INSTITUTE FOR POLICY RESEARCH & SOCIAL EMPOWERMENT

Report for the End Term Evaluation of the Malawi Civic & Political Space Programme of the Danish Church Aid

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Executive Summary

This report presents findings and recommendations of an evaluation of the Malawi Civic & Political space programme (MCPSP) of the Dan Church Aid. The MCPSP has been implemented over a period of five years beginning from 2006 to 2011.

I. Objectives of the MCPSP

The main development problem that that the MCPSP sought to address was the lack of civic participation of the ordinary people i.e. the rural poor especially women. The MCPSP addressed this problem through several projects implemented by a number of partners in selected districts of the central and northern regions of the country. The programme had six key result areas. These are:

i. Strengthening legislative and implementation frameworks for enhanced civic participation of women and other poor.
ii. Increasing women representation in decision making structures and empowering women to challenge repressive cultural beliefs and practices that limit their participation.
iii. Increasing access to justice especially for women.
iv. Strengthening partner advocacy and networking skills.
vi. Promoting linkages/synergies between DCA programmes

II. Objectives of the Evaluation

Guided by the Terms of Reference (ToRs), the evaluation of the MCPSP focused on the following five tasks:

i. Assessing the performance of the MCPSP on the basis of its development objectives reflected in the key result areas.
ii. Assessing the extent of rights based and gender sensitive programming and implementation.
iii. Assessing WoLREC and Nkhoma synod projects with regard to concept, strategy, project delivery process and impacts.
iv. Assessing institutional capacity of the implementing partners on a range of thematic areas.
v. Drawing lessons and making recommendations on the various aspects for the next programme.

III. Main findings of the Evaluation

The key positive findings of the evaluation are as follows:

i. The programme has been very relevant to the development problems that were identified and
targeted. The implementation of the programme has been in direct response to, and in pursuit of, constitutional principles and consistent with the national development strategy i.e. the Malawi Growth & Development Strategy (MGDS).

ii. The MCPSP has had substantial impact in transforming rural people especially women from being passive recipients of development to being its active agents and demanders.

iii. Economic empowerment projects under the programme have contributed to sustained poverty reduction at household levels through increased access to financial resources and asset accumulation.

iv. The civic education and other empowerment activities have yielded significant cultural transformation especially in favour of women especially in highly patrilineal and patriarchal communities.

v. Increased awareness of human rights issues generally and civic competence of the ordinary people which, at community level, has significantly transformed people from being ‘subjects’ of the government to ‘active citizens’ of a progressive state.

vi. All projects under the programme mainstreamed human rights and gender sensitivity. In fact, the entire MCPSP could pass as a Human Rights and Gender programme. However, gender mainstreaming overemphasized numerical concerns i.e. increasing numbers of women in different structures and capacities at the expense of substantive gender issues. It could be more prudent to seriously invest in advocacy and capacity building initiatives aimed at creating a conducive environment as well as technical and analytical skills for women in decision making forums to participate effectively.

vii. The platform has provided an avenue for sharing lessons and experiences among partners and immensely contributed to governance advocacy especially as the political environment has been turbulent. It has provided a coordinated countervailing force in raising voices of reason against retrogressive governance practices of the current political regime. The production of the Annual Governance Report is a significant achievement that chronicles systemic, structural and agential elements that impact on governance and therefore provides material for evidence-based advocacy. The platform further provides a vehicle for coordinating the voices of CSOs and therefore maximizes the gains of advocacy work.

viii. The MCPSP has had viable inbuilt mechanisms for sustaining its results and impacts beyond programme life. The key ones have been the use of CBEs, Knowledge stocks on how to pursue development agendas, replicable lasting skills for collective action, revolving livestock and village loan schemes that have made significant dents on household poverty in the impact communities.

ix. The programme has achieved significant outcomes across the key result areas but with very minimal resources. Thus, it has largely been efficient.

x. All partners in the MCPSP are aware of the four main HAP principles, namely use of participatory approaches, transparency in project management, accountability for decisions,
actions and inactions and instituting a working grievance mechanism/complaint procedure. All partners have so far complied with use of participatory approaches. Compliance on financial transparency has been low as well as introducing or fine-tuning grievance mechanisms.

V. Insights for Future Programming

The future performance of the programme can be improved by doing the following:

i. The study uncovered that there was no clear recruitment procedure in as far as PT1 programme partners were selected. One notable implication of this was failure for projects to clearly demonstrate how their project activities sought to contribute to which programme development objective. In order to have a logical linkage between project activities and programme objectives it could be more prudent to introduce a more objective process for selecting implementing partners and projects by putting up a call for proposals, whereby partners should be applying and selected based on alignment of their projects to programme objectives.

ii. The study uncovered that partners are not aware of any exit strategy and circumstances under which they are liable to ejection from the programme. For purposes of sustainability planning, it is proposed that DCA should seriously consider institutionalizing a clear and objective exit strategy for disengaging with implementing partners.

iii. The study noted that some projects were designed with little considerations about the political realities on the governance landscape. For instance a project designed with the noble aim of advocating for positive constitutional amendments targeted the Constitutional review process whose progress rests on the governing political leadership which has vested interests. Lack of progress on such processes has proved to halt potential progress of the project. Thus it could be more effective for PT1 to develop rigorous criteria for the feasibility of projects or their key components. The criteria should be sensitive and realistic to the political economy of the country. In the aforementioned case, it could have been more effective to use parliamentary processes and structures. For instance the proposed changes could be addressed to the legal affairs committee of Parliament and strategic Member(s) of Parliament could be identified to introduce private Bills or Private Member’s Bills in accordance with the Rules of Parliamentary Procedure.

iv. Improve on linking project activities to programme objectives especially where economic

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1 A Private Bill is a proposal for legislation proposed by an independent civil society organisation or any other non state actor but introduced in Parliament on its behalf by an ordinary Member of Parliament. A Private Member’s Bill, on the other hand, is proposed legislation proposed by a Member of Parliament and introduced by herself or himself in Parliament.
empowerment aspects are designed to be a means to a larger goal rather than an end in themselves.

v. It was uncovered that some programme indicators, like number of chiefs dispensing justice in a fair way are difficult to monitor. Others, such as reduced number of recorded cases of GBV, are complex and accommodate multiple interpretations. Others, such as number of elected female Members of Parliament, cannot easily be attributed to project interventions at impact area level. It is recommended that in the next programme phase, DCA should improve on identifying and developing realistic indicators that capture the effectiveness of the projects. Indicators that have too many intervening variables and actors outside the project’s influence have the potential of misinforming the effectiveness of the projects. For instance, given that local government elections were not held, it could be said that all activities aimed at identifying female candidates for councillorship and all the capacity building activities were a waste and that the projects failed in that regard. This would be the case because the programme indicator was ‘number of female councilors elected’. The most useful indicator would have been ‘number of women signing up for candidacy for councillorship and undergoing the associated capacity building. In short, indicators that have too many intervening variables and actors, some of which may be outside the programme’s influence should be avoided as they have the potential of misinforming the effectiveness of the programme.

vi. The study found that there is no settled policy on DCA’s contribution to remuneration of project staff especially for those that commit less than 100 percent of their work time to project work. We recommend that the highest project post for which DCA should contribute 100 per cent to remuneration should be Project Manager. Contributions to posts higher than Project Manager should be proportional to the time committed by incumbents to project work.

viii. The study found that DCA either has no clear policy or is unable to enforce its policy on location and usage of project vehicles by implementing partners. It was established that in some partner institutions, the project vehicles are used by people who work only marginally on DCA projects and live in districts other than the designated impact districts. We recommend that programme implementation guidelines should require programme managers in impact districts and they should have full use and managerial control of project vehicles.

ix. Discourage remote project management by ensuring that project managers are based in the impact districts.

x. The study noted that while there are deliberate efforts to ensure synergies and linkages between and among projects and programme at national levels, there are no clear mechanisms to institutionalize synergies between projects and between programmes at impact area level. It is consequently proposed that PT1 should facilitate formation of loose networks between PT1
project partners and other stakeholders implementing relevant projects in the same impact areas. Alternatively, DCA should consider implementing its different programme interventions (Governance, Food Security and HIV/AIDS) in the same impact areas. This means that DCA will have to implement holistic development packages in selected districts to ensure that programme synergies envisaged at national level are realized in practice at impact area level. To do this, DCA will have to rethink its criteria for selecting districts for its various interventions.

xi. Delayed financial disbursements from DCA to implementing partners was a recurrent observation. This, we understand, is largely because of the financial system that DCA operates which requires DCA Headquarters to transfer resources directly to implementing partners. There are obviously several options for improving this situation subject to DCA rules for corporate governance which are beyond the scope of this report. Suffice to say that we recommend that DCA should consider improvements on the timeliness of disbursing finances to implementing partners to maximize programme effectiveness and efficiency.

xii. Implementing partners have capacity gaps in various aspects which affect their effectiveness. We recommend that DCA should develop a procedure through which it can identify capacity shortfalls of the partners in relation to their proposed projects at the start of the projects and mainstream in the projects relevant capacity building activities.
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## Abbreviations and Acronyms

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<th>Full Form</th>
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<tr>
<td>ADC</td>
<td>Area Development Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CBOs</td>
<td>Community Based Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCAP</td>
<td>Church of Central African Presbytery</td>
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<tr>
<td>CCJP</td>
<td>Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace</td>
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<tr>
<td>CONGOMA</td>
<td>Council for Non Governmental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSM</td>
<td>Christian Service Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CSOs</td>
<td>Civil Society Organisations</td>
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<td>DAC</td>
<td>Development Assistance Committee</td>
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<td>DCA</td>
<td>Dan Church Aid</td>
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<td>DFID</td>
<td>Department for International Development (UK)</td>
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<tr>
<td>FBO</td>
<td>Faith Based Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>FGDs</td>
<td>Focus Group Discussions</td>
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<tr>
<td>FPR</td>
<td>Financial and Physical Resources</td>
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<td>GM</td>
<td>Gender Mainstreaming</td>
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<td>HAP</td>
<td>Humanitarian Accountability Partnership</td>
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<tr>
<td>ICCO</td>
<td>Inter-Church Organisation for Development Cooperation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>IPI</td>
<td>Institute for Policy Interaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LHRM</td>
<td>Leadership and Human Resource Management</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M&amp;E</td>
<td>Monitoring and Evaluation</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCPSP</td>
<td>Malawi Civic and Political Space Programme</td>
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<tr>
<td>MGDS</td>
<td>Malawi Growth and Development Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MPRS</td>
<td>Malawi Poverty reduction Strategy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NONIE</td>
<td>Network of Networks of Impact Evaluators</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NSAs</td>
<td>Non-State Actors</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OE</td>
<td>Operational Effectiveness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>OECD</td>
<td>Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>P&amp;N</td>
<td>Partnership and Networking</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PAC</td>
<td>Public Affairs Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PLF</td>
<td>Policy and Legal Framework</td>
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<tr>
<td>RBA</td>
<td>Rights Based Approach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SWOC</td>
<td>Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Constraints</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ToRs</td>
<td>Terms of References</td>
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<tr>
<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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</table>
UNIFEM    United Nations Development Fund for Women
VDC      Village Development Committee
WOLREC  Women’s Legal Resources Centre
Acknowledgements

We would like to thank DCA Malawi for giving us the opportunity to conduct the evaluation exercise for the Malawi Civic and Political Space programme. We found the exercise professionally enlightening and educative. In particular, we would like to thank the Regional Representative (Cecily Winther), Programme Officer (Lugede Chiumya) and her assistant (Nancy Chagunda) for providing strategic direction and the necessary logistical support that enabled the execution of the evaluation.

