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Poverty reduction during democratic transition: the Malawi Social Action Fund 1996–2001

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Summary

In 1996 the Government of Malawi launched the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF), which supported the construction of village assets and a public works programme. This report presents the findings of a review of MASAF by a multi-disciplinary team from three well-known research institutions. The team collected data from key informant interviews, a review of project monitoring data and studies at 121 sub-project sites consisting of a checklist survey of the state of repair of the asset, a key informant interview, a questionnaire survey of 9 households and focus group discussions at 15 sites. This provided a unique source of data on the performance of an African social fund. The report assesses the degree to which the project provided benefits to the poor and contributed to pro-poor institutional development. The conclusions are mixed. A high proportion of the resources provided benefits in terms of new infrastructure or employment in public works. There was not much leakage of funds to the better off, nor was there much targeting of the poorest and most vulnerable. The report discusses the relationship between MASAF, the national government, local authorities and community structures. It explores how a demand-led approach interacted with sector planning and the devolution of powers to local government. It also explores the degree to which MASAF succeeded in democratising decision-making. One unexpected finding was the great influence of traditional leaders. The report concludes by discussing lessons for the implementation of Malawi's poverty reduction strategy. The report is of particular relevance to people with a special interest in Malawi and those working on institutional development in Africa.

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Acronyms

ADC	Area Development Committee
AFORD	Alliance for Democracy
BA	Beneficiary assessment
CAS	Country Assistance Strategy
CBO	Community-based Organisation
CIDA	Canadian International Development Agency
CPS	Complementary Panel Survey
CSP	Community Sub-projects of MASAF
CSR	Centre for Social Research
DA	District Assembly
DANIDA	Danish International Development Agency
DCO	District Commissioner's Office
DCU	Development Communication Unit
DDC	District Development Committee
DDF	District Development Fund
DDLGA	Department of District and Local Government Administration
DEC	District Executive Committee
DEVPOL	Statement of Development Policies
DFID	Department for International Development (formerly ODA)
DS	Decentralisation Secretariat
DSS	District Executive Sub-Set
EPA	Extension Planning Area
EC	European Commission
EU	European Union
FGD	Focus group discussion
GDP	Gross domestic product
GOM	Government of Malawi
HIPC	Highly Indebted Poor Countries
ICR	Implementation Completion Review
IDA	International Development Association
IDS	Institute of Development Studies
IEC	Information, education and communications
IFPRI	International Food Policy Research Institute
IHS	Integrated Household Survey
IMF	International Monetary Fund
LGDMP	Local Government Development Management Program

LIA	Local Impact Area
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MIS	Management information system
MK	Malawi Kwatcha
MOE	Ministry of Education
MEPD	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
MoEST	Ministry of Education, Science and Technology
MoFEP	Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning
MoHP	Ministry of Health and Population
MP	Member of Parliament
MPRSP	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
MTEF	Medium-term Expenditure Framework
MU	Management Unit of MASAF
NCIC	National Construction Industry Council
NEC	National Economic Council
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NIBR	Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research
NSO	National Statistical Office
NORAD	Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation
OPC	Office of the President and the Cabinet
PAD	Project Appraisal Document
PAP	Poverty Alleviation Programme
PASR	Poverty and Sustainability Review
PHN	Population, health and nutrition
PMC	Project management committee
PMS	Poverty Monitoring System
PMSF	Poverty Monitoring Support Facility or Fund
PMU	Poverty Monitoring Unit
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
PRS	Poverty reduction strategy
PRSP	Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PSIP	Public Sector Investment Plan
PWP	Public works programme
SWAP	Sector-wide Approach
TA	Traditional authority

TWC	Technical Working Committee of PMS
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNCDF	United Nations Capital Development Fund
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNICEF	United Nations Children's Fund
VAM	Vulnerability Assessment Mapping
VDC	Village Development Committee
VHC	Village Health Committee
WDR	World Development Report

Executive summary

In 1996 the Malawi Government launched the first Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF I). The project was designed to disburse $56 million over a five-year period mostly on community sub-projects and public works. The former funded construction of village-level assets and the latter supported labour-intensive projects in very poor localities. Within two years the credit was fully committed and MASAF II was launched in 1998.

In 2001 the Government of Malawi and the World Bank commissioned an independent review of MASAF I during 1996–2001 'to assess the degree to which the project achieved its objectives and contributed to the World Bank country assistance strategy and the Malawi Government poverty alleviation strategy'. They invited the Institute of Development Studies, UK, to coordinate a team that included researchers from the Centre for Social Research, Malawi and the Norwegian Institute for Urban and Regional Research.

The team organised the review in three phases: (i) a desk review, (ii) consultations with stakeholders to identify areas for further study and (iii) in-depth study of key issues. These studies used a combination of methods: interviews with MASAF managers, government officials, politicians and other informants at national level and at a sample of zones, districts and communities; reviews of project monitoring data; and studies at 121 sub-project sites in 9 districts that included 91 education projects and 30 standalone boreholes. These site studies consisted of a checklist survey of the state of repair of the asset, a key informant interview, a questionnaire survey of 9 households and focus group discussions at 15 sites.

The MASAF project appraisal document states four objectives: (i) create local assets to benefit the poor; (ii) promote a new approach to rural development involving communities in project preparation and implementation; (iii) finance labour-intensive construction as a safety-net operation; and (iv) strengthen poverty monitoring and assessment. Interviews with people involved in the design of the project revealed three additional implicit objectives: (v) integrate new actors into development institutions; (vi) dynamise changes in government performance by demonstrating new ways to deliver benefits to the poor; and (vii) create new spaces for the expression of the needs and interests of the poor. The team took these objectives into account in reviewing the experience of MASAF I.

Poverty reduction

Malawi is very poor, with a per capita GDP of US$160 during the mid-1990s. A 1997/98 survey found that 65 per cent of the population were living in households with incomes below US$0.60 per day in rural areas and US$1 in urban areas. There were high levels of childhood malnutrition with 48 per cent of children stunted. Life expectancy was 41 years, compared with 46 years a decade earlier. Malawi had very high levels of illiteracy, with 60 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men over 15 reported to be illiterate.

During 1996–2001 Malawi experienced serious economic difficulties and prices rose considerably. The HIV/AIDS epidemic had a major impact. In 2001–02 crops failed and food was scarce. Disputes

between donor agencies and the government led to reduced aid flows. The data did not enable the team accurately to assess the contribution of MASAF I to sustainable poverty reduction. The study addressed the narrower question of immediate benefits to the poor by considering available evidence relating to:

- income poverty reduction and income poverty security
- human capital development
- empowerment.

Income poverty reduction and income poverty security

MASAF addressed income poverty and income poverty security by providing paid employment in public works and, to a lesser extent, in community sub-projects. The household survey at sub-project sites found that 15 per cent of households at sites where classrooms were built had at least one household member who had earned income from the construction. It was not possible to estimate the number of person-days and total wages for unskilled workers in these projects. The public works component disbursed $12.8 million, of which 48.6 per cent was for wages of unskilled workers. These projects employed 721,155 people for a total of 14.42 million person-days. According to a beneficiary assessment, 71 per cent of people said that participation in a project had improved their quality of life.

