

.....

Effective decision making, the provision of high-quality public services and consistent good governance are challenging enough for elected councillors in rich, developed countries such as Norway and the United Kingdom.

Delivering accountable, corruption-free, efficient and effective local services in Malawi sometimes be an overwhelming challenge for elected councillors.

As the recent analyses of the political economy of local government in Malawi by NDI/USAID and USAID's Local Government Accountability Programme (LGAP) show that some of the key challenges they face include:

- council meetings are not held regularly
- malpractice and corruption
- little evidence of citizens being able to hold elected councillors to account
- no sub-district structures such as ward development committees through which elected councillors could be held accountable
- the dominance of MPs, chiefs and elders in local governance

USAID's report *Political Economy of Decentralisation and Local Governance Reforms* focuses on fiscal devolution as one of the key issues facing local government, and one that merits further interventions.

The introduction of discretionary District Development Funds in 2015 - 16 has offered an opportunity for elected councillors to further develop as effective politicians and to address the imbalance of power between strong council officers and themselves.

It also offers them opportunity to lead citizen participation in the oversight of this new development budget and track its progress.

The USAID report recommends intensive capacity support for councillors, through on the job coaching and mentoring, so that they can exercise the required oversight and scrutiny of council resources. Further it suggests that building co-operative oversight among elected councillors, chiefs and other community leaders will strengthen accountability and oversight of resources.

It also suggests that councillors should receive on the job coaching in addressing financial irregularities and audit queries.

And it highlights that there are efforts to de-legitimise local government in the eyes of the citizens. This project, therefore, has a strong focus on communicating the positive achievements of local councils and elected councillors, particularly the DDFs, to help create an informed public and civil society that is then able to engage more fully in the democratic process.

The Active Learning Centre (Scotland) and the Women's Legal Resources Centre (Malawi) have secured funding from the Royal Norwegian Embassy for a 3-year project: *Capacity Building and Strengthening Transparency in Local Government*. It aims to:

- strengthen elected councillors' capacity to scrutinise and track budget spend and performance and strengthen elected councillors' confidence to address financial irregularities through a series of **regional roundtables** which bring together elected councillors in a safe space for peer support, group learning and sharing of experiences, and uses experts from formal governance systems such as the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the National Audit Office to reinforce existing rules and regulations.
- develop a culture of co-operative oversight and promote the achievements of elected councillors by involving councillors, chiefs, community leaders and citizens in a straightforward **community engagement process**, led by elected councillors, to foster a culture of transparency and engagement with citizens.
- To increase the understanding among community leaders, citizens and other key stakeholders on the **relationship between central and local government, and their respective roles and responsibilities**.
- disseminate the work of elected councillors and local government and learnings from this project through a **comprehensive media and communications strategy**, including social, print and broadcast and stakeholder meetings to promote and inform national discussions.

The project has distinct but inter-linked elements:

- A programme of **regional roundtables**, bringing elected councillors together in a non-partisan safe space, for peer support and sharply focused modules on anti-corruption, scrutiny and budget tracking. These will include input from the National Audit Office, the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the police. The roundtables will be used to prepare the councillors for the citizen engagement process as set out below:
- A programme of **citizen engagement**, led by elected councillors, to showcase the work of local councils, and to foster a culture of consultation and transparency. The focus of this will be the local delivery of the **District Development Funds**.
- A programme of engagement visits by personnel from the **Malawi National Parliament** to foster a better understanding of the country's governance structures, to be carried out in partnership with other relevant projects.
- A **political mentoring** programme for the 2019 intake of elected councillors.
- A **comprehensive media and communications strategy**, including digital, print and broadcast, as well as stakeholder events, to showcase the work of elected councillors in their locality and to promote national discussions on local governance.
- A training programme **for WOLREC's core team of trainers**, to build a local team of experts in active learning for adults, gender and politics and to strengthen the capacity of WOLREC.

It will run from January 2018 to December 2020, with a mid-term review in the second half of 2019.

It will cover 11 districts in Malawi, ten where WOLREC already has a strong presence on the ground to ensure effective, and consistent monitoring, and it will cover all three regions.

<b>Council</b>	<b>Elected councillors</b>	<b>Region</b>
Thyolo	14	South
Nsanje	10	South
Mwanza	4	South
Neno	4	South
Phalombe	10	South
Chiradzulu	10	South
Dedza	16	Central
Salima	10	Central
Ntcheu	14	Central
Rumphi	8	Northern
Mzuzu City	15	Northern
<b>Total</b>	<b>115</b>	

## Contacts

<p><b>Mrs Maggie K Banda</b>            Executive Director            WOLREC (Malawi)  <a href="mailto:maggiebanda@hotmail.com">maggiebanda@hotmail.com</a>            Malawi cell/WhatsApp: <b>0888750183</b></p>	<p><b>Susan Dalgety</b>            ALC (Scotland)  <a href="mailto:susandalgety@hotmail.com">susandalgety@hotmail.com</a>  <a href="mailto:susan@activelearningcentre.org">susan@activelearningcentre.org</a>            Malawi cell: <b>0992475809</b>            UK cell /WhatsApp: 07805573994</p>
--	---