The evaluation exercise would have been impossible without the cooperation of the implementing partners. They took time off their busy schedules to host the evaluating team, to respond to questions, provide relevant documents and to guide us to selected impact areas. We are further grateful to all individuals who participated in key informant interviews and provided very insightful responses to the questions that were put to them. Further thanks are due to participants in the focus group discussions that were conducted in selected impact communities for their generosity with time and patience and for actively participating in the discussions. We would like to thank Ms. Sarah Nzunda for her roles in data collection. Without her help, we would not have completed the fieldwork on time.

Disclaimer: We, alone, are responsible for the interpretation of facts reported herein and any factual and analytical errors that may be in this report.
1.0. Introduction: Contextual Background for the Civic and Political Space Programme

Since the 1990s when the third wave of democratization swept across the African continent, the quality of governance has become a critical variable in explanations of development experiences and outcomes in developing countries. Of particular salience has been democratic governance which has entailed increased concerns with human rights, transparency and accountability of duty bearers, civic engagement especially of the ordinary people and inclusive processes particularly from a gender perspective. The conventional wisdom is that the capacity of citizens to exercise their rights, including a stronger demand for transparency and accountability, influences government priorities and processes for poverty reduction and the broadening and deepening of democracy (Menocal & Sharma, 2008). The inclusion of marginalized segments of societies, especially women, enhances the quality of governance, and the delivery of public services. Furthermore, there is a growing body of empirical evidence that the active participation of women in civic processes and development initiatives has multiplier effects on development outcomes, makes real and sustainable welfare gains and has high potential to contribute to the breaking of the vicious cycle of poverty and inequalities (UNDP, 2007; UNIFEM, 2006). Thus, the conviction that underlie the importance of gender mainstreaming in development is that addressing some of the most pressing development problems that the world faces requires "putting women front and centre" (DFID, 2010) of development efforts at international, national and sub-national levels. In this regard, democratization not only describes processes of institutional change in the political arena but also provides opportunities to mainstream a human rights-based approach to development and poverty reduction. This line of thought has represented a marked shift in development policy and practice from approaches that often espoused trade-offs between democratization and socio-economic development.

The advent of multi-party democracy in Malawi in 1993 heralded the beginning of an era that was expected to simultaneously deliver democratic governance and socio-economic development at all levels of society. Since then, national development policies, for example the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) and its predecessor (the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy, MPRS) have identified ‘democratic governance’ as an important element for an environment that enables the achievement of equitable and sustainable socio-economic development. However, the realization of these popular aspirations and policy intentions depends on the nature of interventions that actors in development put in place to enable citizens to effectively articulate their views on policy issues that affect them and for duty bearers to be held accountable for the outcomes of their actions and inactions. In nascent democracies like Malawi which are yet to fully shake off the legacies of political and social disempowerment that characterized predecessor dictatorial, often one-party regimes, this entails deliberate programmes outside the state arena that empower citizens and voluntary organizations to enhance their civic competence.

After the transition to multiparty democracy, despite the recognition of the benefits of broad-based civic competence, Civil Society organizations (CSOs) in Malawi remained on the margins of the policy process; the people at grassroots level continued to suffer from capacity shortfalls for meaningful independent collective action while Government and other duty bearers continued to be domineering and were only minimally accountable. This situation has been attributed to the prevalence of weak institutions of engagement between state and society, civic incompetence and people’s ignorance of democratic governance and human rights, lack of national long-term vision and strategies, intransigence of state actors, lack of solidarity and collective strength on the part of the citizens and civil society organizations and narrow agendas of the civil society organizations (Meinhardt, and Patel 2003; Chinwa 2000). In recent times, however, there has been noticeable increased citizen participation in policy and other civic processes due to empowerment initiatives supported by international
development and cooperating partners working in partnership with CSOs. In this regard, Dan Church Aid has supported the implementation of the Malawi Civic and Political Space Programme (MCPSP) to ensure that the marginalized poor, especially rural women are protected and empowered to exercise and uphold their rights to participate in civic life and improve their access to and control of resources and services. The programme sought to achieve this overarching objective through advocacy and lobbying activities, socio-political empowerment, capacity building, research, documentation and dissemination of lessons, networking and coalition building.

This report presents findings of the evaluation of the MCPSP. In order to put the findings into proper perspective, the report provides an overview of the MCPSP in section 2. This is followed by section 3 which presents the objectives and scope of the evaluation. Section 4 outlines the analytical and methodological approach that was used in collecting and analyzing data. Section 5 presents findings of the evaluation. Section 6 concludes the report with a list of recommendations.

2.0. Overview of the Malawi Civic and Political Space Programme (MCPSP)

2.1. Development problems targeted by the MCPSP and Implementation strategy

The Malawi Civic and Political Space Programme (MCPSP) has been implemented over a period of five years beginning in 2006 and winding up in 2011. The Dan Church Aid has supported the programme by providing finances, managerial and technical support to selected implementing partners who have been implementing separate but related projects. The main development problem which the MCPSP sought to address was the lack of participation in civic life by the rural poor, particularly women and girls. Based on a problem diagnosis presented in the programme document (DCA, 2006), the MCPSP sought to address the following specific development problems:

i. Limited access to information
ii. Gender based discrimination
iii. Weak legislative and administrative frameworks
iv. Harmful cultural practices undermining the position of women and their development potential
v. Customary justice that is insensitive to gender needs

Consequently, implementing partners developed projects that aimed to tackle these problems. A total of six partners were involved in the implementation of the programme. Four of these partners are Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) while the other two are secular organizations. Implementation targeted
marginalized and rural communities in Lilongwe rural, Kasungu, Ntchisi, Salima, Mzimba, Karonga and Rumphi districts. These districts were selected because at the time of programme design and inception, they were deemed to be among the least targeted by interventions sponsored by development and cooperating partners. Table 1 below shows the MCPSP projects, implementing organizations, and geographical locations by district.

**Table 1: Partners, projects and geographical coverage of the MCPSP**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Implementing partner</th>
<th>Project Name</th>
<th>Geographical coverage</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>CCJP</td>
<td>Parliamentary Liaison</td>
<td>Lilongwe, Kasungu and Ntchisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCAP, Livingstonia Synod</td>
<td>Improving Women’s socio-economic status: integrating rights-based approaches and village savings and loans</td>
<td>Mzimba</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCAP, Nkhoma synod</td>
<td>Promoting participation through RBA to Development in Malawi</td>
<td>Mzimba, Rumphi, Karonga</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCAP, Nkhoma synod</td>
<td>Community Empowerment for A vibrant Society</td>
<td>Ntchisi (TA Nthondo and TA Malenga)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCAP, Nkhoma synod</td>
<td>Mushroom Village Savings and Loans</td>
<td>Ntchisi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Christian Service Committee</td>
<td>Maziko community Radio</td>
<td>Mainly Ntchisi and parts of Lilongwe, Dedza, Mchinji, Dowa and Kasungu.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Women Legal Resource Centre (WoLREC)</td>
<td>Empowering Women to Participate in public Life</td>
<td>Mzimba, Salima</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR)</td>
<td>Promoting the Role of Women in Decision Making</td>
<td>Salima, Lilongwe rural, Dedza, Karonga, Ntchisi and Ntcheu</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Besides the projects identified above, the MCPSP has also been running a platform consisting of implementing partners and other CSOs who have not been funded by DCA but have shared in the values and aspirations of the MCPSP. This platform has been facilitated by DCA Malawi office which provided a secretariat and technical support under the MCPSP. Thus, except for the management of the platform, DCA Malawi has not been directly involved in on-the-ground or hands-on project implementation but has rather been supporting the implementing partners.

2.2. Desired development outcomes of the MCPSP

In view of the problem diagnosis summarized above but detailed in DCA (2006), the main desired development outcome of the MCPSP was the protection and empowerment of the marginalized poor, especially rural women, to exercise and uphold their right to participate in civic life for increased access to and control of resources and services. In the context of a result-based approach to programme management that the MCPSP adopted, four key result areas were identified. These are:

i. Strengthening the legislative and implementation frameworks for the enhanced participation of women and other poor.

ii. Increasing representation of the poor, especially rural women, in decision making structures and to empower them to challenge repressive cultural beliefs and practices that limit their participation.

iii. Increasing access to justice for the poor, particularly women, from discriminatory and negative cultural practices.

iv. Strengthening partners’ advocacy and networking skills so that they are able to utilize participatory and gender mainstreaming tools.

It was envisaged that the achievement of desired results in these areas would collectively contribute to the achievement of the overall desired development outcome of the MCPSP. In other words, the theory underpinning the programme was that its desired outcomes would be achieved through summation of interventions and outcomes of the various projects. Appendix I provides a summary overview of the programme beginning with key result areas down to interventions and indicators of projects that were designed or expected to contribute to each key result area. This programme matrix was used in the evaluation to assess the relevance of the programme theory in relation to programme achievements/successes and shortfalls/ areas that require improvement in designing future programmes.

3.0. Objectives and Scope of the Evaluation

The main objective of the evaluation was to assess the MCPSP in terms of its problem diagnosis,
design, implementation, and outcomes in relation to the programme’s stated objectives. The results of the evaluation will inform the formulation of a successive programme that is envisaged to be implemented from 2012 to 2017. From the ToRs, the key tasks for the evaluation assignment were as follows:

i. To determine whether and how well the MCPSP has achieved its development objectives and identify the factors that have shaped the attainment of outcomes.

ii. To identify impacts of the MCPSP associated with key result areas with particular focus on the impacts that are directly attributable to the interventions supported by DCA Malawi.

iii. To assess the extent to which the MCPSP has been implemented efficiently and identify what could have been done differently in order to achieve efficiency gains or minimize efficiency losses.

iv. To assess the sustainability of the development gains of the MCPSP beyond the first programme period.

v. To assess the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities and constraints in the context analysis and problem diagnosis that led to the formulation of the MCPSP; the design of the MCPSP; and implementation arrangements and monitoring of the programme.

vi. To assess actual and potential synergy between the MCPSP and other programmes of DCA Malawi particularly those on HIV/AIDS and Food Security.

vii. To assess matters of HAP and extent of compliance among partners.

viii. To assess the WoLREC and Nkhoma Synod projects in terms of concept, project delivery processes and impacts.

ix. To conduct an institutional capacity assessment of the implementing partners.

x. To identify and document challenges and lessons from the entire programme experience and to use them to make appropriate recommendations to DCA Malawi for the next programme period, 2011 -2017.

