

Final Evaluation 2008

Malawi-German Programme for Democracy and Decentralisation, Malawi

Brief Report

gtz

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On behalf of: AFC Consultants International GmbH
This expert report was compiled by independent external experts. It is solely a reflection of their opinions and assessments.

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Overview (tabular form)

The evaluation mission

Evaluation period	03/2008 – 03/2009, field phase: November 10 until December 4, 2008
Evaluating institute / consulting firm	AFC Consultants International GmbH
Evaluation team	Thomas BOYSEN (international expert) James CHIMA (national expert)

The development measure of the GTZ

Title of the GTZ development measure according to the offer	Malawi-German Programme for Democracy and Decentralisation
Number of the GTZ development measure	2001.2483.4
Overall term broken down by phases	01/2003 – 12/2007
Total costs	7.590.000 EUR German contribution 50.000 EUR Malawian contribution
Overall objective of the GTZ development measure as per the offer, for ongoing development measures also the objective for the current phase	<p>The population is offered a more needs-driven and effectively delivered service package by the democratically elected regional authorities.</p> <p>Component objectives for the evaluation period:</p> <p>Component 1: The population in the area of intervention, and especially the disadvantaged female population, increasingly assumes its new roles, tasks and rights in the process of democratic decentralisation.</p> <p>Component 2: Local Governments in the area of intervention improve their financial situation and manage their finances more efficiently and in a transparent manner.</p> <p>Component 3: Local Governments in the area of intervention increasingly assume their role as development agents and become more demand-oriented.</p> <p>Component 4: Decision-makers in the decentralisation process elaborate, adjust and implement relevant strategies and policies.</p>

Lead executing agency	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Implementing organisations (in the partner country)	Decentralisation Secretariat (until 12/2005), National Local Government Finance Committee, Malawi Local Government Association, Local Authorities Service Commission, district and city administrations, elected representatives, selected training institutions and civil society organisations
Other participating development organisations	DED
Target groups as per the offer	Population in the intervention areas

The development measure of the DED

Title of the DED development measures	1: Support for Civil Society Involvement into decentralised Planning and Decision Making 2: Support for Urban and District Assemblies on Collaborative Development Planning & Implementation
Number of the DED development measure	1 and 2
Overall term	01/2003 – 12/2007
Total costs	Ca. 900.000 EUR
Overall objective of the DED development measures as per country / regional director's report	Support of the decentralisation process on the basis of democratic principles
Lead executing agency (in cooperative projects/programmes with the GTZ, see above)	Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development
Partner organisation(s)	Malawi Local Government Association, National Initiative for Civic Education, Malawi Economic Justice Network, CSOs and District and City Assemblies
Other participating development organisations	GTZ
Target groups as per appraisal report / volunteer report	The entire Malawian population

The rating

Overall rating <i>On a scale of 1 (very good, significantly better than expected)</i>	4
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<p><i>to 6 (the project/program is useless, or the situation has deteriorated on balance)</i></p>	
<p>Individual rating</p>	<p>Relevance: 3; Effectiveness: 4; Impact: 4; Efficiency: 4; Sustainability: 3</p>

The object of the independent evaluation is the contribution to democratic decentralisation by GTZ through the “Malawi German Programme for Democracy and Decentralisation” (MGPDD) as well as by DED through its related development measures (DM) during the period from January 2003 to December 2007. GTZ and DED DMs were not integrated into a joint programme, but were based on the Malawian-German “Joint Strategy in the Focal Area of Democratic Decentralisation” and activities were coordinated in the field.¹

The evaluation was conducted by Thomas Boysen (international consultant) and James Chima (local consultant) for AFC Consultants International GmbH and commissioned by GTZ and DED. The overall evaluation process was conducted between March 2008 and February 2009 and the field phase in Malawi was from November 10 until December 4, 2008.

