

The Circumstances Around Female Teachers, their Perception and Practice of Girls' Education: A Case of Secondary School Teachers in Malawi

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1. Summary

Towards the achievement of SDG4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all”¹ by 2030, further efforts will be required in various aspects of the education sector all over the world. In terms of equity, it is still important to consider gender equality after many attempts have been done to approach inequality for decades. However, according to the “Global education monitoring report 2019: gender report” issued by UNESCO², sub-Saharan Africa remains far from gender equality at all education levels.

Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world that is located in south-east sub-Saharan Africa, introduced free primary education in 1994, which resulted in gender equality in the qualitative aspect. On a secondary level, the enrollment rate is also almost 50:50 because of the standardization policy that the government implemented. However, there are still challenges for girls such as a large number of dropouts due to poverty, pregnancy or marriage, and low academic achievement compared to boys. Also, there is a custom generally called *Fisi* mainly in the Southern regions, where girls join the camp to prepare for adulthood after their first menstruation and sleep with a man to practice sexual intercourse. This custom increases the risk of getting pregnant or HIV/AIDS, and eventually dropping out.

For the supportive environment for girls' education, UNESCO indicates the essential roles of female teachers³. However, lack of female secondary school teachers has been an issue in Malawi, and moreover, this shortage is concentrated in rural areas. The rate of the rural population in Malawi was reported to be 83.063% in 2018 (World Bank, 2018)⁴, which means most girls have very few chances to meet female teachers as their supporters. The government demands more women to be trained as teachers and be deployed in rural areas to support girls; however, there are very few researches about female teachers, especially in terms of the surrounding of them, how they perceive the teaching job and girls' education, and how they support them. Therefore, this study will try to examine female secondary school teachers' circumstances, their perception, and the practices of girls' education in Malawi.

This field research was done with the support from GLTP for the purpose of collecting qualitative data and deeply understanding the lives of local people. Female teachers worked hard to overcome some difficulties and understand the importance of education, have beliefs in girls' education and tackle the issues that hinder it. However, there seems to be some contradictions or negative impact among their practice. Therefore, how much the role modeling by female teachers is working is controversial. Further consideration of how to untie the chain of the challenges that girls face will be required.

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女性教員の実情と女子教育に対する認識・実践
—マラウイの中等学校教員を事例に
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2030年までの持続可能な開発目標4「すべての人に包摂的かつ公平で質の高い教育を提供し、生涯教育の機会を促進する」の達成に向け、世界の教育セクターの様々な面での更なる努力が求められている。「公平性」の観点では、不平等を是正しようと多くの試みがなされてきたものの、引き続きジェンダー平等に関して考慮していく必要がある。初等教育における男女間格差は解消に向かっているが、未だその他の教育段階での男女間格差は存在し、特にサブサハラアフリカではすべての教育段階でジェンダー平等には程遠い現状である (UNESCO, 2019, “Global education monitoring report 2019: gender report”)。

サブサハラアフリカ東南部に位置する、世界最貧国の一つマラウイでは、1994年に初等教育を無償化し、量的側面での男女間格差は改善された。中等教育においても、男女の就学率を50:50にするという標準化政策が実施され、就学時における顕著な男女間格差はない。しかし、女子の貧困・妊娠・結婚による中退率の高さや、男子と比べた学力到達度の低さなどが問題となっている。また、生理を迎えた女子が大人になるための準備をするキャンプに参加し、雇われた男性と性行為を行う、一般的に *Fisi* と呼ばれる慣習が南部を中心に存在する。この慣習は早期妊娠や HIV・AIDS の感染率を高めるリスクがあり、最終的に退学に繋がってしまうという現状があるといわれている。

女子の教育に対する支援として、UNESCO は女性教員が重要な役割を果たすと述べている。しかしながら、マラウイでは中等女性教員の不足が問題となっており、特に農村部の中等学校では女性教員が数人のみ、もしくは一人もいないなど、深刻である。世界銀行の2018年のデータによると、マラウイでは83.063%の人々が農村部で暮らしているため、ほとんどの女子はサポーターとしての女性教員からの支援を受ける機会を得られないということになる。マラウイ政府も女性を教員として多く雇用し、農村部に配置する政策を打ち出している。しかし、未だ女性教員を取り巻く環境や、教職や女子教育に対する認識や実践に関する研究は少ない。