4.0. Analytical and Methodological Approach

The evaluation used an integrated analytical framework consisting of institutional and organizational analysis, gender analysis and the evaluation criteria of the Development Assistance Committee (DAC) of the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) and the international Network of Networks of Impact Evaluators (NONIE).

4.1. Institutional and Organizational Analysis

Institutional analysis is primarily concerned with the rules and practices, formal and informal, and the organizational arrangements that are necessary to achieve set objectives and the relevance of the objectives and strategies for achieving them given the particularities of the political, social/cultural,
economic and historical context in which the targeted programme was implemented. The normative position is that effective institutional frameworks for programmes are those that provide rules that are clear, widely known, coherent, applicable to all actors, credible, properly and evenly enforced (NONIE, 2009). In the evaluation of the MCPSP, analysis focused on how the Danish Church Aid and implementing partners designed and implemented interventions under the MCPSP. The main concern in this regard was to understand the institutional and organisational set-ups and to identify which rules and practices, institutional linkages and organizational factors were critical in shaping the implementation and outcomes of the MCPSP. Furthermore, a focus on rules and practices helped in understanding the operational context of the programme especially how political dynamics at the national level impacted the MCPSP. This was particularly crucial as some of the objectives and strategies of the MCPSP as outlined above were vulnerable to political exigencies and the changing rules of the political game.

Organizational analysis is a systematic process through which the capacity of organizations is assessed in relation to their set mandates (UNDP, 2009). Organisational analysis targeted implementing partners of the various projects under the MCPSP. The aim was to identify factors that either enabled them to deliver successfully on their projects or that may have undermined their capacity to do so. Analysis focused on capacity elements such as staffing and skills, staff incentives, service delivery structures, accountability mechanisms and incentives, grievance reporting measures, supervisory relations and general organizational cultures. The analysis also examined whether the actors i.e. DCA programme staff and implementing partners have the necessary institutional capacity (i.e. enabling rules and practices) and the necessary levels of support to facilitate planning, coordination, monitoring and evaluation, and general administration of the MCPSP. Thus, organizational analysis, helped to explain aspects of effectiveness, efficiency and impacts of the MCPSP.

4.2. Gender Analysis

The application of gender analysis to programme and project design and evaluation is concerned primarily with assessing the extent to which gender is mainstreamed in the programme. It requires establishing how well the context analysis identifies gender disparities that are relevant to the programme; and whether the design of the programme and its outcomes are gender-responsive, and whether and how the interventions of the programme address gender needs (OECD, 2003). The MCPSP was designed to pay particular attention to gender dynamics while trying to uplift the rural poor generally. Some specific gender concerns in favour of women are clearly expressed in the overall desired development outcomes of the MCPSP as well as in key result areas presented above and in project documents.

In addition to carrying out a gender analysis, the evaluation also sought to collect disaggregated data
that would show whether and how identified gender gaps had been minimized or closed off due to interventions under the MCPSP. Furthermore, the evaluation sought to identify whether and how the interventions went beyond concerns with numbers of women involved in or benefiting from the different programme components to include substantive empowerment impacts for women. Particular attention was on the following gender elements which were identified in the ToRs:

i. Number and quality of legislative and implementation frameworks for the enhanced political participation of women and the poor have been institutionalized.
ii. Number and participation levels of women in decision making structures and their ability to challenge repressive cultural beliefs and practices that limit their participation
iii. Change in terms of women accessing justice from discriminatory and negative cultural practices
iv. The extent to which the programme has strengthened the ability of implementing partners to utilize participatory and gender mainstreaming tools.

4.3. Criteria for the Evaluation

The ToRs required that the MCPSP should be assessed on the following five parameters: relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact, and sustainability. These criteria are based on international best practice guidelines for evaluating development programmes and projects (DAC/OECD1991; NONIE, 2009). Below are operational definitions of the criteria:

4.3.1. Relevance

This criterion is concerned with whether and to what extent the development objectives were achieved. Under this criterion the programme theory was assessed in full, disaggregated by the key result areas. For instance, the assessment included whether and how the programme key result areas were consistent with problem diagnosis; whether and how the interventions for achieving the desired developmental objectives were suitable; whether and how the indicators were suitable to demonstrate results on given key result area; whether and how the objectives and activities of the programme remain consistent and valid with beneficiaries’ requirements, national needs, and partners’ and donors’ policies.

4.3.2. Effectiveness

This criterion is concerned with whether and to what extent the developmental objectives of the programme were attained; and what factors influenced the achievement and/or non-achievement of the objectives or desired outcomes. For this criterion, the empirical focus was on the objectively verifiable outcomes associated with the interventions.
4.3.3. Efficiency
This criterion relates programme outputs to inputs. The key tenet here is to establish the cost-effectiveness of the programme. It requires comparing alternative approaches to achieving the desired outcomes and gauge whether the most efficient process was adopted in the implementation phase. The key issues under this criterion are whether the programme was cost-efficient; whether objectives were achieved on time and identifying what could have been done differently to maximize the available resources.

4.3.4. Impact
This criterion is concerned with identification of the main positive and negative changes produced directly or indirectly, intended or unintended by a development programme. Establishing impact entails analyzing short term outputs, medium term outcomes as well as long term effects of the programme. Furthermore, given strategic partnerships and programme overlaps within the realm of governance and development, establishing impact requires disentangling aggregate impacts in order to isolate those that are attributable to the programme being evaluated i.e. counterfactual analysis.

4.3.5. Sustainability
The main concern for this criterion is to establish the potential of continuity of benefits of a development programme after the programme has wound up in the impact areas and among implementing partners. For the MCPSP analysis sought to identify self-perpetuating and community-based efforts of collective action aimed at sustaining activities and behaviors of civic competence.

Note: The criteria above were used to assess each key result area of the MCPSP. For each criterion and each key result area, a set of questions aimed at eliciting relevant data from the respondents were developed as explained under data collection below.

4.4. Research Coverage and Data Collection Techniques

4.4.1. Research Coverage
The evaluation reviewed all projects under the MCPSP. However, fieldwork covered four districts, namely Mzimba, Rumphi, Ntchisi and Salima. Except for Rumphi, these districts were purposively chosen by DCA Malawi. Ntchisi, Mzimba and Salima were chosen mainly because the projects being implemented there by Church & Society (Nkhoma synod) and WOLREC, respectively, had not yet been independently evaluated. It was therefore envisaged that the evaluation would provide insights on how the projects have performed and contributed to the relevant key result areas of the MCPSP. In each district, two impact areas were visited. These areas were identified jointly by the evaluation team and
implementing partners. The main criterion for the selection of the areas was that one had to be deemed a spectacular success by the implementing partner and the other had to be an area where the implementing partner thought results could have been better. Table 2 below shows project and impact communities that were visited.

Table 2: Projects and Impact Sites visited for the Evaluation

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>District</th>
<th>Implementing partner</th>
<th>Project Title</th>
<th>Impact communities visited</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Salima</td>
<td>WOLREC</td>
<td>Empowering Women to Participate in public Life</td>
<td>Mtambe Village, TA Mwanza. Mbuna I village, TA Khombedza</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ntchisi</td>
<td>Church &amp; Society (Nkhoma)</td>
<td>Community Empowerment for A vibrant Society</td>
<td>Msendekere Village, TA Nthondo Chipolopolo village, TA Chilowoka</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mzimba</td>
<td>WOLREC</td>
<td>Empowering Women to Participate in public Life</td>
<td>Mtezi Village, TA Mzukuzuku William Ngwenya Village, TA Mmbelwa</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rumphi</td>
<td>Church &amp; Society (Livingstone)</td>
<td>Promoting participation through RBA to Development in Malawi</td>
<td>Elonyeni Village Kamphenda village, TA Nthwalo</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
4.4.2. Data Collection Methods

Data for this evaluation was collected through four main methods, namely literature/document review, key informant interviews, focus group discussions and institutional capacity rating sheet.

4.4.2.1. Key Informant Interviews

Key informant interviews were carried out with a few selected people in each impact community (except at Kamphinde in Rumphi), with key personnel of the implementing partners and key personnel in DCA Malawi and other stakeholders. The interviews were carried out using specially prepared guidelines that drew from the ToRs. The interview guides were used as prompters in a flexible fashion in order to make the interviews more conversational while still structured and controlled. The use of open-ended questions allowed unexpected but relevant issues to be followed up through systematic probing. The flexible manner in which the interviews were carried out allowed for the interviewees to bring up additional or complementary issues that could otherwise be overlooked. The interview guides are in Appendix II.

4.4.2.2. Focus Group Discussions

Focus group discussions (FGDs) provided a means of eliciting in depth views of the participants on the various aspects that the evaluation covered. FGDs were conducted using a specially designed checklist (See Appendix III). Initially, it was intended that three FGDs would be held in each impact area. The first would involve men only; the second would involve women only while the third would be a mixed group. However, the communities preferred to hold one mixed focus group discussion for two reasons. The first was for them to demonstrate the impact of gender awareness that they had benefitted from the various projects that had been implemented under the MCPSP. The second reason was to maximize on time as three FGDs would require spending more than a day with community members. This was not going to be cost-efficient for the evaluation team. Neither would it be cost-effective for the communities. Consequently, nine FGDs were held, one in each impact area except at Kamphinde in Rumphi where two instead of one FGDs were held due to the overwhelming number of participants that turned up to participate in the evaluation exercise.

4.4.2.3. Literature/Document Review

Review of key documents was carried out in order to understand the context of the MCPSP and to cull and validate data. These documents included evaluation reports of the MCPSP as a whole or its components, project documents from the implementing partners and periodic progress reports and

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2 Here the turn up was overwhelming. We split the people into two large groups for mixed focus group discussions instead of one FGD. It was impossible to conduct further key informant interviews because the evaluation team was understaffed.
manuals or handbooks developed by the implementing partners for the various projects.

4.4.2.4. Institutional Capacity Assessment Rating Sheet

A capacity rating sheet was used to capture data on selected thematic areas. The areas covered were policy and legal framework, operational effectiveness, financial and physical resources, leadership and human resource management, gender, HAP and human rights mainstreaming, Partnerships and networking, and monitoring and evaluation. Respondents were asked to rate capacity statements on a scale of one to five. The rating scale provided for five possible development stages in terms of capacity of the chosen thematic areas, with the rating of one (1) being indicative of very low capacity, while five (5) reflected a highly developed state in terms of capacity. For each of the thematic areas, the desired capacity was assumed to be five (5). In this connection, the capacity assessment sought to indicate the current capacity levels in relation to what was desired, in the process revealing gaps in capacity levels. The tool was complimented with qualitative data elicited through key informant interviews with staff of the implementing partners. A capacity rating sheet is in Appendix IV.

4.4.3. Data Processing and Interpretation

Data was analyzed using an integrated approach involving content analysis and discourse analysis. This involved categorizing issues according to the key themes or issues identified in the ToRs namely relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the MCPSP programme as a whole as well as its constituent parts i.e. the specific development objectives. In addition to these themes, analysis sought to identify any other recurrent themes.

