

*National Democratic
Institute for
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BALLOT TEST REPORT

*A Report on a Series of Eighteen Focus
Groups Conducted in Malawi to Test
Alternate Balloting Procedures*

June 1996

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in Malawi to Test Alternate Balloting Procedures**

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*The National Democratic Institute's Malawi Project is funded
under a grant from the United States Agency for International Development.*

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INTRODUCTION

The administration of the May 1994 general elections was a great success by all measures. A large percentage of the population turned out to vote in the country's first democratic elections, there were no allegations of significant voter fraud and the officially reported number of spoiled ballots was relatively low. The most obvious problems on election day were very slow moving lines and the reported confusion by some voters, primarily the elderly, on the mechanics of voting.

Since the general election the current balloting procedure has had to undergo the more focused and in some ways more rigorous test of by-elections in several parliamentary constituencies. These constituency elections offer a much greater opportunity for parties, candidates and individuals to scrutinize the voting process and, if so inclined, abuse its weaknesses. The use of the current balloting process in such a limited environment has resulted in troubling allegations of vote buying/selling and of the importation of voters from outside the constituency. Not all of the allegations have proved to be true. However, there is a widespread perception that the current balloting procedure is flawed and subject to fraud and abuse. If action is not taken by the Electoral Commission and other election officials, confidence in the system of voting and any results produced by that voting may be severely damaged.

It was these concerns and the pending local government elections that prompted the Minister of Local Government and various election officials to request that NDI conduct a limited number of focus group discussions to gather data concerning the feasibility of changing the balloting process. The test focused on attitudes toward the current voting process and the capacity of rural voters to make the switch from the current perforated ballot to a single ballot paper which would require marking the ballot in some fashion. The survey also gathered some basic data on attitudes concerning registration and photo identification.

In preparation for the survey, NDI developed a questionnaire to be used as a guide during the focus group discussions. The questions were based on consultations with local government and election officials, including some members of the Electoral Commission. Eighteen focus groups were conducted in villages in rural Lilongwe and Salima districts. The survey was limited to these two districts to reduce costs and to produce preliminary information on the rural population's attitudes and adaptability. It is hoped that this information can serve as a foundation for basic decisions concerning a new voting system and as a building block for further research once those decisions are made. While the rural population is not a monolithic community, it is likely that similarities in living conditions and literacy rates would have produced comparable results in other parts of the country. It should also be noted that the attitudes concerning voting which were expressed by participants in this report are similar in nature to those expressed by participants in the last NDI survey in which NDI held discussions in all three regions of the country.

This focus group survey incorporated a mock voting exercise in addition to the traditional discussion format. For this part of the program, NDI simulated the atmosphere of a polling station. A portable polling booth was built, indelible ink was purchased and sample registration certificates were made. The primary reason for conducting the focus groups was to determine a new design for the ballot. The vast majority of complaints with the current system centered

around the use of the perforated ballot which required the use of a discard box and parts of which could be taken out of the polling place. As a result, all of the tests which we conducted were with ballot papers that had all candidate names, party names and party symbols arranged on a single page. Two vertical and two horizontal single ballot paper designs were tested.

The single ballot paper requires use of a marking instrument. NDI researched and tested a number of options, including ink pens, rubber stamps and the inked thumb or finger. Because no marking instrument is required in the current voting process, the introduction of marking tools, to which the rural population has had little exposure, was an extremely important issue. For this reason, we chose to design a relatively large number of marking instruments and to test the viability of each with the rural population. Each of the ballot designs and marking instruments were tested in the simulated voting conditions during the mock voting exercise. The results of the mock voting exercise were tabulated and are part of this report.

The focus group findings proved extremely useful in measuring the adaptability of rural residents and identifying any problems that may arise when that population is faced with a single ballot paper or new marking tools. However, we recommend that these results be viewed only as a starting point. When the Electoral Commission and the Ministry of Local Government determine the most viable options for an alternate balloting procedure, further tests should be conducted with models which are likely to resemble the final chosen method. It is our hope that this report will aid election officials in choosing these options and in developing a new voting system for Malawi.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

A total of 184 residents of rural Lilongwe and Salima districts participated in focus group discussions and mock voting exercises to test a single ballot voting system. The primary purpose of the test was to measure the attitude of the rural population towards changing the voting system and their ability to adapt to such changes. The composition of the groups were almost always evenly divided between males and females, and every effort was made to ensure that the discussions were conducted in remote parts of the districts to provide the most difficult test for the ballot designs and marking instruments.

The programme for the focus groups contained two major parts: discussion concerning past voting practices and potential changes and a mock voting exercise. The discussion section of the programme was conducted both before and after the mock voting. Prior to the voting, participants said they remained enthusiastic about voting in future elections and had no major criticisms of the current system, although some felt it was confusing for the elderly. The mock voting exercise tested potential ballot designs and marking instruments to use with those designs. While very few instructions were given to participants prior to casting their ballots, they voted correctly with little difficulty, even when using unfamiliar objects. In discussion following the mock voting, the participants' comments were very positive about the single ballot system. Almost all expressed their hope that such a system would be instituted quickly to simplify the process and eliminate fraud. This summary outlines the recurrent themes from the discussion section of the program and the dominant tendencies discovered during the mock voting exercises. Detailed findings concerning each subject are found in the next section.

The following findings are based on the discussion among focus group participants both prior to and following the mock voting exercise. Most reflect the participants' attitudes on past and future voting.

Registration and Voting: Participants were generally enthusiastic about their continuing participation in the electoral process. They remain eager to vote in any future elections and are not opposed to having to register again to do so. Because of the registration process prior to the referendum and prior to the general elections, many participants simply viewed registration as a necessary part of the voting process. Nevertheless, talk of voter apathy has begun to penetrate into the rural areas, with some participants noting that others in their village may be less willing to register and vote in future elections.

Photo Identification: There was initially a negative reaction among the participants to the idea of introducing photo identification into the registration and/or voting process. Suspicions over the intended use of the photos was widespread. However, when participants associated the identification with the elimination of voter fraud and abuse, there was strong support for the idea.

Voter and Civic Education: Participants expressed a great desire for more education on the voting process and were critical of methods that were not interactive. In the 1994 general elections, most participants received information about voting through campaign meetings, the

radio and posters. Women received much less information than men prior to election day. Traditional authorities, though important in daily life, were not key sources of information on voting.

Change of the Voting Procedure: There was no particular allegiance to the current system of voting among focus group participants, with some indicating that it was confusing and slow. Several participants pointed out that they had adapted to a new method of voting once and were willing to do so again. Their agreement to change was qualified by two conditions: that the new system contain "fewer stages" and eliminate fraud.

Secrecy of the Vote: All participants believed their vote was secret due to both the privacy of the polling booth and the use of an envelope. However, participants who were involved in mock voting exercises without using an envelope were satisfied with the level of security provided by simply folding the ballot to obscure the vote. Indeed, after the voting exercises many participants saw the envelope as an impediment to the speed of the process and declared that its use was confusing to many elderly voters.

Use of Party Symbols, Pictures and Colour: Participants felt that party symbols and pictures of presidential candidates were important aids in helping illiterate voters choose the candidate of their choice. Opinion was evenly divided on the value that colour symbols added to the ballot.

The following findings are based on participant reaction to their experience in the mock voting exercises. They also incorporate the observations of focus group moderators and results tabulated from actual ballots cast.

Viability of Single Ballot Voting System: The use of a single ballot paper and marking instrument is an extremely viable option for an alternate balloting procedure in Malawi. Participants in very rural areas of the districts where tests were conducted were adept at using such a system. This was confirmed by both the observation of the focus group moderators and by close scrutiny of the ballots participants cast. Prior to the mock voting exercise, participants had no objection to changing the balloting procedure and following the exercise, there was unqualified enthusiastic support among all participants for a single ballot system which they felt was simpler and faster. Participants did note their desire, however, to have the new system introduced with adequate civic and voter education.

Ballot Design: The overall design of the single ballot paper did not make a great deal of difference to participants. Tests were conducted with horizontal and vertical designs, but neither participants nor observers noted a difference in speed, accuracy or ease of use. Both designs did, however, produce a tendency to vote for the candidate on the top line or the line farthest to the left.

Use of a Marking Instrument: Participants showed a great ability to adapt to any marking instrument, even those with which participants may not have been familiar prior to the test. Their skillful use of the marking tools produced very few spoiled ballots. In the tests conducted,

four marking methods proved viable for extensive use among the rural population: ink pens, punch out perforations, a rubber stamp with an ink pad and a finger or thumb with an ink pad. Older voters had little trouble using ink pens. When using the punch out perforation, where the voter tore out a small square to denote the vote, participants performed perfectly, perhaps because of past experience. The rubber stamp as marking tool was popular with participants, who found it easy to use. Finally, the inked thumb or finger was clearly the method with which participants felt the most comfortable. Specific recommendations on the design, use and potential problems with each of these marking instruments is detailed in the next section under "Marking Instruments Tested."

