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**DEMOCRACY CONSOLIDATION PROGRAMME PHASE IV
PROJECT CODE: 00083040**

January to June 2014 Progress Report

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND CABINET

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Acronyms

ACB	Anti-Corruption Bureau
CARD	Churches Action for Relief and Development
CBF	Community Based Facilitator
CDC	Centre for Development Communications
CRC	Community Rights Committee
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
DCP	Democracy Consolidation Programme
DCT	Development Communications Trust
DEC	District Executive Committee
IGA	Income Generating Activities
IP	Implementing Partner
KKYO	Nkhotakota Youth Organisation
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MoV	Means of Verification
MEC	Malawi Electoral Commission
MESN	Malawi Economic Support Network
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
NICE	National Initiative for Civic Education
PO	Programme Office
PSC	Programme Steering Committee
PSD	Programme Support Document
RBA	Rights Based Approach
RBM	Rights Based Management
RTD	Right to Development
RLC	Radio Listening Club
SCF	Stakeholder Consultative Forum
TA	Traditional Authority
ToT	Trainer of Trainers
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNDAF	United Nations Development Assistance Framework
VSL	Village Savings and Loans
WORLEC	Women's Legal Resources Centre

Executive Summary

The Democracy Consolidation Programme, phase four (DCP IV, 2012-2016), is aimed at capacitating the citizenry to demand compliance with governance and human rights principles from duty bearers at all levels of society, through provision of knowledge and skills. This is done with a view to facilitating enjoyment of the right to development by the citizenry.

This report covers the first half of 2014. During this period, the Programme provided financial and technical support to 13 Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) and one (1) Public institution to implement four (4) media and ten (10) grass-root based projects. The media projects covered the whole country while grass-root based projects continued to cover 19 districts.

During the reporting period, the Programme began the process of expanding programme implementation by inviting project proposals from interested institutions to implement projects in Kasungu, Dowa, Balaka and Blantyre districts. Unfortunately, most of the proposals received did not meet the required standard, perhaps due to the preoccupation with elections by most of the potential applicants. Consequently, the call for proposals was re-advertised. Project implementation in the 4 districts is expected to commence during the next reporting period.

The Programme continued to register commendable progress towards achievement of its outputs. The community volunteer structures i.e. Community Based Facilitators (CBFs), Community Rights Committees (CRCs) and Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) continued to demonstrate improved capacity as they carried out sensitization campaigns on governance, human rights, the right to development, fair trade, labour and consumer rights as well as undertake appropriate interventions to address their challenges. This resulted in the promotion of transparency and accountability as well as respect for human rights in the delivery of public goods and services at community and district levels. A lot of networking also took place in the run-up to the Tripartite Elections in which the grass-root structures proved their worth by partnering with various institutions in the delivery of civic and voter education.

During the reporting period, while communities carried out normal Right to Development activities, their main focus was on the tripartite elections. In this regard, they played a great role in engaging Parliamentary election candidates to sign social contracts with the communities, fighting electoral malpractices like violence as well as bias in allocation of campaign rally venues, voter intimidation by traditional leaders who were forcing their subjects to vote for their preferred candidates and other forms of electoral related malpractices. The Programme faced, among others, the following challenges: unresponsive duty bearers and increased political sensitivity impacting negatively on delivery of project activities as the community was heavily polarised.

The main lessons learnt during the reporting period were: mutual trust and cordial relations between project staff, CBFs, CRC and RLC members as well as traditional and

other opinion leaders at local level is a success factor in project implementation; and the electoral campaign period presents a unique set of opportunities as Parliamentary candidates are more responsive to demands by communities.

A. Situational Background/Context

Malawi's current overarching development policies are Vision 2020 and the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS II) {2011- 2016}. These two policy documents guide Government and other players' operations in the country. DCP IV was designed within the context of these overarching policies. Governance constitutes one of the major pillars of the policy documents. Consequently, DCP IV is one of the tools designed to respond and contribute to the country's long term vision and medium term development policy, with a particular focus on the promotion of good governance and the realisation of the right to development as prescribed in section 30 of the Republican Constitution.