Data from the capacity assessment rating sheet was captured in an excel matrix. For each implementing partner, the scores for each capacity statement were summed up and averaged out. For each thematic area, the average scores of the individual capacity statements were summed up and averaged out (i.e. average of averages) to find a capacity index for the thematic area for each implementing partner. The index was interpreted using the capacity rating scale. The interpretation of the scores was validated with other qualitative data on the relevant aspects collected through key informant interviews with staff members of the implementing partners and some DCA staff.

5.0. Findings of the Evaluation

5.1. Performance of the MCPSP

The MCPSP has had six key result areas. The first three areas concern results at community level while the last three are programmatic in nature. The performance of the MCPSP across the key result areas has been above average especially in so far as the key evaluation criteria are concerned. The findings are summarized in the following series of tables on each key result area of the MCPSP.
5.1.1. Strengthening legislative and implementation frameworks for enhanced civic participation of women and other poor

Table 3: Strengthening legislative and implementation frameworks for enhanced civic participation of women and other poor

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Strengthening legislative and implementation frameworks for enhanced civic participation of women and other poor</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>The key result area was and remains highly relevant. MCPSP has made an outstanding contribution to strengthening ‘implementation framework’ but not so much on strengthening legislative framework even though the work of the MCPSP in raising awareness on legislative frameworks especially Gender Based Violence has been outstanding.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| Effectiveness        | More than 423 interface meetings between communities and duty bearers have been held during the programme lifespan facilitated by implementing partners especially Nkhoma synod, Livingstonia synod and CCJP. This is against a baseline of no interface meetings with district officials and isolated meetings between communities and their Member of Parliament. The meetings have achieved significant though localized levels of accountability and civic participation in governance. 

There is reported increase in the number of elected ADCs and VDC with chiefs giving up their traditional roles in presiding over village committee meetings to elected ordinary people. This has been particularly the case in Livingstonia synod impact areas as well as Nkhoma and CCJP areas. Over 1000 local level structures within the decentralization framework have been trained on their roles against a baseline figure of zero at the start of the various projects. It must be noted though that that the Ministry of Local Government also contributed in a small way in the composition and one day training sessions of the ADCs and VDCs in some impact areas.

Linking up communities to service providers which has resulted in beneficiaries being able to demand social services that were initially deemed to be far out of reach. Church and Society, Nkhoma and Livingstonia Synods were particularly outstanding in this regard.

More than 2280 CBEs have been trained to facilitate collective action for civic engagement and civic education activities on gender, human rights and other themes.

Up to six pieces of legislation, including the Domestic Violence Act, have been translated into vernacular languages which have been used in awareness campaigns.
### Impact

MCPSP has contributed to broadening and deepening democracy as a multi-level and multi-stakeholder system of governance with beneficiary communities clearly distinguishing between central and local government and explaining their roles in them.

MCPSP has contributed to the process of democratizing development as ordinary people have visibly changed from being passive recipients of development to being active demanders and actors in local level development initiatives. Interface meetings and citizen engagement with government and NGO service providers have enhanced active citizenship compared to as was the case at when the baseline was conducted.

MCPSP has empowered communities by building their civic competence through provision of a sustainable knowledge base on how to pursue local development agendas and demand accountability from duty bearers and how duty bearers can meet accountability requirements. This has been demonstrated through submission of village action plans to Councils and NGOs and interface meetings. It is a culture that was nonexistent at baseline stage.

MCPSP has built sustainable local capacities to initiate and forge collective action for development especially among women.

### Sustainability

CBEs constitute a mechanism that will carry forward the work in this key result area.

Over the last five years of the MCPSP, there has been a clearly discernible deepening and broadening of civic competence and an evolution of democratic culture at the local levels in the impact areas. This was evident in the critical views aired by participants in FGDs, the questions they have put forward to duty bearers in interface meetings and their plans to invite their MPs and District Officials to answer questions on specific issues relevant to their respective areas. It is unlikely that the culture that has evolved will ebb away anytime soon.

Training and awareness initiatives in the impact areas targeted young and energetic people who have become increasingly progressive. This promises intergenerational flows of knowledge and practices that will carry forward the work that began under the MCPSP. Furthermore, awareness activities also included the elderly who are understood to be custodians of culture and were expected to be averse to the new human rights talk and conservative. Their participation and understanding helped in uncovering systematic but secret cultural practices (e.g. *bulangete la a mfumu*) that were anti-developmental and repressive of women and young people.
5.1.2. Increasing women representation in decision making and challenging cultural beliefs

Table 4: Increasing women representation in decision making and challenging cultural beliefs

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Increasing women representation in decision making and challenging cultural beliefs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>This key result area was and is still relevant as national statistics show that the number of women in decision making structures still lags behind and in many cases is below the minimum threshold (i.e. critical mass) that is necessary for influencing the content of decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>There are reports of significant improvements at local levels in terms of numbers of women in local decision making structures including ADCs, VDCs, church positions and local tribunals/juries as compared to the baseline position. However, the evaluators did not find any recorded data to verify the claims made by implementing partners and communities. Evaluators observed enthusiasm among women for candidacy in local government and parliamentary elections. Across the implementing partners, women empowerment activities involved about 189 female aspirants for local councillorship and 30 female aspirants in parliamentary elections. There are no comparable baseline data but it is a well established fact that numbers of female candidates in both types of elections have always been very low across the country.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Impact

There is high enthusiasm among women to take up positions in local level committees even in societies that are known to be traditionally highly male-centered. This shows that women are using their acquired empowerment to change their social circumstances.

Evaluators observed respect for women and women’s views by the male folk in public forums contrary to what was reported to have been the case before the programme. Community members themselves identified the changes.

Reported women participation in decision making on household resources especially income from agricultural produce. This, according to the women themselves, showed that they were being accepted as equals with their spouses.

There were reports of men helping with domestic chores that were traditionally left for women such as looking after young children and cooking. In Salima and Rumphi, the message was put across to evaluators through drama performed by members of the communities.

Increased collective action initiatives for women including Women’s forum and girls forums through which women-specific issues are articulated and strategies laid down to take them to duty bearers. The evaluation noted a total of 107 women’s forums and associations formed under the programme and nine girls forums. These activities are being replicated in neighboring areas that were not targeted by the MCPSP. This positive spillover.

There is increased access to resources for women especially through VSL schemes and livestock interventions. While these interventions have contributed to household incomes and improved women’s status in their relations with men, the evaluation did not find clear result-based linkage with the objective of increasing women’s representation in decision-making. Economic empowerment became pretty much an end in itself. This suggests that the programme/project theory was not rigorous enough.

At the beginning of the programme the baseline reported existence of entrenched patriarchal system which oppressed women and girls. Some cultural practices only came to light after the women began talking about them openly due to social empowerment activities implemented under the MCPSP. The evaluation established that the following cultural practices which were rampant during the baseline time period have now been abandoned:

- Chiefs being given teenage girls for nights spent away from home on duty (Bulangete la a mfumu).
- Giving up young girls in payment of debts (kupimbira),
• Cultural gagging of women in public forums e.g. married women could not speak at a forum if their fathers-in-law were in attendance.
• Food allocation practices within households which favoured men by giving them the most delicious portions (kuphula nkhu ku).
• Girl child-father relations in which the girl child was not allowed to interact with her father informally.
• Degrading rituals for first pregnancy (kupaka nkham a).
• New mothers segregated from households for several months until they are clean.
• Mothers to twins segregated based on myths for about two months after giving birth.
• Widows sleeping naked, wearing the same dress for the whole month and being taken to the river early in the morning for cold bath throughout the mourning month.
• Taking over the wife of a deceased male relation (chokolo).

Both right holders and duty bearers, men and women confirmed that these practices have been abandoned because of the awareness on human rights, especially women’s rights and open discussion of these oppressive cultural practices supported by the MCPSP.
Sustainability

CBEs constitute a mechanism that will carry forward the work in this key result area. Women have gained skills in forging and managing collective action initiatives that are being used beyond the immediate goals of the respective projects. It is a spirit which does not seem stoppable and the results of women's forums so far, especially in doing away with repressive cultural beliefs and practices, anchor the spirit.

However, Women's/communities' knowledge about the existence of facilities such as the Victim Support Units and how to use them to seek redress will be critical in ensuring sustainability of the gains. The evaluation observed that many community members, in some cases even people from outside designated project impact areas were reporting their cases to MCPSP implementing partners for redress.

5.1.3: Increasing access to justice especially for women

Table 5: Increasing access to justice especially for women

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Increasing access to justice especially for women</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>This key result area is relevant and will continue to be relevant as access to justice, both formal and informal, continues to be a serious development challenge in the country.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>Up to 2,648 traditional leaders who preside over local/traditional tribunals have been trained by implementing partners of the MCPSP on mainstreaming a human rights based approach in dispensing justice. This is against a background of no such training having been offered before.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Up to 2,280 CBEs have been trained as Trainers on access to justice and GBV. Some of them currently participate in panels of village tribunals and continue to advise traditional leaders on rights-based approach and procedures in hearing cases.

There is an observed increase in the number of human rights issues or cases brought to the primary justice systems. The evaluators noted that the number of cases rose from 16 in 2007 to 887 in 2011. The huge increase is attributed to the ability of ordinary people to identify human rights abuses and their willingness to seek redress. The increase shows that civic education on human rights in the impact areas of the MCPSP has been a success. Evaluators were informed through key informant interviews and FGDs that most of these issues had been brought for determination by women but the claim could not be verified.
from any records disaggregated by gender.

There are strong vocal claims by both communities and implementing partners of reductions in the number of cases of GBV. However, not all implementing partners had records of such cases. The records of CCJP and Church & Society of Livingstonia showed that total number of recoded cases (up to 2011) in their respective areas were 32 and 378 respectively. According to informants these figures represent reductions in the number of cases. However, the evaluators were not provided with baseline figures to verify the claims.