Extraneous, Malformed & Misplaced Marks: Regardless of the marking instrument tested, participants occasionally made marks other than as instructed. Lighter marks, particularly when using the inked finger or thumb, appeared on other parts of the ballot including in other boxes. Some marks, especially when using a pen or rubber stamp, did not appear as they were intended. For example, when told to make a "tick" with the pen, a few participants made other marks and when using the rubber stamp, a few participants failed to use enough pressure so the mark did not come out as intended. These marks also extended slightly into other boxes at times. With all marking instruments, the marks sometimes appeared in the party symbol box or next to the name rather than in the empty voting box beside the symbol and name.

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o The Electoral Commission should investigate further what may be early signs of voter apathy and design appropriate civic and voter education programs to generate greater interest in participation. In addition, if a new round of registration is planned for local government elections, steps should be taken to make registration more convenient to ensure the greatest participation. Suggestions by participants included a longer registration period and mobile registration centres.
- o The introduction of photo identification into the voting process should not move forward until there is a clear understanding of the fears of the rural population to the use of photographs. In addition, any introduction of identification must be accompanied by a concerted civic education effort that outlines the purposes and uses of such identification, reassures the population about the impossibility of misuse and links its use to the elimination of fraud.
- o A new voting system must be introduced with a comprehensive education programme that incorporates interactive methods. Election officials should consider developing special educational mechanisms to reach women and should explore closer cooperation with political parties and traditional authorities.
- o Election officials should focus on designing a voting system that requires fewer steps and which restores confidence among the general public that the system can not be abused.

- o Election officials should debate the benefits of the elimination of an envelope in the voting process, which include fewer stages and less confusion among some voters, versus the possibility of a minor decrease in the amount of secrecy of the vote. An adhesive that seals the ballot by pressure when folded should also be investigated and considered.
- o The ballot should continue to display party symbols along with candidate and party names, and when feasible, party symbols should appear in colour. In addition, pictures should continue to be used on presidential ballots but are not critical in other elections.
- o An alternate balloting procedure, which incorporates the use of a single ballot paper, which is simpler to use than the current system and which takes steps to eliminate fraud, should be introduced as soon as it is feasible or before the next nationwide election.
- o The Electoral Commission should conduct further tests using real symbols to determine if there is a significant advantage gained from occupying the first line on a ballot. If so, mechanisms should be developed to correct this deficiency.
- o If the single ballot system is adopted, further tests should be conducted with some or all of the four recommended marking instruments.
- o The use of a marking instrument will be new not just to voters but also to polling officers. For this reason, it will be necessary for the Electoral Commission to develop new regulations and instructions for polling officers. This is particularly important for the rulings on what constitutes a valid vote. Based on the results of the tests, it is recommended that the Commission issue clear guidelines to govern marks that appear malformed, are extraneous or are misplaced. The Electoral Commission should consider adopting a liberal standard for determining what constitutes a valid ballot to avoid ballots being voided unnecessarily.

DETAILED FINDINGS

Registration & Voting

Voter registration procedures and attitudes concerning registration are extremely complicated matters. It is recommended that a full focus group survey, with registration as its sole focus, be conducted before the Electoral Commission takes a major decision on changing registration methods or on conducting another full round of registration. During the course of this survey, NDI gathered very basic and limited information on registration that needs to be explored further. The information on registration and voting is outlined below to give election officials preliminary data upon which they can plan additional research.

Level of Participation in Elections: A large majority of participants reported they had registered for and voted in the referendum. Of those that did not register most were young or female. About the same number said that they had voted in the referendum. Almost all participants indicated that they had both registered for and voted in the general elections.

Lost Registration Certificates and a New Round of Registration: Participants were not asked whether they were still in possession of their voter registration certificates, but members of five groups volunteered the information. Their contribution reveals a very high number of lost certificates. In this group, females noted a slightly higher rate of lost certificates. These participants indicated that a new registration period for local government elections was a good idea because it would allow them to replace their certificates.

Even those participants who were in possession of their certificates said they would have not a problem with being required to register in order to vote again, with most seeing it as simply part of the voting process and others noting that it was "their duty." Likewise, all seemed eager for a chance to vote for new councilors. However, a significant minority of the participants warned that others in their village were "disillusioned" with politics or were "disappointed in their leaders." As a result, several participants felt that there may be "generally low turnout because of unfulfilled promises," but each denied this was their attitude and maintained their intent to participate fully in the local government elections.

The Current System of Registration: There was a wide range of opinion about the current system of registration with some saying that registration was easy and there was no need for change and others who felt that the registration centres needed to be closer to villages. The latter group of participants felt that if the registration centres were not within a short walk, and if registration were not held in the dry season when people were not as busy and traveling was easier, many people would fail to register. Considering ways to increase voter participation, there was general support among the participants for a longer registration period and for officials to visit villages to register the sick and elderly. Participants in several groups recommended one month as a reasonable amount of time for the registration period.

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o The high rate of lost certificates among participants in the five groups that volunteered the information suggests that a new registration period for local government elections is necessary.
- o Election officials should take note of what may be early warning signs of voter apathy and take action to ensure that registration and voting is made as convenient and as simple as is needed. Because of the seriousness of this issue, it is recommended that further research be conducted to determine attitudes and to guide voter and civic education efforts once a date is set for local government elections.
- o A longer registration period of at least one month and appropriate timing of the registration period should be considered to ensure greater participation.
- o An increase in the number of registration centres should be considered to make it easier for rural people to register. Mobile registration centres were suggested by the participants.

Introduction of Photo Identification

Initial Reaction to Photo Identification: NDI was asked to explore the reaction of rural residents to the introduction of photo identification into the voting process. When this topic was first approached in the focus group discussions, the response was largely negative. The majority of participants were opposed to the idea initially and were confused about how the photos would be used. Many felt that villagers would be scared by the process and suspicious, questioning why authorities would need the photos. There were also concerns that the photos would be turned over to the police.

Link Between Photo Identification and Elimination of Fraud: When an explanation of the purpose of the photos was offered and linked to ensuring the identity of a voter, participants seized upon the idea of a photo identification card as a way to stop fraud and abuse of the current system. One noted that the cards would "ensure that switching voter registration certificates would be impossible," while numerous others quickly saw that the cards would curb the buying/selling of votes and other fraud, "the cards will help to check dirty games played by politicians whereby they take people elsewhere to vote for them." Once the participants made the link between the elimination of fraud and photo identification (it should be noted that this was without prompting), they were quite emphatic that they would have no reservations about having their picture taken before or during the voter registration period as long as three basic conditions were met. The identification would have to be offered free of charge, the photo identification would have to remain in the possession of the individual, and assurances would have to be made that photos would not be used by police. Those who had expressed concern about the suspicions of villagers to the photos felt that these could be overcome through civic education.

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o The initial reaction of participants suggests that photo identification could not be introduced into the voting process without significant civic education on the purposes of the photo and the link between the identification and the voting process.
- o If election officials opt to institute photo identification, further research is critical to determine the depth and parameters of the rural population's fears over the use of photos. Serious consideration will also have to be given to the financial and logistical implications of providing photo identification to the whole voting age population. Replacement of lost identification documents may be a problem in the future.
- o If photo identification is introduced, it should be linked to the elimination of fraud, which participants saw as a legitimate and important reason reform.
- o The introduction of photo identification should be accompanied by assurances that the photos would be free, would remain in the possession of the voter and would not be given to the police in order to be accepted in rural areas.

The Current Voting System

Memory of the Current Process of Voting: Most participants have a general memory of how they voted that includes standing in line, receiving ballots, going into a booth, tearing the ballot, and using the discard box. Specific recollections about using voter registration certificates and the exact nature of the voting were less frequent. For example, only about half of the participants remembered they had voted in two elections, presidential and parliamentary, in 1994.

Information on Voting Prior to and on Election Day: All participants felt they had received sufficient information to vote properly in the May 1994 general elections, although the vast majority indicated their preference for more intensive voter education in future elections. Even those participants who had no prior knowledge of the voting process on election day felt that the instructions from the polling officers were sufficient to cast their ballot without error. For those who received information on the process of voting prior to polling day, the primary sources were campaign meetings, the radio, posters and church leaders, in that order. Campaign meetings were the primary source for men while women cited both the radio and campaign meetings as important sources. However, there were significantly more men who attended campaign meetings than women and a large number of women indicated they had no information on voting until they went to cast their ballot. Also, many participants felt that the elderly did not receive enough training on how to vote prior to election. The general opinion was that this caused many delays and spoiled ballots by the elderly during the voting and that this should be an area of focus for election officials in the future.

Practically all participants said they had seen posters on the process of voting during the general elections, and while the posters were generally liked, there was widespread criticism of their limitations. One participant said that the posters did not remain in public long because villagers liked to display them on their home walls, but most of the criticism focused on the problems the

posters posed for the illiterate. "We can't read, so how can posters help us?" a participant asked. What proved to be more bothersome for participants was the lack of interactivity of the posters. One noted, "you can't ask a poster questions." Participants repeatedly indicated their strong preference for face-to-face voter and civic education, with some recommending that educated people in the villages be trained to teach others. Only a handful of people mentioned that they had viewed the Electoral Commission video on voting. However, those who did were enthusiastic about its ability to teach voting methods. Traditional leaders did not figure significantly in voter education efforts.

