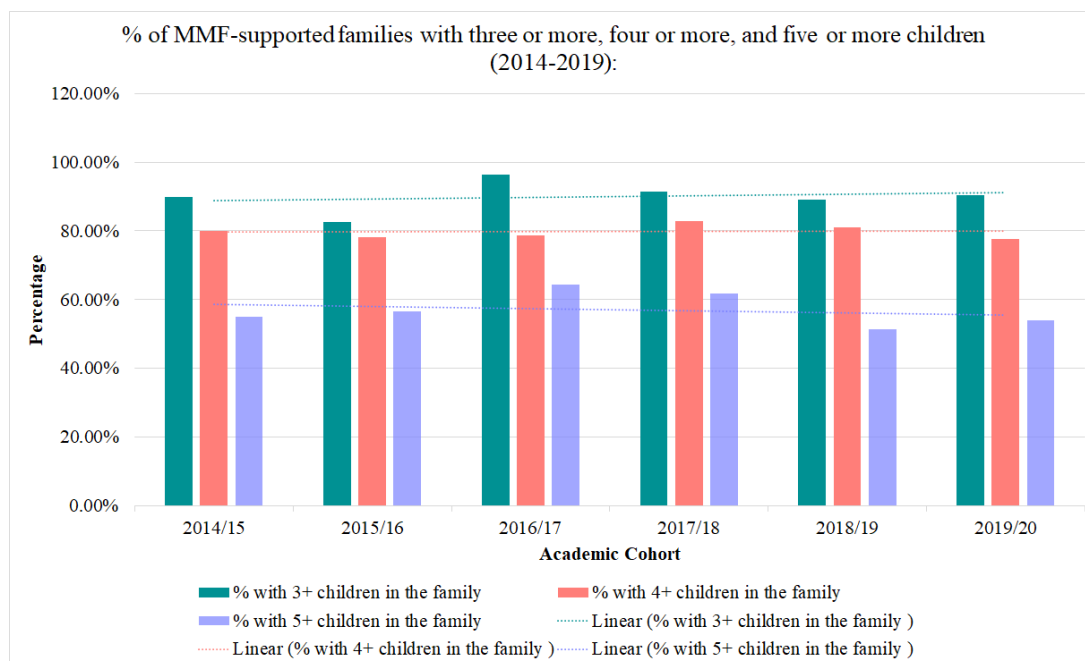


Figure 3 Family size by year

Conclusion

As part of a wider study, a quantitative analysis of the MMF's data on the girls they have supported between the academic years 2014/15 and 2019/20 was conducted.

MMF supports girls at six secondary schools across three partner organisations. These girls are very poor and MMF helps them with many of the necessities of school life. The items most often requested are books and other school supplies, including the notebooks that they need for class. The next most requested group of items is school uniforms, bags and shoes. 'Pocket money' is often needed. In Malawi this money is for basics like pencils and personal items. Sanitary wear is not often requested directly and this is connected to social taboos about the subject.

The data showed that, while family size in Malawi has decreased since 2014, this is not demonstrated for the families of MMF pupils.

The wider findings of this study, explored in the main report and available on <https://mamiemartin.org/our-work/what-we-do/impact/> , indicate that MMF's way of supporting girls at school is effective. It is suggested that this is related to the MMF holistic model of support, one part of which is providing the girls with money for necessities. This approach is an 'enabler' of education for these marginalised children and one which is recommended in the wider literature about barriers to education.

The findings of the quantitative analysis of MMF's data demonstrate the level of need amongst MMF-supported pupils and the wider report puts these findings in the context of the literature and other research in the area.

Acknowledgements

Many thanks to Anna Freidenfeld for this analysis and reporting of the MMF data. Thanks to Jean Gordon for help with that placement and with the writing up of the MMF reports on that research.

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