The strategy of keeping daily pay low in public works projects successfully discouraged people with alternative ways of earning money from seeking work. However, there was little effort to ensure that the poorest and most disadvantaged benefited. The relatively modest funding of a public works programme (PWP) and the decision to spread the benefits widely meant that beneficiaries mostly received only one opportunity at employment during the life of the project. It is best to view the PWP during 1996–2001 as a short-term expedient to relieve severe poverty and as a test of an approach the government could subsequently scale up.

The experience of MASAF illustrated the difficulties that a scaled-up public works programme would face. There were disputes about the appropriateness of the indicators of a geographical area's need. These indicators would have to be updated frequently to command general support. In any case, there were strong political arguments for spreading the benefits widely, since every constituency had many very poor people.

The team did not find major leakages of funds to the better off, nor did it find much targeting of the poorest and most vulnerable. It would have taken a special effort to channel funds to the latter, who tend to have less influence. There may be a conflict between the wish to benefit the poorest and the pressure to produce good quality assets.

Human capital development

The assessment of human capital development focused on school buildings and boreholes, which accounted for 1,214 out of 1,392 sub-projects. One reason for the preponderance of schools is that the

government eliminated primary school fees shortly after the 1994 election and enrolment increased substantially. The new policy was given a large amount of publicity.

The study did not find a relationship between the level of poverty at district or traditional authority (TA) level and the allocation of MASAF I resources. This suggests there was little targeting of the poorest localities. The richer areas did not capture a disproportionate share of sub-projects as a result of their greater ability to prepare and advocate for sub-project proposals. It is probable that most sub-projects were in locations with many poor households.

The evidence suggests that MASAF provided substantial benefits to the poor. This was certainly the case with regard to the provision of additional school places. MASAF I funded around one-quarter of the classrooms built between 1994 and 2001 (with MASAF II providing a similar number). Almost all those buildings were in use at the time of the survey, though around 35 per cent are estimated to be in serious need of repair. On the basis of the survey estimates, they provided spaces for more than 150,000 pupils, representing around 13 per cent of the increase in primary school enrolment of 1.2 million which occurred in 1994.

Survey estimates similarly indicate that some 200,000 people are using MASAF I boreholes as their primary source of drinking water. Here the position on sustained use is less impressive. Only half of the boreholes linked to education sub-projects and two-thirds of standalone boreholes provided a reasonable supply of palatable drinking water at the time of the survey.

Empowerment

It was difficult to provide a quantitative assessment of empowerment. However, there are some encouraging indications. Almost 60 per cent of respondents reported involvement of household members in sub-project selection and 27 per cent said that members had participated in project preparation. This quantitative evidence is somewhat simplistic, since it does not address the degree of "involvement". The focus group discussions revealed how limited this was at many sites.

The great majority of respondents accepted that their community was responsible for maintenance of school buildings and boreholes created with MASAF support. Attitudes about how further investments might be obtained could also be regarded as in line with MASAF principles, in that around 65 per cent of respondents proposed that the first step would be to collect money or building materials before seeking external assistance. However, the focus group discussions suggested that many people had little idea of how to secure the additional support.

Institutional development

The new government inherited a poorly performing administrative system in 1994. It launched a number of reform initiatives including strengthening financial planning, restructuring some ministries, establishing an Anti-Corruption Bureau, reforming personnel management in the public sector and strengthening decentralised political and administrative structures. The outcome has been disappointing. The team

reviewed the experience of MASAF I with this in mind, looking at the interaction between the project and government structures, assessing the influence of MASAF on the progress of reforms, and identifying lessons for the implementation of Malawi's poverty reduction strategy.

MASAF and national planning

The team did not find guidelines for allocation of community sub-projects between sectors or between districts, nor did it find evidence that the Project Steering Committee reviewed the pattern of allocation. Despite the lack of explicit plans, the projects were distributed relatively equally between districts, with the less populous ones tending to have more projects and higher expenditure per capita. The limiting factor seems to have been the capacity of districts and Zone Managers to process applications. On the other hand, the allocation of projects between traditional authority areas was highly unequal and in 20 out of 26 districts more than half the projects were in a single traditional authority area. This suggests that traditional leaders played an important role in mobilising communities to submit proposals or in lobbying to have proposals appraised. Communities submitted many more proposals than anticipated, creating a large backlog. The team heard many stories about how political lobbying influenced the choice of proposals for appraisal.

The relationship between MASAF and the Ministries of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and Health and Population (MoHP) were quite different. The MoEST was under pressure from the highest political level to increase the supply of school buildings. At first there were problems of communication between MASAF and the Ministry and some schools were sited inappropriately, but these problems were resolved.

The relationship between MASAF and the MoHP was problematic. The MoHP was preparing a national plan and proposal for a sector-wide approach for donor support. It opposed the construction of facilities not in its plan. There is disagreement between MASAF and the Ministry regarding the participation of district medical personnel in approving proposals for health facilities. Several completed facilities are not staffed. MASAF eventually discontinued funding of health facilities. Meanwhile, health status was declining and many communities put health at the top of their priorities. Neither the MoHP nor MASAF was able to respond to these expressions of need with an alternative to the construction of new facilities.

There is a great deal of dispute about the efficacy of the MASAF strategy of implementing rural infrastructure projects through elected project management committees (PMCs). There is little doubt that MASAF was more efficient than the MoEST Development Management Unit. It is more difficult to compare it with building programmes implemented through special management units, non-government organisations (NGOs) or other models involving communities. The lack of a systematic study of the alternative approaches for implementing the large school building programme is a sign of a lack of strategic thinking by government and donors.

Centralisation or decentralisation

The centralisation/decentralisation dichotomy is not a helpful way to explain the relationship between MASAF and other institutional actors. Decentralisation of government functions did not progress very far during the period of MASAF I and many problems with project implementation were associated with insufficient district support. MASAF's centralised financial accounting system and external audit were important factors in reducing opportunities for leakage. Also, the direct link between the MASAF Executive Director and the President played an important role in protecting Zone Managers from pressure from local politicians. On the other hand, communities believed that government personnel had little influence. Many decisions were made by traditional leaders and project management committees. The power of local leaders was illustrated by their influence on the technical screening of projects and the heavy concentration of community sub-projects in a few traditional authority areas.

Participation and democratisation

A high proportion of households reported participating in several phases of the project cycle, but the degree of participation was often modest. A few communities undertook Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) exercises to agree priorities, but in most cases the traditional leaders strongly influenced project selection. Teachers, Members of Parliament and religious leaders were also influential at some localities.

There is little evidence about the impact of traditional leaders on the appropriateness of the choice of MASAF sub-projects and the fairness of resource allocation. Policymakers need more systematic knowledge about chief/community relations and how chiefs interact with other power elites at district and national levels. It is particularly important to understand the conditions that result in elite capture of resources and decision-making processes and the circumstances that encourage development-oriented relationships between chiefs and the community.

There was general agreement that project management committees had played a key role in implementation. The team learned of incidents of faulty procurement or corruption, but most committees functioned reasonably well. There was little evidence that participation in a committee substantially increased the capacity of local people to undertake other projects.

Monitoring project performance

The team found strengths and weaknesses in project monitoring. Financial data were kept up to date and efforts were made to validate them through external audits and follow-up of complaints. Other monitoring data were less well organised and clearly not used for decision-making purposes. For MASAF to participate actively in strengthening district and national level institutions, it is important that it improves its capacity to collect and analyse data on sub-projects.

MASAF I commissioned several beneficiary appraisals, which provided useful insights into project implementation. However, they did not provide systematic qualitative information to complement quantitative project data and they tended not to focus on issues particularly relevant to specific stages of

project implementation. These studies would be much more useful to managers and policymakers if they were undertaken as part of a systematic approach to monitoring.