そのため、この研究ではマラウイの中等女性教員の实情と女子教育における認識・実践を調査する。また、GLTPの支援を受けた今回の実地調査は、質的データ収集と現地の人々の暮らしを理解する目的で行った。現時点での調査結果としては、女性教員は数々の困難を乗り越えて教員になり、教育の重要性を理解し、女子教育への信念をもって実践を行っているようだった。しかしながら、彼女たちの実践の中にはいくつかの矛盾や困難があるように見受けられた。そのため、どの程度彼女たちのロールモデルとしての役目が機能しているのかは議論の余地がある。また、女子の直面する困難の鎖を断ち切る方法への更なる考慮が必要であろう。

2. Research Activity

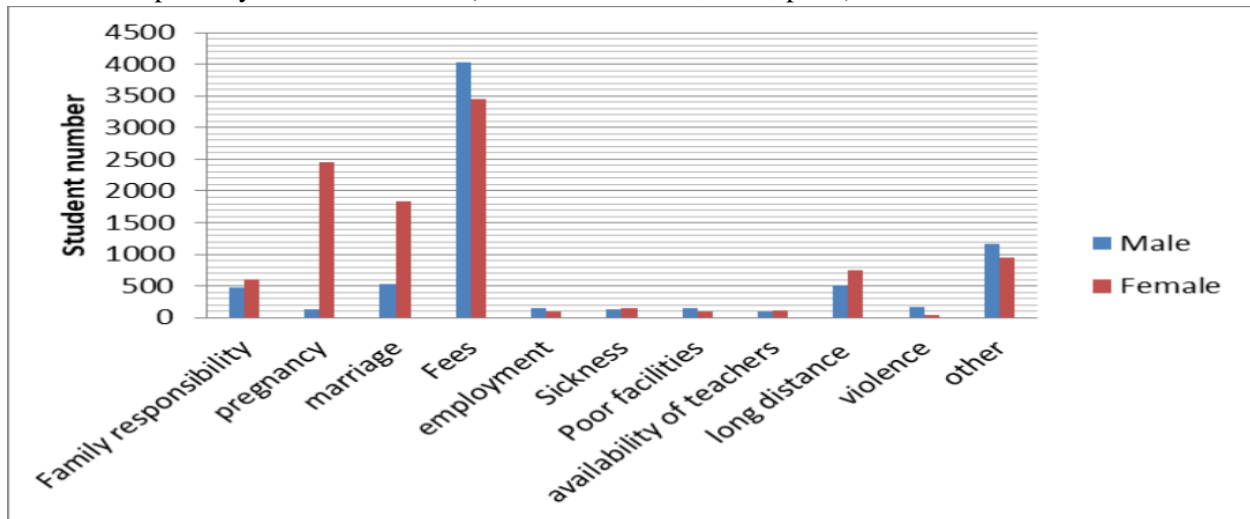
(1) Introduction

a) Background of this study and the Problem Statement

Towards the achievement of SDG4 “Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all” by 2030¹, further efforts will be required in various aspects of the education sector all over the world. In terms of equity, it is still important to consider gender equality after many attempts have been done to approach the inequality for decades. Equality in primary education between boys and girls has been improved, but there are still more tasks for other levels of education. According to “Global education monitoring report 2019: gender report” issued by UNESCO², sub-Saharan Africa remains far from gender equality at all education levels.

