



# NATIONAL DEMOCRATIC INSTITUTE FOR INTERNATIONAL AFFAIRS

Fifth Floor, 1717 Massachusetts Avenue, N.W. Washington, D.C. 20036 (202) 328-3136

■ FAX (202) 939-3166

■ E-Mail 5979039@MCIMAIL.COM

## DZIKO NDI ANTHU "The Nation is the People"

A Report on a Series of Fourteen Focus Groups  
Conducted in Malawi Between March 28 and April 6, 1994

Written by Greg Gay  
Edited by Mark Muller, Traci Cook and Jean Maguru  
Project Design by Naomi Mpemba and NDI/Malawi  
Focus Groups Moderated by Ethlet Phazi, Caroline Kayira,  
Kondwani Mwangulube, and Timothy Chikoti

National Democratic Institute  
Post Office Box 30998, Lilongwe  
Tel: 742-114 742-224, Fax: 742-673



## INTRODUCTION

It is important, especially in times of transition, for governments, and for parties and candidates aspiring to positions of leadership, to inform themselves and to be attentive to the needs and wishes of the people. It is the essence of democracy that government be of the people and that the voice of the people be heard and respected. Public opinion research provides a particularly valuable means for governments and other interested bodies to stay abreast of wishes, demands, concerns and fears of the people. Its value lies in its impartiality and independence of any particular interest or pressure group.

This report documents the findings from fourteen focus groups conducted by the National Democratic Institute throughout Malawi between March 28 and April 6, 1994. A focus group is a semi-structured discussion that lasts between one and two hours with approximately ten to twelve participants. Each session is conducted by a moderator who uses an outline to guide the discussion and to keep it focused on the relevant topics. The questions are essentially open-ended, allowing participants to respond in their own words. Focus group research does not result in findings that can be expressed in numerical values or percentages, as with a traditional survey or poll, but it provides insights into people's beliefs and understandings and illuminates the reasons that people think and behave as they do.

Recognizing that close to 90% of the population of Malawi lives in rural areas, this study concentrated on residents of remote rural villages. For balance and control, two groups were done in semi-urban villages or "townships". More than 150 Malawians of voting age (18 and over) were included in the study. The two groups in the Northern Region were conducted in Tumbuka and the remaining twelve in Chichewa by fluent speakers of the languages.

The objectives of this study were to gauge the awareness of rural populations of the political parties and their symbols; to assess the extent of their knowledge about the elections and voting procedures and any related concerns; and, to identify the hopes and expectations they hold for a multi-party system and for democratic development. This analysis could be of use to the Electoral Commission, the political parties, the international donor community, and other non-governmental organizations involved in the Malawi elections. Also, after the elections it could be of use to elected officials, political parties, NGOs and other institutions as they seek to advance and strengthen Malawi's process of democratic development.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This focus group project revealed a number of important themes that are common to the electorate throughout Malawi. For instance, it is clear that voters are enthusiastic about their opportunity to participate in this election, although they currently have little understanding of the voting process. Additionally, a high percentage of voters are still undecided, particularly among women, and direct personal contact is the most persuasive means of communication a party or candidate can employ in appealing to these undecided voters. These and other key findings are briefly outlined in this section, and discussed in greater detail in a later section.

**AWARENESS OF ELECTIONS** - Malawians have a high degree of awareness of the general election on May 17. Many of them voted in the referendum and are aware that changes, both gratifying and unsettling, have followed in its wake. They look toward the election as a watershed in their national life and approach it with a mixture of anticipation and anxiety.

**EXPECTATIONS OF VOTING** - A high proportion of Malawians expect to vote on May 17. Nearly all of the participants in the focus groups had already registered and indicated that they would not be deterred from voting by any of a number of possible obstacles suggested during the questioning. Many voters, especially women, were undecided as to whom they would vote for. But in general participants expressed real enthusiasm for going to the polls despite their concerns that it could entail some dangers.