Furthermore, the evaluation noted that field staffs of partner institutions were trained as paralegal personnel. These have been operating legal clinics to support complainants and help them seek redress from either the primary or secondary justice systems within the impact areas.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>Human rights-based approaches have been mainstreamed in the procedures for the delivery of local level justice in the impact areas of the programme.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Traditional leaders that have undergone training on RBA have increasingly become agents of change in transforming primitive and unfair cultural practices by dispensing primary justice from a human rights perspective.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Reported reduction in the number of serious cases of GBV i.e. those involving bodily harm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>CBEs, most of whom now sit in advisory capacity at village courts/tribunals and the continued use of women jurors have potential to sustain the gains achieved so far.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### 5.1.4: Partners advocacy & networking skills

#### Table 6: Partners advocacy & networking skills

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Partners advocacy &amp; networking skills</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Relevance</strong></td>
<td>The main vehicle for delivering on this key result area has been the Platform (The Political Space Forum) which is led by the partners themselves but given administrative support by DCA MCPSP programme staffs. Enhancing advocacy skills among partners was and remains highly relevant especially at a time when the country’s governance situation is at a bottom low while the national development policy framework explicitly sets democratic governance as a necessary ingredient for Malawi’s political and economic development at the same time recognizing the instrumental role of CSOs in promoting accountability at all levels of the policy process (MGDS theme six). Enhancing networking skills among partners was and is still relevant especially against a background of individual CSOs usually working in isolation leading to poor coordination of efforts, efficiency and effectiveness losses and sometimes raising questions of CSO legitimacy. Establishing alliances among partners to achieve objectives in common areas of interest through long term interactions and collaboration in various interventions is a relevant and critical issue as it leverages development resources and enhances efficiency and development outcomes. This is particularly the case when the alliances include project development and implementation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Effectiveness</strong></td>
<td>Through the Political Space Forum, MCPSP has ably facilitated coordination of advocacy efforts amongst funded and strategic partners. Press statements on governance issues, signed by all partners have displayed credibility. It is further noted that responses by the ruling party or government machinery to such press statements have been gentle or sometimes the statements have gone without eliciting commentary from the party and government functionaries. This is in contrast to when single or individual CSOs put up critical statements in the Press. Party and Government functionaries deploy malicious propaganda against the institutions and their leaders. The MCPSP has supported partners to attend capacity building initiatives within and outside Malawi on various issue areas. The MCPSP has organized and supported Capacity building training workshop for partners on different topical issues pertaining to mobilization of funds, democratic governance, gender, RBA and others Our judgment is that these efforts have been effective as partners clearly demonstrated</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

19
deeper understanding of democratic governance in their advocacy work. Furthermore, the ability of some of the partners in mobilizing resources from sources other than DCA has improved and communities reported through FGDs that the partner institutions demonstrated expertise in rights-based approaches.

The Political Space Forum has effectively coordinated civil society efforts and conveying proposed policy positions to relevant authorities. The most notable of these efforts is the grassroots consultations on constitutional review and submission of proposals to the Constitutional Review Conference. The leadership of the forum was subsequently co-opted into the Constitutional Review Committee which guaranteed

In pursuit of promoting evidence-based policy advocacy, DCA collects secondary data on governance issues and has commissioned several studies on the state of governance in Malawi, and shared the findings with members to come up with a common position to inform subsequent advocacy work. The Political Space Platform has served as a forum for partners to declare a common position on topical governance issues in Malawi through press conferences, position papers and press releases. However, most advocacy work has been reactionary and taking the form of media outbursts against a government that hardly listens to alternative views and is visibly averse to the work of CSOs and NGOs in the governance realm.

Furthermore, the Platform’s advocacy work has been concerned more with actor-related aspects than deep-seated institutional or structural elements that underpin problematic governance issues. For example, on the vice presidency saga, the call has been for President Bingu Mutharika not to exclude the vice president from active governing on the basis of constitutionalism. But there has been no articulation or search for alternative institutional arrangements to inform a better constitutional design in relation to the office of the vice president their presence and continued advocacy on human rights and constitutional issues in relation to democratic governance.

The platform has been effective in running coordinated initiatives in introducing, reviewing and raising awareness on constitutional questions, reviewing and monitoring of GBV.

However, the advocacy component of the MCPSP has been limited in its effectiveness by the inability of Maziko Radio Station to go on air during the programme’s life span. The Radio began broadcasting after the programme’s life and only a few weeks after the fieldwork for this evaluation report.

The evaluation further observed that the platform would do well with more administrative support. It was observed that DCA programme staffs for MCPSP are too few to dedicate enough time to the activities of the platform. Their scope of work is wider in relation to their numbers so much that their
efforts tend to be thinly spread across the activities.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>MCPSP has empowered partners by building their civic competence through provision of a sustainable knowledge base on how to pursue policy advocacy agendas and demand accountability from duty bearers and how duty bearers can meet accountability requirements.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MCPSP has built sustainable partner capacities to initiate and forge collective action for democratic governance and human rights especially for women.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The partners’ platform has become recognizable as a voice of reason on democratic governance and a countervailing force to the self-interested policy dictates and practices of the current political regime.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>However, the impact of the advocacy work of the platform has been minimal for two main reasons. The first is that advocacy strategies have been less engaging in solution-seeking that airing out wrongs and criticisms. The second is that the government has increasingly become intransigent and regards CSOs as an opposition block or a bunch of detractors. With a government of this attitude, it is difficult for advocacy work to achieve desirable results. Actually, it calls for advocacy work on how to achieve a listening, responsive and responsible government.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Sustainability

Sustainability of the platform that enables shared advocacy work and networking depends on the continued financial support from DCA.

There is reasonable potential to sustain the positive aspects of capacity building efforts carried out through the platform. This is the case because the evaluation noted that partner representatives who attended capacity building activities on various governance and organizational development issues subsequently imparted the knowledge to their colleagues at organizational and project levels. This helped in building their own pool of knowledge and skills within the institutions in a sustainable manner.

The provision of administrative support by DCA to the platform has been crucial to the sustenance of the platform and its activities. According to key informant interviews with representatives of partner institutions, it is very probable that the platform would have lost momentum and could easily be targeted for vengeance by ruling party functionaries if it was administered by any of the partners. However, evaluators found this to be a counterfactual position that cannot easily be substantiated. Suffice to note here that in view of the current government antipathy towards NGOs and international development partners, it would be prudent to consider alternative arrangement for a secretariat to the platform to avoid putting DCA in a direct line of attack by overzealous government and ruling party functionaries.

The sustainability of the platform in advocacy and networking will be ensured if proactive approaches to advocacy are adopted. For instance focusing on shaping the legislative framework on various aspects of politics, governance and human rights has potential for more impact and its sustainability.

5.1.5: Use of participatory approaches, gender and human rights mainstreaming

Table 7 Use of participatory, gender and human rights mainstreaming tools

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Use of Participatory &amp; Gender Mainstreaming Tools</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>This key result area was and is still relevant. Although there have been efforts to include women and the poor in development process, they continue to be alienated from public life in various ways. Their less active involvement or in some cases outright exclusion undermine the effectiveness of political and socio-economic development initiatives that target these social groups.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Effectiveness

All partners under the programme designed and implemented projects that used participatory approaches and mainstreamed human rights and gender sensitivity. Mainstreaming of participatory approaches has been the hallmark of the MCPSP. While the design stages of some projects were less participatory, the implementation of all projects was socially inclusive and participatory.

The use of participatory approach in itself has been a tool for social empowerment for the communities involved in the projects under the MCPSP. During the evaluation both duty bearers and right holders hailed the approach as enhancing responsiveness of communities and accountability and accountability of implementing partners during the implementation stages of the various projects.

Although gender issues are often described or dismissed as ‘women’s issues’ in many parts of the country even among the ‘educated’, it is satisfying to note that ordinary people in the impact communities of the MCPSP understand gender as an issue of equal opportunities between men and women. The Gender and Development (GAD) approach reflected in the projects under the MCPSP has contributed to the achievement of gender sensitive results in favour of women even in such difficult areas as transformation of cultural practices that were controlled by men in favour of men.

The evaluation found it to be self-evident that a critical success factor in mainstreaming gender has been the deliberate attempt to include men in the various project activities that primarily targeted women and the framing of gender issues as ‘human rights issues’ rather than merely women’s issues as is often done in purely feminist approaches.

The evaluation noted that in all projects under the programme, fifty percent of the CBES were women while the other half were men. Communities reported through FGDs that using male CBES to raise awareness on gender issues and women’s rights was a very effective way of winning over the hearts of culturally conservative men to provide space to women.

The use of participatory approaches and gender mainstreaming has seen the MCPSP contribute to enabling women’s collective action efforts for political and socio-economic empowerment. One count based on records made available to evaluators shows that at least 118 women’s groups were created across the implementing partners with over 2000 women being involved in VSL schemes and livestock pass-on schemes. The economic aspects of collective action have contributed to significant poverty reduction at household level according to the testimonies of the participants as compared to the period before the interventions were introduced. Furthermore, women’s collective action has seen the abandonment of some cultural practices as reported above.
However, the evaluation observed that the implementation of the projects under the programme has had a disproportionate emphasis on citizen rights over duties. Lack of adequate understanding of the nexus between rights and duties in the different domains, between various parties, has led to some misunderstandings and conflicts. The commonly cited examples were to do with citizens’ rights or freedoms to do as they pleased in relation to their obligations to respect community authorities and the connection between conjugal rights and conjugal duties among married couples.

Impact

The programme has generated high enthusiasm among women to take up public positions even in societies that are known to have been highly male-centered.

There is observed respect for women and women’s views by the male folk in public forums. This was evident in mixed focus group discussions in all the impact areas that the evaluation team visited.

Reported women participation in decision making on household resources especially income from agricultural produce. The evaluators were informed that before gender awareness activities, the male folk in the households used to squander income from agricultural produce and women were unable to influence expenditure patterns.

Through partner projects, the MCPSP has introduced, and in some cases achieved institutionalization of interface meetings between women groups and duty bearers.

The evaluation team heard reports in focus group discussions of the changing roles of men in the impact areas. In particular, men were reported to have started helping with domestic chores that were traditionally left for women e.g. cooking and child care. Both men and women across the sites were unanimous in reporting this.

There are now active collective action initiatives for women including Women’s forum and girls forums through which women-specific issues are articulated and strategies laid down to take them to duty bearers. Through these forums, young girls have been rescued from forced early marriages (e.g. in Rumphi and Mzimba), and some oppressive cultural practices have been abandoned (e.g. Chiefs blanket in Ntchisi). The evaluation was further informed that women’s forums have been replicated on demand in villages that were outside the designated impact areas of the various projects. In Salima, Mzimba and
Involvement of chiefs and other community elders (i.e. custodians of culture) in mainstreaming gender has ensured the legitimacy of cultural change and will help sustain the changes beyond the lifespan of the MCPSP. However, since the new culture is a sharp departure from “conventional” ways of thinking and doing things, change in that direction continues to be gradual and will require further advocacy.

Use of economic empowerment strategies i.e. VSL and livestock pass-on groups will sustain women’s collective action groups. However, the evaluation observed that economic empowerment strategies became an end themselves and were recognized less as a means to political empowerment of the women. The projects implementing these activities lacked clear mechanisms connecting economic empowerment of women to their participation in public life. The mechanisms were lacking in both the project theory and project practice.
5.1.6: Linkages/Synergies

Table 8: Linkages/Synergies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Evaluation criteria</th>
<th>Linkages/Synergies</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relevance</td>
<td>This is a relevant aspect of the programming as it has huge potential to contribute to the overall efficiency of the DCA programmes while maximizing their collective positive impact. It represents a holistic approach to socio-economic development at impact level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Effectiveness</td>
<td>DCA has held a number of inter-programme meetings where programme staff share notes on how best to link their different but interrelated programmes to address the plight of the marginalized segments of the society in a holistic fashion. However, this linking of programmes at management level has hardly translated into concrete activities in implementation of the various projects under the programmes. There has been more synergy achieved between projects within the MCPSP. This has been the case because choice of project impact districts for some projects was, in some instances, guided by the presence of another DCA funded projects to enhance synergies. For example, CHRR’s project on increasing the number of women in decision making structures (focusing on local assemblies and Parliament) was implemented in areas where CCJP and NKhoma synod were already working on related themes. Furthermore, peer reviews involving MCPSP partners have contributed to sharing lessons. However, the evaluation observed the lack of deliberate mechanism at impact area level to achieve synergy between DCA programmes. Although the MCPSP is purely a governance programme, projects have been implemented in a flexible fashion to allow use of socioeconomic livelihood concepts such as VSL, livestock pass-on and community level social welfare notions targeting the chronically ill to be used as a means to achieve the governance objective. Through these socio-economic platforms, right holders, especially women, have been accorded a platform to discuss and pursue collective action on topical political, socio-cultural and economic development issues, which they eventually discuss with duty bearers through interface meetings and</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
have been able to achieve significant results in some areas as indicated above.