Political commitment or politicisation

The team reviewed the positive and negative aspects of the relationship between MASAF and the political process. It found evidence that MASAF was seen as a national project. There was very high popular awareness of the project. Members of Parliament from all three parties said that communities were more likely to benefit from investments in rural infrastructure if they were funded through MASAF than through sector ministries.

The team did not find major political bias in MASAF. Constituencies held by the ruling party did not receive an unfair share of community sub-projects. Members of Parliament had limited influence over the choice of community sub-projects, although they seemed to have more influence in constituencies held by the ruling party. The team did not find much evidence that politicians derived financial benefit from community sub-projects, but it heard stories of politicking around the election of project management committees and participation in public events such as project launches. It also heard of competition between Members of Parliament and elected District Councillors to take credit for sub-projects.

Politicians said the rules of the MASAF project cycle were appropriate and fair. MASAF sub-projects did not suffer the severe leakage of funds that afflicted some government investment projects. There were complaints about petty corruption and there is no reason to assume this did not occur; however, a large proportion of funds reached the communities. MASAF was viewed as an institution that follows rules. Politicians continue to manoeuvre for party and personal advantage, but they take the rules of engagement seriously. This success can be attributed to strong political support combined with the following institutional arrangements that rewarded good performance and made corruption difficult:

- The President invested his credibility in the project and gave it a high profile, making it risky for other power holders to use the project for personal gain.
- MASAF accountants reviewed all documentation that project management committees and councils submitted and withheld payment when there were reasons to doubt the veracity of financial reports. The external audit of all sub-project sites was an important factor for building trust.
- There was a lot of publicity about the sub-projects so that communities knew how much money was allocated and what it was meant to finance.
- The newness of MASAF, changes to the number of zones and the rotation of Zone Managers made collusion between zone and district personnel difficult, thereby limiting opportunities for corruption.
- MASAF created appropriate incentives by paying performance-related salaries and punishing corruption.
- The World Bank backed up the insistence by MASAF management on careful financial audit and publication of information on sub-project budgets.

Towards an enabling environment for the poor?

This section reviews the contribution of MASAF I to the creation of a more enabling environment for the poor and outlines additional measures that could be taken. It is structured in terms of the characteristics that Joshi and Moore identify.[1]

Tolerance

During the second half of the 1990s Malawi was emerging from a period of political repression and civil society's role was limited. Communities organised to prepare proposals and lobbied to have their proposals attended to. They mostly looked to traditional authorities for leadership. Action is needed to give the less powerful community members more influence, based on knowledge of how local power structures operate. MASAF could provide opportunities for members of project management committees and community-based organisations to discuss common problems and it could provide them with relevant information. This could lead to larger-scale organisation around poverty issues at constituency and national levels.

Predictability

MASAF established clear rules for applying for projects and it informed communities about the kinds of investments that attracted support. There is evidence that people believed in the legitimacy of these rules; however, procedures for deciding which proposals to appraise first were not transparent and lobbying was important. MASAF should preserve its rules-based project cycle by monitoring who participates in sub-project appraisal and supervision. It needs to add procedures for choosing proposals for appraisal. MASAF has to deal with the present backlog of project proposals in a manner that preserves its reputation for taking project proposals seriously, but without guaranteeing that all requests will be funded.

Credibility

Surveys uniformly found that villagers and politicians held MASAF in higher esteem than government departments. There was a widespread belief that a large proportion of MASAF money reached communities. MASAF needs to maintain its reputation for financial probity by strengthening its financial management, internal and external audit and other measures to limit opportunities for collusion in rent-seeking. It will also need measures to ensure a more equitable allocation of resources within districts.

Rights

Villagers had no legal entitlement to secure a project and they had no legal recourse if something went wrong. Nonetheless, communities felt that the submission of a proposal to MASAF entitled them to a response. They put pressure on MPs to follow up delays. MASAF needs to define procedures for communities to follow when they have a grievance. For example, they need to know what to do when a

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[1]   Joshi and Moore (2000).

building they co-fund is unsound or not staffed. This could involve the establishment of local systems of dispute resolution. It could eventually lead to the creation of legal rights to make claims against parties that do not fulfil their responsibilities. MASAF also needs to provide relevant information so that communities know how local institutions perform in comparison to elsewhere in the country.

Lessons for the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy

Reconciliation of planning and demand-led approaches

The team explored ways to reconcile district planning, national plans and a demand-led approach. The challenge is to incorporate the three perspectives in arrangements for resource planning by reconciling the achievement of geographical equity (including special support for the very poor) with the need to provide incentives for communities and their leaders to pursue development activity. The following procedures could help:

- Communities and local leaders would be provided with a menu of options for meeting their needs, prepared in consultation with sector planners. They would rank these options in order of priority. Measures would be taken to ensure that the poor and less powerful have a voice.

- Sector ministries would provide technical guidelines regarding investments in their sector and the complementary inputs they would provide. They would define procedures for staffing and financing new facilities.

- Investment plans would be compiled for an agreed locality (traditional authority, ward or district).

- Some development funding would be allocated on the basis of geographical equity (with special provisions for very poor communities).

- Other development funding would be provided on a competitive basis, with clear rules for application and appraisal.

- Detailed information would be published on all investment decisions, showing distribution between localities and between sectors.

- Channels would be established for communities to put forward problems and requests not included in the menu. The roles of MASAF, districts and sector ministries in responding to these problems and requests would be clarified.

- MASAF would monitor the distribution of expenditure between localities and the delivery of benefits after completion of assets – such as the construction of schools, provision of boreholes, etc. It would also monitor the performance of local and national administrations in support of MASAF projects.

Future options

Discussions of social action funds often conclude by asking about the exit strategy. It will take a long time for Malawi to create effective development institutions. When one considers the effort involved in

creating an effective institution such as MASAF, it may be more fruitful to discuss the evolution of its role. The team identified two options.

One option is to expand the previous approach. One senior politician suggested that sector-specific social funds would enable government to deliver more benefits. This approach would construct a structure parallel to the government system. It could run into problems if government and donors lost interest in supporting a government administrative system that delivered little and was held in low esteem.

Another option is to combine the delivery of benefits with intensified institutional development. Many barriers to implementing reforms are much lower than in the mid-1990s. Each ministry would define short-term service delivery targets. The government would identify key functions that need to be strengthened to achieve these targets. District Assemblies would carry out similar exercises. MASAF would help these government agencies achieve their goals. It would use its financial management system to ensure that funds were used appropriately. It would organise activities aimed at strengthening the management capacity of development actors. It would also use its good name to monitor progress and produce reports that all stakeholders would trust, including in-depth analytical studies to identify constraints to implementation and strategies for overcoming them. The success of this strategy would depend on the commitment of political leaders to an institutional development process and their willingness to give MASAF the independence to play an effective role.

MASAF needs to find ways to institutionalise its position and reduce its dependence on a few individuals. This will involve strengthening appropriate decision-making procedures and ensuring that they are followed. It will also involve giving greater responsibility to the MASAF governing body and providing it with appropriate monitoring information. It may also involve the establishment of more effective parliamentary oversight.

