

Spiritual State of the World's Children

Malawi





Spiritual State of the World's Children A Quantitative Study

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY FOR MINISTRY

Malawi

November 2007

Prepared by:



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OneHope is a non-profit organization with a mission to *affect destiny by providing God's eternal Word to all the children and youth of the world*. With programs in over 125 nations OneHope has reached over 500 million children and young people with a special presentation of the life of Jesus. Committed to presenting God's Word in a format that is relevant and dynamic, research is a critical step in the development of country and age specific products and programs.



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When citing this report, please use the following reference:

OneHope, Inc. (2007). *Spiritual state of the world's children: a quantitative study. Executive summary for ministry. Malawi*. Retrieved from: <http://onehope.net/sswc/country-research/>

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Section I: Key Issues Analysis

Key Issues

- They are very positive about family life.
- Exceptionally high affiliation with Christianity and practice of spiritual disciplines by a significant percentage of youth.
- Possibility that there is a weakening relationship with adults.
- High levels of secular influence possibly producing moral behavior incongruent with Christian teaching.
- Evidence of syncretism and pluralism in their religious worldview.

Strengths & Opportunities

- Optimism about marriage with strong family values. Fewer than 10% reporting that their home is not a comfortable place.
- About 80% believe that premarital sexual activity is not acceptable.
- They express interest in new electronic technology.
- With ninety percent expressing a personal relationship to Jesus Christ there is a high value on close relationship with God and involvement in religious observance.
- With church seen as the most important source of information about God, about half engage in spiritual disciplines with 18% reading the Bible more than 8 hours weekly.

Weaknesses & Threats

- Relationships with adults are influenced by the fact that 30% have experienced the death of one or both parents and that half feel that the adults in their life are too restrictive.
- They are unlikely to learn about sex from their parents.
- Forty percent report little or no Bible reading, 77% watch MTV and 50% have engaged in pornography over the past three months.
- About 60% have stolen or lied and 8% have attempted to commit suicide.
- There is more certainty of the existence of ghost than God and about 70% do not believe in the bodily resurrection of Christ.
- They are willing to accept the validity of other religious practice as the equivalence to Christian practice.

Research Recommendations

- Intensive outreach to children and youth not engaged in discipleship programs.
- Strengthen programs that encourage engagement with scripture and application to daily living.
- Support for family systems and trans-generational learning.
- Highlight leadership that models biblical values and behavior in public and private life.
- Prepare to take advantage of the introduction of electronic media for education.

It is important to note that the data was collected from secondary school students still attending school. This may not accurately represent the conditions for all children in Malawi. During the process of data collection it was noted that respondents may have been uncomfortable describing the starkness of their reality.

The preceding analysis is subjective and attempts to identify issues that should be explored further. It is recommended that the “Data Report” be studied before engaging in program modification.

Section II: Project Description

Acknowledgments

This project was made possible in part by funding from the Maclellan Foundation and Global Ministries - OneHope International.

We acknowledge the cooperation of the Department of Education Malawi, the headmasters and staff of the schools included in the sample, the cooperation of students, volunteers and the Book of Hope Malawi Staff.

The instrument administered in this study was made available by Josh McDowell Ministries.

Overview

OneHope seeks to understand what children and youth deal with in their day-to-day realities. We know that children and youth face a variety of social challenges and experience psycho-social needs to which they are often left without effective responses. We do know that the needs of children vary from country to country and even regionally within countries. However, without reliable information we are unable to tailor our products and distribution programs to address needs specific to particular contexts.

While the issues and challenges facing children and youth in developed countries are researched and documented, those in developing countries are not. Without an accurate analysis of their contexts these populations are treated as though they share a common reality. An awareness of the immediate reality of children is often discovered only after ministry has begun and resources have been committed to a project.