The evaluation noted that it is difficult using the current geographical spread of DCA programmes to achieve inter-programme synergies at impact area levels. Unless DCA adopts an approach of geographic concentration, inter-programme synergy will continue to be elusive in practice even though points of programme intersections can be identified at management level.

Furthermore, the evaluation observed that the MCPSP provided a useful mechanism for achieving programme synergy with the HIV/AIDS and Food Security Programmes. This is the case because both HIV/AIDS and food security are amenable to framing as human rights issues and could have easily become topical issues in the MCPSP. For example, the economic empowerment activities could have been designed in a way that links up with food security as well as governance. For example, when the evaluation team explored this issue with participants in focus group discussions and with key informant interviews, the following observations came up:

- That there has been increased access to resources for women especially through VSL schemes and livestock interventions. This was particularly true of the WoLREC and Livingstonia’s projects.
- That there has been improved food and nutrition security in beneficiary households especially in HIV/AIDS affected households. This was mainly in WoLREC’s projects.
- That the Human rights approach which is central to MCPSP has helped communities to begin framing food security/nutrition issues and HIV/AIDS as human rights issues.

It is noted, however, that this kind of synergy between DCA programmes was not systematically explored at design and implementation levels of the various projects but remains a potential way of enhancing synergies. Thus, these results were identified pretty much as unintended positive outcomes.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Impact</th>
<th>In view of the findings that there were no deliberate mechanisms for inter-programme synergy at impact area levels, the evaluation had no basis for identifying impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Sustainability</td>
<td>There are potential ways of achieving sustainable synergies between DCA programmes but these remain unoperationallised as identified above. However, the holistic approach to addressing needs and challenges faced by the poor, women and other marginalized groups has potential for long-term commitment and motivation for communities to advance good governance agenda, food security and HIV/AIDS issues.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.2. Programme Efficiency

The MCPSP as a whole has been efficient in so far as its effectiveness and impact in relation to resource inputs is concerned. However, there are a few pockets that will have to be addressed to improve effectiveness and efficiency gains. Below are some of the issue areas:

i. Inadequate human resources in projects: It is generally observed that DCA Malawi prefers lean structures. This is commendable from an efficiency point of view. However, this tends to be pushed through beyond the necessary level for efficiency gains. All implementing partners pointed out the need for a few more personnel in order to maximize the effectiveness of the projects.

ii. Inadequate human resources at DCA for the MCPSP: It is observed that DCA staffs responsible for programme activities of the MCPSP are too few – only two people. Given what they are able to achieve, it is clear that represents efficiency gains as more is delivered from less resource inputs. However, partners observed that the staff tend to be overstretched and are sometimes overwhelmed with the sheer volume of work. These aspects compromise the effective and timely delivery of managerial and administrative services.

iii. Low levels of remuneration and incentives: This is a generic complaint from implementing partners. Some partners have had to source money elsewhere to top up on salaries of key personnel on MCPSP projects in order to retain them on the projects or simply to be fair by not offering salary levels that are unable to sustain a livelihood.

iv. Delays in financial disbursements by DCA: This too was a recurrent observation. The delay periods for some projects have been as long as five months. Such delays affected not only efficiency but also effectiveness as project activities could not be carried out in time. Furthermore, such delays inflict misery and anxiety among project staff who have to go without salaries for the entire period of delay. While these delays have been particularly serious in the last one year of the programme (because of changes at DCA Malawi and DCA Copenhagen), they have nonetheless been an issue even before.

v. Over contribution to remuneration for staff who spend disproportionately less time on project activities: It is observed that in some projects the MCPSP has been over contributing to salaries of personnel (may be unknowingly) who do not put in the requisite amount of time and work into the project activities. This represents an inefficiency and smacks of rent-seeking behavior that should be discouraged.

vi. Delayed benefits from Maziko Radio Project which in turn has compromised the impact of
advocacy work. It is noted, however, that the reasons for the delay were beyond the direct influence of project managers and were political in nature. To the extent that the radio was not able to go on air until the last few weeks of the programme, it may be said that the project has been inefficient in that it took up investable resources but its benefits delayed for too long and affected the potential impact of the programme’s advocacy work.

vii. A one size fits all project credit ceiling of MK12 million per annum is rather disproportionate in relation to scope of coverage of the projects. It represents ‘over funding’ for projects that are comparatively smaller (e.g. those covering only three TAs and only a few villages within the selected TAs) while representing ‘underfunding’ for those projects that are large in terms of scope. Both scenarios have implications on efficiency but also programme equity. In the case of the phenomenon of ‘overfunding’, it means the programme forgoes achieving more positive results from its resource envelope while in the in the case of ‘underfunding’, the partner institutions feel too much squeezed to deliver expected results even with insufficient resources. The evaluation observed that partners either had to find resources from elsewhere to top up on those available from DCA or had to modify their approaches to cut down on their costs. While topping up resources signifies true partnership with DCA, modifying approaches to the delivery of project activities compromised community empowerment. For example, instead of grassroots participants taking charge of inputs to the constitutional review, it was cost effective for partners to take charge and only consult the grassroots. To enable ordinary people to lead their own participation in law formation required numerous empowerment activities for which resources were not available. There is need to revisit the rule for allocating project budgets under the MCPSP.

viii. Remote management: In some projects, management personnel operate from outside the impact districts. This unnecessarily increases the administrative costs of the projects and affects operational effectiveness.

ix. Project vehicles are too few for some projects e.g. for C&S Livingstonia synod.

x. Project vehicles are hardly available for executing routine project activities especially in cases where project managers live away from the impact districts and have custody of the vehicle. e.g. WoLREC and NKhoma synod.

5.3. HAP Knowledge and Compliance
Implementing partners are aware of HAP principles and there is evidence the principles are well understood by senior staff in the organizations. There is evidently high compliance with the use of
participatory approaches in projects. This is probably because the principle is in perfect harmony with
the philosophical underpinning of DCA’s approach to development which is shared with the
implementing partners. There is low compliance in so far as financial transparency except for CCJP
which embraced the principle and quickly found a way of operationalising it and has since applied the
principle to projects supported by other financiers. The other partners have lagged behind on this
because of lack of clarity or uncertainty regarding the extent of transparency and accountability that
partners should avail to the communities as both too little and too much has potential problems of
creating misperceptions and unrealistic expectations in communities. There is room for other partners
to learn from CCJP on how to operationalise the HAP principles. The partners’ platform would be a
useful forum for this.

The evaluation observed that most implementing partners have intra-organisational grievance or
complaint procedures mainly used by their staffs. The evaluation did not find evidence of the existence
of viable grievance mechanisms that ordinary poor men and women in the impact areas could use in
pursuit of HAP principles, except for WoLREC. For the other implementing partners, the main reason
for the low uptake is that HAP was introduced mid way the programme and some partners found it
practically difficult to mainstream and operationalise the principles in on-going projects. WOLREC has a
procedure that is specific to the project funded by DCA and originates in the communities. They have
area associations i.e. Khomwa in Salima and Rwasazi in Mzimba. The associations comprise
representatives from the villages, across traditional authorities, where the project is being implemented.
The associations handle all project-related complaints at area level and refer those they cannot resolve
to WoLREC head office through the project officer. Furthermore, the associations have the liberty to call
on DCA programme staff if community members feel that WoLREC is not being transparent or
accountable enough.

5.4. WOLREC and NKhoma Synod Project Assessments

This section presents a concise assessment of the projects implemented in Salima and Mzimba
districts by WoLREC and in Ntchisi district by the Church & Society Programme of the Nkhoma Synod.
The focal elements of the assessment were the project concept, project delivery processes and project
impacts.
### 5.4.1. WoLREC Project Assessment

**Table 9: WoLREC project Assessment Matrix**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Project delivery process</th>
<th>Impacts(^3)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improving women’s participation in public life is a relevant concept</td>
<td>Implementation has almost exclusively focused on economic empowerment which has become an end in itself rather than a means of mobilizing women for participation in public life. There is need to rethink the project theory when commissioning new projects of this type to clearly spell out mechanisms that link economic empowerment with public participation. The inclusion of men in the associations is a key success factor and quite commendable. Provision of seed capital in terms of livestock and agricultural inputs has contributed significantly to breaking the chain of the vicious cycle of poverty for some households. Scope of coverage i.e two TAs and five villages in each TA in both districts has contributed to Community participation at inception stage was rather inadequate. WOLREC brought down solutions. But onward implementation has been through a bottom-up approach. WOLREC demonstrated flexibility and learning by providing communities with resources to buy goats for themselves after those that WOLREC brought did not acclimatize. Regular contact between project officers, CBEs and communities which keeps the project momentum. However, the cost of travel by project officers to communities needs to be looked into as the motorbike fuel allocation per month is too low. Evident networking and collaboration with government.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Reduced domestic violence (reported through FGDs) but not verified. Reduced cases of property grabbing and demonstrated awareness of property from a rights perspective. Sharing in the household chores between men and women. Wealth creation through asset accumulation at household level. The evaluation team visited a few households in Salima and heard testimonies and saw evidence of transformation which included a portfolio of livestock and better housing. However, the methodology was not designed to measure in quantitative terms the movements in household poverty. Furthermore at Mtezi village in Mzimba, they have a capital investment plan to purchase a</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

\(^3\) For some of the impacts that are identified here, quantitative data would have been more useful in showing the extent of the impacts by comparing evaluation findings with baseline data. However, the baseline report did not give useful figures and during the evaluation, the implementing partner was unable to cite current figures or provide records that could be used for this purpose. Thus, the impacts are reported herein only qualitatively based on evidence and verbal reports collected through focus group discussions and key informant interviews. The evaluation team was under the impression that record keeping may be a problem.
been less about women’s participation in public life and more of economic empowerment and poverty reduction. There were no clear interventions to convert the achievements of economic empowerment into women’s participation in public life. This was a ‘missing link’.

scaling up impact as resources are not thinly spread out on the ground.

Revolving livestock banks to sister villages has increased the scope of impact of the project beyond its designated impact areas and at no extra financial cost.

agents especially social welfare officers, veterinary services.

Ownership and property rights mechanisms have been a critical factor in the success of the project in so far as economic empowerment is concerned

mill using the VSL.