It is too early to assess the long-term impact of MASAF on poverty and the development of pro-poor institutions. A number of questions remain to be answered. Will the next President continue to use it for delivering on promises, rather than for patronage? Will the next MASAF Executive Director have the political skills to secure high-level political support without political interference? Can MASAF managers maintain their high morale and financial probity as their organisation matures? Will Malawi's political leaders permit MASAF to create the type of enabling environment described above? If the answers are yes, MASAF can evolve into a development institute, which uses its technical competence and high reputation to deliver benefits to the poor and support long-term pro-poor institutional development. Otherwise, its long-term impact will be limited.

Introduction

This report presents the findings of a review of the first Malawi Social Action Fund during 1996–2001 (MASAF I). A social fund is an institution with the capacity to disburse World Bank credit and other funds rapidly to meet priority needs of the poor. Social funds are demand-led, emphasising the participation of poor people in planning and implementation of local interventions. In the case of MASAF, that includes disbursement of funds to locally constituted project management committees. One objective of many social funds is to help local institutions become more responsive to the needs of the poor. The rise in the number of social funds in Africa has been a relatively recent phenomenon and there is a great deal of debate about the role they can or should play in poverty reduction strategies. This report contributes to this debate by exploring one country's experience in depth.

The Malawi Government launched MASAF I in 1996. The project was designed to disburse $56 million over a five-year period, but the government was determined to implement it more quickly. Communities flooded the project with proposals for sub-projects. Within two years the credit was fully committed and the government requested a second loan. MASAF II was launched in 1998. Project managers began to design MASAF III in 2002 and launched it in late 2003. MASAF managers recognise the need to adapt in response to challenges and this has been reflected in their changing approach to project design and implementation. However, the demands of overseeing the rapid growth of an institution and implementing large and complex projects left little time for reflection on their experience.

World Bank officials found themselves in a similar position. They had overseen a rapid growth in the number of projects and the volume of lending in Malawi and elsewhere in Africa. They felt the need to take stock of what had been achieved, the problems that had arisen and the lessons for Country Assistance Strategies.

In early 2001, the Government of Malawi and the World Bank decided to commission an independent review of the first Malawi Social Action Fund to 'assess the degree to which the project achieved its objectives and contributed to the World Bank country assistance strategy and the Malawi Government poverty alleviation strategy'. They established peer review groups in Lilongwe and Washington. These groups recommended that the review team focus on poverty impact, sustainability and institutional development.

The review was implemented in three phases: (i) a desk review and discussions with key informants, (ii) consultations with stakeholders to identify areas for further study and (iii) in-depth study of key issues. A Norwegian Trust Fund to the World Bank provided funding.

The desk review was carried out during the first half of 2002. The team agreed its focus with MASAF managers and the World Bank task manager. Team members visited Kasungu, Machinga and Thyolo Districts. They met MASAF Zone Managers in the field and at a meeting in Lilongwe. They met officials of a number of ministries and international agencies and they reviewed the available documents.

The review team presented the findings of the desk review to a workshop in Lilongwe in August 2002. The participants included researchers, MASAF managers and officials from several government

ministries (Annex I). They assessed the accuracy of the reported findings and identified topics requiring further study.

The review team prepared a plan for in-depth studies that took into account the original scope of work and the workshop recommendations. MASAF and the World Bank approved the plan. The studies employed a combination of methods, described in Chapter 8 and Annex II. The team interviewed key informants at national level (MASAF managers, politicians, government officials and so forth) and at a sample of zones, districts and communities (Annex I). It reviewed documentation from several ministries and the MASAF files. It undertook surveys at 121 sub-project sites situated in 3 districts in each of the 3 regions of Malawi. It also reviewed project monitoring data for these sites. At each site the team undertook a checklist survey to assess the state of repair of the asset, a key informant interview, and an interview with an informant at each of nine households at each site. In addition, one or more focus group discussions were held at 15 of the sites.

The studies were delayed by the crop failure in 2002 and the consequent rise in hunger in many rural areas. The team submitted a draft report in September 2003. The peer review groups provided feedback at a teleconference and supplied written comments. The present report incorporates many of their suggestions.

Chapter 1 situates MASAF I in the context of the transition to an elected government and the constraints inherited from the previous regime. It outlines the process of project design and identifies the explicit and implicit project objectives. It emphasises the need to understand MASAF in its context.

The next three chapters discuss the impact of MASAF on the poor. Chapter 2 presents data on the macroeconomic and policy context within which MASAF I was designed and implemented. It outlines the development of a strategy for poverty reduction that culminated in the publication of the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy in 2003. Finally, it presents a framework for assessing the project's impact on the poor.

Chapter 3 presents the findings of the study of community sub-projects, focusing on schools and boreholes. It reviews the evidence on the allocation of projects between districts and traditional authority areas, finding no relationship with headcount poverty levels. It then looks at the impact of the sampled sub-projects in terms of the physical state of the assets, the availability of complementary resources such as teachers and books and the degree to which the asset was used. It also explores indicators of empowerment, based on the attitudes of people towards these assets and towards MASAF and other government agencies. The chapter concludes that MASAF did provide benefits to large numbers of poor people, but that these relatively small investments could only have a modest impact even in communities with sub-projects.

Chapter 4 reviews the impact of the public works programme component, drawing heavily on several beneficiary appraisals. It finds little evidence of targeting of the poorest traditional authority areas but it does find quite effective targeting of individual beneficiaries. There is little evidence that non-poor households took up employment in these projects. However, there was also only a limited effort to ensure that the poorest and most vulnerable were included. The chapter explores the evidence for the impact of MASAF on the wellbeing of recipient households. It concludes that the project was successful in

channelling funds to poor households, but due to the limited levels of funding and the desire to spread benefits widely, the long-term impact on communities and individual beneficiaries was modest.

The remainder of the report discusses MASAF in its institutional context. Chapter 5 considers the relationship between bottom-up processes and sector planning. It presents evidence of the influences on the selection of projects and on the pattern of resource allocation and explores the roles of MASAF managers, sector ministries, politicians and district personnel. It outlines the very different relationships between MASAF and the government bureaucracy in the education and health sectors and the different outcomes that resulted. It assesses the degree to which MASAF was politicised and concludes by considering whether MASAF has influenced the responsiveness of government.

Chapter 6 reviews the relationship between MASAF, districts and communities in the identification, appraisal and implementation of sub-projects. It explores the differences between districts included in a project aimed at strengthening local investment planning and those not included. It examines the reciprocal relationship between MASAF and district management and representative structures. It points out that formal decentralisation of government systems was at a very early stage during MASAF I and that there is little evidence that the project influenced this process very much. The chapter draws attention to the major role that traditional leaders played at different phases of the sub-project cycle.

Chapter 7 explores the participation of community members at each stage of the project cycle. It assesses the role of various local actors in the project. It points out that many communities understood community participation in terms of contribution of labour alone, despite experience with the implementation of a MASAF sub-project. It draws on the findings of focus group discussions to explore the content of community participation in these sub-projects. The findings highlight the importance of certain key community actors, particularly the traditional leaders. There is evidence that many people felt they had little influence on the selection and implementation of projects. The findings in Chapters 6 and 7 highlight the important role that traditional leaders play and the need to take into account local decision-making processes in the implementation of MASAF and the government decentralisation programme. In particular, practical strategies are required to give the poor and powerless a voice.

Chapter 8 reviews MASAF's monitoring and evaluation. It describes the different strategies employed and shortcomings that have become apparent. It outlines the methods that the review team employed and comments on the lessons they learned that might be useful for future work.