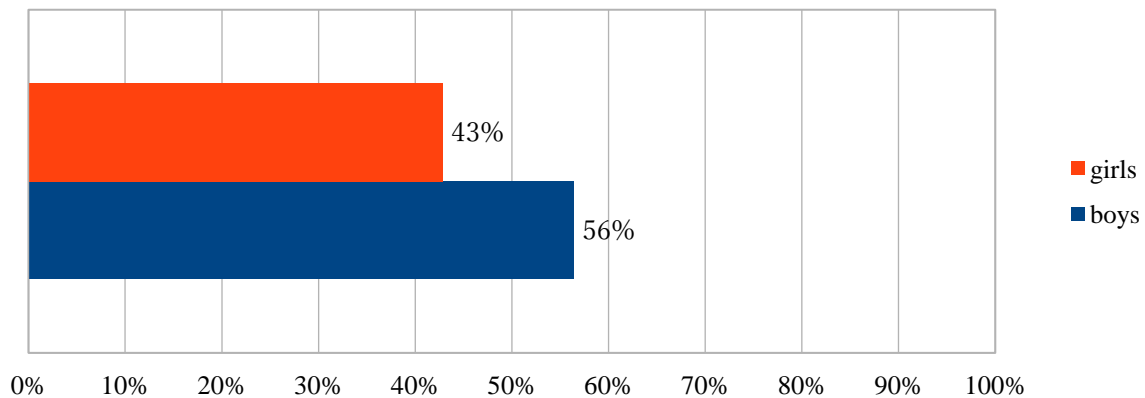
Malawi, one of the poorest countries in the world that is located in south-east sub-Saharan Africa, introduced free primary education in 1994, which resulted in gender equality in the qualitative aspect. The enrollment rate is also almost 50:50 because of the standardization policy that the government implemented (MoEST, 2014, p. 94)³. However, there are still challenges for girls such as the large number of dropouts, and the low academic achievement compared to boys.

Chart 1. Drop-out by Reasons and Sex (cited from MoEST, 2017, p. 67)⁴



In 2016/17, 10520 girls (5.9%) (7522 boys, 3.8%) dropped out of secondary school (MoEST, 2017)⁴. The top three reasons for girls’ dropout were poverty (unable to pay school fee), pregnancy, and marriage, and the second and the third reasons accounted for 41% of all female dropouts. Early marriage rate is 42% and early pregnancy rate is 29% in Malawi (The Global Education Monitoring Report team, 2019)², which are considerably high among the sub-Saharan countries.

Chart 2. The pass rate for MSCE in 2019 (created by the author referring to MANEB, 2019)⁵



Also, for the pass rates of Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) examination which takes place at the final year of secondary education, it was 56.46% for boys (28,884 out of 51,159) and 42.89% for girls (17,887 out of 41,708) in 2019 (MANEB, 2019)⁵. Moreover, there is a custom generally called *Fisi* mainly in the Southern regions, where girls join the camp to prepare for the adulthood after their first menstruation and sleep with a man to practice sexual intercourse. This custom increases the risk of getting pregnant or HIV/AIDS, and eventually dropping out.

For the supportive environment for girls' education, UNESCO indicates the essential roles of female teachers (UNESCO, 2006)⁶. However, lack of female secondary school teachers has been an issue especially in Malawi, where the rate was 22.87% (3,292 out of 14,396) in 2018, while it was 44.03% (25,390 out of 57,697) for primary school teachers (UNESCO UIS, 2018)⁷. It was 10-20% lower than other sub-Saharan African countries, moreover, this shortage is concentrated in rural areas. Many schools in rural areas have few or no female teachers. The rate of the rural population in Malawi was reported to be 83.063% in 2018 (World Bank, 2018)⁸, which means most girls have very few chances to meet female teachers as their supporters. The government demands more women to be trained as teachers and be deployed in rural areas to support girls; however, there are very few researches about female teachers, especially in terms of the surrounding of them, how they perceive the teaching job and girls' education, and how they support them. Therefore, this study will try to examine female secondary school teachers' circumstances, their perception and practice of girls' education in Malawi.

b) Research Purpose and Research Questions

R.Q. 1 How are the environment around female teachers and their perception for becoming a teacher?

- 1.1 What were their reasons to become a teacher?
- 1.2 How has the process been to work as a teacher?
- 1.3 What is their motivation to continue to work as a teacher?
- 1.4 What are the demotivating factors for female teachers?

R.Q.2 What are female teachers' perception and practice of girls' education?

- 2.1 What are the challenges for girls that female teachers perceive?
- 2.2 What do they practice to assist girls' education?
- 2.3 Are these practices unique to female teachers?
- 2.4 What do they expect girls to be after secondary education?