General Feeling About the Current Voting Process: Participants felt that the current balloting process was generally good and relatively easy. They particularly liked the ease with which the ballots tore due to the perforations. Some participants liked the use of the indelible ink for dipping the finger to prevent fraud. [Note: These sentiments were expressed before the mock voting exercises were conducted.]

Problems Experienced with Current Voting System: Few participants admitted that they had any difficulty in voting during the general election. However, they did report that others had problems in voting, primarily the elderly and the illiterate for whom participants felt the balloting process was too complicated. The problems cited included: putting all the ballots in one envelope; putting the intended vote in the discard box instead of the ballot box; difficulty in tearing the middle ballot; hurrying through the process and making mistakes because of the long lines; and mistakenly bringing some or all of the ballots out of the polling place. Many participants expressed their dislike of the discard box for various reasons. Some felt it could be used for fraud. Others felt that people could see the discarded ballots and be influenced in their vote. Many, though, indicated that it was simply too easy to place the intended vote in the box by mistake, making the use of the discard box confusing.

A relatively common complaint among participants was that the voting process took too long. This group said that the complicated nature of the balloting process, which comprised "too many stages," meant that the elderly and illiterate could not easily follow the instructions they were given. This, they felt, caused extreme delays in moving voters through the process and resulted in others being pressured to hurry their votes. One suggestion in speeding the process was for poll workers to tear the perforated ballots for the elderly.

In selected villages, participants reported that they felt threatened by political parties to vote for them. Similarly, a few participants reported that they had heard allegations of vote buying or selling, but most of these seem to emanate from radio reports of by-elections. [Note: The concern over buying/selling is likely to be even greater in the areas where by-elections have occurred.]

Opinions About Changing the Current Voting System: While participants were generally happy with the current voting process, the vast majority expressed no reservations about changing the system. They did not feel that there was only one way to vote and were not particularly committed to the current system. One participant noted, "if we could change from the old system under MCP, we can change from the current system." Participants made their support of a new system contingent upon two factors: the system should eliminate fraud and should be simple with fewer stages. A few participants did note that the elderly are now familiar with the

system and a change might adversely affect them. Despite being willing to accept a change in the voting system, all participants indicated strongly that it should be accompanied by appropriate civic education, preferably through face-to-face contact.

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o While the preference for face-to-face civic education may not be feasible when taken literally, i.e. individual education for the whole voting population, consideration should be given to developing more interactive methods of voter education. As suggested by the participants themselves, training-the-trainers or more extensive use of the video van with moderators could satisfy the general public's desire to be educated through interactive methods.
- o The disparity between men and women who received information on voting prior to election should be investigated and remedied. Elections officials may need to target voter education efforts specifically for the female population. Because it provides an avenue for those females who do not attend campaign meetings to obtain some information on voting, radio should remain an integral part of voter education efforts.
- o Because political parties played a very important role in educating the public on the voting process, serious consideration should be given to coordinating more voter education efforts with parties. Conversely, traditional authorities were not important sources of information according to participants, but given the importance of these leaders in the daily lives of most Malawians, election officials should explore whether they could be tapped to assist in educating voters.
- o The use of posters for voter education should not be eliminated but should be considered only a supplementary form of information.
- o Strong consideration should be given to adoption of a voting system that is less complicated for the illiterate and elderly, does not make use of a discard box, reduces the amount of time a voter must wait before casting a ballot and eliminates fraud.

Secrecy of the Vote

The Guarantee of Secrecy: No one in the survey disputed the fact that their vote was secret. All participants stated their strongly held belief that no one could know how anyone else voted unless it were divulged by the voter. The majority of participants felt that the privacy of the booth was the most important factor in ensuring secrecy. One participant echoed the sentiments of all when he declared that the ballot was secret because "we cast it ourselves with nobody watching." Most of the participants, especially females, also indicated that the use of the envelope made their vote "doubly secret" because no one could see their chosen ballot inside.

Use of the Envelope: Before the mock voting exercise, almost all participants saw the envelope as an important, if secondary, safeguard for the secrecy of their vote. However, no participant voiced any concern about the secrecy of the ballot when we conducted 18 of the 19 tests without

using an envelope. The design of the current voting system which requires that one party symbol be singled out and taken to the ballot box makes it much easier to recognize at a glance who a person has voted for without an envelope. This is why so many participants were committed to using an envelope prior to the mock voting.

Elimination of the Envelope: Once participants had a chance to use a single ballot with many party symbols and were instructed to fold the ballot before coming out of the booth to obscure the symbol, they much preferred this system to the one that utilizes an envelope. Participants expressed no reservations about the guarantee of secrecy of their vote under this system. One participant said, "there is no need to use the envelope since we just fold the paper to cover the mark." Other participants even began to criticize the envelope after the exercise, saying that it was confusing to most rural people and therefore should be abandoned. Many also thought the elimination of the envelope would speed the process of voting.

In the mock voting exercise, a small minority of the participants folded their ballots outside the booth, despite instructions to do otherwise. In a real voting situation, more explicit instructions may be necessary or a polling officer may have to be stationed near the booth to remind voters to fold the ballot before they enter the open part of the polling station. [Note: During the general elections, there were also reports of voters placing their ballot in the envelope after they exited the booth.]

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o The elimination of the use of the envelope should be thoroughly debated by election officials. Participants in the discussions were not committed to the use of the envelope and many felt its elimination would speed the voting process and make it less confusing for the elderly.
- o If use of the envelope is eliminated, minor precautions may need to be instituted to ensure that voters fold their ballots inside the booth, thus ensuring the secrecy of their vote.

Use of Symbols, Pictures and Colour on the Ballot

Use of Party Symbols: Both males and females liked the use of the symbols for easy identification. They also liked the fact that the symbols helped people who couldn't read identify the party of their choice. Describing this, one male participant said, "we need the symbols to help us know who to vote for." On the whole, females recognized symbols less and thought they were somewhat confusing. The confusion was the result of what the participants termed as "too many symbols on the ballots," which seemed to refer to symbols which were not readily recognized. In one village participants were very critical similarity between the Malawi Democratic Party (MDP) and the Malawi Democratic Union (MDU) party symbols.

Use of Pictures: Many participants remembered the pictures of the presidential candidates on the general election ballots. Again, they liked the pictures because it was easy to recognize the candidate of their choice, and it was felt this was a useful feature for people who were illiterate.

There was a sense that pictures were particularly important for presidential candidates. A minority felt that the pictures would be confusing if people had never seen the candidate and should not be important in helping a voter make a decision. Since many people would not recognize local government candidates, there was not a strong desire for having pictures on the ballots for such an election.

Use of Colour: The opinion on the use of colour symbols on the ballot was divided. Some thought that colour symbols would be useful in helping the illiterate identify their parties and candidates. Explaining his support of this position, one participant said, "otherwise, it will appear that all the candidates are from the same party." A slightly larger number felt that there was no need to have colour since the symbols were already different.

In the mock voting exercise that used colour on the party symbols, most participants who used this ballot were dismissive of its value. "Colour will be a waste. There is no need for it," said one of the group. Another indicated that using colour would only create problems, "because people would have to get used to new colors with new parties."

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o The ballot, in whatever form, should continue to display party symbols to aid the illiterate in voting for the party and candidate of their choice.
- o The ballot should continue to display the pictures of presidential candidates but pictures may be considered optional for other elections.
- o The use of colour party symbols should be considered for all elections when not cost-prohibitive.

Ballot Designs Tested

This test involved several designs of a ballot whereby all candidates and parties appear on a single page and are never separated. This differs from the current method which presents the voter with a single sheet that is perforated and requires the voter to tear off the desired ballot. In the 1994 general elections, the current method proved complicated for some, particularly the elderly. More importantly, though, recent by-elections have produced allegations of vote buying/selling which is technically possible under the current system of voting. Potentially, voters could simply take the ballots that are intended for the discard box out of the polling place and sell them to individuals or parties who support the candidate on the missing ballot. To counter this, it was decided that a single ballot paper should be developed to determine its viability among the rural population. Several variations of the single ballot paper were designed to test which was the easiest to use for this population and which produced an equitable result.

Vertical vs. Horizontal Design: Two major alternative designs of the single ballot were tested. The first was the vertical design which positioned candidates and party symbols from the top to the bottom of the page, and the horizontal design which positioned candidates and party symbols from left to right on the page. The horizontal design was the one that was most similar to the

arrangement of the current ballot. Participants reported no difference in terms of speed or other factors in using the vertical or horizontal design. No difference in speed, ease of use, or accuracy was noticed by the NDI team in observing the balloting either.

