

United Nations Development Program

Country: Malawi

Project Document

UNDAF Outcome (s) Good governance, gender equality and rights based approach to development enhanced by 2011

CPAP Expected Outcome (s) By 2011, improved national capacity to formulate policy, manage, monitor and deliver services to protect the rights of vulnerable groups

CPAP Expected Outputs/Indicators Strengthened technical capacity of the Malawi Electoral Commission to support the organization and implementation of free, fair and credible elections in 2010 and beyond

Project Expected Outputs/Indicators

1. Strengthened capacity of MEC to organize and conduct the local government elections

Indicators:

- Voters' register updated and cleaned up.
 - IFMIS established and operational.
 - Asset management system produced and operational.
 - Number of CSOs supported by MEC.
 - % of voter turnout during polling day
2. Increased involvement and participation of women in local government elections.

Indicators:

- Number of women candidates participating in the LGEs.
 - Number of women engaged as registration and polling staff.
 - Number of women elected as councilors
3. Free and credible local government Elections conducted on the due date

Indicators:

- Elections calendar finalized
- Availability of adequate polling materials
- Robust results management system delivers accurate and quick results.
- LGEs declared free and credible by international observers and local monitors.
- Number of complaints received and resolved in time.

Implementing Partner
Other Partners

Malawi Electoral Commission
UNDP, Participating Development Partners.

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Brief Description

The United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF) and the UNDP Country Program Document have identified democratic governance as major focus area. UNDP support to Malawi on democratic governance is in line with national priorities as enshrined in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy, which acknowledges that good governance is a fundamental prerequisite for the achievement of the long – term national development goals. To further consolidate and deepen democracy in Malawi, UNDP, in close collaboration with other development partners, will support Malawi to conduct the 2010 Local government elections. The main objective of this project, therefore, is to support the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) to plan, conduct and supervise free and credible local government elections in 2010. The project will also support MEC to reinvigorate steps taken prior to the 2009 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections, to strengthen its capacities and set in place a strategic plan that will allow a continued capacity development effort to be undertaken in the run up to 2014 National Elections.

Specifically, the project will seek to achieve the following;

- 1) Strengthened capacity of MEC to organize and conduct the elections. The major activities will include the operationalization of IFMIS, establishment of the asset management system; training of ICT staff, formulation of the 2011- 2014 Strategic plan; preparation of the project document for In between Ballot Boxes activities; project evaluation and audit.
- 2) Increased involvement and participation of women in local government elections by conducting training for women candidates on local government elections and communication; lobbying party leaders to support women candidates in the local government elections; and educating the general public on the importance of voting for female councilors
- 3) Free and credible local government Elections conducted on the due date. The major activities in this component will include procurement of polling materials, provision of CSO support for the Voter Education and Information; and support to the actual management of the electoral processes.

The project funding will be provided through a Multi donor trust fund managed by UNDP. Development Partners participating in the basket fund will meet on a regular basis to review the project implementation and also agree on the issues that arise during the project implementation.

<p>Program Period : July, 2010 — June 2011 UNDP Program Component: Fostering democratic governance Project Title: Support to Local Government Elections Project Code: Duration : July, 2010 – June, 2011</p>	<p>Estimated budget: US \$5.4 million</p> <p>Of which: UNDP US\$ 1.3 million</p> <p>Other Resources (Unfunded) US\$ 4.1 million</p>
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AGREED BY (GOVERNMENT) _____

MINISTRY OF FINANCE
 2010-08-08
 P.O. BOX 30049
 CAPITAL CITY, LILONGWE

AGREED BY (MALAWI ELECTORAL COMMISSION) _____

AGREED BY: UNDP _____

Athand Shamba
 12/7/10



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1.0 SITUATION ANALYSIS

1.1 Background

Malawi has made significant progress towards consolidating its participatory democratic practice since introduction of multi-party elections in 1994. The country has held four successive parliamentary and presidential elections. The 2009 Presidential and Parliamentary Elections (PPE) have been acclaimed as free, credible and reflective of the will of the electorate according to international standards. The national constitution provides for a system of checks and balances among the legislature, the executive and the judiciary and for universally recognized pillars of democracy, including a bill of rights and freedom of speech and assembly. The Malawi Constitution also provides for the Local Government Elections (LGE) to be conducted one year after the parliamentary and Presidential Elections.

In 2000, Malawians went to the polls to elect their first local government councils with a view to empowering local communities. This resulted in the establishment of 861 local government councils which held office, in accordance with the Local Government Act (1998), for five years until 2005. The momentum was not sustained, and no local government elections have been held since. . Voter turnout at the 2000 local government elections was a paltry 14%. Further, 15% of constituencies had only one candidate standing for election In terms of gender representation, out of the 843 elected councilors, only 70 or 8.3 % of the elected councilors were women. Following a constitutional change and further legislative changes that allow the President to set the dates for the LGE and that have changed the scope and composition of the local level bodies, the government has expressed desire to hold the LGE on 23 November 2010. According to the Electoral Commission Amendment Bill 2010, there will be a total of 439 local government wards for the 2010 elections which will be more than double the number of parliamentary constituencies.