The report concludes in Chapter 9 with a summary of the key findings and the lessons that arise for MASAF and other institutions involved in implementing the poverty reduction strategy.

1 MASAF and the post-election transition

Gerald Bloom

In May 1994, Malawi held multi-party elections after 30 years of authoritarian one-party rule. The decision of the ruling Malawi Congress Party (MCP) to hold elections came after a sustained period of political mobilisation. The MCP lost power and a new government was elected. The new government needed to deliver on promises it had made to provide benefits to the poor. The new ruling party did not hold a majority of seats in Parliament and it had to establish itself as representing the national interest (Kaspin 1995). The donor community was eager to help consolidate what it viewed as an important democratic change. This chapter situates the design of the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) in the context of the transition to a regime of party political competition. It is based on a review of documents and discussions with people in government, the World Bank and other donor agencies.

1.1 Meeting expectations during the regime transition

The new government came to power after an extended period of political mobilisation, which had raised popular expectations for change. The Church and a number of non-government organisations had played an important role in calling for an end to authoritarian rule. There was widespread agreement on the need for fundamental reform of the mechanisms of democratic representation and the systems of public administration. These reforms would inevitably take time to implement. Meanwhile, the government had to respond to the expectations that the run-up to the elections had raised.[2]

During the election campaign the United Democratic Front (UDF) had emphasised the need for action to reduce poverty. The previous government had refused to acknowledge the existence of poverty. It was now difficult to acknowledge it without creating high expectations for personal handouts. Shortly after taking office the government began a series of consultative meetings leading to the publication of a poverty policy framework (Government of Malawi 1995). This document outlined a broad poverty alleviation programme. It also presented data on the severity of poverty. The publicity given to poverty put it very much on the agenda of the population of Malawi and international donors. This generated pressure for action.

One highly visible commitment was the government's promise to provide free primary schooling. This resulted in a substantial increase in primary school rolls from 1.8 million to nearly 3 million. The many children in overcrowded classrooms and in classes under the trees emphasised to villagers the need for more classrooms, teachers and books. The government needed to find ways rapidly to deliver on its promise.

The government had to overcome several obstacles in meeting these public commitments. It faced a disastrous economic situation (Harrigan 2001). The country had experienced two major droughts in the

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[2]   Bratton and Mattes (2001) present survey data that suggest high levels of popular awareness about democracy and substantial support for it.

early 1990s. The impact of these shocks had been exacerbated by major reductions in donor support in response to governance problems. The previous government had increased public expenditure during the run-up to the 1994 elections. Malawi experienced a 'full-blown macroeconomic crisis' in 1994, according to the World Bank (1996). The new government was forced to impose strict public expenditure controls at a time when popular expectations were high. This was a difficult circle to square.

The government's ability to address the needs of the poor was further constrained by weaknesses in the system of public administration.[3] Ministries often spent their budget before the end of the financial year and they allocated a high proportion to general administration. There was inadequate accountability for the use of public funds. The government and donor agencies were involved in initiatives to improve public sector financial management, but these measures could take a long time to bear fruit. In the meantime, it was difficult to ensure that increases in the budget of sectoral ministries would yield commensurate benefits to the population.

The new government had to work with a bureaucracy inherited from the previous regime. The processes of public sector planning and management were inappropriate for implementing a poverty reduction strategy. However, the reorientation of the civil service would be particularly difficult at a time of financial constraint, when officials would be asked to undertake additional work whilst their salaries stayed very low. This challenge was compounded by the political passions aroused during the mobilisation for democracy and the election campaign itself. There were tensions between ministers and senior civil servants; the political leadership was not certain it could rely on the bureaucracy to implement its policies enthusiastically.[4]

District administrative systems were fragmented, with parallel structures accountable to the President's Office and to local councils. Elected councils had been dissolved and district development committees (DDCs), on which traditional leaders and Members of Parliament sat, were the *de facto* decision-making bodies. The Ministry of Local Government was implementing pilot projects in six districts aimed at strengthening local planning. The government was committed to the establishment of strong district administrations answerable to an elected assembly. However, it could take some time for districts to develop the capacity to implement major initiatives. It would also take time to establish elected assemblies. In the meantime, the DDCs might not provide a strong political base for such initiatives.

Non-government organisations, including the churches, had played an important role during the period leading up to the elections. They had been at the forefront of the development of innovative approaches for working with communities. They faced a difficult challenge in establishing collaborative relationships with the government bureaucracy and the new political leaders.

The government had to find a way to meet popular expectations for immediate change. The review team did not find any documents with a clearly formulated strategy for dealing with this situation. It is

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[3]   Public expenditure reviews in 1990 and 2000 documented these problems (World Bank 1990 and 2001; and GOM 2000).

[4]   The review team heard echoes of these tensions in comments by Members of Parliament from government and opposition parties about the role of politics in the performance of national ministries.

likely that much of what happened came about as stakeholders responded to opportunities and crises. However, the interviews with key informants revealed three contending approaches for implementing aspects of the framework for poverty alleviation. One focused on reforming the national bureaucracy to formulate and implement sector development plans. Another emphasised the potential role of local government as a driver of a pro-poor development agenda. A third advocated the immediate creation of a rapid disbursement, demand-led initiative to meet expectations, whilst government implemented structural reforms. Different parts of the government system and different donor agencies adhered to each of these strategies throughout the period under review.

1.2 World Bank support during the post-election transition

The World Bank was dissatisfied with the results of its previous support strategy. It noted that poverty indices had not improved after many years of involvement in Malawi. A midterm review of its population, health and nutrition project had suggested that existing approaches were unlikely to meet project objectives. The education sector was also reviewing its approach.

In September 1994 a mission visited Malawi to explore whether a multi-sectoral approach to community development, drawing on the experience of the Zambian Social Recovery project, might be appropriate. The mission was given strong support from the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (MEPD). In an interview with the review team, the former Minister said he was particularly concerned about how to implement the free primary education policy. His Ministry had already housed a Social Dimensions of Adjustment Project funded by the UK Department for International Development (DFID). This project had been seen to be effective in responding to community needs in the difficult political environment before the elections. This may have predisposed him to take the demand-led approach seriously.

There were disagreements within the World Bank about the relative weight it should give to sector support projects, projects aimed at strengthening planning and administrative structures and rapid disbursement projects. Questions were raised about how to reconcile the need for macroeconomic discipline and for planning public expenditure with the unplanned nature of a demand-side approach. The portfolio ultimately included all three types of project.

The disagreements within the World Bank were repeated in the wider donor community. Several agencies had left the country during the period of political pressure for democratic reforms. On their return, they re-established their previous relationships with sector ministries. Some established traditional sector support projects. Others provided project aid, with the hope that it would evolve into budget support and/or sector-wide approaches. The ultimate success of this strategy depended on the reform of public sector planning and management. The United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) had remained in the country and had become the lead agency in support of district strengthening. It had placed UN volunteers in several districts to demonstrate how district strengthening could improve service delivery. It argued for substantial increases in financial support for local governments as a means of

meeting community needs. Advocates of both approaches were concerned that a social fund would create a structure parallel to government and, thereby, divert attention from needed public sector reforms.

During the run-up to the meeting of the Consultative Group in Paris in late 1994, strong arguments were put forward for and against the establishment of a social fund. The Ministries of Finance and Economic Planning and Development organised consultative meetings with technical staff in donor agencies to argue for a new approach to development. The social fund was eventually allowed to go ahead, largely because of support from Malawi's political leaders.