As part of OneHope's *Spiritual State of the World's Children* study, the Attitudes and Behaviors of the Youth (ABY) project will capture the following information about children in Malawi:

- Typical family situations, relationships and parental contact
- Behaviors and moral values guiding relationships with peers of the opposite sex
- Daily occupations and pastimes
- Worldviews, influences, beliefs, future goals, and religious affiliation
- Theological perspectives and commitment

Research Methodology

The ABY survey is a stratified random survey of secondary school children. The survey was stratified by degree of urbanization and gender for Malawi. Additional strata that permit analysis are: family composition, ethnicity, and religious affiliation.

The core survey was constructed using the Survey of Juveniles designed by Chris Sleath of Josh McDowell Ministries. The survey was administered in secondary schools in English. Surveys were administered in randomly selected accessible¹ schools segregated by population density (proportional to national population distribution of urban-rural residents) to students in the schools randomized by gender (proportional to the national ratio of male-female).

¹ Schools considered inaccessible are those that are in conflict zones, areas of extremely low population or that cannot be reached by public transportation.

Project Overview

The data was collected June through July of 2007. The local coordinator for the research conducted in Malawi was John Mwalwanda working with Student Christian Organization of Malawi, with research assistance by Carol Jacobs. Oversight was provided by Kimberly Morrison and Dr. Allen Reesor of Pompano Beach, Florida. The research followed the project design instructions (see below under Logistics).

Data was entered into a web-based database. The data base was hosted by Philip Issa of Elite Survey and assessed by Dr. Rene Paulson, Ph.D. The final report employs Dr. Paulson’s analysis of the data and is supplemented with secondary data drawn from research projects and primary qualitative data.

The final report will be made available to ministry partners who promote ministry to children and youth through collaborative research.

Logistics

Review

National leaders reviewed the survey and recommended minor edits.

Randomization

Reliability of the survey results depends upon consistent randomization of the participants. Two strata of randomization that govern participant selection employed in this project were gender and population density distributions.

The Malawian Ministry of Education provided a list of schools segregated by population density.

Population density was interpreted as either urban or rural. Additionally, the study population was further segregated into one of two classes: less than one hundred thousand or between one hundred thousand and one million. This list was used to select randomly identified schools at Book of Hope Headquarters. The list of randomized schools was returned to the local Research Coordinator for review. Schools that were inaccessible (see footnote on inaccessibility above) were replaced by following randomization procedures.

To ensure that gender participation reflects the male/female ratio of the national population, randomization by gender was finalized when students were selected for participation.

Verifying Access

Student Christian Organization of Malawi met with the administration of each school to explain the survey and obtain commitment for participation. It was found that most schools, especially in rural areas, had low enrollment numbers and surrounding schools also did not reach the expected number of 200 for the whole school.

Survey Printing

A master copy of the survey response form was forwarded electronically to the local Research Coordinator who received bids for the printing of 4,000 collated and stapled copies.

Quality Control

Hard copies of the survey response form were randomly assessed to evaluate survey validity. Hard copy survey response forms will be retained by the local coordinator in Malawi for one year to verify the accuracy of data entry if needed and as a back up to electronic data files. The surveys are kept confidential and will be turned over to a designated OneHope headquarters representative on or about 12 months following the close of data collection. After 12 months, a OneHope representative will oversee the destruction of all hard copy surveys.

Implementation & Survey AdministrationData Collection

The survey was administered in the schools identified by randomization and previously contacted. The research agent identified the number of classes in session on the day of the survey.

- If the average class size at a school was less than 30 students, 15 classes were randomly selected for inclusion in the study. 15 students from each class were randomly selected proportional to the male/female ratio for Malawi.
- If the average class size at a school was more than 30 students, 10 classes were randomly selected for inclusion in the study. 22 students from each class were randomly selected proportional to the male/female ratio for Malawi.

Students were asked to voluntarily participate. Participants were administered the survey in groups that could be accommodated in a classroom. Approximately 200 students were surveyed at each school.

The surveys were conducted by two people. A brief scripted introduction was read aloud and students were given the opportunity to ask questions. Administrators took turns reading each question aloud to students.