**UNCERTAINTY ABOUT VOTING PROCEDURES** - While most participants understood that their vote would be secret, there was also a high degree of uncertainty about the procedures and mechanics of voting. Many people had questions about what, exactly, they would do when they went to the polls. However, participants seemed to believe that on election day the process would be explained to them by pollworkers. As one participant put it, "When we go there, they will tell us what to do."

**RECOGNITION OF PARTIES** - The degree to which voters recognized the eight contesting political parties varied considerably. For instance, every participant recognized the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), which has governed Malawi since its independence more than thirty years ago, and virtually all recognized its leader, its

symbol and other high officials in the party. Furthermore, the participants held firm -- though wide-ranging -- opinions about the MCP based upon years of experience.

Two other parties, UDF and AFORD, enjoyed fairly wide recognition. In a third case the party leader and symbol were better known than the name of the party. The remaining four parties were much less well known, and face an arduous task in getting their names, candidates and symbols before the voters.

**DESIRE FOR REPRESENTATIVE GOVERNMENT** - A recurring theme among voters was the desire for candidates, and ultimately their Members of Parliament (MPs), to come to the village to meet them and to see for themselves their needs. The idea of representational democracy has strong appeal at the grass roots, and personal contact is probably the single most powerful communication with the electorate. They want to feel that they know their representative.

**HARD TIMES/POLITICAL PROMISES** - Participants stated a long list of changes and developments they hope the new government will provide. Concerns about food and feeding the people loom very large, as participants expressed that they continue to experience hard times due to: the 1992 drought; procurement of fertilizer; high prices charged in the shops; and depressed prices paid for their crops at ADMARC. They nevertheless cast a critical eye on politicians' promises and are highly skeptical of those which seem unrealistic.

**WOMEN IN POLITICS** - There appears to be no bar in the minds of voters to women participating in the political life of the country. Clearly they are expected to vote. Women generally have less access to political information and therefore seem less informed about parties, candidates and party symbols. Both male and female participants recognized that Malawian women are standing for parliament and indicated that is acceptable as long as those candidates are qualified. At the same time, however, there is uneasiness about women being in charge, with some participants indicating that they would not be ready for a woman President, and would be more comfortable with women playing support roles in government.

**CONCERNS FOR SECURITY** - An often expressed anxiety relates to the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP), who, since the disbanding of the organization, have disappeared from public view. Rumors abound that they are hiding-out or have crossed into Mozambique. They are often blamed for a perceived increase in theft and rape. People are concerned that the MYP will reappear on election day and create havoc.

These fears are expressed in vivid terms including vague talk of civil war. In many voters' minds instability was associated with the multi-party era.

## DETAILED FINDINGS

**POLITICAL CLIMATE AT THE VILLAGE LEVEL** - Each focus group began with participants introducing themselves and saying a few words about their families. They were then asked a series of basic questions about a familiar topic -- life in their village. Answers to these questions provide a useful backdrop to other questions in the study.

**HARDSHIPS AND NEEDED IMPROVEMENTS** - Malawians believe that times are hard and feel that their standard of life has deteriorated. Fundamental to this is the drought of 1992 which affected many areas in Malawi. This caused greatly reduced maize crops and affected the quality of drinking water at many bore holes. Food from international donors was necessary to alleviate famine, and the manner in which it was distributed (or not distributed) is a matter of intense interest and comment by rural voters. Food, and matters relating to food, are high priority concerns.

Voters in the villages can produce a long list of things they feel need to be improved. These will be dealt with in more detail in another section, but they include water quality, prices paid for crops by ADMARC, high prices in the shops, roads, bridges, bus service, transportation, schools, hospitals, maize mills, electricity, companies to provide employment, credit to start businesses, opportunities to earn money.

**CHANGES SINCE THE REFERENDUM** - Participants noted a number of changes that have come about since the referendum on multi-party democracy, some of which they view with gratification and others with apprehension. "Bad laws" of the government have been abolished including the requirement to buy party cards, the "men's tax", required gifts and attendance at meetings, and required dancing at ceremonial occasions.