The outcome of the discussions within the World Bank can be seen in its 1996 Country Assistance Strategy (CAS). It emphasised the changed political climate and the willingness of government to encourage popular participation in determining development priorities. It proposed the following objectives for support:

- Growth through macroeconomic stabilisation, unleashing private initiative, population control and human resource development and capacity-building/decentralisation.
- Targeted support for the poorest.

The CAS identified serious problems with the slow implementation of International Development Association (IDA)-supported sector projects. It attributed this to weaknesses in public sector management and accountability. For example, despite considerable efforts to establish a medium-term expenditure framework, control over government spending was weak. The CAS emphasised the need to build capacity to overcome these constraints. In the meantime, the Bank proposed a social fund as its principal strategy for providing rapid benefits to the poor.

1.3 The design of MASAF

During the immediate post-election period the government paid a lot of attention to poverty. In August 1994 the President launched a poverty alleviation programme. The government established a Presidential Council on this topic. It also created a Technical Steering Committee, based in the MEPD. This committee coordinated consultations with sector ministries, NGOs and donors leading up to the production of the Poverty Alleviation Framework in 1995.

The MEPD also took the lead in the development of the social fund idea. It organised two study tours in September: one to Zambia and Ethiopia and the other to relevant initiatives in Malawi. The Ministry convened a series of workshops for government officials, NGOs and members of the task forces of the poverty alleviation programme. By October, the recommendations were summarised in a working paper that proposed a strategy of seeking community proposals and depending on the staff of sector ministries to interact in a facilitating role with communities (Government of Malawi 1994). It also proposed situating the social fund in the MEPD, to build on the foundation that the Social Dimensions of Adjustment Unit had laid.

By late 1994 Malawi's political leaders had become very interested in the potential role of demand-led approaches in meeting popular expectations. One informant referred to a shared perception that benefits did not "trickle down" through the government system and mentions several influential presentations to the newly appointed Cabinet about "bottom-up" approaches to poverty reduction. A senior politician referred to the enthusiasm with which the Cabinet received a presentation by the President on the potential role of a social fund. Another said that Cabinet support for a social fund was virtually unanimous.

In late 1994 the government organised a stakeholders' workshop to discuss the emerging ideas for a social fund. It followed this up in early 1995 with a systematic client consultation. The findings suggested that communities trusted traditional authorities much more than government extension workers (Chimbwete *et al.* 1995). They suggested that communities had the capacity to formulate proposals and implement projects. They also suggested that communities should have the right to select the people most appropriate to assist them with these projects. There then followed a phase of piloting the new approach in the sites where the systematic client consultations had taken place. In the meantime the management unit was established.

From the start of the pilots the project gave a lot of attention to winning popular understanding and support. The public was provided with information through radio broadcasts and many newspaper articles. The publicity linked MASAF to the government's commitment to poverty reduction. The President launched the pilot phase and he made frequent references to MASAF in his speeches. This publicity raised popular expectations. The final stages of project design took place in this context of strong political support and growing public expectations. The project was appraised in November/December 1995 and it became effective shortly thereafter.

The project appraisal document (PAD) identifies the following objectives:

1   Provision of additional resources to create village-level assets that will be directly beneficial to the poor through investments in primary education, peripheral health services and safe water.

2   Promotion of a new approach to rural development by involving communities in project preparation and implementation, while encouraging government agencies, NGOs and private institutions to assist communities when needed.

3   Support for a district-level programme of labour-intensive construction to be targeted at the poorest districts as a safety net operation.

4   Strengthening of poverty monitoring and assessment.

MASAF was structured as a World Bank project, initially reporting to the MEPD. It was also answerable to a Project Supervision Committee (PSC) on which the Permanent Secretaries of relevant Ministries sat. Its management arrangements and personnel policies were independent of government systems. The project was organised in two major components.

The community sub-projects (CSPs) component provided communities with a menu of possible projects including the construction of schools, health facilities, water supplies and bridges. Communities were expected to convene a meeting to identify a project and then complete a project proposal form. They were encouraged to invite facilitators based in the communities or available from district level to assist with these initial activities. Communities were expected to provide 20 per cent of the project cost, mostly in the form of bricks, sand and time for project management. These projects were to be appraised by members of the district executive committee (DEC), a structure that had been established in the six districts implementing pilot district-strengthening projects.

Once a project received approval, communities were expected to appoint a project management committee (PMC) to implement it. The PMC managed the money, purchased materials and employed a contractor. District-level personnel were expected to visit project sites regularly. Completed projects were to be handed over to the relevant ministry and community committee. For example, schools would be staffed and funded by the Ministry of Education (MOE) and supported by the community education committee.

The design of the project assumed that government ministries would play an important role in project identification, appraisal and implementation. Sector ministries were expected to provide planning guidelines and norms and standards for new facilities. The district-level team that appraised project proposals was meant to include a representative of the relevant ministry. Senior ministry officials sat on the PSC, which approved all sub-projects. The hope was that this would ensure that sub-projects were consistent with national development plans and that completed projects would be integrated into the government system.

The public works programme was to be implemented by the office of the district commissioner. Localities were to be selected on the basis of the degree of food insecurity. Levels of pay were set below market daily rates. The work was mostly on roads and only one family member was allowed to secure a job. Specific targets were set for female employment.

The project included support for capacity-building at community level and a major publicity effort to inform communities about the opportunities available through MASAF. This was particularly important since the previous approach to participation had mostly consisted of the provision of unpaid labour for community projects. The project also provided funding for national poverty monitoring.

1.4 MASAF and transition management

The interviews with key informants suggest that the government and the designers of MASAF viewed the project as much more than an instrument for rapid disbursement of funds in rural areas. They saw it as an important element in an unstated strategy for democratic change and pushing forward a variety of structural reforms to the government system. This section identifies some strands of this implicit strategy.

MASAF's Executive Director emphasised to the review team the importance of "software" – the role of the project in changing the mindset of community members, government officials and politicians. This view of MASAF was put forward in a briefing note to the President in July 1995:

As shown above, the procedures and process of the MASAF project cycle management places a lot of decision-making power to the people ... The role of MASAF in the government's Poverty Alleviation Programme is that it will not only provide the physical facilities and socio-economic services to the people but that it will embody the democratic voice and participation of the people in the socio-economic progress of this country. MASAF will demonstrate that democracy is not just a slogan in Malawi but a positive partnership between the civil society, government and other partners in development.[5]

A newspaper account of the President's speech at the launch of MASAF in August 1996 highlights some constraints to the implementation of the poverty alleviation policy. It reports him as saying he would not allow civil servants to frustrate government business because of their political inclinations. It includes the following quote:

I am head of the Civil Service and I can dismiss anyone at any time. If those who are serving the people don't change their attitudes I will dismiss them so that they can continue serving their masters at home ... When it comes to development and combating poverty, I ask that we all set aside our political differences and work together towards a common goal ... I ask all political leaders to encourage this culture of togetherness by showing greater commitment to development, rather than using politics to divide the people and slow down development work.[6]

The key informant interviews revealed different points of view regarding MASAF's role in overcoming these constraints. There was broad agreement that there were serious problems with the performance of the public sector. The challenge was to implement major structural reforms, whilst meeting popular expectations for delivery of benefits.