DCP IV was developed in response to a follow-up survey on civic education in Malawi (2011); the DCP III end of project evaluation (2011); situation analysis undertaken in 2012, Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II (MGDS II, 2012-2016) and the United Nations Development Assistance Framework (UNDAF, 2012-2016). The UNDAF outcome is "*National institutions foster democratic governance and human rights to promote transparency, accountability, participation and access to justice for all especially women and children by 2016*". The UNDAF was aligned to the MGDS II.

According to the situation analysis, Malawi's main problem is poverty whose root cause is the "*low enjoyment of the right to development, especially amongst children, women, people with disabilities, and the rural and urban poor*". Consequently, DCP IV's goal is "*Group villages progressively enjoying the right to development through demanding good governance and performance of correlative duties.*" The Programme is specifically designed to build capacity on the demand side of governance and human rights (right holders). It is aimed at imparting knowledge and skills to right holders, especially vulnerable groups, to be able to demand good governance and fulfilment of human rights, especially the right to development, from appropriate duty bearers. DCP activities are, therefore, mainly focused on transferring knowledge and skills, animation, working through groups as well as other interactive strategies which are complemented by radio and print media. The Programme is implemented through projects developed and implemented by CSO's and Public institutions selected through an open and competitive process. The projects fall into two broad categories: firstly, grass-root based projects which operate through local structures (District Office, CBFs, CRCs and RLCs) to facilitate achievement of programme outputs and, secondly, media based projects, which complement the grass-root based projects through provision of relevant and critical information as well as acting as a channel for right-holders to communicate their views on various governance issues and right to development requirements to duty bearers as well as

receive feedback. The media projects also act as a channel for dialogue on various topical issues between right holders and duty bearers.

The Programme employs a three pronged approach, namely; provision of knowledge on governance and human rights, with a special emphasis on the right to development, fair trade, labour and consumer rights; development of skills and structures for demanding good governance and fulfilment of human rights, especially the right to development, fair trade, labour and consumer rights; and provision of remedies through the paralegal services offered to victims of human rights violations. DCP IV uses the Rights Based Approach to programming (RBA) and Results Based Management (RBM). All programme activities pay special attention to the status and needs of vulnerable groups.

B. Assessment of Project Results during the Reporting Period

During the reporting period, the Programme renewed, for twelve (12) months, funding agreements with 14 institutions carried over from the previous reporting period to implement 10 grass-roots and 4 media based projects. The grass-roots based projects continued to cover 19 districts¹ while information disseminated through media based projects reached out to the whole country. Following the allocation of resources for programme expansion to 4 new districts in the 2014 Annual Work Plan, a call for project proposals was issued in May, 2014 through the print media targeting Balaka, Blantyre, Dowa and Kasungu districts. Unfortunately, the response was not as impressive perhaps due to the preoccupation with elections by most of the potential applicants. The call for project proposals was re-advertised and selection process will be completed during the next reporting period.

During the reporting period, the programme continued to record commendable progress towards achievement of its outputs. CBFs, CRCs and RLCs with support from district Paralegal Officers and Development Communications Trist (DCT) facilitators continued to disseminate the knowledge and skills they acquired to other members of society as well as make assessments and engage appropriate duty bearers to address their challenges. Media coverage and community activities were, however, dominated by election related activities in readiness for the tripartite elections held on 20th May 2014. This saw project volunteers, where their institution was accredited by Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) or in partnership with other accredited institutions, where their own institution was not accredited, involved in sensitisation campaigns and monitoring various electoral activities, including the voting process. The volunteers also facilitated the drawing up of citizen manifestos aimed at securing buy-ins from aspiring candidates with a view to holding them to account once elected. As a result social contracts were signed between aspiring parliamentary candidates and communities in many constituencies. The contracts will be used to measure the performance of the elected leaders. In view of the fact that the elections were very

¹ Nsanje, Chikwawa, Mwanza, Neno, Mulanje, Phalombe, Zomba, Machinga, Mangochi, Ntcheu, Dedza, Salima, Ntchisi, Mchinji, Nkhotakota, Nkhata-Bay, Mzimba, Rumphu, Karonga

important in shaping the country's future, a lot of time was dedicated to electoral activities rather than mainstream project activities.