On the down side, many felt that unemployment had increased, police corruption had become more of a problem, and there was a strongly held belief that crime was on the increase. Specifically mentioned were thefts of livestock and chickens by "people with knives, axes, and guns", and "crimes at night", including rape. People felt it was no longer safe to be on the road at night.

Voters were clear that the referendum had ushered in a new era in which many parties could compete. Opinion was divided with regards to whether or not this was good. Many found ways of expressing the notion that the free competition of ideas would lead to more imaginative and productive government and that those ideas could now be freely expressed in public. On the other hand, some felt that increased competition

would lead to a decrease in stability and unity. This view was succinctly put by an older gentleman who said, "You put two or more bulls in one kraal and you have a fight."

**DECISION-MAKING IN THE VILLAGES** - Participants uniformly reported that decisions affecting the village were made by the head man or chief, usually in consultation with village elders. The chiefs are usually men; the elders are almost always men.

**CONCERNS ABOUT THE MALAWI YOUNG PIONEERS (MYP)** - Closely related to the concerns about crime is a serious and widespread anxiety about the MYP. Since this organization was forcibly disbanded by the Army, it has ceased to have a visible public presence. Many believe that its members have gone into hiding and are marauding at night, or have crossed into Mozambique and will reappear to cause trouble on election day. Regardless of the reality or seriousness of any threat posed by the MYP, participants expressed vivid concerns and fears about the status and future of the Pioneers.

**ELECTIONS AND VOTING** - Even in the remote rural areas visited by the focus group team, all the participants reported that they had registered and expect to vote on election day. Almost none of the participants indicated that they had little interest in voting, and by and large, interest in the election ran high. Nearly all participants indicated that they would not be deterred from voting by any of a number of possible obstacles that were suggested in the interview.

**PROCEDURAL CONCERNS** - It was clear that almost none of the participants had any idea what they would have to do in order to cast a vote. The moderators posed a hypothetical situation in which there was available an expert on voting, and asked participants what questions they would have for this expert. The first question in almost every case was "How do I vote?", in the sense of "what do I do in order to cast a vote?" Other procedural questions included "How will the papers be issued to me?", "What do I do with the discarded papers?", and "How many boxes will there be?" (a reference to a controversial system proposed for the referendum whereby the choice would be indicated by selecting one of two ballot boxes into which voters would place their ballot papers -- thereby defeating the secrecy of the ballot.) In addition, a number of women participants expressed concerns about security and crowd control at the polling place.

These uncertainties and lack of procedural knowledge did not seem to greatly dismay

potential voters. They seemed confident that the necessary information would be available to them when the time arrived. As one participant put it, "Political parties are educating people on how to vote, so, it is not a problem."

**SUBSTANTIVE CONCERNS** - Along with procedural questions we heard queries such as "Who should I vote for?", and "How should I decide who to vote for?" These and other similar questions contributed to the strong impression that voters felt they did not have adequate information to make informed choices. Some participants even commented that since the focus group team came from Lilongwe, they likely had more information on the parties and candidates and should therefore recommend who the participants should vote for. This might also have reflected the fact that at the time most of the focus groups were done, the candidates' list had not been published and many of the voters had no way of knowing who the parliamentary candidates were in their constituency. Moreover, almost all voters did not know the name of the constituency they were registered in.

There was a point of confusion among a few (mostly older) voters who said that they had already expressed themselves in the referendum and did not understand the need to do so again in the election.

**SECURITY CONCERNS** - As noted above, anxiety runs high over the whereabouts and intentions of former members of the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP). Questions like "Will soldiers be available for security?" and "Will there be war between the MYP and the Malawi Army?", "Who will maintain security?", "Will soldiers vote?", give a flavor of the concerns.

**SOURCES OF INFORMATION** - Radios and party meetings were the two most widely mentioned sources of information in rural areas where literacy is relatively low. Radios are largely in the hands of men and therefore less accessible to women, at least during the day. Some participants mentioned that in hard economic times it is difficult to afford batteries for the radios.