The 2009 PPE revealed the strengths that had enabled MEC, which bears the constitutional responsibility for the conduct of elections, to deliver free and credible elections. However the subsequent evaluation of the Elections Support Project, the reports of the EU observer mission and the Electoral Debriefing Conference on June 2009, revealed that there were institutional weaknesses that would need to be addressed in order to further enhance the quality of its work. Some of the major weaknesses included poor planning and budgeting resulting into poor planning and budgeting which resulted into unwarranted cost overruns; delayed procurement of equipment that resulted into the procurement of more items to meet the Constitutional deadline of 19th May, 2009; weak institutional capacity at MEC in most the department resulting into deployment of TAs in almost every department; and inadequate capacity of the CSO in the implementation of CVE activities.

According to reports compiled by technical experts after the elections, and as confirmed by the findings of the DPA /UNDP needs assessment mission (NAM) fielded over a period of two weeks in March 2010, these weaknesses included a voters roll with errors and no regular and systematic updating of the register, insufficient information for voters, party agents and domestic observers at polling stations, inadequate training of voter registration teams and poll workers resulting in poor completion of Optical Map Reading (OMR) forms, a high percentage (60%) of unserviceable field registration equipment which broke down due to poor handling by registration staff, lack of counterpart staff to understudy technical experts, and no agreed methodology for evaluation of Civil Society Organizations' (CSOs) capacities to conduct civic education. Consultations conducted by the DPA/UNDP NAM also revealed a general lack of urgency at MEC to prepare for the impending local government elections. The Commission appeared to be more reactive than proactive and had no detailed, actionable calendar on the basis on which to prepare for the elections upon announcement of the polling day.



1.2 Rationale

While the Commission has the required competence to conduct elections, a fact borne out by its organization of previous elections since 1994, the last LGE were held in 2000 and there is scanty institutional memory to bolster the Commission's ability. Additionally, the population has little understanding of the real roles and functions of the councilors to be elected this time around, especially with the amendments that are being introduced to the Local Act. In the wake of the 2009 PPE, it is conceivable that voters may not be as enthusiastic as they should to once more go to polling stations to cast their votes - a phenomenon that plagued the 2000 LGE. Thus, a strong effort will need to be made to put in place a voter education program that will sufficiently explain the functions of the councilors, the importance of voting for women as well as men to ensure a healthy and gender sensitive voter turnout. This will be particularly important in view of the changes in the structure of the electorate since the last local government elections of 2000 and the import of the recent amendments to the constitution and the Local Government Act. If voters are not motivated to participate in the elections, the resulting low turnout can prompt questions of legitimacy, representation and accountability of elected leaders and institutions.

Following on the success of the 2009 PPE, the forthcoming LGE must succeed not only by meeting the conventional criteria of free and credible elections, but also in mobilizing a healthy turnout of voters, increasing the participation of women candidates and registering an increase in the numbers of female councilors. A crucial feature of the elections will be the extent of non-partisan involvement of the media and civil society organizations in civic and voter education to enable voters to make informed choices, as well as monitoring media reporting on the elections for equitable and non partisan coverage of political party campaigns. The conduct of the elections also needs to reflect improved performance on the part of MEC relative to weaknesses perceived in past elections especially in the availability of an updated voters' register. Most importantly, MEC's performance will need to induce renewed public confidence in the Commission as a competent and impartial institution to facilitate free choices by communities of councilors who will plan, formulate and implement their development plans.

2.0 INTERVENTION STRATEGY

The envisaged support to the elections, to be funded through a trust fund that will be established by UNDP for the purpose, will be a fast-track intervention that, while not addressing all of the perceived weaknesses within the MEC, will nevertheless focus on enabling it to deliver a credible election and thereby take the country another step forward in deepening Malawi democratic tradition.

The strategy envisages a three-pronged intervention that will, firstly, offer support to MEC in the form of voter registration equipment and printing of ballot papers as well as recruitment of technical assistance staff. Secondly, the project will also provide limited technical assistance through provision to the Malawi Electoral Commission so that it is able to engage CSOs. Through this component, MEC will need to work strongly with ongoing civic education organizations and mechanisms such as NICE, which through separate channels may obtain increased resources for purpose of up-scaling activities for the LGE. It will also focus on promoting voter education through CSOs, while all aspects of voter information (basic information on the fundamentals of the elections including when and where to register; and where, when and how to vote), will be the responsibility of MEC. The Ministry of Gender, Children and Community Development will mount a 50-50 campaign, in continuation of the successful campaign for the 2009 PPE, to sensitize the general public about the importance of voting for female councilors.

UNDP will continue its coordination role for support to the project through regular, monthly meetings with Development Partners and officials of the MEC to ensure project monitoring, evaluating the impact of activities undertaken, and identifying opportunities for improved performance.