(2) Study Area

Republic of Malawi

-Eight secondary schools (plus one primary school in Lilongwe)

-Urban areas: two schools in Lilongwe (the capital city)
one school in Blantyre (the commercial city)

-Rural areas: four schools in Chikwawa (the South West Division)
one school in Nsanje (the South West Division)

-Faculty of Education, University of Malawi in Zomba

-Central West Education Division, Ministry of Education in Lilongwe



(3) Methodology

a) Methodology

1. Research on the previous literature and policy papers

2. Observation at local schools/communities

3. Interview

1. Semi-structured interviews with 19 female secondary school teachers

2. Semi-structured interviews with 3 female primary school teachers

3. Interview with a female professor at Faculty of Education, University of Malawi

4. Interview with 2 male secondary school teachers

5. Interview with a member of an NGO that tackles the issue of HIV/AIDS among adolescent girls



Picture 1: With female students



Picture 2: A biology class of a female teacher in Lilongwe



Picture 3: Students' discussion and presentation

(4) Research Findings

Findings are shown below corresponding to each research question.

The findings are mainly coded from the interviews with a professor (Dr. Dorothy) and two female teachers in Chikwawa, a rural area (Tama and Nana Smart).

R.Q. 1 How are the environment around female teachers and their perception for becoming a teacher?

1.1 What were their reasons to become a teacher?

Most of the teachers interviewed did not intend to teach initially. Therefore, their first impression toward the teaching job was not necessarily positive. Most teachers mentioned **the unavailability of the jobs that they actually wanted**. Some other teachers who initially intended to become a teacher mentioned the influence of the existence of **the role models**. Also, some teachers mentioned **the characteristics of the teaching job is attractive as result-oriented**.

1.2 How has the process been to work as a teacher?

As a process that female teachers have traced, a teacher shared her experience in her first week in a rural area. As stated above, the shortage of female teachers is an issue in rural areas in Malawi, since most of them are reluctant to be deployed there due to lack of appropriate marriage partner, inconvenience or poor working environment. Some female teachers even tell a lie that they have her husband in an urban area so that they can avoid teaching in a rural area. However, despite the fact that they tend to avoid working in rural areas, she was quite satisfied with her work there because she thought it was the chance for her to motivate somebody. She was admired by girls in terms of outfit during her first week. However, she has seen some changes in their impression, and she is now seen as a future role model for girls as is expected for female teachers. Although she had faced some difficulties such as students who tell her that they have not been used to being taught by female teachers and especially her subject English which is mainly for male teachers, she overcame these difficulties to perform her mission, which is to impact as many students as possible.

1.3 What is their motivation to continue to work as a teacher?

Their motivation varies. Many teachers mentioned the characteristics of the teaching job, such as the **availability of free-time**. Many teachers in Malawi have a lot of free time in the afternoon (though there are also some teachers who teach in open school). Some other teachers referred to personal experiences, especially **teaching experiences when they were young**. Also, one teacher attributed to the **objectives** that she set as a teacher, which is to impact as many students as possible. She is the one who had a role model who inspired her to become a teacher.

1.4 What are the demotivating factors for female teachers?

Although they continue to teach because of the reasons above, there are some demotivating factors such as **low salary, lack of learning materials, poor working condition** including disagreement with other teachers (such as misunderstanding of the situation without regarding female teachers' opinions), and some sort of discrimination against female teachers.

R.Q.2 What are female teachers' perception and practice of girls' education?

2.1 What are the challenges for girls that female teachers perceive?

The female teachers recognize many challenges that girls face in secondary school: poverty, sexual relationship, lack of long-term plans, laziness, low achievement, low self-esteem, lack of exposure, long-distance, household chores, bullying from boys. They get involved in an intricate web of these challenges.

Poverty

The main problem which most of the teachers mentioned was poverty. Many teachers explained the relationship between poverty and **sexual relationships**. Many girls get into a relationship with a man or a boy to get money for school fees and materials, households, or what they want such as fashion or makeup, which lead to early pregnancy and dropout from school.