Despite the inevitable emphasis on elections, other more routine project activities continued to be undertaken resulting in improved capacity at grass root level. For instance, the volunteers continued to lead their communities in identifying governance and human rights challenges besetting them as well as identifying and implementing appropriate remedial activities including dialogues with duty bearers. Further, DCT trained 4 RLCs from Zomba and Balaka districts while Women's Legal Resources Centre (WOLREC) trained 15 CRCs from Dedza district, that were carried forward from the previous reporting period, on fair trade, labour and consumer rights. The training provided the targeted CRCs and RLCs with knowledge and skills to fight against exploitative trade and labour practices. Furthermore, WOLREC and Nkhotakota Youth Organisation (KKYO) carried out CRC refresher training activities on governance, human rights, the right to development, fair trade, labour and consumer rights. The two day refresher training sessions were necessitated by the decline in knowledge levels amongst CRC members caused by lapse of time, for those that attended the initial training, as well as increasing numbers of new members brought in to replace those that were no longer available through loss of interest, death or relocation to other areas. 10 out of 60 CRCs in Mwanza district and 9 out of 131 CRCs in Nkhotakota district benefited from the training. Initial evaluation indicate that the sessions helped revamp weak CRCs. For instance, soon after the refresher training, Kalanga CRC, in STA Govati, Mwanza district, established a committee that was mandated to actively search for a market for their sweet potatoes. The training will continue in the next reporting period and will extend to all 19 districts.

The media based projects continued to compliment the efforts of grass-roots based projects by disseminating important messages on governance and human rights to right holders, communicating community demands to duty bearers as well as feedback to right holders and, most importantly, providing a channel for exposing under or non-performance by various duty bearers. This resulted in negligent or lazy duty bearers jumping into action to address concerns raised by right holders as a result of or to avoid reprimand from higher level duty bearers. The media was also used to expose common trade and labour exploitative practices with a view to raising awareness among the citizenry. This resulted in the promotion of transparency and accountability in the delivery of public goods and services; realisation of human rights, generally and specifically the right to development, especially for vulnerable groups (the elderly, women, people with disabilities and those affected by HIV/Aids, youth and children) and the promotion of fair trading systems such as the use of credible trade tools.

The Programme also continued to provide free paralegal services to victims of human rights violations in the 19 targeted districts. During the reporting period, a total of 1,242 cases were registered out of which 674 were resolved through mediation and counselling, 415 were referred to appropriate case handling institutions and 153 were

pending resolution at the close of the reporting period. Vulnerable groups, in particular, women, children and the elderly continued to make up over 60% of the beneficiaries of this service.

Bi-annual review meetings aimed at sharing experiences and best practices among CBFs were held in all the target districts except Chikwawa, Phalombe, Mangochi, Salima, Ntchisi and Ntcheu. A range of duty bearers, including the ACB, as well as representatives from successful local Cooperatives/Associations were invited to interact with the CBFs and share experiences on their operations and best practices. The review meetings also served as revision forums for the training manuals in readiness for the rolling out of the CRC refresher training sessions. In addition, CRCs undertook learning visits to other committees in their neighbourhood. 1 CBF each from Mangochi and Ntcheu visited Nkhata-Bay as model CBFs during the latter's review meeting. Further, Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD) organized a learning visit for its new Mulanje District Paralegal Officer to learn from his counterparts in Zomba and Phalombe.

Progress under each Output

Below is a summary of progress registered under each output during the first half of 2014. The summary provides the progress made so far towards the achievement of the set annual targets. It should, however, be noted that progress registered in most instances contributes to several indicators and has, therefore, been lumped together to avoid duplication.

Output 1: At least 70% of Group Villages effectively demanding progressive accessibility and acceptability of basic social services, basic services and good governance especially for women, children, youth and people with disabilities.