Party meetings or visits by the candidate are clearly the communication of choice for rural voters. They want to see, hear, and form some sense of identification with the candidates. This is closely related to the idea of having an MP beholden to the constituency who will visit, note his constituents' needs and represent them in the parliament. There was an impression that while radio is an effective way of educating the voters about parties, candidates, and party symbols, personal visits are likely to be much more persuasive in helping voters decide whom to vote for.



Newspapers might be important to some urban voters, but they were rarely noted by participants in this study. Other forms of communication which got passing mention include posters, tee shirts, caps, and badges. Two of the parties have adopted ballot symbols which are also hand signals -- the "V" sign of AFORD, and the clasped hands of UDF. In traveling on rural roads we noticed pedestrians, especially youngsters, greeting vehicles with these symbols. The one index finger or thumb sign for the MCP was also widely seen.

**POLITICAL PARTIES** - It was not the purpose of this study to poll public opinion to determine which parties have greater or lesser support within the electorate. As a form of qualitative research, the focus groups were intended to explore what understandings people have and to gain insights into what they are thinking. The discussion of political parties in the focus groups was intended to assess the extent to which the concept of party politics is understood in Malawi, and whether voters are familiar with, and are drawing distinctions among the parties.

The governing Malawi Congress Party occupies the unique position of being universally recognized and has a track record of over thirty years on which it can be judged. The MCP's leader, President H. Kamuzu Banda, is widely regarded as the Father of the Country, and occupies a position above the fray of partisan politics. The party symbol is recognized by all voters. Malawians have ample experience with governance by this party and hold strong and wide-ranging opinions.

For the seven opposition parties there was great variation in the recognition of the party names, symbols, and leaders. The two parties that were pressure groups during the pre-referendum period, AFORD and UDF, enjoyed fairly high recognition. For the remaining five there was spotty recognition and considerable confusion. These were recognized by only a few participants who usually indicated that they had heard about them on the radio. Their symbols were not well recognized. They face a strenuous task in establishing and differentiating themselves in the minds of the voters.

Two parties have chosen symbols that are quite similar and seem to be confusing to many voters. These are the two "dove" symbols -- one a white dove on a black background, the other a dark dove on a white background. These two parties will need to make special efforts to ensure that the correct symbol is associated with their party in the minds of the voters.

Participants held strong views concerning their support for either a single or multi-party system. However, there was little differentiation made by respondents among messages of the opposition parties. Also,

although there was high recognition of some of the candidates for president, mostly voters feel that they are electing a party to govern rather than an individual candidate. As a consequence most people do not understand that they may vote for a president and an MP of different parties.

#### **EXPECTATIONS OF GOVERNMENT UNDER MULTI-PARTY DEMOCRACY -**

Participants indicated that while they anxiously anticipate the benefits of a more democratic system, they also fear what they perceive as a heightened likelihood of loss of control, breakdown of order, and general chaos in Malawian society.

Some participants expressed themselves in somewhat philosophical terms, speaking of "competition of good ideas", and "freedom to discuss and come up with the best plan", but in the main voters expressed their expectations in terms of hopes for, or doubts about specific desired changes or developments. Some wondered whether the developments could be accomplished within the five-year term of their parliamentary representative and president.

**WOMEN'S ISSUES** - When asked their views on women running for office, participants pointed out that some women already are running, "so if they are qualified -- why not?" At the same time there seemed to be no overwhelming enthusiasm for the idea in Malawi, even in the women's groups. Some were aware that there are Malawian women campaigning for parliament in the upcoming election and they generally approved of that, but did not think it would be right for a woman to be President.

Women expected to vote and in that way play a role in the political life of the country. Some of the women participants indicated that they experience some obstacles to becoming informed voters, in part because radios are generally the possessions of men, and women therefore often have limited access to radio broadcasts. Typically, it is men who attend party meetings and rallies while women attend to domestic chores. Women report that they do sometimes talk about politics when they are together at such places as wells and maize mills. However, as a result of a lack of information, women voters are more likely to be undecided than men.