Increased awareness on human rights especially women’s rights (gender) due to civic education provided by WOLREC through CBEs. This was verified from responses to questions raised in focus group discussions.

Linking communities to service providers and other projects e.g. Steven Louis, COMSIP and providers of legal services. The result is that now the communities are able to approach service providers directly without relying on the involvement of WoLREC personnel.

Women empowerment especially in speaking up on their issues in public and making themselves available for positions in community structures

Increased resources for women and households. This was reported in both focus group discussions and key informant interviews and the evaluation team had an opportunity to visit a few selected households whose

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4 The evaluation heard reports and testimonies of increased women’s participation in public life but only very rarely did the people link it to economic empowerment activities. Women’s active participation was attributed to the civic awareness on human rights and gender relations. For this reason the evaluation is hesitant to draw a direct link with economic empowerment activities.
success was outstanding.

Increased role of women in household resource allocation. This was reported by the women themselves in focus group discussions and was confirmed by the men.

Increased respect for women as equals by the men especially at household.

Charity works in the communities by WOLREC clubs/associations. Looking after and visiting the sick and providing them with their needs.

5.4.2. Nkhoma Synod Project Assessment

Table 10: Nkhoma Synod Project Assessment Matrix
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Concept</th>
<th>Strategy</th>
<th>Project delivery process</th>
<th>Impacts</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The project concept and continues to be relevant. Ntchisi is one of the poorest districts and also with the highest rates of illiteracy. Therefore the focus on economic empowerment and civic education for functional literacy in a modern society were highly relevant. However, project titles should be more clear and concrete – creation of a ‘vibrant society’ for a project title is rather arcane.</td>
<td>Economic empowerment for women through VSL is a potentially viable tool for poverty reduction at household level but needs to be complemented with training in basic business skills so that participants can maximise benefits. Training of CBEs especially the youth keeps community momentum, increases project uptake and promises sustainability beyond project life. Networking through the NSA platform ensures good will, support and cooperation for project activities.</td>
<td>Interface meetings between duty bearers and rights holders have been heralded as ‘strange but nice’ as they have improved accountability. The programme has created its own demand from untargeted communities. Could do better with a car at the project office as mobility is a serious issue. Rights education targeted at duty bearers at community level is commendable. There is an observed attitude problem on the part of government officials who tend to ignore or delay responding to issues raised by communities. As a result communities have become over dependent on project staff to do things for them. There is demand for a training programme for village headmen to cover aspects of rights and good governance as well as the relationship between customary laws and people’s freedoms. There is awareness on property grabbing but it is not well appreciated as the practice is culturally entrenched. Openness and women’s freedom to talk in public forums. Community empowerment enabling them to identify and approach relevant duty bearers with relevant development problems. Awareness of rights and duties even though the emphasis has mostly been on rights.</td>
<td>Dwindling resistance to elected local structures. Now the ADCs and VDCs in the impact areas are elected. This was also independently confirmed in focus group discussions and by TA Nhondo in a key informant interview. Involvement of women in development activities including leadership positions at community level. Community empowerment demonstrated through local level articulation of demands for project and demands for accountability from duty bearers. There are now periodic interface meetings between district officials and communities and more responsiveness. There is awareness on property grabbing but it is not well appreciated as the practice is culturally entrenched. Openness and women’s freedom to talk in public forums. Community empowerment enabling them to identify and approach relevant duty bearers with relevant development problems. Awareness of rights and duties even though the emphasis has mostly been on rights.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
5.5. Institutional Capacity Assessment

Implementing partners were asked to rate their institutional capacity on various aspects. Capacity statements were also designed to capture aspects of organizational cultures on the selected thematic areas. These areas were: Policy and Legal Framework (PLF); Operational Effectiveness (OE); Financial and Physical Resources (FPR); Leadership and Human Resource Management (LHRM); Gender Mainstreaming (GM), Rights Based Approach (RBA) and HAP; Partnership and Networking (P&N); and Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E). The capacity statements were rated on a scale of 1 to 5 where the scores carried the following meanings:

1: Very Low (No evidence of relevant capacity)
2: Low (Anecdotal evidence of capacity)
3: Medium (Partially developed capacity)
4: High (Widespread, but no comprehensive, evidence of capacity)
5: Very High (fully developed capacity)

For each thematic area and for each implementing partner, scores on individual capacity statements were averaged out to find a capacity index for the thematic area. A summary of the results are presented below (Detailed score sheet is in Appendix V)

5.5.1. Capacity Assessment Results by Index

Table 11: Capacity Assessment Results by Index

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Partner</th>
<th>PLF</th>
<th>OE</th>
<th>FPR</th>
<th>LHRM</th>
<th>GM,RBA, HAP</th>
<th>P&amp;N</th>
<th>M&amp;E</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>WoLREC</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.9</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.6</td>
<td>4.8</td>
<td>4.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkhoma Synod (C&amp;S)</td>
<td>4.1</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>3.8</td>
<td>4.0</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Livingston Synod (C&amp;S)</td>
<td>3.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>3.6</td>
<td>3.9</td>
<td>4.4</td>
<td>4.5</td>
<td>4.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CCJP</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>4.3</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Observations:

i. Except for WoLREC and CCJP which, according to the results above, see themselves as having high and fully developed capacities across the thematic areas, there is an acknowledgement of considerable capacity gaps by other implementing partners.

ii. Some indices presented in the table above are somewhat inconsistent with qualitative findings. This is because of possible bias in the rating by staffs of the implementing partners. It was evident to the evaluating team that some staffs thought that acceptance of capacity deficiencies would work against them in accessing more resources from the donor on the grounds of lack of absorption capacity. Furthermore, for some partners such as WoLREC and CCJP rating sheets were completed without follow up probing. This compromised the efficacy of the tool as it was impossible to understand the justification for their ratings and possibly force through changes to some of them. For some, the differences may indicate that partners do not recognize some aspects of their organizational practices and culture as capacity issues. In either case, such denial of capacity deficiencies limits the scope of capacity development initiatives that can be undertaken.

iii. All partners acknowledged the role of DCA MCPSP in contributing to their capacity development especially on FPR, P&N and M&E. However, going by partners’ own informed perceptions of capacity, there are sticking problems in some areas and their prevalence varies across the partners as detailed below. The section below enumerates the most common or most decisive capacity constraints that may have to be considered in subsequent programmes.

5.5.2. Key capacity constraints and organizational cultures

This section lists key capacity constraints that prevail among implementing partners. The list includes those constraints that were identified by at least two partners:

i. Corporate governance: All partners have had boards from the time the organizations were established. The boards are constituted in different ways subject to the constitutions of the

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5 For example, in evaluating the different key result areas we have reflected on some operational challenges that partners experience and these were not reflected by the partners themselves in the capacity assessment.
various organizations\textsuperscript{6}. However, the evaluation observed that there is inadequate performance of roles by Boards of Directors or Trustees for some implementing partners. In some cases, there is very little oversight activities and policy and strategic guidance from the boards. The most common reason cited was the lack of funds to facilitate board meetings. In some cases, it was observed that board members lacked the technical and functional competence to perform their roles vis-a-vis the projects.

ii. Political and legal environment: The changing but increasingly unfavourable political environment (which naturally shades into the legal domain) has undermined the capacity of implementing partners to operate effectively and attain desired results. Of most pronounced effects have been the changes on local government elections as well as the application of legal technicalities to allow Maziko Radio to begin broadcasting.

iii. All implementing partners have low, if any, capacity to generate income on their own. However, most of them especially C&S Livingstone Synod, WoLREC and CCJP have developed demonstrated capacity to attract funding from financiers other than DCA. The capacity of C&S Nkhoma Synod in this regard is still very low while that of Maziko is untested although the potential is arguably huge once the radio begins to broadcast.

iv. Across all implementing partners there is a conspicuous lack of long term human resource development initiatives and lack of staff retention schemes. This is largely the case because of the nature of project work which will hardly allow staff long periods of absence from the workplace.

v. There are leadership and managerial deficits in various guises including little delegation in some organizations and micro-management. Not only do these practices dampen morale and initiative of lower level staff, they also constrain personal and professional development.

vi. Some implementing partners have inadequate office infrastructure. While almost all of them have working computers, internet connectivity is still a challenge.

vii. There is lack of sufficient capacity on gender mainstreaming. The most common and well understood aspect is that of inclusion of women in activities or structures. However, gender

\textsuperscript{6} We must say here that procedures for identifying board members for some of the implementing partners are rather weak and make the boards prone to manipulation and unable to exercise rightful oversight necessary for good corporate governance.
mainstreaming needs to go beyond numerical concerns to address substantive issues including appreciation of different approaches for the application of affirmative action measures without compromising on meritocracy.

viii. There is low capacity for mainstreaming HAP principles in project design and implementation. In particular, grievance procedures (for both staff and communities) for most implementing partners are quite rudimentary and there is some level of diffidence in terms of how some HAP principles, for example, financial transparency, can be effected without breeding new difficulties for project implementation. Furthermore, the scope of the HAP principles is not well understood. There is a general misunderstanding that the operationalisation of the concept ends at the level of implementing partners. Its essence, though, is that its scope goes as far as DCA HQs.

ix. There is low capacity and appreciation of negotiation, conflict management and resolution skills. This aspect was mostly reported in the context of the advocacy platform which was also reported to have insufficient capacity to craft advocacy strategies of positive engagement with duty bearers as reported elsewhere in this report.

x. There is low capacity in some partner organizations for project designing especially on the aspect of specification of causal mechanisms for attaining desired results and impacts (i.e. articulating a project theory). A related element which reflects a capacity deficit is the development of feasible outcome and impact indicators that are consistent with the theory underpinning the project.

6.0. Recommendations

6.1. Programme performance

6.1.1. Strengthening legislative and implementation frameworks for enhanced civic participation of women and other poor.

i. The programme’s approach focused on collecting inputs for the constitutional Review Conference. This turned out to be less effective because of the political economy dynamics and vested interests that undermined the process. In order to strengthen legislative frameworks DCA and partners must use a different approach. We suggest that they must identify relevant legislative frameworks (Acts of Parliament or constitutional provisions) that need to be targeted for review in order to enhance civic participation. For example, other studies have established
that The Local government Act and the Chiefs Act are some of the laws that directly impinge on
the participation of rural folk in public life. The platform may wish to carry out a consultative
review process of such laws, carry out advocacy activities to garner support for suggested
changes. Furthermore, instead of advocating for government to accept proposals and then for it
to produce draft law for Parliament, DCA and its partners could explore the production of draft
law and seek to present it in Parliament either as a Private Member’s Bill or as a Private Bill.

ii. In order to strengthen participation frameworks especially at the local level, the programme
should explore ways of deepening civic engagement beyond interface meetings in the absence
of local government councilors. One potentially effective way of doing this is to train Area
Development Committees (ADCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs) and advocate
for their involvement in policy and development processes at local government area level.

iii. Continue to advocate for decentralization in the form of devolution of political and
administrative authority rather than administrative de-concentration of central government
which has effectively been the practice to date. A potentially effective way for doing this is to
engage in evidence-based advocacy highlighting the governance and development shortfalls of
current practices and offering institutional solutions.

iv. Develop civic education programmes on the legislative process of the local assemblies (by-
laws) and identify opportunities for civic participation in that process.