Before the field mission, the consultants analysed relevant documents from DED and GTZ, held discussions with key staff at head offices of both DED and GTZ and formulated the Inception Report. Based on interview guides that had been drafted in the Inception Report and refined just prior to the field phase, the evaluation team conducted interviews in Malawi with key informants at central ministerial level, with staff from relevant national institutions, staff of Local Assemblies (LA) as well as with various Civil Society Organisations (CSO). The information thus gathered was set in relation to the results chains for each component, the basic concept as described in MGPDD's offer as well as the planning documents for DED development workers (DW). The evaluation team tried to base its analyses as much as possible on facts and figures. Unfortunately, because of a lack of an effective monitoring system neither MGPDD nor DED could provide figures to most issues and the team attempted to establish facts through triangulating statements from a number of interviewees. Discussions with MGPDD and DED staff as well as with the numerous partner organisations served to further deepen the team's understanding as well as to determine root causes for positive as well as negative results. The field phase ended with a presentation of findings to partner organisation and MGPDD and DED staff to which all interviewees were invited.

MGPDD started in January 2003 as a first phase of a programme intended to continue in altogether three phases until 2012. Since the programme underwent significant conceptual changes as initiated by a Programme Progress Review in 2007, the first phase is considered to be a terminated programme, justifying the evaluation being a final one, even though a successor programme by the same name continues today.

¹ Since the evaluation deals with in effect three development measures (DM), it is necessary to define terminology: DM without any qualifier will designate both GTZ and DED contributions together; MGPDD will signal that the statements are made only relating to GTZ activities and results; DED will mean its contribution within entire DM. The distinction between the two DED DMs is not made explicitly but will become clear from the context.

DED DMs were planned sequentially for up to 10 development worker positions, of which six were included in the evaluation. Total cost for the evaluation period is 7.590.000 Euros for the GTZ, 900.000 Euros for the DED and 50.000 Euros for the Malawian contribution.

The programme's overall objective was: *"The population is offered a more needs-driven and effectively delivered service package by the democratically elected regional authorities"*.

The target group was the entire Malawian population. The lead executing agency in Malawi was the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (MLGRD). Implementing organisations were the National Local Government Finance Committee (NLGFC), the Malawi Local Government Association (MALGA), the Local Government Service Commission (LGSC), district and city administrations, elected representatives, selected training institutions and CSOs.

The decentralisation process was still in its early stages at the start of the DM. The first generation of councillors had been elected to the 40 LAs in November 2000. Local administrations suffered from significant staff shortages, the under-qualification and inexperience of existing staff as well as a lack of financial resources and were unable to fulfil their roles as promoters of development and poverty reduction. National organisations and institutions also lacked the necessary capacity to manage the decentralisation process. The first National Decentralisation Programme (NDP I) was scheduled for a major review and the legislation concerning decentralisation needed to be evaluated against the experiences made in the field. Conditions changed in 2005 when the President refused to hold local government elections (LGE) and dissolved all Assemblies, creating a crisis that continues to prevent further progress on devolution and was still unresolved at the time of the evaluation.

Both GTZ and DED designed their activities to be implemented directly with LAs, CSOs at various levels as well as with government agencies and ministries (multi-level and multi-partner approach). This was intended to allow weaving together practical assistance to LAs with strategic advisory services for institutions at national level. MGPDD support was organised in four components: 1) Local Governance; 2) Financial Management; 3) Service Delivery; 4) Decentralisation Management. The DED DMs are related to Components 1, 3 and 4 and are treated under these titles throughout the present text.

The DM pursued a country-wide approach, actually touching all LAs in some form, but providing direct assistance only to a limited number. There were no targets set as to how many LAs would benefit from direct support and the programme pursued instead an approach relying entirely on demand from LAs or partner organisations. DED was active in selected LAs as well as directly in MLGRD, working on planning issues. DED also supported

MALGA and two NGOs at national level. MGPDD supported CSOs, LAs and national level government institutions with capacity building, specific expertise and funding.