Lack of long-term plans

According to the impression of one teacher, over 50% of the girls cannot have long-term plans. This teacher sees a negative impact of role-modeling. She has discussed with other teachers and discovered that many girls go into a relationship, which is easier to get what they want now than working hard on a long-term perspective. That is opposite to what teachers have expected of the existence of the female teachers as role models.

Laziness

A professor of the University of Malawi sees the contradiction of the situation of girls receiving a lot of supports from the government, NGOs, and international organizations, but not achieving well. She analyzes the causes of low achievement, and mentions their laziness as the factor to impact them more than cultural factors that societies have previously emphasized marriage, that a woman gets married to a rich man, and she doesn't have to work hard.

2.2 What do they practice to assist girls' education?

Under these vulnerable environments for girls above, female teachers offer a lot of assistance. The most frequent answer was **mentoring, counseling, and guidance**. A professor sometimes sees the contradiction of what is required for them and the effect of female teachers' behavior on girls because they sometimes would rather be taught by male teachers who are more relaxed.

Financial issues

Teachers initiate some activities. One is holding a casual clothes day, where students pay 50 kwacha (about 7 yen in April 2020) for their casual clothes on a particular day. Others are asking parents whose children are on a bursary to help other students by sharing some money or raising funds through the mother support group.

Sexual relationships

For example, the issues to do with **the initiation ceremonies**, we still have to talk with our girls before they go there on their holidays. We tell them if you are going for holidays, this is what you are supposed to be doing...make sure that you come back and see other students not as expected mothers. (Tama, 27/02/2020)

...the topics that I teach in life skills, there is also another one, HIV/AIDS, cultural practices that facilitate the spread of HIV/AIDS... We also talk about *Fisi*. (Nana Smart, 27/02/2020)

According to what is told by the teachers, the initiation ceremony is a tradition of the whole Malawi. When girls start menstruation, they learn to prepare for adulthood. There are some styles: joining the camp held by the community elders, going to a church, listening to a friend or sister of parents.

The first one is that the community tells them the expectations of the society as a woman, to be respectful to their parents, how to be a good wife and how sexual intercourse is supposed to be done, do not go about having sex with a male because they know that they are grown to get pregnant. The chief of the communities does it in the longest holiday in July or August, before the school terms start. One teacher (Tama) said that during that time, drums are beaten all over the area in Chikwawa to let people know the camps are going on. In remote areas, there still remains the custom of *Fisi* in it. The girls have sexual intercourse with a man who is hired by the communities to cleanse them. It was common in the past; however, in most other areas, that part has been removed since people have been enlightened thanks to some organizations such as NGOs or international organizations telling them the risks of that practice such as early pregnancy or HIV/AIDS.

The second one is held at a church especially in towns or for some people in rural areas. They do not join the traditional camp, but they go to a church camp to be passed the information, which has Christian values. The third one is done by a reliable friend or sister of parents, who teach girls instead of them because some things may not be comfortable talking with their daughter.

The researcher couldn't meet the teachers who experienced the initiation ceremony. One teacher (Tama) told me that her parents chose not to take her to the camp considering the sensitive contents that are going to be told in the camp.

2.3 Are these practices unique to female teachers?

Many female teachers think that the roles of female teachers and male teachers are the same, but they are different in terms of supporting girls' education. For example, role modeling and counseling are usually done by female teachers because of cultural reasons. However, some male teachers also assist them.

2.4 What do they expect girls to be after secondary education?

Teachers went through some difficulties to pursue education as girls by themselves. They believe in the importance of education to change their lives. Thus, they have expectations for girls to be independent and strong enough to overcome adversity through education so that they can achieve their goals the same as boys. Some teachers even stated their wish for girls to be contributors to national development.

(5) Discussion

Female teachers' initial reasons they entered teaching profession differ from the ones who intended to become a teacher to the ones who had no choice, but they worked hard to overcome some difficulties and understand the importance of education, have beliefs in girls' education and tackle the issues that hinder it. However, there seems to be some contradictions or challenges among their practice. One is a possible negative impact of role modeling by female teachers, especially those who are young.