Data Entry

Student Christian Organization of Malawi was responsible for accurate input of the data into the web-based survey interface.

Section III: Profile of Youth in Malawi

Demographic Profile

Our sample drew on a slightly higher percentage of male (52%) respondents than females (48%). About one-third of respondents were 15 years old and younger and two-thirds 16 years of age and older. The median grade was ninth with stronger representation for sixth and seventh grades. Most students indicated that they were doing “good” or “average” in school.

About one-third of those responding indicate that their father and mother are involved in agricultural professions. A similar number report that their parents are engaged in “other”, an unspecified category. Twenty percent indicate that their fathers are “professional” and 10% “public sector” employees.

Nearly 60% report that their parents are married with only 10% reporting a family situation of divorce or separation. Thirty percent indicate that one or both parents have died. Twenty percent report living in a situation other than with their parents. Two percent of these live without an adult in their home.

Family Relationships

Respondents hold a traditional view of family with the presence of children in the home being an important factor. Most (62%) indicate that a normal family is made up of those related by birth, adoption or marriage. An additional 20% accept that people living together could be considered family; this includes the acceptance of non-traditional relationships such as homosexuality.

On the whole respondents, nearly 46%, seem to be close to their fathers. They indicate that they sense their father’s love, feel proud of their father, and show love for their father, with males reporting higher levels of these feelings than females. Children generally spend less than 60 minutes a week talking with their father, with a quarter spending less than five minutes each week. Males more often report that they spend time alone with their father.

Nearly two-thirds of students report being “fairly close” or “very close” to their mothers. In all categories of relationship surveyed, respondents indicate that they are close to their mothers. Respondents spend significant time talking with their mothers, 29% spend two or more hours per week.

The majority of youth indicate that the adults in their family “sometimes” or “frequently” demonstrate love for each other, set good examples, are interested in them, and admit when they are wrong or mistaken. However, they report that adults are too restrictive with over 50% indicating that “sometimes” or “frequently” they are “not allowed to do what they want” or that “more is expected than is fair”. This is more likely to be true of urban and younger respondents.

Thirty-nine percent of those responding indicate that their home is a place where they feel safe and loved. Although 60% do not feel that they fit this category, nearly half indicate that while not perfect, their families create an environment that shows love or are working at trying to love each other. Only 8% indicate that they are not comfortable in their home.

Although slightly more than half indicate that it is hard to have a successful marriage; marriage is highly regarded. Seventy percent report a preference for marriage over single life and 90% believe that God intends marriage to last a lifetime. Fifty-four percent of those surveyed believe that “society would collapse if the traditional family falls apart” with older youth more likely to support this idea. This view of marriage is reinforced by their personal experience with 75% indicating that their family experience

has been positive and 67% indicate that parents should not get divorced. Eighty-eight percent expect to be happy in their own marriage and fewer than 30% suggest people should expect that a marriage will end in divorce. Seventy percent of respondents indicate that they would like to be a virgin at marriage. Eighty percent report that if they could change the past, they would wait to have sex until after marriage.

Relationships with People of the Opposite Sex

The data indicates that Malawian youth are generally conservative in their attitudes toward premarital sex. Between 75%- 85% expressed the opinion that fondling and sexual intercourse are never acceptable. A quarter report that they have engaged in sexual intercourse, although almost 75% of students have held hands with a member of the opposite sex. Males are three times more likely than females to have engaged in intense sexual activity such as fondling breast and genitals and sexual intercourse. As expected, youth older than 16 are twice as likely to be involved in sexual activity with the opposite sex, particularly at the more intense stages, 29% for sexual intercourse.

There seems to be little influence on behavior in areas of sexuality even if there was external peer or parental approval. Responses do indicate that youth older than 16 and males are slightly more likely to take advantage of the opportunity if it was presented than their counterparts.

Over half of the students report having learned about sex through textbooks, sex-related magazines and books, and classmates or friends. They are least likely to have learned about sex from their parents or through the internet.