The four components are first briefly described and evaluated in a general manner. Afterwards, an assessment of the entire DM is made based on the five criteria for success: relevance, effectiveness, impact, efficiency and sustainability. While sustainability is rated on a 4-point-scale (from 1 = very good sustainability to 4 = inadequate sustainability) the other criteria are rated on a six-point scale (from 1 = very good rating, significantly better than expected to 6 = the programme is useless, or the situation has deteriorated very significantly). These criteria were agreed within the Development Assistance Committee of the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD-DAC). The programme is also evaluated (but not rated) with regard to its contribution to poverty reduction and the Millennium Development Goals, promotion of gender equality, promotion of sustainable development, and subject-specific success criteria.

Local Governance: MGPDD's outputs concentrated on supporting CSOs who conducted civic education and awareness raising activities concerning decentralisation using various communication methods ranging from public debates to radio and TV broadcasts. Additional support was given to a few CSOs to conduct surveys relating to decentralisation. MGPDD designed a decentralisation guidebook and a training manual for training of Village Development Committee (VDC) members. VDCs and Area Development Committees (ADC) (their equivalent at Traditional Authority - level, a sub-structure to LAs) were mobilised in some test activities to make a connection between the large LAs and its constituent communities. Activities were undertaken in 24 out of 40 LAs, most of which were rural. There was no coherent strategy to cover all LAs or to target specific groups with specific messages and methods. Activities were proposed by CSOs and not initiated by MGPDD. These activities focused on questions of democracy while somewhat neglecting questions about how local governments are supposed to work. DED supported the most important national level Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) in key operational aspects which was very much appreciated by the NGO. There are no figures available as to the results of this substantial work since no credible measurement has been done. The dissolution of elected councils has made it difficult to convey messages on decentralisation to the public, but the almost total lack of public debate on decentralisation indicates that the population is either not very concerned with the absence of elected councillors or is too frustrated with politics to bother. Low voter turn-out during the last general elections (in 2004) indicates the latter.

Financial Management: MGPDD started with 5 pilot LAs and quickly expanded to 9 LAs who were assisted through capacity building of financial staff, in some cases the elimination of final accounts backlogs as well as with revenue generation activities. MGPDD worked

closely with NLGFC to create a budget manual for LAs, training material for revenue collection and assisted NLGFC in drawing up a strategic plan and reorganising its operations. The component was able to initiate the inclusion of a revenue collection course in the permanent curriculum of the Staff Development Institute (SDI – a government training institute for training government employees) and courses on revenue generation have been held with participants from every LA in the country. MGPDD assisted some urban LAs to establish a business registry to allow for a more equitable tax collection. These activities together led to substantial increases in revenue collection in all LAs, especially in those that were directly assisted as opposed to those whose staff participated only in national level training courses or in best-practice workshops that MGPDD organised together with NLGFC.

Service delivery: This component concentrated almost entirely on planning with some additional activities in reviewing by-laws and organising team building and change management workshops for LA officials. Two of the three indicators for this component were related to service delivery but the subject was entirely neglected relying on the hope that better planning would improve services. Planning assistance was given by MGPDD as well as DED, who placed a varying number of planning advisors in LAs. The planning process pursued a participatory approach that used the ADC and VDC structures to obtain input from the population. 22 planning processes were supported of which 10 have been finalised. The others continue to be supported through the successor programme. The plans are not simple accumulations of needs and wants, but well-reflected development strategies covering relevant areas. The project lists could be structured better to facilitate implementation but are otherwise of high quality. The plans are hardly being implemented, due in part to the absence of an elected body to formally adopt them, in part because the LAs still do not have access to funds for implementation.

Decentralisation Management: MGPDD assisted the Malawian government in the review of the NDP I in 2004 as well as in the design of the NDP II. After the dissolution of elected assemblies in 2005, the new NDP II was not adopted and work on decentralisation policy was slowed down substantially. These events put the entire decentralisation model into question. Initial attempts of German Cooperation, including MGPDD, to discuss a resolution of the issue at the political level met with little interest and no serious policy discussion existed at the time of the evaluation. MGPDD continued to assist MLGRD in the implementation of the decentralisation reforms while using the draft NDP II as a rough guideline. At the same time, MGPDD developed, together with MLGRD, a capacity development programme covering the entire decentralisation process. Delays were caused by lengthy discussions whether the capacity building programme should take precedence over the NDP II or the other way around. MGPDD and DED both assisted MALGA in basic

operations and strategy development but the absence of elected councillors have made it almost impossible for MALGA to operate properly. LGSC was supported in designing a strategic plan that helped it to become more demand oriented.