**WORD ASSOCIATION** - Participants were asked to take part in a word-association exercise where they would be given words that express various concepts relating to democracy and government. The participants were then asked to state what words or thoughts came to their minds in relation to the offered words. Following are the most frequently encountered responses:

**NATION** - "The nation is people" ("Dziko ndi Anthu" is a very common phrase in

Chichewa and was far and away the most often heard response), "People living together happily", "People live in conflicts", "The nation is changing and has changed", "A place where there is real peace and tranquility", "It is the government", "The nation is a leader".

**DEMOCRACY** - (The Chichewa language does not have a word which equates exactly to the English word "Democracy". The word selected for this exercise was "ufulu weni weni" which in English means "real freedom".) - "To be able to do what you want to do and form many political parties", "freedom of agreeing and disagreeing", "freedom for villagers to sell and farm crops", "tolerance", "discussing the truth", "staying freely without conflicts", "living in harmony", "people don't get diseases", "respect of one's views", "democracy is people and government", "think about the party cards which were abolished".

**MULTI-PARTY** - "opposition parties", "freedom of speech and the creation of good government", "one can switch from one party to another", "things are better with multi party", "an organization which wants to run the country", "confusion, since there is no peace; if there are two or more bulls in one kraal they always fight -- this applies to many parties", "sharing ideas in order to run the country efficiently", "when one feels free to ask questions", "parties argue on principle of change", "full of lies", "multi-party is unity and better living and freedom".

**GOVERNMENT** - "people living in the country", "laws which govern the people", "governs and rules the people when in problems", "government is leaders", "people living in the rural areas", "place where people stay well", "people living happily", "it is to be ruled", "security of people", "those who break the law should be punished", "has different departments".

**CHURCHES** - "teachers of God's word", "teachers of politics who precipitated multi-party", "linkage between God and people", "spiritual supervisors on earth", "people who pray to God", "guides backsliding Christians", "ancestral spirits", "make the people stay well spiritually", "say the truth and help people in rural areas", "followers of Jesus".

**CHIEFS (TRADITIONAL LEADERS)** - "Head of the village who tries to unite people so that they should stay in harmony", "settles cases of the village", "mediator between people and the government", "area chairmen", "solve problems in families, like cases of divorce", "unite villagers and enlighten them on a few things", "distribute land".

**SOLDIERS** - "defends the country from outside attack", "make people stay well and protect them from thieves", "they are good people with a good reputation", "soldier are leaders", "workers of the government", "ensures tranquility".

**INTIMIDATION** - "to suppress someone from prospering", "lack of doing what you feel because of other people's hindrance", "lack of freedom of speech", "deprive somebody of important ideas", "favoritism/bias in any cases or crimes", "paying low prices when people want to sell their crops", "when someone is hit by a car", "one has no freedom".

**HARASSMENT** - "forcing one to admit to things he did not do, putting people in prison for years without trial", "raising prices in shops without thinking about the poor people", "doing things without concern for others", "when people are not free to express their views", "when people were working on farms without pay", "Beating people because they are powerless, "punishing people without proper reason", "forced donations", "buying party cards by force", "quarrelling with their husbands", "people's possessions were just taken", "being forced to leave business to go to party meetings or forced dancing".

**ELECTORAL COMMISSION** - "Organization which tries to see that political transition happens smoothly", "brings peace between political parties", "it is good", "wants to choose the next president", "it was chosen by the people".

**MYP (MALAWI YOUNG PIONEERS)** - "MYP are bandits, robbers and confusionists", "deep concern about MYP who are in Mozambique", "nation should inform us whether or not MYP have returned from Mozambique", "they were here to defend the regime, not the nation", "the government brainwashed people that they were farmers, but they had guns", "MYP's are still receiving pay -- this worries people", "MYP are development workers, carpenters, builders, and farmers", "paramilitary concerned with peace", "defend the people and country", "intimidate people", "had weapons to defend the party", "they are hiding waiting to wage war".

**INTERNATIONAL DONORS** - "help poverty-stricken countries in famine and poverty", "help Malawi when in trouble -- like drought", "donate food and drugs, build hospitals", "help orphans", "should help Malawi now because we are dying of hunger", "always think of the poor", "offer money for development", "misappropriation of funds by government".