Vertical Ballot Design: The vertical design tended to produce more marks on the first and second lines of the ballots. The total results from all the tests with the vertical design combined are: Line 1--50 marks; Line 2--47 marks; Line 3--27 marks; Line 4--20 marks; Line 5--9 marks; Line 6--14 marks. Since real parties were not used, it may be that the tendency to mark in the first and second lines was because there was no real choice. If real parties were used, participants may have chosen other lines. However, it may be that there is also some advantage to having the first line.

Horizontal Ballot Design: The horizontal design was developed to see if positioning candidates and party symbols in this manner would eliminate the advantage that may be gained by appearing near the top of a ballot paper page. In these tests using the horizontal design, participants most often chose the first, second and fifth lines. Line 1 indicates the line to the far left of the page. The numbers are: Line 1--10 marks; Line 2--13 marks; Line 3--1 mark; Line 4--1 mark; Line 5--6 marks; Line 6--0 marks. Therefore, it appears that arranging the candidates and party symbols horizontally does not significantly affect what may be a tendency to mark a box which is positioned first or second on the page. Again, since this was a test where no real party symbols or names were used, NDI cannot determine whether a ballot with real and known choices would produce different results. Also, it should be remembered that there may have been some advantage to occupying the outside edges of the ballot in the 1994 elections, but this was not seen as a significant issue at the time.

In addition, there were two variations on the horizontal design that were tested to determine which would produce more accurate results. One simply had a vertical line separating the candidate and party symbol and the voting box, while the other design featured a more clearly defined box in which to vote. This latter design produced slightly better results with more participants placing their marks accurately within the box instead of beside the symbol or name.

Single Ballot Vertical Design with Colour Symbols: As noted above, there was mixed opinion on the use of colour for party symbols. Some participants felt it was a very useful tool for illiterate voters while others were skeptical of what colour added to the ballot. Members of the focus group which participated in the test with party symbols in colours on the ballot said it did not affect them or assist them in making their choice. However, as with the other ballots, fabricated party symbols were used and therefore it is impossible to know if the effect would be the same if real party symbols were used. Fabricated symbols were printed with colours that are used by parliamentary or nonparliamentary parties currently. Still, the participants indicated that colour made no difference in their choice.

Ballot with Adhesive Strip: In an attempt to eliminate the use of an envelope to simplify voting but at the same time increase the secrecy of the vote beyond merely folding the ballot, a ballot that had an adhesive on the bottom that would seal the ballot when folded was tested. The adhesive required some form of wetting to seal. The majority of participants in the focus group that tested this ballot did not like the process of wetting or licking the adhesive. They thought this act was either complicated or unhygienic.

Before testing this type of ballot paper, attempts were made to locate an adhesive that did not require wetting, but such a product was not available in Malawi. It is possible, however, that with further efforts a type of "self-sealing glue" could be located or could be imported. An adhesive that does not require wetting may be worth testing because it could potentially provide increased security without the negative aspects cited by participants above.

Ballot Test With and Without an Envelope: Eighteen of the nineteen tests were conducted without an envelope. Voters were simply told to fold the ballot to obscure their marks. As noted above, participants in these tests still felt their vote was secret and thought that not using an envelope made the voting process less complicated and faster.

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o Further testing should be done to determine whether there is any advantage in occupying the first or second line on a ballot that arranges candidates and parties vertically or horizontally on a single page. It is suggested that the test use real party symbols to determine if the first or second line advantage disappears or is lessened if voters are given a true choice.
- o If it is found that there is a significant advantage to occupying the first line on the ballot, elections officials may want to consider mechanisms which ensure fairness, such as rotating the party that occupies the top line in various polling centres.
- o If a horizontal ballot design is chosen, it should contain a clearly designed box in which to vote.
- o When feasible, party symbols should appear in colour to assist illiterate voters. While this was supported by only half of the participants surveyed, their objection was simply that they felt it did not add to the ballot. They did not indicate that colour in any way detracted from the ballot. The other half of participants felt that colour would assist most people in identifying their party and candidates.
- o There should be further research into the availability of a "self-sealing" adhesive that would seal a ballot paper by pressure alone when folded. If an appropriate adhesive is found, then further testing should be conducted to see how it performs in realistic voting situations.

Marking Instruments Tested

The single ballot design requires that some sort of marking instrument or other method be used to indicate the candidate the voter is choosing. This issue was one that greatly concerned the election officials consulted prior to the ballot test, given the rural population's lack of exposure to the most obvious marking instruments, such as ink pens. For this reason, NDI chose to design several objects that could be used to mark the ballot and to test the viability of using each with voters in rural areas of the country. The results from the tests are outlined below.

Ink Pens: Although it was anticipated otherwise, people in very rural areas showed an ability to use pens with little or no difficulty. There was some concern among younger participants that older participants would not be able to use a pen. However, tests with two older age groups showed that they experienced no particular problems in using a pen. With voters of all ages, pen marks sometimes extended beyond the boundary of the box and occasionally entered slightly into other boxes. Nevertheless, it was clear in these cases for whom the person intended to vote.

It was also anticipated that there may be some problem with participants removing pens from the polling booth, but although 60 participants took part in testing with this marking instrument, not one pen was taken. In the more chaotic atmosphere of a real polling station, though, this may prove to be a problem. This may require that the pen be secured to the booth by a string or some other method and that extra pens be kept in the polling station.

NDI tested a number of ink pens available locally and in the end decided to test two in the field during the mock voting exercise, the best performing pen from a group which was relatively inexpensive and the best performing pen from a group which was relatively expensive. The Studio Roller 0.5 was the more expensive pen, which retailed in Malawi at the time of the test for MK30/pen. The cheaper of the two pens retailed at the time of test for MK3.50/pen.

In the tests we conducted, the more expensive Studio Roller was clearly the superior pen. The ink performed properly in all tests, and the marks were dark and easy to recognize. The pens did not require much pressure from participants in the mock voting exercise to make clearly defined marks. Although we did not use the pen in an extended test, it is likely that this pen would last longer. The Zebra Ballpoint by contrast is much cheaper, but still performed relatively well. All marks could be recognized, although some were rather light. This pen clearly requires more pressure from the user and therefore, elderly voters may experience some trouble. In addition, this pen may not perform as well when left idle for extended periods or when used consistently for extended periods. For these reasons if the Zebra ballpoint, or any ballpoint pen, is chosen as the marking instrument, extra pens should be available in each polling station to protect against possible problems or failures.

Punch or Tear Out Perforation: This test was designed so that a box with a perforated square appeared next to the name of each candidate. The voter was required to remove the square by the name of the candidate of their choice. Although the focus group moderators and NDI staff found this method somewhat difficult, the participants tested in rural areas proved quite adept, perhaps because of their experience at using perforations in the general elections. After the first test this method was retested to ensure the results were not an aberration. In both tests the participants performed perfectly with no spoiled ballots. Despite the success rate, several minor problems were observed. First, this type of ballot requires that it be folded more than once to obscure the vote, since the hole made by the perforated square is quite visible otherwise. Second, this method prompted more questions by voters and required slightly more explanation from the moderators/polling officers during the mock voting exercise. Finally, there appears to be a tendency to vote on the first or last lines because it is easier to reach and "tear out" the perforations in those lines. [Note: This effect might be negated if a perforation is designed that is easier to tear or if voters are faced with real choices between real parties.]

It is recommended that if this method is chosen, there be a redesign of the perforation. The one tested was in the shape of a relatively large square. A smaller square or a perforation in the shape of circle may allow the voter to "punch out" the perforation instead of carefully tearing it out and thus may speed the voting process. A circle perforation was not tested because this type of perforation is not available in Malawi without incurring the cost of making a mold. However, when printing a large number of ballots, the cost would be minimal. The final design would need to be retested to ensure that voters can use it easily and that it does not produce unexpected problems.

Rubber Stamps: NDI tested two custom-made rubber stamps in the mock voting exercises. One had an "x" carved out of it and the other had a solid circle or "dot" carved out of it. Each was made locally for MK30/stamp. Ink pads were purchased locally for MK40/pad to use with the stamps. This marking method required that the participants ink the stamp on the pad and then place the stamp in the box positioned beside the candidate of their choice. The stamp method was very popular with the participants and resulted in very few spoiled ballots.

When participants used the rubber stamp which produced an "x" mark on the ballot, virtually all marks were clear and placed perfectly within the box. When using the rubber stamp which produced a "dot" mark on the ballot, approximately 20% of the participant's marks appeared as half moons. All whose marks appeared this way were made by female participants and were probably the result of insufficient pressure on the stamp. The participants who made the "half moon" marks complained that the table in the booth was not stable. Nevertheless, with both the full marks and the "half moon," all marks were well within the appropriate boxes, and it was clear for whom each voter was casting their ballot. In addition, one participant suggested that the handle of the stamp be made bigger for easier handling. The only other problem experienced with the use of the stamp was that a few (approximately 10%) of the participants opted to use a thumb print instead of the stamp. In every case, it was clear for whom the person was voting. A ruling by the Electoral Commission counting thumb prints as valid votes, if they appear within a box, when using a stamp would be necessary to prevent a number of voided ballots on polling day.