Indicator 1: No. of CBFs identified and trained as trainers on governance and RBA

Planned: 200

MoV: Progress Reports

Progress

- Activities aimed at achieving the above two indicators were not implemented pending selection of IPs for Balaka, Blantyre, Dowa and Kasungu districts. The selection process was, however, re-launched following poor response to an earlier call for project proposals.

Indicator 2: No. of CRCs created and trained on governance and RBA

Planned: 500

MoV: Progress Reports

Progress

- Refresher training on right to development and RBA was launched in Mwanza and Nkhotakota towards the end of the reporting period where a total of 19 CRCs

out of the planned 2,407 committees from 19 districts were trained. Training could not start earlier due to busy elections calendar which utilised the same volunteers.

NOT Achieved (Gap for CBF and CRC identification and training is 100% while for CRC refresher training it is 2,407 CRCs in 19 districts)

Indicator 3: *No. of CRCs dialoguing with duty bearers.*

Baseline: 980 CRCs; 45 RLCs.

Target for 2014: 1,470 CRCs, 61 RLCs

MoV: DCP Progress reports

Progress:

- 1,575 out of 2,439 CRCs (65%) and 56 out of 61 RLCs (92%) reached out to various duty bearers, especially local government service providers, through dialogues aimed at addressing various challenges impacting negatively on the quality of life for right holders. For instance:
 - ✓ Advocating for fairness and equality in the implementation of Government and Civil Society safety net programs;
 - ✓ Demanding transparency and accountability in public service delivery;
 - ✓ Advocating for professionalism in the conduct of duty bearers, e.g. health workers, teachers, etc;
 - ✓ Demanding improvements in infrastructural services i.e. roads, bridges, school blocks, boreholes, sanitation facilities and clinics; and
 - ✓ Abolition of harmful cultural practices.
- Most communities made demands on various aspects of governance and human rights, especially the right to development, through interface/dialogue meetings with various duty bearers. During the reporting period, the CBFs, CRCs and RLCs held approximately 1,158 interface meetings with various duty bearers.

Fully Achieved (Gap: target exceeded by 105 and 11 for CRCs and RLCs respectively)

Indicator 4: *No. of cases registered and processed by the district paralegal offices.*

Baseline: 1,504; **Annual target:** 2,256

Progress:

- District paralegal offices in 19 targeted districts continued to provide free paralegal services to victims of human rights violations. During the reporting period 1,294 cases were registered out of which 696 were resolved through mediation and counselling, 428 were referred to appropriate case handling institutions and 170 were pending resolution. Disputes handled included, among others, gender based violence, child exploitation/abuse, labour disagreements, land grabbing and deceased estate management.

Partially Achieved (Gap: 962 cases)

Indicator 4: *No. of Radio programmes on governance and Rtd produced and broadcast.*

Annual target: 208:

- *No. of Mfulu supplements produced and disseminated*

Annual target: 120,000

Progress

- 75 Radio programmes produced and aired by Capital radio (*Mau a Kumudzi – Village views*), DCT (*Khamalathu – our hard work {persistence}*) and *Tilondoloze Khamalathu – lets follow up on our hard work*), Centre for Development Communications (CDC) (*Mbaliyanga*) and KKYO (*Titukule Boma Lathu – lets develop our district*). The programmes were aired on Capital Radio, MBC radio 1 (DCT), MBC radio 2 (CDC) and Nkhotakota Community Radio (KKYO).
- The Ministry of Information and Civic Education produced and disseminated 4,500 copies of a special *Mfulu* newsletter which was distributed through DCP grass root based IPs. The ministry produced the newsletter following a production suspension for *Boma Lathu* newspaper, which carries the *Mfulu* supplement, due to financial constraints. Copies produced were below the planned monthly production of 10,000 due to high cost of printing a small newsletter.