MASAF was designed to deliver benefits rapidly. Its performance was not constrained by deeply rooted structural problems in the public sector. This would allow it to demonstrate an alternative way of doing things. However, the PAD acknowledged there was a risk that the new institution would operate in parallel to an expensive and unproductive bureaucracy. This could sacrifice structural reform in favour of unsustainable populist measures. MASAF's strategy for avoiding this risk was to involve sector ministries and district-level personnel in project implementation. It did not set out to establish a capacity to provide technical support to community implementation. It was to be a mechanism for channelling funds to communities and enabling existing government structures to support these communities. The hope was that government officials at national and district levels would develop new working practices through working with MASAF.

A second aspect of the strategy for change was the integration of actors with experience of poverty reduction into positions of influence. During the years prior to the introduction of multi-party elections, a

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5   Briefing note dated 25 July 1995 in Policies and Procedures file MU/ADM/37.
6   *The Nation*, 7 August 1996.

number of people had explored new ways of thinking about poverty and tested new approaches to community development. They mostly worked for donor-funded projects, NGOs and research institutes. Soon after taking power the government established task forces to formulate a poverty alleviation strategy. These groups included senior civil servants and the people with experience of poverty-related issues. The government needed to find a way to involve these people in implementing aspects of the strategy they had formulated. It integrated some into national ministries. However, there was a risk that they would be unable to change the performance of these ministries rapidly. MASAF provided an alternative way to bring members of these groups together to move the poverty alleviation agenda forward.

MASAF recruited its management team from two sources. Its Executive Director had been a senior civil servant during the previous regime. At one point he had been the Head of the Civil Service. The government had initially recruited him to be the National Coordinator of the Poverty Alleviation Programme. However, the President asked him to leave that post to become the head of MASAF. Most other managers had worked for donor-funded poverty reduction projects or NGOs. They had been involved in the task forces on the poverty alleviation strategy. The decision to put together a team of highly motivated activists led by a seasoned public servant was an important strategy for creating an institution capable of mobilising for change. One notable feature of MASAF has been its refusal to recruit long-term expatriates. It is a wholly Malawian organisation.

A third aspect of the strategy concerned public attitudes and expectations. According to Bratton and van de Walle (1997) an important characteristic of a regime change is that new rules of the political game become established. Actors develop new expectations and they have access to different channels to make their needs and interests known. This was the case in Malawi, where everyone had to learn new behavioural norms appropriate to a regime of multi-party elections.

Several informants talked about a passive attitude amongst the public. Peasants had low expectations of government and little sense of being entitled to benefits. Government investments in rural areas had been represented as a gift from the President, rather than a right. People had few channels to influence government officials directly. The tendency by the state to view protest as subversive had shielded officials from pressure to meet needs. Middle-level officials tended to keep their heads down to avoid identification as a troublemaker. The result was an unresponsive, centralised public administration. The systematic client consultations confirmed that people believed that government would not use funds effectively to meet their needs (Chimbwete *et al.* 1995). Many of the newly elected parliamentarians shared this belief.

The designers of MASAF wanted to contribute to a change in the rules of the political game by empowering communities and changing government officials' understanding of their role in development. The PAD states objectives for altering the attitudes of the community (reviving the spirit of self-help and empowering people to seek support from government) and of government officials (greater willingness to respond to communities).

The original idea was that MASAF would distance itself from politicians and the political process. MASAF was to be an instrument for changing community expectations and the understanding of

technocrats about their role in meeting these expectations. It actively sought *commitment* from the political leadership, but wanted to avoid *politicisation*. As it turned out, the President, Members of Parliament and traditional leaders became increasingly interested in MASAF projects. The design and implementation of MASAF took place during a period when these people were re-inventing their roles in achieving national objectives and in competing for elected office. MASAF found itself in the middle of the emerging politics of poverty reduction.

Table 1.1 summarises the objectives and risks presented in the project appraisal document. The bottom half includes implicit objectives and risks that emerged from the interviews with key informants. One challenge of the review was to compare the situation at the end of MASAF I with what might have happened if the project had not been implemented. The team identified three strategies for driving pro-poor development that were contending for support during the mid-1990s. One emphasised public sector reform, the second decentralisation and the third a social fund. It could be argued that the President's suggestion that the National Coordinator of the Poverty Alleviation Programme resign his post to become Executive Director of MASAF constituted a decision to use the social fund as a major mechanism for driving change, rather than to focus immediately on the reform of the public sector to implement the poverty alleviation policy. Similarly, the decision to channel funds through MASAF, rather than the district councils, may have shifted the emphasis away from measures to strengthen that level of government. One aim of the review has been to understand how the relationship between MASAF, national government, districts and communities worked and how the project influenced institutional development.

Table 1.1 Anticipated benefits and risks of MASAF

Anticipated Benefits	Risks
World Bank Staff Appraisal Document	
Improved health, education and economic infrastructure and improved service delivery.	Government of Malawi (GOM) fails to meet its medium-term expenditure framework (MTEF) targets and fails to finance recurrent costs of basic services.
Increased capacities of community-based organisations (CBOs), district, provincial and national government and NGOs to plan, appraise and complete capital projects.	Community self-help spirit may be undermined by other projects not using the same criteria for project selection.
Recognition of the value of self-help in development and maintenance of that creation.	Problems with local accountability.
	Poor technical quality of works.
Revived spirit of self-help, increased sense of ownership and accountability, participation in decision- making for own development and empowerment of implementing communities.	Communities may be overburdened with tasks and responsibilities.
	Management Unit of MASAF (MU) may be unable to respond to level of demand.
Creation of income-earning opportunities through employment.	GOM fails to meet its basic commitments to finance service provision at district level – depriving project of appraisal capability and routine supervision.
Improved food availability in food-deficient areas.	There have been weak links between MASAF projects and mainstream government planning. Involvement of government officials at district level in a centralised government system does not mean a functional link between MASAF projects and government planning.
Implicit Objectives in Transition Management	
Integrate new actors into development institutions.	New recruits lack understanding of existing government system; risk of socialisation to bad practices.
Dynamise change in government performance by demonstrating alternative ways of doing things (mainstream lessons of small-scale projects and NGO experience).	Parallel structure created that duplicates functions and does not contribute to the reform of existing systems.
	Unrealistic expectations created leading to disillusionment.
Create new spaces for the expression of needs and interests.	

2 The macroeconomic and poverty context
Henry Lucas

This chapter begins with a discussion of trends in the Malawi economy over the period from independence until the implementation of MASAF I. It then describes the basic characteristics of poverty at the end of this period, considers the development of poverty alleviation policy and presents the framework adopted by the review to explore the extent to which MASAF contributed to sustainable poverty reduction.

2.1 Macroeconomic background

Malawi is a small, densely populated, landlocked country with limited natural resources and subject to periodic drought. Since independence in 1964, it has focused almost exclusively on agricultural development, with supporting infrastructure investment in the transport, water and energy supply sectors, the last based on hydroelectric generation and distribution. Over the period to 1979 it was politically relatively stable and experienced some degree of economic success, with estimated growth of around 6 per cent per year.[7] While this appears impressive, it was from a very low base and largely offset by rapid population growth. The estimate should also be treated with caution, as subsistence agriculture constituted a large proportion of total output and production estimates for this sector are typically imputed using population data.