Inked Thumb or Finger: This method requires the use of ink pads that cost, as noted above, MK40/pad. In the discussions prior to the mock voting exercise, most people expressed their preference to use their thumb as the marking instrument. However, the actual tests produced mixed results. Some thumb marks were placed over symbols. Other thumb marks ran into adjacent boxes. On several ballots there was one dark thumb mark in one box and a lighter one in another box either due to an impression made by the original thumbprint when folding or to the voter mistakenly touching the ballot in another place with the inked thumb. A few participants also made the mark with the finger which had been dipped in indelible ink instead of using the ink pad. In general, use of an inked thumb or finger seemed to cause more extraneous marks on other parts of the ballot than the stamp or pen.

Nevertheless, participants both prior to and following the mock voting exercises felt most comfortable with this method. Therefore, this method deserves consideration. If this method is chosen, further testing may be merited to determine the extent of the problems described above. Once completed the Electoral Commission should make appropriate rulings regarding what would constitute a valid vote to prevent a high number of spoiled ballots.

Sticker: Small adhesive stickers that required a plastic backing be peeled off before the sticker could be placed on the ballot were obtained from a local printer and tested in one mock voting exercise. Many participants found the use of a sticker as the marking instrument difficult. This was due primarily to the problems they experienced in trying to peel the backing from the sticker in order to place it in the box of their choice. Some participants were confused about whether to place the sticker vertically or horizontally. Those that placed the sticker vertically often crossed into another box, making it somewhat difficult to tell the voter's intended choice. This was due in part to the size of the sticker we tested because of the difficulty of finding a smaller sample. Stickers that have a break in the middle may also have produced better results, however, we were not able to locate these in small sizes in Malawi. In addition, the process of using a sticker was so new that many participants were uncertain how to proceed and asked for additional, more explicit instructions from the moderators/polling officers.

Postage-Like Stamp: Small blue air mail stamps were purchased from the local post office and coloured to obscure the writing. These postage-like stamps were tested in the field in one mock voting exercise. While participants were able to use the postage stamp better than the sticker, they expressed some serious doubts about the method. Some complained that the adhesive on the stamp did not hold well, and indeed one stamp fell off during the counting of the ballots. However, more fundamental problems were encountered. Again, some participants were confused about whether to place the stamp vertically or horizontally, resulting in some stamps crossing over into other boxes. Some participants did not like the process of wetting or licking the stamp necessary to make it stick to the ballot, citing this process as unhygienic, complicated and slow. The size and adhesive of the stamp could potentially be changed/improved if purchased from a private vendor. However, as one participant noted, "the idea of a postage stamp is new to most people, so it is not the best way to vote."

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o Four of the marking methods tested produced results which were exemplary enough to be recommended for use with a single ballot paper. These included: an ink pen; a "punch out" perforation; a rubber stamp with ink pad; and an inked finger or thumb using an ink pad.
- o As with all voting methods, there are advantages and disadvantages to each. These are outlined in detail above. Once a marking method is chosen, it is strongly recommended that further testing be done to give the Electoral Commission the opportunity to address all potential problems in advance.
- o If a pen is chosen as the marking instrument, it is recommended that provision be made to have extra pens at each polling station and that the pen in the booth be secured by a string or some other method. In addition, the costs of using a more expensive pen versus the ease of the use of the pen for voters should be seriously debated by the Electoral Commission. When a final choice of a particular pen is made, it would be wise to do limited testing to ensure there are no undiscovered problems with that particular brand.

- o If a "punch out" perforation is chosen to denote for whom the person is voting, the size and type of perforation should be researched carefully. Once chosen, the new perforation should be retested to ensure that voters can use it easily.
- o If the rubber stamp is chosen as the marking instrument, there should be an Electoral Commission ruling that gives clear direction to polling officers to declare half or three-quarter marks and thumb prints as valid votes if they appear wholly within a box or if it is clear for whom the person voting. In addition, the design of the booth should ensure that there is a stable surface upon which the voter can make a clear and forceful stamp, and the handle of the stamp should be large for easier use.
- o If the inked thumb or finger is the chosen marking method, the Electoral Commission should have in place procedures which do not void votes because of extraneous marks, lighter marks in boxes if there is a darker mark that indicates the vote, or marks that extend slightly into another boxes.
- o Participants found the use of a sticker as the marking instrument difficult. Therefore, this marking method as tested in this survey is not recommended.
- o Participants found the use of a postage-like stamp cumbersome and unhygienic. Therefore, this marking method as tested in this survey is not recommended.

Marking Instructions Tested

When testing the pens, three different marking instructions were used, "mark," "tick," and "x" to determine if any of these made a difference in how well participants marked the ballot. When instructing the voters to use a "tick" or "x," the moderators/polling officers would make that sign in the air with their finger. Generally, all three marking instructions given to the participants produced good results. The mark instruction produced many different marks, some imitating party symbols. A more specific instruction, such as "tick" or "x" produced more consistent, clear marks that were almost always within one box. In addition, at times different marks appeared within the box and in other instances marks would appear in symbol boxes or beside names regardless of the marking instruction.

These findings suggests the follow recommendations:

- o A more specific instruction on the marking method, such as "tick" or "x" accompanied by a demonstration of the mark by the polling officer, should be given to each voter if a pen is chosen as the marking instrument.
- o Election officials should develop clear rules about which votes will be counted as valid if a pen is used as the marking instrument. It is recommended that any mark, if it is clear for whom the person is voting, be counted as a valid vote regardless of the instruction.

- o It is also recommended that marks in symbol boxes or beside names be counted as valid votes if it is clear for whom the person is voting.

Reactions to the Single Ballot System of Voting

Following the mock voting exercise, the participants gathered again to discuss the results of the exercise and their feelings about the various aspects of the ballot and the marking instruments. Regardless of what ballot design or marking instrument was used, there was enthusiastic support for the use of a single ballot without an envelope or discard box. There were numerous comments from participants which praised the single ballot system as less confusing ("there's no need to bother with tearing ballots") and easier to use, with most expressing their strong preference for it. One participant said, "the new system is greatly welcomed and involves easy to understand procedures, even for the elderly." Participants also felt that the single ballot system was less time-consuming and involved fewer stages. At this point the moderators reminded the focus groups that this test involved only one election, instead of the two in which they had to vote during the 1994 general elections. Still, participants were insistent in their belief that the single ballot system would be faster, even taking into account the time it would take to vote in two elections.

Participants cited other reasons for their strong support of a single ballot system as well. One of the most important was the participants' fervent belief that this balloting procedure would discourage cheating and dramatically reduce fraud. One after another participants noted that vote buying/selling would no longer be possible in the manner it is alleged to be done currently. Other reasons cited for preference for the single ballot paper included the perception by participants that all party symbols on one piece of paper made choosing easier, that secrecy would be improved since no ballots would be discarded and that in the instance of the "punch out" perforation, only blank pieces of paper would remain in the booth.

Practically all of those surveyed expressed their desire to see a single ballot system introduced before the next election. However, this statement was almost always accompanied by a plea for civic and voter education at the same time the new system is introduced. Part of this emanated from a fear that, even though they had personally negotiated the new balloting procedure with ease, perhaps others wouldn't. Part of the desire for more civic education also is the result of a desire to have more information about voting and government in general.

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o An alternative balloting procedure which makes use of a single ballot paper and eliminates the use of a discard box should be introduced as soon as feasible or before the next nationwide election.
- o This new voting procedure should be introduced with adequate civic and voter education to inform and reassure the general public.

Problems Observed with the Single Ballot System of Voting

The vast majority of participants negotiated the single ballot voting system, regardless of marking instrument or ballot design, with ease during the mock voting exercises. In the discussions following the exercises, very few participants had any significant criticism of the system, with most describing it as "perfect." However, observation by moderators and examination of the actual ballots cast produced some minor problems that should be considered by election officials in developing any alternate balloting procedure. Some of these problems have been mentioned in previous sections detailing specific aspects of the voting.

Folding: A small number of participants folded their ballots outside the booth, potentially allowing at least polling workers to see how they voted, even though they had been instructed by the moderators/polling officers to fold the ballot inside the booth.

Size of Ballot: The size of the ballot used did not make it easy to fit the ballot paper into the opening of the ballot box used. This was a particular problem if the ballot was folded twice. The tests were not conducted with official Electoral Commission ballot boxes; however, we are aware that the opening in those boxes is quite small as well.

Marks Outside Boxes or Into Other Boxes: In general, marks made with pens or inked thumbs tended to go a bit outside the boundaries of the boxes in which voters were meant to make their mark or go into other boxes slightly.

Marks Other than Those Instructed: In using the rubber stamp method that requires an ink pad, some voters put thumb marks instead of stamp marks inside the boxes. In using the rubber stamp with the "dot," some marks appeared as half moons or were only partial marks. Sometimes other marks were made when voters had been instructed to use the pen and place an "x" or "tick" in the box beside the candidate of their choice. In all these cases it was clear for whom the person intended to vote.