Their attractive outfit may distract some girls into lack of long-term plans, because they desire to get what they want now, not waiting for the time they get employed and paid. Therefore, they get into a relationship with males to be provided with their needs, which might lead to early pregnancy and dropout from school. The other one is that female teachers worked hard and overcame some challenges to become a teacher, and therefore they might tend to attribute girls' low achievement to their laziness and sometimes being strict to them. Thus, even though female teachers encourage girls, some of them would not listen and prefer to be taught by male teachers because they may be more accommodating. Therefore, it is still controversial how much the role modeling by female teachers can work.

(6) Conclusion

While the world is making progress to achieve SDG4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all"¹ by 2030, girls in Malawi still seem to get involved in the intricate web of poverty, low self-esteem, lack of long-term plans, laziness, and some other factors, which lead to low achievement and the high dropout rate. The government of Malawi expects female teachers to take a central role to support girls, and UNESCO indicates the importance of them in girls' education as well. It is important to employ more female teachers and deploy them in rural areas to support more girls especially in rural areas as the government attempts, but this research found that there are some cases that the roles female teachers play do not necessarily impact positively on female students. Therefore, further consideration of how to recruit them and how to address the challenges that girls face should be required so that more effective and efficient collaboration at both macro and micro levels will be promoted to achieve equity at which SDG4 aims. The analyses of this research are to be continued to generate more concrete proposed solutions.

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Annex

The List of the Interviewees

Nickname	School	Gender	Age	Subjects (<u>observed class</u>)
Susan	A (Lilongwe)	Female	51	<u>Biology</u> (science)
Nancy	A (Lilongwe)	Female	55	Deputy, languages
Cassy	A (Lilongwe)	Female	53	Chichewa
Lilly	B (Lilongwe, girls only)	Female	39	Intern, <u>English</u>
Bike	B (Lilongwe, girls only)	Male	40	Special Needs Education Teacher, <u>chemistry</u> (science)
Mwandida	B (Lilongwe, girls only)	Female	45	Special Needs Education Teacher, <u>sign language interpreter</u>
Chiba	A staff of an NGO in Blantyre	Male	35	the issue of HIV/AIDS among adolescent girls
Ruba	C (Blantyre)	Female	34	<u>English</u>
Alice	C (Blantyre)	Female	30	English, Home Economics
Chimzy	C (Blantyre)	Male	44	Deputy, geography
Dr. Dorothy Cynthia Nampota	Chancellor College, University of Malawi	Female	N/A	Chemistry (Math and Science)
Tama	D (Chikwawa)	Female	27	Chichewa, English
Nana Smart	D (Chikwawa)	Female	37	Life Skills, <u>Social Studies</u> (Bible Knowledge)
Uso Za	E (Chikwawa)	Female	27	History, bible knowledge

Maliana	E (Chikwawa)	Female	29	Languages, <u>debate and drama club</u>
Joy	F (Chikwawa)	Female	58	Biology
Ireen	F (Chikwawa)	Female	28	Math, computer science, chemistry
Marrie	F (Chikwawa)	Female	52	Languages
Steba	G (Chikwawa)	Female	50	Deputy, languages, agriculture
Eluby	G (Chikwawa)	Female	32	Geography, Chichewa
Rilcraz	G (Chikwawa)	Female	26	Language
Mercy	H (Nsanje)	Female	32	Math, computer science
Tatenda	H (Nsanje)	Female	46	Languages
Risa	I (Lilongwe, primary)	Female	28	Special Needs Education Teacher
Teleza	I (Lilongwe, primary)	Female	41	Math, science, religious education
Mpatso	J (Lilongwe, primary)	Female	49	Special Needs Education Teacher
Mr. Phiri	An officer of Central West Education Division, Ministry of Education	Male	N/A	Special Needs Education

3. Reflection to the GLTP in Africa

The reason why I applied to the GLTP was that I wanted to experience and understand how people live there and interview (listen to) people's opinions mainly about gender issues in Africa. I thought at least one month would be needed for me to understand their lives vividly, but I didn't have chances and financial support for that. Then, when I found a post about the GLTP on the homepage of my

university in April, when the deadline for application was approaching, I was desperate to work hard to achieve this precious opportunity. Without the help of the GLTP, I couldn't fulfill my dream to go to Africa directly to see, hear and feel the real lives there to understand the local context more. Also, for your information, I was told by my professor that I should not go to Africa as a young Japanese female student who can be more vulnerable to risks. Therefore, as a sign of my determination, I had my hair cut and wore men's clothes to avoid unnecessary exposure of myself. However, I found that Malawi was not that dangerous, and people were friendly as "Warm Heart of Africa" shows.