The subject of democratic decentralisation was clearly a high priority for the Government of Malawi (GoM) at the start of the DM and it remains a sub-theme in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS). It remains highly **relevant** for German and international standards and value oriented development strategies and goals. The evaluation team is convinced that the President is not fundamentally opposed to decentralisation because other policies of giving control to lower levels of administration are ongoing at a remarkably quick pace. After initial attempts to resolve the LGE crisis, the German position became unconstructive in simply threatening to terminate MGPDD, thereby reducing MGPDD's relevance to the GoM.

While the topic of each of the four components is relevant in that most important elements of democratic decentralisation are covered, the one missing element is the support to municipal projects. This has deprived MGPDD of the possibility to assist in capacity development on the basis of actual projects and limited its potential impact in the area of poverty reduction to a very marginal contribution.

Since component 1 outputs are not strategically geared to achieve any quantitative goals or mobilise the potentially most active or influential groups, the relevance of the activities supported must be questioned. The support to financial management corresponds highly with LAs' felt and real needs. Development planning is clearly the basis for any structured and needs oriented local governance as well as a way to involve the public in decision making. MGPDD entirely neglected support to service delivery.

In spite of the continuing high relevance of democratic decentralisation, the lack of focus in civic education, the total neglect of service delivery and especially the lack of progress in furthering devolution only allow a **satisfactory** rating of **relevance (level 3)**.

MGPDD's and DED's **effectiveness** is strongly negatively impacted by the failure to give an operational definition of the "country-wide" approach. Since resources would not have allowed direct interventions in all LAs, the intervention area mentioned in MGPDD's offer should have been clearly designated. Furthermore, targets should have been set in order to give staff sufficient incentives to maximise their output and LA coverage in components 1, 2 and 3. Instead, it was left to each component manager and the operation centres to choose in which LAs to work.

Component 1 cannot produce any figures on how effective it was. The lack of emphasis on the functioning of local governments in civic education reduced the component's effect on

local governance. Results from support to financial management are higher than expected. Component 3 effectively assisted the production of development plans based on a participatory process and with high quality results. No activities were undertaken to improve service delivery, thereby ignoring entirely two of the component's three indicators. The effectiveness of component 4 was diminished after the postponement of LGE and the lack of discussion at any level about decentralisation policy. The more than satisfactory effectiveness in the area of financial management cannot compensate for the severe shortcomings in Components 1 and 3. Therefore, the rating of **effectiveness** is only **unsatisfactory (level 4)**.

Highly aggregated results (**impact**) such as poverty reduction cannot be identified. MGPDD contributed only to the general functioning of LAs, not to development projects. Only DED contributed noticeably to the reduction of poverty through its successful support to mobilise communities around irrigation in Rumphu. Private sector service providers were not trained in order to create a pool of service providers available for LAs after the programme's departure.

MGPDD's results chain is not very elaborate concerning indirect results. Development plans are not being used widely, mainly because LAs have no access to investment funds. Indirect results in civic education are difficult to ascertain, mainly because of lack of opportunity for the population to vote or become candidates. Voter turnout in 2004 as compared to 1999 seems to indicate rather increasing levels of voter frustration.

The overall assessment of MGPDD's and DED's contribution to indirect results and highly aggregated impact is influenced not only by the probable or observable indirect results of outputs produced. This would lead to a satisfactory assessment. However, the impact rating must also consider that overall effectiveness is unsatisfactory and some of the expected results were not achieved. Combined, this must also lead to an **unsatisfactory** rating of **impact (level 4)**.