6.1.2. Increasing women representation in decision making positions

i. The electoral system that is used in Malawi (i.e. First −past −the Post) has been found to be
unfavourable for the election of women to elected assemblies at local and national levels in
several countries. We suggest that DCA and its partners should conduct a study or commission
one, on the relationship between electoral systems and numbers of women in elected
structures in order to identify constraints that pull back women from making themselves
available for candidacy and reduce their chances of being elected once they take up
candidacy. This will help in identifying how best to carry forward the 50-50 campaign in relation
to elected assemblies.

ii. Previous advocacy strategies for increasing women in Parliament and local government
assemblies have focused on providing campaign support of various kinds to women
candidates. The results have been slow and dismal. There is need to more direct and quick
ways of increasing the number of women in elected decision-making structures. We suggest
designing and implementing an advocacy strategy on affirmative action that may increase
numbers of women in elected assemblies. Best practice scenarios can be assimilated from the
experiences of Uganda and Tanzania which use electoral systems similar to that of Malawi but
have modified them with different affirmative action facilities that have enabled them to increase the numbers of women parliamentarians beyond the critical mass threshold of 30%.

iii. The programme should go beyond concern with increasing numbers of women in decision making structures to providing specific tailored support to those women who are already in the positions to enable them make in roads and influence the content of legislation, regulation, development plans and policies as the case may be.

6.1.3. Empower women to challenge repressive cultural beliefs and practices that limit their participation.

i. The evaluation noted that this key result area did not have adequate baseline information and challenging repressive cultural practices was treated as an added activity to the gender awareness programme. In view of the results achieved in this area as detailed above, this is an area that must be highlighted as a primary concern of the programme. We therefore recommend that DCA and its partners must commission sociological/anthropological studies in potential impact areas to identify and document cultural practices in thematic areas, how they impact on women, youth and men, their custodians and enforcement mechanism. These studies should inform the design of interventions in the respective areas.

ii. Based on evidence adduced from the suggested studies or any other credible source of evidence, we recommend developing tailored civic education programme and intensifying education on human rights especially women’s rights in relation to the identified oppressive cultural practices.

iii. The programme must sustain and enhance women’s and girls’ forums and associations to share their lived experiences on the different ways that cultural practices affect them and to articulate desired changes and how to pursue the changes.

6.1.4. Increasing access to justice especially for women

i. Enhance civic education for women to enable them recognize injustices in their communities, cultural practices and in their domestic relations.

ii. Mount basic training for traditional leaders and local courts officials on the basic tenets and procedure of delivering gender-sensitive justice.

iii. Promote the use of village juries where women and CBEs conversant with human rights issues and especially women’s rights can participate in advisory capacities.
6.1.5. Partners advocacy & networking skills

i. Maziko Radio has now gone on air with a national broadcasting licence. This offers the MCPSP and other DCA programmes a huge opportunity for reaching out to the nation with advocacy messages on various issues. DCA and partners are encouraged to use this resource for evidence-based advocacy for institutional and structural reforms.

ii. Sustain the production of the annual governance report and its dissemination at sub-national levels.

iii. Develop a more engaging strategy of advocacy that links up the platform with policy makers and political leaders in a regular and institutionalized fashion rather than reactionary approaches and over reliance on media releases.

iv. Improve on policy analysis skills including policy entrepreneurship among implementing partners to increase government uptake of policy proposals from the platform.

vi. The MCPSP should continue to be even more proactive in focusing on influencing policy changes, vis-à-vis creation of conducive and gender sensitive legislative and implementation frameworks and not focusing more on reacting to individual cases emanating from system failures.

6.1.6. Use of participatory & gender mainstreaming tools

i. While there is, generally, use of participatory approach, the nature of people’s involvement is equally important especially at project design stage. In some projects, there is evidence that people’s participation at design stages was less than optimal as partners took mainly a top-down approach. Thus, people’s participation was instrumental rather than transformative, leading to implementation problems of the solutions. We recommend that problem identification by partners through quick surveys should be supplanted with genuine consultations with targeted beneficiary communities.

ii. The MCPSP should promote replication of best practices from its projects, for example, the use of interface meetings which by design promote significant levels of women representation and participation in public life.

iii. MCPSP management should develop or improve criteria for assessing before implementation how proposed projects conform to the participatory approach and how they mainstream gender.
6.1.7. Linkages/Synergies between programmes

i. To consolidate linkages and synergies at impact area levels, the DCA should, in the next MCPSP phase, either seriously consider facilitation of loose networks between MCPSP partners and other stakeholders implementing relevant and linkable projects in MCPSP impact areas or ensure that different MCPSP programme projects (HIV/AIDS, Food Security etc) fall in the same impact areas.

ii. CBEs should be trained on how to use project activities under the MCPSP to complement other programme areas. For instance, in training people on human rights, they could do it from an HIV/AIDS perspective or food security dimension. Similarly, in preparing an agenda for interface meetings, they could identify and frame questions on such issues as food security and/or HIV/AIDS etc that are primary concerns of other DCA programmes.

6.2. Programmatic issues

i. Introduce a more objective system of identifying partners in the MCPSP. In particular, DCA should put out a call for proposals and specify key criteria for assessing the proposals and awarding projects.

ii. Partners /projects should be aligned to specific programme objectives rather than indicators. It should be clear from the outset which projects are contributing to which programme objectives. This is important as programme evaluation proceeds on the basis of key result areas and not project indicators.

iii. Improve on specifying mechanisms that link directly project activities to project and programme goals. For instance, ensure that economic empowerment activities deliver governance outcomes. This is about a clear articulation of project and programme theories. This is important for purposes of gauging the success of the respective projects and programme in relation to stated objectives and desired outcomes.

iv. Improve on indicator development especially by taking into consideration the wider political context that impacts on the effectiveness of projects and programme. For instance under the key result area of increasing number of women in elected positions, a better indicator for the programme given the nature of relevant projects and the political environment would have been ‘the number of female candidates/aspirants and not necessarily the number of women in elected position.

v. Review levels of remuneration and incentives for the different cadres of project staff.
vi. Increase staff numbers for the MCPSP at DCA as well as in projects. The increases should be based on practical needs.

vii. Rationalize salary contributions to non full time project staff. Full contributions should be for project managers and below.

ix. Develop and implement a policy that ensures that project vehicles are based and used primarily in impact districts.

6.3. WOLREC and NKhoma Synod Projects
i. Provide more resources to scale up coverage

ii. Increase staff numbers at project sites especially for WOLREC

iii. Ensure project vehicles are based in impact districts and used primarily by project Managers.

iv. Improve on timely disbursements to minimize financial and operational stress

v. Specify mechanisms of linking project activities to project goals and the latter to programme objectives (not indicators) under development objectives

vi. The highest project post that MCPSP should fund in full is project Manager. For posts higher than that, MCPSP should make reasonable contributions only.

6.4. Mainstreaming human rights and gender sensitivity in programming and implementation
i. Gender sensitivity must go beyond concerns with numbers of women participating in activities and structures to addressing substantive issues of opportunities between men and women as well as other issues

ii. Besides framing gender as a cross-cutting issue, it should also be projected as a human rights issue to deepen and broaden its acceptability so that gender sensitivity increasingly becomes part of the social fabric. The evaluation noted that communities were more
receptive to human rights discourses than to gender per se. Linking the two in the suggested manner would help further assimilation of gender sensitivity.

6.5. **HAP Knowledge and Compliance**
   i. Make it a requirement for project proposals from (potential) partners to demonstrate full awareness of HAP principles in their proposed implementation strategies and declare willingness to comply.

   ii. For all partners, DCA must conduct internal workshops on how exactly each of the key HAP principles will be or can be implemented in their respective projects.

   iii. DCA and partners must develop a clear policy position on the extent of financial transparency that partners will be expected to avail to communities.

6.6. **Institutional capacity of implementing partners**
   i. Corporate governance: organize training or workshop at the inception stage of each project involving board members, management and project staff. Workshops should be tailored to clarify roles and expectations of the different players vis-à-vis the project.

   ii. Political and legal environment: The advocacy platform must consider scanning the legal and political environment to identify institutional (i.e. rule based or legal) bottlenecks for which a proactive advocacy strategy should be developed and implemented.

   iii. Sourcing funds:
      a) DCA should continue the practice of joint applications with implementing partners for funding from other financiers;
      b) Through the platform, organize workshops on developing winning proposals;
      c) Partners should be encouraged to think outside the box on ways and means of generating supplementary income without turning into profit-maximizing organizations

   iv. Long term human resource development: Projects or the program should start providing support for long term capacity e.g. partial or full scholarships for postgraduate studies in relevant fields. The trained staff must be bonded either to the implementing partner or to DCA for a given minimum number of years with clearly spelled guidelines on implications for jumping
v. Support leadership and management development including capacity development in conflict management and resolution; and project design and management through short term training of project management staff preferably at local institutions.

vi. Organize periodic training sessions or refresher workshops on gender and HAP mainstreaming. Furthermore, implementing partners should become acquainted with the notions of ‘developmental leadership’, and ‘working politically’ especially in such fragile conditions that obtain in Malawi and may be expected to continue prevailing for the first few years of the next MCPSP.

7.0. New areas for intervention
All the projects and the key result areas of the MCPSP were found to be relevant given the context and the specific development challenges that they sought to address. Nonetheless, the evaluation exercise asked respondents at different levels and in different capacities to signpost new potential areas that the next MCPSP should consider venturing into. Furthermore, evaluators used the results of the exercise to identify new areas. In addition to or within the current work areas, the following issue areas were identified:

i. Accountable and equitable access to public services especially health, water and sanitation and infrastructure (especially rural feeder roads).

ii. Advocacy for decentralization in the form of political devolution of authority as opposed to the current form which is largely administrative de-concentration of central government.

iii. Anti-corruption and investigative journalism

iv. Community training programmes on Income Generating Activities (IGAs) and basic business management skills preferably as key components of economic empowerment activities.

v. Civic awareness on the right to development with a primary focus on duty bearers.

vi. Provision of social welfare and social security interventions targeting orphans and vulnerable children.

vii. Adult literacy interventions

viii. Commissioning research for development in issue areas of interest

8.0. Conclusion
This report has presented the key findings of the evaluation of the MCPSP based on the ToRs of the
assignment. Overall, the evaluation found that the implementation of the MCPSP has made significant contributions to civic life in rural communities as well as to economic empowerment. Women have been not just beneficiaries but active players in their own development and emancipation from oppressive cultural practices.

However, the implementation of the programme could be better. In this regard, the evaluation identified areas that should be improved. This report has proffered some suggestions on how some of the challenges could be dealt with. It is hoped that the findings and recommendations contained in this report will make a positive contribution to future programming.
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Appendices

Programme overview matrix

Key Informant Interview Guide

Focus Group Discussion Guide

Institutional Capacity Rating sheet

Detailed Capacity Rating Sheet Results