Beliefs and Perspectives on Daily Life

The most frequent pastimes reported are studying, reading, listening to music, and sleeping. Malawian youth currently participate in web surfing and SMS chatting with relatively low frequency but they express interest in new electronic technology such as MP3, cell phone, and laptop computer. Although students report watching TV on an irregular basis for the most part, 77% also indicate that they watch MTV once a week with urban and older youth 8% more likely than their counterparts to view weekly MTV programming. Older youth report that they are more likely to be influenced by music than those younger than 16 years of age.

A majority (59%) of respondents indicate that they are “very satisfied” and 20% “somewhat satisfied” with their life. Respondents in urban settings and those younger than 16 years of age report somewhat greater satisfaction with life than their peers.

Malawian youth indicate that over 80% place high value on a close relationship with God, education, physical health, a happy marriage, and a high paying job. Integrity, having a clear purpose for living, and a comfortable lifestyle are also significantly valued with over 70% indicating these have a lot to do with a good future. The least valued criteria for future satisfaction are public recognition or fame, followed by having children, and sexual fulfillment within marriage.

Although 40% report little or no Bible reading weekly, 18% report reading the Bible 8 hours or more a week. This supports the indication that students are most influenced by the Bible, the Christian faith, and parents, followed by textbooks, teachers, and siblings. About half of the respondents indicate that religious leaders in their community have some or a lot of influence in their life. On the other hand, other religions and national political leaders have the least influence.

However, when looking at self-reported activities over the past three months we see that the high regard for scripture and Christian faith does not translate to moral behavior. Fifty-six percent report

they have stolen money or other goods and 63% that they have lied to respected authorities and peers; with male respondents 8% more likely than females to lie to authority figures. About 51% report having read a pornographic magazine and almost a quarter have watched pornography, cheated on an exam, or attempted to hurt another person physically or emotionally. Younger and rural youth are about 10% more likely to try to hurt someone physically. Twelve percent of respondents report having had suicidal thoughts with 8% having attempted suicide.

Religious Background and Practice

Ninety-five percent of those responding indicate their religion is somewhat or very important to them, almost as many (88%) believe their faith is very important in their lives. Eighty-four percent of those responding indicate they are Christian – 53% Protestant, 31% Catholic; and only 26% feel the Christian faith is not relevant to their lives. Less than 1% of students indicate either no faith or indigenous faith. About 85% feel it is important to be a member of a church and that the Bible provides moral truths which are the same for all people.

Nearly all (90%) of respondents believe that the universe was created by an omnipotent God. However, only 10% are certain that God exists, with most (87%) accepting only the probability of God's existence. Respondents seem far more certain that ghosts exist and influence life with 40% certain and 24% believing it is possible. Rural populations indicate a 10% higher certainty in the existence of ghost than urban students. Eighty-four percent agree that angels do exist and influence people's lives.

Ninety percent indicate that the Church is an important source of information about the Bible or Jesus and that family or relatives (78%) also have significant influence. More than 90% of those who responded indicate that they believe the accuracy of the Biblical narrative, the virgin birth of Christ, the judgment of God, that forgiveness of sins is possible only through Jesus Christ, and the value of prayer to change the events of life. With respect to Jesus Christ 80% believe that he was a real person who led a sinless life, but only 29% believe he returned to life physically.

At 70% most respondents believe that confession of sins and acceptance of Jesus Christ is necessary for access to heaven. Girls are significantly more likely by 14% to accept these conditions for going to heaven than are boys. About 80% believe that those who do not accept Jesus Christ as their Savior will be condemned to hell; others (15%) believe you can earn a place in heaven by being a good person or doing good things.

However, 60% seem to hold a pragmatic view of morality regarding truth as relative and morals as right "if they work". Females are more likely to take a morally relativistic view than males. Though most believe that they should rely on the Bible for moral guidance and that scripture provides people with practical standards for living, almost half believe it is ok to bend the rules, break the law or lie when necessary.

