

MALAWI ELECTORAL AND DECENTRALIZATION ACTIVITY (MEDA)

MEDA PROGRAM :

IMPLEMENTATION PERIOD

October 2013 - December 2015

DISTRICTS

Balaka, Lilongwe and Machinga

PARTNERS

- Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC)
- Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (FEDOMA)
- Malawi Human Rights Youth Network (MHRYN)
- NGO Gender Coordination Network (NGO-GCN)

STRATEGIC PARTNERSHIPS:

- District Councils Balaka, Lilongwe and Machinga
- **Early Grade Reading Activity**
 - Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM)
 - International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI)
 - Local Government Finance Committee (LGFC)
 - Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD)
 - Support for Service Delivery Integration (SSDI)
 - United States Agency for International Development (USAID)

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ORIENTATION WORKSHOPS FOR THE AGRICULTURE COMMITTEES IN BALAKA, LILONGWE AND MACHINGA DISTRICT COUNCILS



Photo/NDI: Member of Parliament Wilson Ndomondo, making a contribution during the agriculture committee orientation workshop in Machinga



Photo/NDI: Councilor David Chitedze presenting group findings at an agriculture committee orientation workshop in Machinga

In June, 2015, NDI Malawi in partnership with three district Councils supported orientation workshops for the agriculture committees to help members of these committees to learn about the agriculture system, sector budgetary information, oversight of service delivery and representation of citizen interests in local government. The orientation workshops were part of NDI's larger post-election program which seeks to restore public confidence

"I am grateful to NDI for providing us the opportunity to interact with our colleagues at the secretariat. This training will equip us with important skills that will help us serve our people better." - **MP Ndomondo for Machinga District, South Constituency**

in local governance and generate more opportunities for citizen inclusion in local governance and dialogue among newly elected councilors, parliamentarians and communities.

The committee orientation workshops were organized

in collaboration with partner organizations such as the Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM), International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI), National Local Government Finance Committee (NLGFC) and the Ministry of Agriculture and

Food Security. The workshops were a success as they brought together councilors, local leaders, members of parliament and district secretariat staff to discuss the realities of agriculture in their respective districts. From June 9 to 25, NDI organized three orientation workshops for agriculture committee members in Balaka, Machinga and Lilongwe districts and reached 40 participants (6 women, 34 men).



Technical Assistance to Health, Agriculture and Education Committees

In July NDI intensified its efforts in offering personalized assistance to the education, health and agriculture committees in Balaka, Lilongwe and Machinga district Councils.

NDI's efforts have ranged from providing support to the councilors to develop committee work plans to serve their communities better. On July 9, 2015 NDI met the committee chairpersons and deputy committee chairpersons of health, education and agriculture committees for Machinga and Balaka districts where NDI Senior Program Manager Pamela Kuwali assisted the committees on how to develop work plans that respond to District Development Plans, Annual Investment Plans and sector



Photo/NDI: Former chairperson of Lilongwe District Council Samson Chaziya commended NDI for the technical assistance provided to education, health and agriculture committees of Lilongwe

"Members of the education, health and agriculture committees in my council are very different from the rest. They make meaningful contributions during council meetings ... this is because you have trained them on outreach and communication, budget scrutiny and participatory budgeting processes. I wish you could extend this assistance to other committees and local councils as well."

implementation plans. On July 13, NDI met agriculture, health and education committee chairpersons in Lilongwe and provided similar assistance

to them. Former chairperson of Lilongwe District Council Samson Chaziya who also attended the meeting thanked NDI for its continued support to the Council:

said Chaziya at the end of a meeting where NDI was mentoring the chairpersons and deputy chairpersons agriculture, health and education committees of Lilongwe District Council.

Policy Forums: Education

On August 18, NDI in partnership with the Lilongwe District Education Committee and the Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC) organized the first policy forum on education held at the Lilongwe District Council Chamber.

Organizations invited by the Council included Word Alive Ministries, Good Neighbors, Landirani Trust, Civil Society Education Coalition, NGO-Gender Coordination Network, Malawi Human Rights Youth Network and the Federation for Disability Organizations in Malawi attended the forum. Dr. Joseph Chimombo Director of Basic Education in the Ministry of Education also participated the forum. The forum organized in the form of a town-hall meeting, was the first time such interaction has been organized in local government. The forum began with the district secretariat and the Civil

Society Education Coalition (CSEC) providing a snapshot of the problems facing the education sector in the district. Participants then asked questions and suggested solutions on how the problems highlighted could be addressed. Key among the problems highlighted included high school dropout rates especially among girls, poor infrastructure, inadequate teachers leading to congestion, and high pupil to teacher ratios. As an interest group and also a MEDA Partner, FEDOMA was represented and wanted to know the district's plans on providing equitable access to education and building disability-friendly structures.

At the end of the forum participants agreed that the problems facing the education sector are so many that local government alone cannot address all of these, as such there was need for collaboration to improve



Photo/NDI: Education policy advisor for Lilongwe providing details on challenges facing the sector in the district

quality, access and delivery. Participants agreed that it is high time communities were empowered to change their mindset and play more active roles in improving education services. The forum was aired on Malawi Broadcasting Corporation Radio One on Monday 24 August, 2015. A 30-minute live phone-in program followed. The District Education Manager Alexander Manyengo, Chairperson of the Education Committee Hadwell Jani, Policy Officer for primary education in Lilongwe rural east Benalita Chome

Kadzera and CSEC Program Manager Esther Msowoya responded to questions from the public on the problems of education in Lilongwe and how these can be resolved. The level of attendance and participation was positive and the event reached out to more interested citizens through the radio program. The committee chair was motivated by the opportunity to reach citizens in Lilongwe district.