**MBC (MALAWI BROADCASTING CORPORATION)** - "it is a broadcasting station", "official radio station of Malawi on what is happening nationally and internationally", "tries to hide the real issues of the nation", "people are forced to tune to BBC for real issues of Malawi".

**POLITICAL PARTIES** - "associated with people getting rich", "the money which used to be in the hands of 'fat people' will be found by everyone", "opposition to the government", "opposition which is full of lies", "parties which disagree with one another when they differ in their principles", "things have changed due to political parties like the increase in thefts", "things have changed for the better like the abolition of the man tax and party cards, and complete abolition of forced gifts like cattle", "people know about Malawi's past because of them", "political parties are members of parliament", "make decisions and plans about development", "no unity when there are many parties".

**POLICE** - "organization which tries to defend the nation from thieves and robbers", "guides lost persons and deals with accidents", "offers international security", "jails offenders and judges cases", "people think about thieves who are jailed or about murderers", "good people"

**UNITED NATIONS** - "Organization which helps other nations when there are problems of war or famine", "international machine which fights for unity", "organization where people meet to help those countries which are in a problem", "help Malawians with problems", "development in politics and economics".

Some comments from respondents might give a sense of Malawians' hopes and fears for multi-party democracy and their futures. Participants expressed their desire that the following changes would take place: government will value people's voices; government will be for all; misappropriated funds will be recovered; state houses will be sold; there will be an end to the MYP; there will be more job opportunities; there will be new schools and new hospitals; there will be free education.

Participants also noted the following changes that they feared might take place in a multi-party democracy: there will be increased robberies and murders; the next government will go bankrupt because of current misappropriation of funds; the president will be rich.

When asked what issues they want to be addressed by the post-election government, participants offered the following priorities: good houses; decent clothes; new roads and bridges; end to transport problems like buses; new companies; increased salaries; a rise in

living standards; increased employment; price control and regulation; a reduction in the price of maize seeds and fertilizer; higher prices from ADMARC for cash crops; more maize mills; alleviation of poverty; good governance; reintroduction of THEBA (work in South African mines); loans for starting small-scale enterprises; more medicine in hospitals; more schools; female primary education; more wells/bore holes; better security, with the police valuing peoples needs and complaints; equal development in all regions.

Participants had mixed views on whether the role of Members of Parliament would change under a multi-party system. Some indicated that they now expected their MP to "come see for himself what is lacking" and to respond to the problems in the Parliament. Others however, indicated that they did not think the MP would spend time in their constituency "because there is tendency for MPs to neglect their people once elected."

## **HIGHLIGHTS of FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS**

In the process of conducting focus groups throughout Malawi, the researchers learned or confirmed a number of things about the electorate and the political process here which we feel are important enough to reiterate at the end of this report.

- o People know about the election, have registered and intend to vote.
- o Many voters are still undecided, especially women who seldom attend party meetings where political opinions are formed.
- o Most voters, especially women, are not yet clear about party names, symbols and candidates.
- o People lack information on the procedures for voting, although they seem to be clear that the ballot will be secret.
- o Voters have little understanding that they can vote for a President of one party, and an MP of another.
- o Radio is a powerful means of educating the electorate, especially men.
- o The most persuasive means of communication is face-to-face meetings between candidates and the voters.
- o People will vote based in part upon the contact they have with candidates; similarly, they want MPs who will visit them and represent their needs and wishes in Parliament.
- o People are highly skeptical of unrealistic campaign promises.
- o People perceive an increase in crime -- theft of live stock, armed robbery, rape, crimes at night -- and worry about criminals and the MYP.
- o People associate instability and crime with the multi-party era. This is due in part to confusion over which system they are currently operating under and who is responsible

for running the government now.

- o The most powerful issue motivating voters is food and matters relating to food such as the availability and price of fertilizer and the prices paid for crops.



## METHODOLOGY

A total of 14 focus group discussions were held between March 28 and April 6, 1994. As stated earlier, a focus group is a structured discussion, lead by a moderator in which a planned sequence of questions is asked, and the responses carefully noted and later analyzed.