Marks in Symbol Box or Beside Name: Some marks were made in the symbol box or beside the name instead of the blank box beside the symbol and name in which voters were meant to make their mark. It was clear in each case for whom the person intended to vote.

Use of a Wetting Instrument: Participants found the use of a wetting instrument difficult. In addition, females found anything that required licking to be unhygienic. Both problems were encountered whether the object was to seal the ballot or meant to be placed on the ballot to denote a vote.

Thumb Marks on Other Parts of the Ballot: When using the thumb, there were numerous ink smudges or lighter thumb prints both in other boxes and on other parts of the ballot. This was produced by a direct touch from the voter or by a still-wet thumb print when the ballot was folded.

These findings suggest the following recommendations:

- o If the use of an envelope is eliminated, more explicit instructions or an officer stationed outside the booth may be required to avoid having a voter come outside of the polling booth with an unfolded ballot. In addition, a self-sealing adhesive could be developed to seal the ballot when folded.
- o Tests with official ballot boxes and potential ballot sizes should be done to ensure that the size of the ballot does not cause a problem in actual voting. This will be especially important if the use of an envelope is eliminated.
- o Assuming the use of some type of marking instrument, marks that go outside voting box boundaries or into other boxes should be counted as valid if it is clear for whom the vote is intended. Electoral Commission officials should develop clear instructions on this issue for polling officers. In addition, design of a ballot that provides for a small space between boxes may be considered to alleviate part of this problem.
- o Assuming the use of some type of marking instrument, marks other than those which voters are instructed to make should be counted as valid votes if it is clear for whom the vote is intended. Electoral Commission officials should develop clear instructions on this issue for polling officers.
- o Assuming the use of some type of marking instrument, marks that appear in the party symbol box or beside a name instead of in the box in which the voter is intended to make their mark should be counted as valid votes if it is clear for whom the vote is intended. Electoral Commission officials should develop clear instructions on this issue for polling officers.
- o Ballot papers that require wetting to either seal or place a mark are not recommended.
- o If the inked thumb or finger is chosen as the marking instrument, the darkest thumb print should be counted as the valid vote and marks of lighter thumb prints in other boxes or on other parts of the ballot should not void a vote. In addition, marks made anywhere on the ballot paper with the different-coloured indelible ink, which is used to prevent double voting, should not void a vote. Electoral Commission officials should develop clear instructions on these issues for polling officers.

RESEARCH METHODS

A focus group is a semi-structured discussion on specified topics, with 5 to 15 participants. A professional moderator guides the discussion, which normally lasts two hours, and carefully notes the responses so that they can be subsequently analyzed.

The questions posed in a focus group discussion are more open-ended than in a typical polling questionnaire. Rather than eliciting simple "yes" or "no" answers, they are designed to allow participants to respond in their own words and manner. As a result, focus groups do not generate quantitative results like a poll. Instead, focus groups allow detailed discussions of complex issues and reveal the ways in which participants express their views.

Focus group research is internationally recognized as a reliable method of producing qualitative data. While it does not have the statistical validity of a quantitative baseline survey, it does provide an understanding of public attitudes at a particular point in time. Focus group research is used widely in Africa because of the cultural adaptability of the methodology and the general lack of reliable sampling for quantitative surveys. NDI has conducted focus groups in Malawi, South Africa and Ethiopia in the recent past.

In this project, the methodology differed slightly from a traditional focus group survey. The first half of survey was conducted normally with participants responding to a set of questions. However, the second half of the survey consisted of a mock voting exercise to test actual skill for a variety of voting methods. The results were tabulated and are part of this report. Finally, the survey ended with a follow-up discussion on how participants felt about the voting method tested and the other various methods discussed.

The Focus Group Team

NDI Malawi Program Director Traci Cook designed the questionnaire for the discussion section of the project in consultation with members of the Electoral Commission and officials at the Ministry of Local Government. These officials also contributed their suggestions for various ballot designs and methods of voting for the mock voting exercise.

NDI Malawi staff member Foster Mijiga supervised the discussions in the field. He selected appropriate locations and directed site set-up for the mock voting exercise. The focus groups were moderated by Timothy Chikoti and Mary Msusa, both of whom have extensive experience in this type of research, and both of whom have worked on previous NDI focus group projects measuring views on democracy and governance. In each group, one moderator would lead the discussion in Chichewa, while a second would take detailed notes in English. The discussions were also tape recorded. Following each focus group, the moderating team prepared a detailed report in English based upon their notes and the tape recording. When all of the discussions were completed, the whole focus group team reviewed the reports and identified recurrent themes or tendencies.

Method of Selecting Sites and Forming Groups

Because of the lack of telephone communication in rural areas and the remoteness of most of the focus group locations, it was virtually impossible to make advance arrangements or recruiting participants before the day of discussion. Recruiting was carried out on the spot when the focus group team reached the site of the discussion. In keeping with Malawian custom, Mr. Mijiga would seek out the Chief or Village Headman and explain the purpose of the visit. He would then request the traditional leader's permission and assistance in assembling the group of participants. In every instance, the leader was gracious and willing to assist, and the focus groups were quickly assembled. The discussions were then held in the open, usually in the shade of a tree or on the porch of a house.

The focus group discussions were conducted in eighteen (18) villages in rural Lilongwe and rural Salima districts. The limiting of the survey to these two districts was deemed the most cost-effective and quick method to obtaining preliminary results on attitudes about and ability to use alternate balloting procedures. As a result, though, this test can not provide data for all three regions of the country. Nevertheless, the exercise was extremely useful in identifying the major problems and obstacles posed by a single ballot system for a rural population. Every effort was made to ensure that the majority of the villages that participated in the survey were located in remote parts of the districts to provide the most difficult test for various voting methods, such as the use of a pen or a rubber stamp as a marking instrument.

Over 60% of the participants listed farming as their primary occupation. Other participants were fishermen or were involved in other small enterprises, such as selling firewood or produce. The focus groups included both male and female participants who ranged in age from 18 to 80. All of the discussions were conducted during the course of a week in early October. The majority of participants voted in both the June 1993 Referendum and in the May 1994 general elections.

APPENDICES

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION OUTLINE

1. Introduction/Explanation of Purpose of Discussion.

2. Initiate a Discussion of the Current Voting Process.

Are you registered to vote? Did you register for the referendum? Did you register for the general elections? (Note: determine how many have registered twice or only once.)

Elections for councillors will be held in the near future. Do you plan to vote in those elections? Would you be willing to register again if it was required before you could vote for a councillor?

What would make it easier for you to register again? (Discuss times, places and process of registration.)

Did you vote in the last election (general election May 1994)?

Did you/do you remember voting in the referendum two years ago in 1993?

What do you like/dislike about the election (voting process)?

Are there people in your village who have difficulty voting?
If so, please describe the problems they are having.

Have you heard about any problems with the election? Any cheating?
Any vote buying/selling? [Probe any specific examples given.]

Do you remember how you voted? Explain. Did you have any problems voting that way?

Did the ballot look like this? [Show the 1994 parliamentary ballot.]
What did you like about it? Is there anything you did not like? Do you remember how many ballots there were? Do you remember what they were for?

What about the envelope? Why is it important?

What did you do with these papers and the envelopes?

Do you think your vote was secret? What do you think made your vote secret?
[Probe especially any references to the envelope as the vehicle which ensures secrecy.]
Who might know who you voted for? How would they know? Have you heard stories of people who know how other people voted?

Do you like using the perforated (explain and show what perforated means) ballot?
Envelopes? Discard box? What problems did you encounter in using each?

Did you like the use of the symbols of the parties on the ballots in the general elections in May 1994? What do the symbols mean? Should they be in colour? [Show example of colour symbols.]

What did you think of the use of the pictures of the candidates on the presidential ballot? Is a picture important?

How did you learn to use the current voting system when you first voted? If you had not been told how to use the system until referendum or election day, was the explanation of the polling officer sufficient to assist you in voting correctly?

What would you think if the way you cast your vote were changed?

3. Introduce the Concept of Identification.

If you arrived to register and the officials asked to take your picture for an identification card, what would you say and/or think? If you are not willing to have your picture taken, what are your objections?

4. Conduct a Mock Voting Exercise.

Set up a mock polling station. Explain the exercise in general terms to all focus group participants. Have the participants form a single line. Have a moderator explain to each "voter" the process to cast a ballot. Provide each voter with a single ballot and a marking instrument. Commence voting.

Scrutinize each ballot, making particular note of any problems which are apparent. Calculate the number of spoiled ballots.

5. Review the Voting Exercise with the Participants.

Did you like using this single ballot system of voting? Did you like it better than the old (the one used in the referendum and the general elections) system? If not, why not?

What did you think was the most difficult part of voting in this new way?