As my field experiences, I tried to stay and talk with local people as much as possible considering the security at the same time. Before going to Malawi, I made a few supporters in the Ministry of Education and an NGO. They really supported me in terms of connection with schools and teachers, some information about education in Malawi, and accommodations and transportation. For example, I stayed in a rural area once with the family of the executive director of the NGO called DIN Malawi that tackles girls' education as one of the issues in Malawi, and I really experience the local lives and think about the meaning of the education there during that stay. He was well known by the people in the area and had two cars and a big house, which means his family was relatively affluent.



Picture 4: Nshima, fish and vegetable



Picture 5: Dinner with my host and other guests

However, we experienced blackouts and water cut off almost every day, and lived like other local people. It was horrible to stay without a fan when the temperature was as high as 38°C and it was very humid. There were many mosquitoes or other insects as well. I couldn't take a bath and got infected there after all. I ate local food with them, and I'm afraid I must say it was not sanitary. However, they lived strongly and I was so impressed especially by how the children worked. The first girl child cleaned the house, the second boy washed his father's car and press the clothes with a hot iron, the third girl helped the maid to prepare the meals, and the fourth boy cut off some chickens' heads to cook them. After finishing their own jobs, they went to school, and they worked at home after school as well. I couldn't believe that they were the same aged children as Japanese children although I know that there are some Japanese students who help housework too. However, I felt like a husband is still the one who works for the family, and a wife and children do household cares in Malawi while the situation is changing little by little under the trend of gender equality in Japan, which means a husband and a wife work and do domestic chores together especially among the younger generation, and some children help them with some housework (I accept exceptions here, too). I could feel the difference of the meaning of and the

expectation for children vividly, and that helped my understanding of the results of the interview with female teachers about their views of girls' education.

Though I enjoyed my stay in Malawi a lot, I experienced some challenges as well. First, there were some demonstrations going on for due to the injustice of the president election, so I was told not to go out for some days. Also, even if I thought I would get one of any diseases such as Malaria, it was hard for me to recover fully from the infection called "Urinary Tract Infection" that I got due to the use of dirty public toilet. I suffered from high fever with the chills, nausea, body pain, stomachache and headache for a few days twice. Fortunately, I could transfer easily using a taxi and a car of my friend from a rural area where I stayed then to the private hospital that is said to be the most reliable in Malawi, so I just stayed at the guesthouse for 2 weeks in total.

For now, I'm planning to make use of this experience as an English teacher at junior high school in Chiba where I'm supposed to work from next year. I'm going to conduct English lessons that include International Education/Development Education in order to tell my students about the situation surrounding Africa, and the world and let them think about the issues in the world such as poverty, inequality, environmental issues. Through my attempt, I hope I can increase the number of the children who regard such issues especially in Africa as their own, and do some activities even if they are small or start thinking about their future career in a wider viewpoint including working abroad. Without experiencing their lives by myself, I couldn't tell children how they live, what they cherish and challenges they have. Also, as an individual, I'm thinking of joining JOCV volunteer in the future and go back to Malawi.

I strongly recommend challenging yourselves to those who are interested in studying or making a research abroad. At first, I didn't expect that I would be able to pass the interview of the GLTP as a first-year Master's student, but without believing in my possibility and pushing myself, there had been no opportunity for me to make a research abroad that I really wanted. If you have something that you really want to do, I recommend you to prepare well and then just challenge yourself even if you're not ready enough. Once you can get the chance of going to Africa through the GLTP, you'll be supported academically, mentally, technically and financially.