MGPDD's **efficiency** suffered from the lack of setting targets for area coverage and from the lack of focus to push staff towards maximising their output. Acting as a funding agency for partner activities instead of designing activities and using partners to implement them reduced MGPDD's control and thereby the quality of certain activities. The loss of efficiency through this lack of control outweighs the gains achieved by subsidising established organisations to implement their own activities. Support to LA financial management was efficient in collaborating with NLGFC to introduce manuals and with others to institutionalise relevant training courses, but failed to efficiently use the limited human resources within the component. The process of formulating development plans is quite efficient and produces

high quality plans. However, the time it takes to produce the plans compared to their validity is not acceptable.

In general, the division of tasks between DED and GTZ was well conceived and executed, leading to a number of formal agreements. Donor coordination remains weak and donor driven, but no significant overlaps were identified. The evaluation team is convinced that the DM could have achieved much more at LA level. Mainly due to the lack of targeting and MGPDD's extreme demand orientation, overall **efficiency** must be considered **unsatisfactory (level 4)**.

The activities that MGPDD and DED have been undertaking inherently support **sustainability** by addressing structural issues, individual as well as institutional capacity development, the institutionalisation of training courses and the production of widely accepted manuals. However, sustainability of achievements will depend on whether and how a solution to the continuing LGE crisis is found. If donors continue to be rigid in their demands to hold LGE and are not willing to compromise to save the most important parts of local governance, then there is little hope that the current model will prevail or an acceptable alternative will be installed. The alternative will rather be less democracy and decentralisation. Without these external risk factors, the programme would merit a higher than **satisfactory (level 3)** rating for the **sustainability** of its results.

The overall rating of MGPDD and DED's related activities is strongly influenced by the continuing LGE crisis and German Cooperation's unconstructive response to it. Relevance and the prospects for impact and sustainability would have been higher if not for this continuing problem. MGPDD's lack of managing its output in an efficient and effective manner and its choice to neglect entirely the important aspect of LG service delivery are the main factors that reduce the **overall rating to unsatisfactory (level 4)**.

MGPDD did not develop a specific **gender** strategy, but supported a number of partner organisation's activities. These specifically targeted civic education for women with the goal of making them more active in local politics. One supported initiative trained women on how to become effective candidates for political positions. MGPDD was not designed to have a direct impact on **poverty reduction** and since it was not allowed to directly support municipal development projects, it could only support the basic framework that would then allow improved development projects. DED supported the mobilisation of communities around the subject of irrigation in one district with an interesting facilitated approach. Capacity building measures, the mainstay of MGPDD, could not have any visible effects within the short timeframe of the evaluation period. MGPDD's approach followed the three elements of **sustainable development** (process orientation, value-based and holistic approach), but was

thwarted in many respects by the dissolution of elected Assemblies. The most important risk for **conflicts** is in pre-electoral violence between political parties. MGPDD and DED supported a number of individual activities concerning the management of conflicts as well as a very successful local initiative in Rumphu by some young politicians who have joined forces to eradicate political violence in their community (until now successfully).

MGPDD's lack of proper targeting and failure to focus on maximising results as well as the neglect of service delivery went largely unnoticed by any supervisory instances, including the project progress review. This indicates that a **lesson** might be **learnt** from this, namely that a review of supervision and control mechanisms within GTZ might be in order. The exclusion of support to development projects (and the unavailability of other sources of relevant funding) made it impossible to use these as examples for capacity building, which limits MGPDD's relevance and effectiveness.

The following **recommendations** are meant for the successor programme to MGPDD that should be designed as a joint programme of DED and GTZ:

- The intervention area needs to be clearly defined including a distinction between LAs with high intensity direct support and others with low intensity indirect or periodic support. This must lead to the setting of quantitative targets for LA coverage in every component offering services to LAs.
- The approach to civic education and the promotion of local governance needs to be more strategic and follow principles of modern marketing. Groups that have the most interest in functioning local services should be seen as priority targets.
- A full diagnosis of operations and functions of partner LAs should be the basis of any assistance programme. This must include simple administrative services.
- Private sector service providers need to be trained and used to deliver services on the new programme's behalf. This will create the necessary expertise that individual LAs cannot maintain even after the programme has been closed.
- The training of LA staff in rules and regulations must be made a priority to ensure that LG administrations follow the rules and work in a transparent manner.
- The maintenance of databases for planning purposes is crucial for a rolling planning system and needs more attention.
- A more appropriate response of German Cooperation to the current crisis concerning LGE is needed to find alternatives and avoid the risk of further endangering the decentralisation reforms.