PARTIALLY Achieved (*Gap: 29 radio programs for half year – this shortfall was occasioned by delayed commencement of activities; and 55,500 copies of Mfulu mainly attributable to reduced production following suspension of Boma Lathu Newspaper. Production of Boma Lathu to resume in July, 2014*)

Output 2: *At least 70% of Group Villages in 28 districts demanding fair labour practices, markets and consumer protection especially for women, youth, children and people with disabilities*

Indicator 1: *No. of CBFs trained as trainers on Fair trade, labour and consumer rights*

Planned: 128

MoV: Progress Reports

Indicator 2: *No. of CRCs trained on fair trade, labour and consumer rights.*

Planned: 448

MoV: Progress Reports

Progress:

- Activities aimed at achieving the above two indicators were scheduled to take place in Karonga, Mzimba and Nkhata-Bay during the next reporting period. Note, therefore, that Nkhata-Bay, Mzimba and Karonga districts are yet to start registering results on issues of fair trade, labour and consumer rights.

- 19 CRCs were refresher trained on fair trade, labour and consumer rights in Mwanza and Nkhotakota districts. Similar refresher training will be done in all the 19 districts during the next reporting period. Commencement of the activity was delayed due to the busy elections calendar which utilised the same volunteers.

Not Achieved (Gap for CBF and CRC training is 100% while for CRC refresher training it is 2,407 CRCs in 19 districts)

Indicator 3: *No. of CRCs reporting identification and resolution of consumers rights issues.*

Baseline: 980

Target: 1,470 CRCs and 61 RLCs

MoV: Progress Reports

Progress:

- 624 CRCs and 61 RLCs championed consumer protection initiatives resulting in the setting up of monitoring committees to monitor the use of approved and assized trading scales as well as promote vigilance against the sale of expired products and exploitative barter trade that exchanges agricultural products with plastic kitchen utensils. Un-assized scales were withdrawn and expired goods destroyed while the barter trade was stopped in many areas.

Fully achieved for RLCs and partially achieved for CRCs (Gap: 846). *Matters under this indicator are more prevalent during the agriculture marketing season which commences in earnest from July.*

Indicator 4: *No. of CRCs reporting identification and resolution of labour rights issues.*

Baseline: 980

Target: 1,470

MoV: Progress Reports

Progress:

- 519 CRCs and 19 RLCs mobilized communities to stand up for the protection of children's rights, and to fight against child labour and exploitation. Monitoring exercises in child labour prone areas like Lakes Malawi, Chilwa and Chiuta, agriculture sector and Trading Centres were also intensified. 542 Children (319 boys and 223 girls) were withdrawn from child labour and returned to school.
- The committees also galvanized employees to demand fair labour practices. The CRCs and RLCs intervened in cases of unfair dismissals and lack of occupational safety and, in the process, upheld the rights of workers.

Partially achieved (Gap: 951 for CRCs and 42 for RLCs)

Indicator 5: *No. of CRCs reporting identification of fair markets and resolution of exploitative trade practices.*

Baseline: 980

Target: 1,470

MoV: Progress Reports

Progress:

- 624 CRCs and 61 RLCs took measures to eliminate exploitative trading practices and the tendency by Vendors to offer ridiculously low prices. Communities created groups such as associations to jointly address the commonest exploitative tendency of using barter trade. Trading as a group also ensured better and profitable prices through identification of profitable markets for their pooled products. It also enhanced information sharing for easy market identification leading to reduced reliance on the exploitative middlemen.

Fully achieved for RLCs and partially achieved for CRCs (Gap: 846). *Matters under this indicator are more prevalent during the agriculture marketing season which commences in earnest from July.*

Indicator 6: *No. of CRCs engaged in IGAs*

Baseline: NA

Target: 300

MoV: Progress Reports

Progress:

- 514 CRCs and 40 RLCs engaged in various income generating activities like Village Savings and Loan Groups (VSLs), bee keeping, fish farming as well as producing energy saving stoves for sale.

FULLY Achieved (Gap: target exceeded by 254 committees)

Indicator 5: Number of radio programmes produced and broadcast

Planned: 208

MoV: Progress Reports

Progress:

- Media projects continued to provide complementary coverage of fair trading, labour and consumer rights and bringing out lessons learnt from the grassroots based projects. The media coverage galvanised interest in other communities to emulate the examples set by those covered. See under Output 1 indicator 4, for details of media productions.