Similar forums will be held for agriculture and health and will also be extended to Machinga and Balaka district Councils.

Development of Public Expenditure Tracking Guides (for councilors and civil society partners)

In an effort to deepen transparency and accountability in local governments, in partnership with the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development and Local Government Finance Committee, NDI has developed a Public Expenditure Tracking (PET) guide that will help councilors, local governments and civil society organizations in Malawi to track local budgets. Expenditure tracking guides have been developed as a guide for local governments highlighting Councilor oversight functions and another one has been designed for civil society organizations or interested citizens to learn how to monitor and track budgets.

"We are happy to be associated with the public expenditure tracking document. We know that issues of financial improprieties are quite serious in our country and it is our hope that with this document the public and the councilors will be able to monitor local council expenses and contribute towards protecting public resources from plunder"
- Kiswell Dakamau Director of Local Government Services Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development during a stakeholder consultation



Photo/NDI: Kiswell Dakamau Director of Local Government Services who described the guide as timely and essential and Dr Asiyati Chiweza, local government specialist who developed the two guides based on prior NDI experiences worldwide

Dr. Asiyati, a professor at the University of Malawi developed the two guides that were peer-reviewed by individuals from the Ministry of Local Government,

National Local Government Finance Committee and the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN). The guides will be released to the public in October 2015.

Roll-out of MEDA Second Phase

From April 2015, NDI rolled out the second phase of MEDA. In this phase, the Institute is providing grants to four local civil society organizations to carry out issue advocacy in Balaka, Lilongwe and Machinga districts with special emphasis on education, health and agriculture. The four organizations receiving funding in this phase are Federation of Disability Organizations in Malawi (FEDOMA), Non-Governmental Organizations Gender Coordination Network (NGO-GCN), Malawi Human Rights Youth Network

(MHRYN) and Civil Society Education Coalition (CSEC). On May 22, in an effort to enhance networking, collaboration and coordination of activities among partners NDI organized a one-day workshop in Lilongwe for the partners implementing the MEDA project. The workshop provided an opportunity to discuss program expectations and introduce USAID integration efforts which was also underscored by the presence of Counterpart, one of the partners receiving funding



Photo/NDI: A partners presenting findings from a group session.

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Roll-out of MEDA Second Phase

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from USAID as well as representatives from USAID Malawi.

The workshop brought together executive directors, projector officers and district coordinators responsible for the MEDA project in Balaka, Lilongwe and Machinga districts. The board chairperson for NGO-GCN, Network Coordinator for NGO-GCN, Executive Director for FEDOMA and National Coordinator for MHRYN attended the workshop alongside their program staff. A total of 23 partners attended the workshop. At the end of the workshop one of the field coordinators working for MHRYN Charles

Sineta said “this meeting will lead to improved coordination among MEDA partners as we were able to appreciate what each partner is doing and how they can work together to maximize resources and avoid duplication.”

Chris Chisoni, National Secretary of the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace also presented results of the focus group discussions that his organization conducted with support from NDI under the MEDA program. The findings presented gaps and challenges in local governance and challenged the local NGOs to develop programs that respond to people’s needs.



Photo/NDI: MEDA partners in group discussions during the partners coordination workshop

FEDOMA influences FISP policy change in Balaka

Through issue advocacy meetings that FEDOMA has been conducting in Balaka under the MEDA program by engaging with Area Development Committees (ADCs) and Councilors, Councilors passed a resolution to include persons with disabilities on the beneficiaries list for the Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP). Previously persons with disabilities were not benefiting from the program because agriculture officials felt that such persons would not utilize the input due to their condition.

FEDOMA leaders reported that the full council observed that persons with disabilities were in fact the people who needed FISP the most and agreed that these vulnerable citizens will be prioritized during the registration and distribution exercise. Chairperson of the Agriculture committee in Balaka Thomas Thomson Bwanali reported that during a monitoring visit by NDI Senior Program Manager on July 9 *“We realized that it was unfair to deny persons with disability access to subsidized farm inputs, our view was that the disability challenges would prevent them from using the input but our perception has changed. In fact, persons with disabilities deserve the inputs more than anybody else”*.

Partner activities

MEDA partners CSEC, FEDOMA, NGOGCN and MHRYN continued to implement activities that ranged from issue advocacy, community interface meetings and issue scorecard meetings to monitor service delivery and issue reprioritization meetings as well as re-signing of social contracts. From May to July 2015, partners reached 1,180 citizens in three districts. In future activities partners will conduct training of community leaders on budget monitoring and tracking. Through this activity, community activists and ADCs will learn how to enforce transparency and accountability in the way public resources are managed in their local governments.

NDI has new Country Director

NDI Malawi has a new Resident Country Director, Sandy Quimbaya who was previously the Deputy Country Director. Former Country Director Taona Mwanyisa has been posted in Zambia. NDI staff wish Ms. Quimbaya all the best in her new role.