Graphical display of objectives' achievements according to indicators

<p align="center">Malawi German Programme for Democracy and Decentralisation Achievement according to indicators</p>			
<p>Programme Goal: The democratically established Local Governments offer more demand-oriented and more efficient public services to the population.</p>	<p>Goal indicator 2: Regular financial transfers to Local Governments take place and Local Governments increase their self-generated income from taxes, duties and fees.</p>	<p>Goal indicator 3: Local Governments increasingly take decisions on overall public spending in the areas of investment and implementation.</p>	<p>Goal indicator 4: The share of the population that regards the services delivered by Local Governments as demand-oriented and efficient increases.</p>
	Assessment: achieved	Assessment: irrelevant	Assessment: not achieved
<p>Component objective 1 The population in the area of intervention, and especially the disadvantaged female population, increasingly assumes its new roles, tasks and rights in the process of democratic decentralisation.</p>	<p>Component objective 2 Local Governments in the area of intervention improve their financial situation and manage their finances more efficiently and in a transparent manner.</p>	<p>Component objective 3 LG in the area of intervention increasingly assume their role as development agents and become more demand-oriented.</p>	<p>Component objective 4 Decision-makers in the decentralisation process elaborate, adjust and implement relevant strategies and policies.</p>
<p>Indicator 1 The share of the population knowing the tasks and functions of Local Government, as well as the populations' rights and duties within the framework of local governance increases from 46% to 55% on average. Difference men/women from 6.3% to 5%.</p>	<p>Indicator 1 The revenue generated by LG through taxes, duties and fees increases by 30% in all Local Governments.</p>	<p>Indicator 1 The share of the population which declares itself satisfied with local service delivery increases by 5%.</p>	<p>Indicator 1 <i>75% of MLGRD, NLGFC, MALGA, LGSC have consistent annual action plans which are in line with the National Decentralisation Policy.</i></p>
Assessment: partially achieved	Assessment: achieved	Assessment: not achieved	Assessment: achieved
<p>Indicator 2 In 50% of the Assemblies, the full Assembly as well as the Committees of Finance, Health, Education and Development meet at least 4 times per year.</p>	<p>Indicator 2 50% of the financial administrations of the LG produce the final budget within the legally binding timeframe and 30% make it accessible to the public.</p>	<p>Indicator 2 The number of LG employees who know the essential legal texts as well as the methods and procedures necessary for their function increases by 50%.</p>	<p>Indicator 2 The National Decentralisation Programme is adjusted annually following the recommendations of the 2004 Review Mission.</p>
Assessment: irrelevant	Assessment: not achieved	Assessment: not achieved	Assessment: irrelevant
<p>Indicator 3 The number of contestants in the next Local Government Elections on the whole increases by 10%, women candidates increase by 15%..</p>	<p>Indicator 3 The number of reported financial irregularities in the LG accounts decreases by 5% (comparison financial years 2005/2006 and 2006/2007).</p>	<p>Indicator 3 The share of District Development Plans elaborated on the basis of Socio Economic Profiles and Village Action Planning increases by 50%.</p>	<p>Indicator 3 The number of LGs satisfied with the services of MALGA increases from 43% to 60%.</p>
Assessment: irrelevant	Assessment: not achieved	Assessment: achieved	Assessment: not achieved

To gain space, the above overview has omitted the first indicator for the Programme Objective because it does not conform to the AURA system and MGPDD had no influence on its achievement. A few indicators have been shortened to save space.

The assessment is done following these categories:

- (achieved) Even if quantitative proof is not available in all cases, the evaluation team considers the indicator fully achieved;
- (partially achieved) Achievement is judged to be at least half of expectations;
- (not achieved) Less than half of expectations are fulfilled
- (not relevant) External circumstances made this indicator irrelevant.