PARTIALLY Achieved

OUTPUT 3: *Community members facilitating voter education for the right to development and good governance*

Indicator: % of public who are knowledgeable about electoral processes

Baseline: NA

Target: NA

MoV: Progress Reports

Progress:

- Output not funded.
- Despite the absence of election specific funding, CBEs, CRCs and RLCs actively participated, either on their own or in partnership with other accredited organisations, in raising awareness and encouraging community participation in the 2014 tripartite elections. The volunteers were also vigilant in guarding against lapses and apathy in the process which could have seen some polling processes managed poorly or very few people turn out to vote. The volunteers engaged appropriate duty bearers to ensure that challenges were promptly attended to while at the same time calling on the community members to go and vote for candidates of their choice.
- CRCs and RLCs played a great role in engaging Parliamentary Election Candidates to sign social contracts with the communities (CRC & RLC facilitated the signing of such contracts in 45 constituencies from across the country), fighting electoral malpractices like violence as well as bias in allocation of campaign rally venues, intimidation of voters by traditional leaders forcing their subjects to vote for their preferred candidates and other forms of electoral related malpractices.

PARTIALLY Achieved, although no formal assessment of the output was done. In the next reporting period, the Programme will focus on holding elected officials accountable.

Output 4: *Right to development-centred effective and efficient management, partnership formation and monitoring and evaluation of the Programme*

Indicator 1: Number of strategic partners facilitating the meeting of demands by DCP supported communities

Baseline: 15

Target: 17

MOV: Progress reports

Progress:

- During the year, the Programme advertised for partners to implement the project in 4 additional districts of Balaka, Blantyre, Dowa, and Kasungu. Unfortunately, the first response was not satisfactory and, consequently, the call for project proposals was re-advertised.
- IPs continued to network with other organisations at various levels, including DEC and other district networks. New partnerships were forged to deal with

elections related issues. For instance, the Programme agreed to partner with OXFAM on its “*improved access to profitable markets*” campaign which targeted aspiring Presidential and Parliamentary candidates. Malawi Electoral Support Network (MESN) and National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) were another set of institutions with which the IPs networked. CDC’s *Mbaliyanga* program extensively engaged MEC to clarify electoral issues.

- IPs continued to invite various duty bearers to review meetings to share relevant information with CBFs, especially on what services they offer and how the services could be accessed. Further, the Programme Office and the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB) agreed to take advantage of review meetings for the ACB to make a presentation on ‘*Community participation in the fight against corruption*’. Consequently ACB made such presentations in Mwanza, Mulanje, Nkhata-Bay and Rumphu districts.

Fully Achieved

Indicator 2: % of implementation partners indicating satisfaction with support from DCP **Baseline: 100%; Target: 100%**

MOV: Perception survey reports

Progress:

- Perception survey yet to be conducted

NOT Achieved

Indicator 3: Programme Steering Committee (PSC) and Stakeholder Consultative Forum (SCF) resolutions showing satisfaction with Programme implementation

Baseline: None

Target: Undefined

Progress:

- No PSC meeting was held during the reporting period due to the busy elections schedule. Stakeholder Consultative Forum (SCF) held for District Paralegal Officers and Project Managers from 14 institutions in April, 2014. The forum shared experiences, discussed Programme implementation strategy and reporting guidelines and addressed common challenges.

Partially achieved (Gap: 100% for PSC and fully Achieved for annual SCF).

Indicator 4: Average % funds absorption rate per year

Baseline: 92%

Target: 97%

Progress: 68% of the resources absorbed

Partially Achieved.

Indicator 5: *Number of people trained or refresher-trained in RBA and RBM*

Baseline: 79

Target: 85

Progress:

- ToT for district managers and project officers on RBA and RBM for Balaka, Blantyre, Dowa and Kasungu districts to be conducted in the next reporting period.
- The SCF offered an opportunity to revise the programme's implementation strategy covering elements of RBA and RBM.