Moderators should display "problem" ballots and discuss with the participants what went wrong and what could be changed (in terms of the design of the ballot, the instruction to the voters, or the marking instrument used). Ask what more could the polling officer have told them to make voting easier.

DEMOGRAPHICS OF FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANTS

Total Number of Participants: 184

Gender:

Men	51 %
Women	49 %

Occupation:

Farming	61 %
Farming Supplemented by Other Enterprise	14 %
Selling Good	7 %
Wage Occupation	5 %
Fishing	4 %
Student	4 %
Small Enterprise	3 %
Other	2 %

Age:

25 and under	28 %
26 to 35	34 %
36 to 45	24 %
46 to 55	6 %
55 and over	8 %

FOCUS GROUP INFORMATION BY VILLAGE

Bingu Village, T/A Maliri

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 48; Range: 23-80 years
Occupation: 7 Farmers, 3 Farming & Small Enterprise
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Zebra Ballpoint Pen
Marking Instruction: "Mark the Ballot"

Chana Village, T/A Pemba

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 29; Range: 19-52 years
Occupation: 2 Farmers, 4 Brewing Beer & Baking Cakes,
1 Charcoal Seller, 1 Student, 1 Usipa Seller,
1 Manager of Tea Room & Farmer
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Horizontal with Small Box for
Marking Inside Bigger Box with Name
Marking Instrument Tested: Rubber Stamp "Dot"

Chinoko Village, T/A Chimutu

11 Participants: 6 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 42; Range: 30-68 years
Occupation: 11 Farmers
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Thumb

Chioza Village, T/A Mazengera

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 29; Range: 19-43 years
Occupation: 9 Farmers, 1 Farming & Selling Produce
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Rubber Stamp "Dot"

Chirombo Village, T/A Chiwere

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 34; Range: 23-56 years
Occupation: 3 Selling Firewood & Bamboo Sticks, 5 Selling
Firewood & Bamboo Sticks & Farming, 2 Weaving Baskets &
Selling Bamboo Sticks
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical Color
Marking Instrument Tested: Thumb

Chisikwa Village, T/A Kalolo

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 23; Range: 18-30 years
Occupation: 4 Farmers, 2 Students, 1 Butcher, 1 Small
Enterprise, 2 Farming & Brewing
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Studio Roller Pen
Marking Instruction: "Make an X"

Chitepete Village, T/A Msosa

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 39; Range: 28-62 years
Occupation: 5 Fishermen, 1 Housewife, 2 Farmers,
1 Mat Maker, 1 Manager of a Restaurant
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Postage-Like Stamp Which Required Wetting

Jezele Village, T/A Kalonga

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 44; Range: 30-65 years
Occupation: 9 Farmers, 1 Farmer & Carpentry
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical With Sealing by Wetting
Marking Instrument Tested: Studio Roller Pen

Kantchenembwe Village, T/A Kalonga

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 26; Range: 19-37 years
Occupation: 6 Farmers, 2 Students, 1 Farming & Selling Fish,
1 Small Enterprise
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Punch Out Perforation

Kolombola Village, T/A Pemba

11 Participants: 5 Male, 6 Female
Average Age: 32; Range: 20-66 years
Occupation: 6 Farmers, 3 Farmers & Casual Laborers on
Estates, 1 Farmer & Small Business, 1 Farming &
Selling Produce
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Horizontal with Box
Beside Name
Marking Instrument Tested: Thumb

Kubwesi Village, T/A Kalumbu

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 35; Range: 20-56 years
Occupation: 6 Farmers, 1 Primary Teacher, 2 Farming &
Selling Produce, 1 Messenger
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Rubber Stamp "X"

Matumba Village, T/A Khombedza

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 32; Range: 19-50 years
Occupation: 10 Farmers
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Zebra Ballpoint Pen
Marking Instruction: "Make a Tick"

Mchoka/Ndindi Village, T/A Ndindi

11 Participants: 6 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 32; Range: 22-62 years
Occupation: 7 Farmers, 1 Student, 1 Casual Laborer,
1 Small Enterprise, 1 Farming & Selling Produce
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical With Envelope
Marking Instrument Tested: Rubber Stamp "X"

Mnjingi Village, T/A Chiwere

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 37; Range: 21-53 years
Occupation: 7 Farmers, 1 Farmer & Driver, 1 Farmer
& Traditional Healer, 1 Businessman
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Punch Out Perforation

Mwalala Village, T/A Kalonga

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 37; Range: 22-50 years
Occupation: 7 Farmers, 2 Farming & Selling Produce,
1 Small Enterprise
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Peel Off Sticker

Nanganga Village, T/A Mazengera

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female
Average Age: 31; Range: 22-44 years
Occupation: 10 Farmers
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical
Marking Instrument Tested: Rubber Stamp "Dot"

Zalo Village, T/A Kulunda

11 Participants: 6 Male, 5 Female

Average Age: 34; Range: 23-41 years

Occupation: 2 Fishermen, 2 Casual Laborer,
2 Housewives, 1 Small Enterprise, 1 Farmer,
1 Manager of a Tea Room, 1 Selling Maize Flour,
1 Fisherman & Builder

Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Horizontal with Small Box for
Marking Inside Bigger Box with Name

Marking Instrument Tested: Thumb

Zapita Village, T/A Maliri

10 Participants: 5 Male, 5 Female

Average Age: 26; Range: 20-47 years

Occupation: 8 Farmers, 1 Student, 1 Small Enterprise


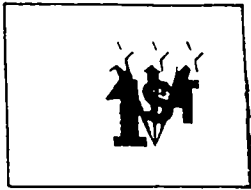

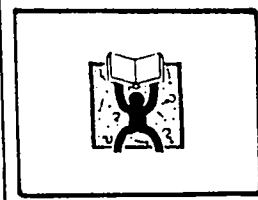
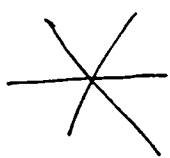
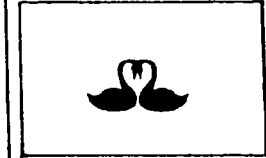
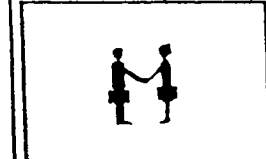
Ballot Tested: Single Ballot Vertical

Marking Instrument Tested: Studio Roller Pen

Marking Instruction: "Make a Tick"


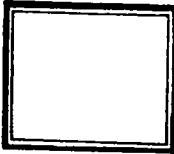

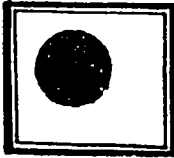

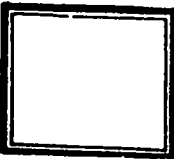

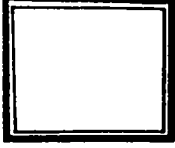




EXAMPLES OF BALLOT DESIGNS AND MARKS

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Fie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		





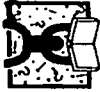


Vertical Ballot Design and Mark Made Other than as Instructed

CHISANKHO 1996

<p>Joseph Lilongwe</p>  <p>MFP</p> 	<p>Foster Blantyre</p>  <p>FDM</p> 	<p>Daitso File</p>  <p>GNP</p> 
<p>Gillian Pricetown</p>  <p>SLF</p> 	<p>Ken Kampango</p>  <p>SDP</p> 	<p>Bonnex Thauzeni</p>  <p>BBP</p> 








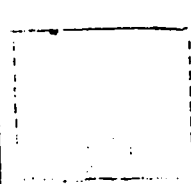
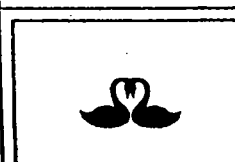
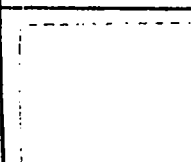
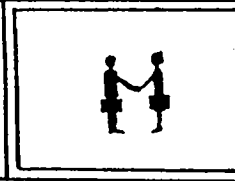

Horizontal Ballot Design: Small Box Inside Bigger Box

CHISANKHO 1996

<p>Joseph Liiongwe</p>  <p>MFP</p>	
<p>Foster Blantyre</p>  <p>FDM</p>	
<p>Dalitso File</p>  <p>GNP</p>	
<p>Gillian Pricetown</p>  <p>SLF</p>	
<p>Ken Kampango</p>  <p>SDP</p>	
<p>Bonnex Thauzeni</p>  <p>BBP</p>	





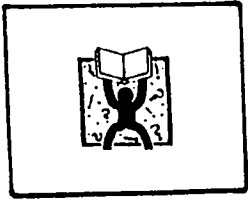

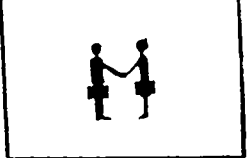
Horizontal Ballot Design: Voting Box Beside Name

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flic	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		