Forty-two percent believe that other religious practices are "maybe" or "certainly" helpful. Sixty percent indicate that truth is relevant and "means different things to different people". About 80% of those responding indicate that they believe all religions are essentially praying to the same God.

The data indicates that nearly three quarters of the students participate in weekly or daily religious activities. When compared to male responses females are more likely to be involved in regular religious services. Ninety-five percent report that they are "somewhat" or "very likely" to continue to be involved in religious services after they have left home.

Prayer is regularly practiced with over half reporting daily and 21% weekly prayer. Regular scripture reading occurs in the routine of over one-half of those surveyed; 1/3 report daily and 21% weekly

reading of scripture. Participation in formal religious study groups and youth groups is relatively high with 50% participating in weekly or daily groups. Nearly 60% attend groups smaller than 30. Only 15% indicate that this question does not apply to them.

Nearly all the students, 89%, responded to this question indicating that they have made a personal commitment to Jesus Christ. Thirty-seven percent of students report that they made a commitment between the ages of 13-15; twenty-one percent having made the commitment between the ages of 9-12, and 19% between 16-18 years of age. Females are more likely to have made that commitment between the ages of 13-15 years of age.

Section IV: Malawi Secondary Data

**Secondary Research Profile
GHANA**



DEMOGRAPHICS & POPULATION	
Population	11,359,669
Population (under 15 yrs)	45%
Population % of children in child labor (5-14)	35.5%
Internet users per capita	4.1 per 1,000
Cell Phones per capita	.34 per 1,000
Radios per capita	499 per 1,000
Televisions per capita	4 per 1,000
Computers per capita	2 per 1,000
Life Expectancy	40 yrs
Birth Rate (per 1,000 people)	45.15
Infant Mortality (per 1,000 live births)	127.87
% Urban / Rural Population	17.3% / 82.8%
Largest City / Population	Lilongwe 721,988 – .06%
EDUCATION & LITERACY	
Literacy Rate (over 15 yrs)	62.7%
Primary Level is eight years/secondary is 4 years	Free
Primary Enrollment	72.1%
Literacy Rate – Males	76.1%
Literacy Rate – Females	49.8%
Ratio of Girls to Boys in tertiary education	30:64
ECONOMICS	
GDP (purchasing power parity) (per capita)	\$600.00
GDP (official exchange rate) (per capita)	\$8.272
Poverty Rate (% below poverty line)	53%

SOCIAL			
Human Development Index ² (out of 177)	166	Prisoners (per capita)	Not Available
Divorce Rate as percent of Marriages	Not Available	Homelessness	Not Available
Unemployment Rate	Not	Teen Pregnancy (15-19 yrs)	Not

This data is drawn from CountryWatch.com, World Health Organization, and public domain data. Statistics are generally from 2005 but may be earlier if none more recent are available.

² Human Development Index (HDI) is a composite index that measures the level of well-being in 177 nations in the world. It uses factors such as poverty, literacy, life expectancy, education, gross domestic product, and purchasing power parity to assess the average achievements in each nation. It has been used in the UN's Human Development Report since 1993.

	Available		Available
Murder (per capita) 1,000 people	Not Available	Child Prostitution	Not Available
Agencies (secular)	Not available	Orphans, Children (aged 0–17) orphaned due to all causes, 2007, estimate (thousands)	1,000,000
Drug Usage/Alcoholism	Not Available	Estimated number of children (ages 0-14) living with HIV, 2007 (thousands)	91,000
ETHNIC GROUPS & RELIGIONS			
Chewa (Nyanja)	32%	Protestant	55%
Other	18%	Roman Catholic	20%
Lomwe	16%	Muslim	20%
Yao	10%	Indigenous beliefs	5%
Ngoni	8%		
Sena	3%		
Tonga	2%		
European and Arab	1%		
LANGUAGES			
English (official), Chichewa (official)			