Partially achieved (Gap: Officers from Balaka, Blantyre, Dowa and Kasungu IPs)

For a sample of success stories registered under outputs 1 and 2, please see Annex IV

C. Gender Mainstreaming

As per its design, the programme continued to mainstream gender in all its activities. Further, all activities continued to pay special attention to the needs and challenges besetting vulnerable groups, namely; women, the elderly, people with disabilities and those affected by HIV/Aids, youth and children. This decision was primarily based on the prevailing gender imbalances, as a result of which deliberate efforts were made to promote participation of vulnerable groups. For instance, by design, women are supposed to comprise 40% of the various local committees and take up leadership positions. Already, slightly over 50 % of CRCs and around 70% of RLC members are women, with a good number of them in leadership positions.

Community iterative assessments and action taking on local challenges were particularly designed to address the prevailing gender disparities and the need to prioritise women and other vulnerable groups. Consequently, women saw more benefits from the projects and initiatives being brought to their communities as most of the community rights challenges being addressed by the Programme were those that had a greater negative effect on them and the interventions were specifically designed to improve their well-being and status. For instance, lack of Under-5 clinics, access to potable water and improved sanitation facilities are particularly harsh on women and the girl-child and were consequently prioritised.

Community volunteer structures also ensured that women and other vulnerable groups equally benefitted from Government safety net programs. Further, women were major players in wealth creation schemes which saw more women start savings clubs in their communities through which they accessed capital and started small scale business ventures. This ability to earn their own income freed women from some of the worst forms of abuse.

In a bid to enhance the attainment of the girl child in education, bye-laws were introduced in many communities to curb early marriages which are often as a result of poor attitudes among parents that see them favouring boys to remain in school while girls are brought up to learn how to manage a home and are then married off whenever the family feels they are a burden or as a means of accessing support from men.

It should also be noted that most of the beneficiaries of the free paralegal services were women who were able to access justice.

And finally, presentation of project information was done with gender disaggregated data to demonstrate the extent of gender mainstreaming.

D. Status of key Partnerships and inter-agency/departmental collaboration in the area of the outcome

The Programme is implemented through IPs, who constitute the Programme's primary partners. During the reporting period, the Programme renewed partnerships for all its 14 IPs to continue implementing the 4 media and 10 grass-root based projects.

All IPs continued to participate in DEC meetings and other district networks. New partnerships were forged to deal with elections related issues. For instance, the Programme agreed to partner with OXFAM on its '*Access to Agricultural Markets*' campaign which targeted aspiring Presidential and Parliamentary candidates. MESN and NICE were another set of institutions with which the IPs networked. CDC's *Mbaliyanga* program extensively engaged the MEC to clarify electoral issues.

E. Lessons Learnt

The main lessons learnt during the reporting period were:

- ✓ mutual trust and cordial relations between project staff, CBFs, CRC and RLC members as well as traditional and other opinion leaders at local level is a success factor in project implementation;
- ✓ the electoral campaign period presents a unique set of opportunities during which Parliamentary candidates are more responsive to demands by communities; and
- ✓ continuous engagement with duty bearers leads to a better understanding of project purpose and improved relations resulting in duty bearers becoming more responsive.

F. Challenges

The following challenges had an impact on Programme delivery:

- (a) unresponsive duty bearers: this development was to a greater extent caused by lack of resources in public institutions as a result of the fraud and theft of substantial amounts of public resources that happened in the last half of 2013;

- (b) increased political sensitivity occasioned by the tripartite elections which impacted negatively on delivery of project activities as the community was heavily polarised; and
- (c) a combined busy farming season and hectic electoral calendar resulted in rescheduling of community training sessions in Karonga, Nkhata-Bay and Mzimba districts to the next reporting period.

G. Conclusion

The programme continued to register commendable progress with many communities transforming from being docile to active citizens demanding delivery of quality and affordable basic social services, respect for human rights in the delivery of public services as well as transparency and accountability. The election of councillors, after a long absence, will present an opportunity to grass root volunteers as they will now have a voice in the decision making fora at district level. The Programme proved relevant in addressing the challenges outlined in the situation analysis. It also demonstrated that it had the potential to contribute to the attainment of Vision 2020, theme 5 of MGDS II and Outcome 4.1 of the current UNDAF.