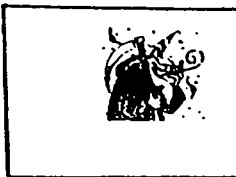

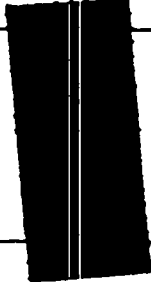
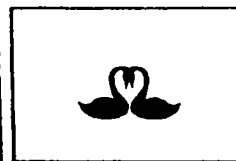
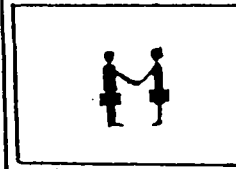
Ballot with Punch Out Perforations

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		


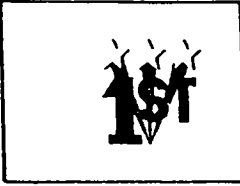



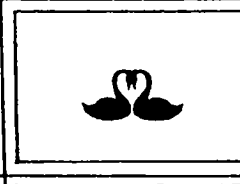
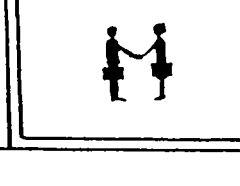
Ballot with Peel Off Sticker

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		






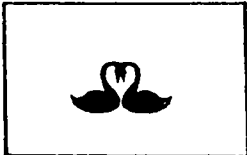
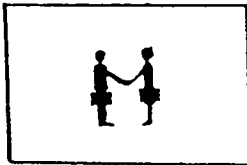
Ballot with Postage-Like Stamp

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		


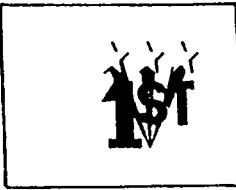



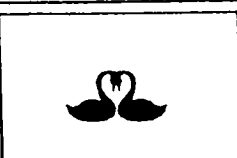
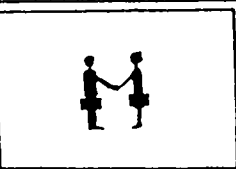
Mark Made with Rubber Stamp "X"

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		




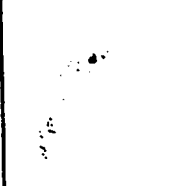


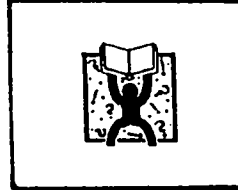



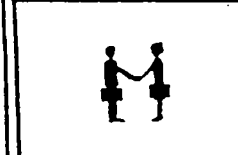

Mark Made with Rubber Stamp "Dot"

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		






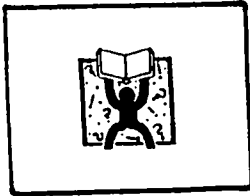

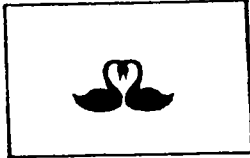
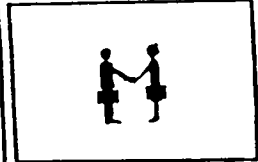
"Half Moon" Mark Made with Rubber Stamp "Dot"

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		



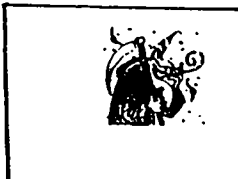



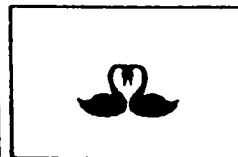
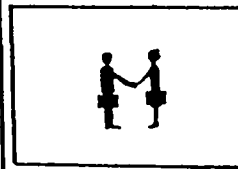
Thumb Print and Extraneous Marks on Other Parts of the Ballot

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		



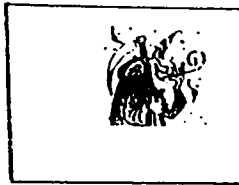

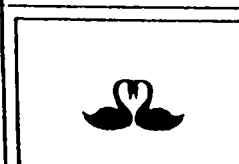
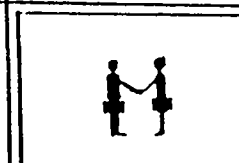
Extraneous Marks on Ballot & Mark Made Other than as Instructed

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		




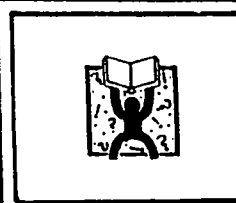

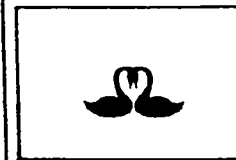
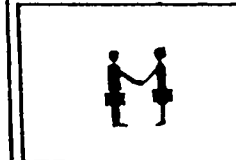
Mark Made Other than as Instructed

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		





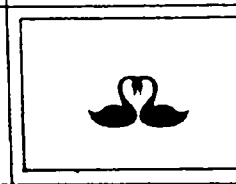
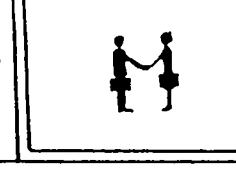
Mark Which Extends Beyond Voting Box

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		





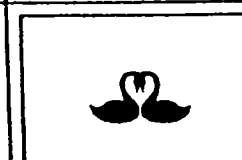
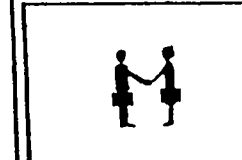
Mark Which Extends Beyond Voting Box

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Fie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		




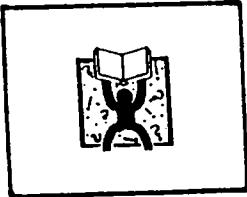

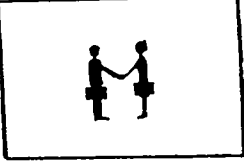
Mark Which Goes Slightly Into Another Box

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		




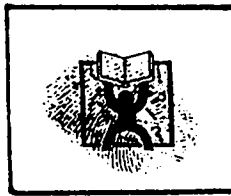

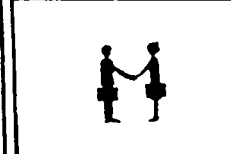
Mark Which Goes Slightly Into Another Box

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		





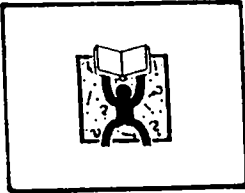

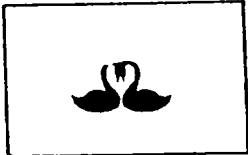
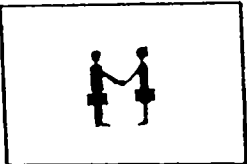
Mark Made in Party Symbol Box

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		







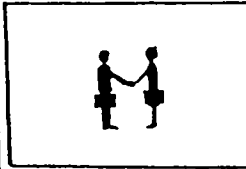
Mark Made in Party Symbol Box

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		


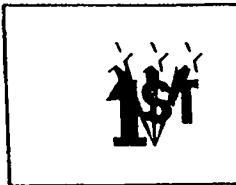


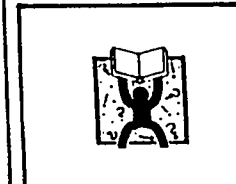


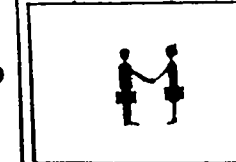
Dark Mark in One Box, Lighter Mark in Another

CHISANKHO 1996

Joseph Lilongwe	MFP		
Foster Blantyre	FDP		
Dalitso Flie	GNP		
Gillian Pricetown	SLF		
Ken Kampango	SDP		
Bonnex Thauzeni	BBP		

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Dark Mark in One Box, Lighter Mark in Another

EXAMPLE OF BALLOT FROM HAITI

The ballot for district elections in the country of Haiti on the following page incorporates many of the features tested in the Malawi focus groups individually. The goal in Haiti was to use every tool possible to assist illiterate voters in correctly casting their ballot for the candidate of their choice. Thus, the ballot includes pictures of candidates, candidate names, party acronyms and party symbols in colour, some of which were multi-coloured. In addition, the thumb was chosen as the marking method and an oval space, roughly the shape of a thumbprint, was designed to provide voters a clear area in which to mark. Given the high rate of illiteracy in Malawi, election officials may wish to consider this design or parts of this design in choosing an alternate balloting procedure for Malawi.

REPUBLIK DAYITI
ELEKSYON
1995

D001
DEPATMAN LYES
1E SIKONSKRIPSYON POTOPRENS

DEPITE

JEAN MAZARE THOE	GERALD DONVELIN	YVES LUMBER PERITE TOUSSAINT	OLIBRIE MATHUEL	ERUJIT PERDU CASSEUS	YVON DONDANT	BERNARD STERLIN	PAUL MACE JAVERIN	CLAUDE BIRIBUE	LENER MONTFORT MONTESTEIN	MATHER FORTISTAL	CARLE 2. STUJANE	OGTINE ST-JUSTE	GEORGES ANDRE LAMBERRE	JEAN THOCHET DOLE	LENA MC-MALLY	JACQUES VOLANT
IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND	IND

V O I D V O I D V O I D V O I D V O I D V O I D V O I D V O I D





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