The project was a collaboration between Greg Gay, a professional focus group moderator from Washington, D.C., and Naomi Mpemba, an instructor in Psychology at the Kamuzu College of Nursing in Lilongwe. The team of tri-lingual moderators, Ethlet Phazi, Caroline Kayira, Kondwani Mwangulube, and Timothy Chikoti, all of whom are Social Science students at Chancellor College in Zomba, have previously worked with Miss Mpemba on health-related focus groups sponsored by international organizations.

The method used in this focus group study in some respects reflected the realities of working in largely rural Malawi. Given the lack of telephone communication in the rural areas and the traditional structure of village life, there was virtually no way of recruiting participants in advance so that the groups met some ideal specifications. The decision was therefore made to carefully select villages throughout Malawi to provide proportionate samples from each of the three regions (North, Central, and South) and a fair representation of a variety of tribal groups. A team of researchers traveled together by truck visiting the selected villages.

A decision was made to analyze the information gathered in these focus groups in terms of its relevance to the nation as a whole, rather than attempting to discern differences that might exist between regions or tribes. Since each focus group was drawn from a single village, and given the close, face-to-face relationships which exist within villages, our concern was that differences were as likely to represent peculiarities of a village as they were regional or ethnic differences. As it turned out, lively differences of opinion among people of the same village emerged in many of the discussions.

A further decision was made to conduct separate groups for men and for women, with corresponding male or female moderators. This decision was arrived at based upon the observation of Ms. Mpemba, the Malawian focus group consultant, that in Malawi women sometimes hesitate to speak freely in mixed groups.

Our procedure upon arriving in a selected village was to seek out the Chief or Head Man, greet him and explain that we were doing research. His help was requested in assembling groups of ten men or women, ages eighteen and above. In every case the traditional leader was gracious in assisting us and quickly assembled our focus groups. The

method of selection seemed to depend upon who was around at the time, and we detected no effort on the part of any chief to bias the group.

Most of the discussions were conducted in the open under a shady tree, although two were done in small thatch- or tin-roofed buildings. In some cases observers gathered and inserted themselves into the conversation, but in the main the groups stayed as originally constituted.

In each discussion one of the team would act as moderator and a second would take detailed notes in English. The discussions were also tape recorded. Following each focus group the moderator/recorder team would prepare a detailed report in English based upon both their handwritten notes and the tape recordings, and following a format suggested in their moderator's guide.

Two groups were held in villages in each of the following districts: in the Northern Region, Mzimba; in the Central Region, Dedza and Mchinji; and in the Southern Region, Zomba, Chikwawa and Mulanje. In addition, one group each was held in the following two semi-urban areas: the Central Region village of Mtandire, outside of Lilongwe, Malawi's capital city; and, the Southern Region village of Chensoba, outside of Blantyre, Malawi's largest city.

The questions developed to guide the focus group moderators were translated into Tumbuka and Chichewa. The groups done in Mzimba were conducted in the Tumbuka language; all the others were done in Chichewa.

After completing the 14 focus groups and writing reports on each, the team performed two other important tasks. Greg Gay conducted a focus group in English with Ms. Mpemba and the moderators in order to review what they had learned from the experience and to capture in English as much as possible the attitudes of the participants in the discussions they had conducted, which otherwise might have been lost in translation. This was particularly helpful to the writer of this report in understanding the relative importance of many of the things mentioned in the team's written reports.

The team also reviewed their own written reports extracting and compiling data on certain key issues and consolidating it into a more useful format in support of writing this report.

This project would not have happened without the outstanding planning and support of the entire NDI team in Malawi. Accompanying the field research team were Ms. Jean

Maguru who provided administrative support and translation capability, and Mark Mullen, who as project manager ensured that the team always got to where it needed to be, kept everyone moving pretty much on schedule, and saw to it that needs and comforts were attended to. Mr. Mullen's intimate knowledge of Malawi and its people and his understanding of how to get things done here were invaluable to both the planning and execution of the project.