The 1980s saw a dramatic downturn. Contributory factors included a series of extended droughts; falling prices of the main export crops – tobacco, tea and sugar, and a war in neighbouring Mozambique which cut off transport links to the nearest seaports and led to the movement into Malawi of some 600,000 destitute refugees. In spite of considerable financial support from the World Bank and other international donors,[8] the economy continued to falter. Further disastrous droughts in 1992 and 1994, and the freezing by international agencies of non-humanitarian aid in May 1992 contributed to a 7 per cent decline in GDP between 1991 and 1994. In the latter year, increased spending during the last months of the outgoing government, which included substantial civil service wage increases, and by the new government to provide drought relief and meet a campaign promise to provide free primary education, resulted in a dramatic increase in the budget deficit to over 15 per cent of GDP and in an inflation rate of 83 per cent in the following year. This dire situation led to the adoption by the government, acting on advice from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, of severe financial austerity measures and a structural adjustment package centred on liberalisation of the agricultural market.

The economy improved sharply in 1995 and 1996. The war in Mozambique had ended, rainfall returned to normal and the government introduced an apparently successful scheme to distribute free

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[7]   Unless otherwise stated, data used in this chapter are taken from the World Bank World Development Indicators website http://publications.worldbank.org/WDI/.

[8]   In 1996 external grants and borrowing amounted to 10 per cent of GDP and 40 per cent of government expenditure (Jenkins and Tsoka 2001).

packs of seed and fertiliser to smallholders. Good harvests saw GDP growth of over 9 per cent in both years. Inflation fell to 43 per cent and the budget deficit to 4.4 per cent, the latter in part achieved by the retrenchment of some 20,000 civil servants employed by state-owned corporations and a substantial decline in the real wages of government workers. However, the austerity measures combined with below-average rainfall again slowed growth to around 6 per cent in 1997 and 3 per cent in 1998. A 50 per cent devaluation of the Kwacha in that year also undermined confidence and pushed up the inflation rate. Large-scale agriculture contracted by some 11 per cent, mainly due to reduced tobacco output, reflecting lower world prices. The economic gloom continued into the late 1990s and 2001 saw a fall in real GDP by around 1.5 per cent.

Figure 2.1 GDP and population growth 1980–2001 (1980=100)
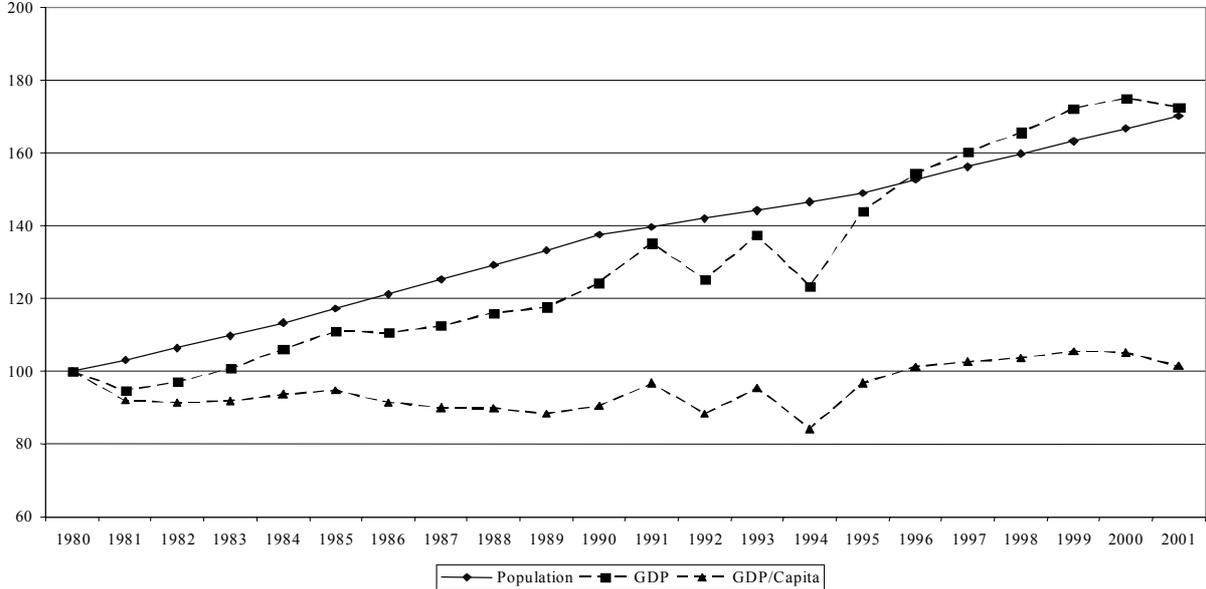
The economic options for Malawi over the MASAF I period were highly constrained by the dominance of subsistence agriculture and a limited number of export crops. Some 70 per cent of the population were engaged in agriculture, which constituted 42 per cent of GDP. Around 80 per cent of output came from smallholders farming less than 2 hectares (40 per cent less than 0.5 hectares) and was mainly concerned with the production of food crops such as maize, potatoes, groundnuts, cassava and plantain. The major cash crops, tobacco, tea and sugar were primarily produced by estate farmers. In 1998, estate farms occupied 1.15m hectares of freehold and leasehold land. The latter had increased rapidly though the 1970s and 1980s with the transfer of land from smallholder customary tenure, but a World Bank structural adjustment loan in 1990 stipulated that this practice should cease. Smallholders had been encouraged to move into cash crops through a range of donor-funded rural development schemes but reverted to low-risk, drought-resistant food crops in the 1990s. The economy was thus heavily dependent on the output of

the estates to earn foreign exchange. Over 1997–2000, 85 per cent of the value of exports derived from cash crops, 63 per cent from tobacco.

2.2 Poverty in Malawi in the mid-1990s

Though the economy was beginning to recover in 1995, just prior to the implementation of MASAF I, over much of the preceding period population growth had outstripped economic growth,[9] resulting in a per capita GDP of just US$160, a figure which ranked Malawi 46th out of 53 African states. The 1997/98 integrated household survey (IHS) estimated that 65 per cent of the population were living in households with per capita consumption expenditure below a poverty line of around US$0.4 per day in rural areas or US$1 in urban areas.[10] The percentage of poor was somewhat higher in the southern region, at around 68 per cent, compared to the 62–63 per cent in the Central and Northern regions. The "poverty gap", the notional amount needed to lift all of the poor above the poverty line, was US$345 million, or 20 per cent of annual GDP.

In addition to the high levels of poverty, Malawi also had one of the most unequal distributions of income in the world, with a Gini coefficient of above 0.6. This can be partly explained simply by the extent of desperate poverty. When so many are living at a minimum subsistence level, even those with apparently modest incomes from formal employment or with above-average ownership of land or other assets will be relatively wealthy. However, it probably also reflects the narrowly-based development strategy of the 1960s and 1970s, when growth largely benefited the minority involved in or linked to estate production. Inequality was also linked to a policy of allocating a major proportion of public expenditure on education to the production of a small number of high-prestige secondary and tertiary graduates, while providing limited access to primary school for the majority of the population.

Widespread poverty is characteristically associated with high levels of fertility and mortality. In Malawi in 1995, the total fertility rate was over 6.5 live births per woman (almost double the average for all low-income countries), with some 50 per cent of the population under the age of 15. Life expectancy was just 41, having *decreased* markedly from around 46 ten years earlier. Limited declines in infant mortality, from 152 to 133 per 1,000 live births, were achieved, possibly due to apparently successful vaccination programmes that are reported to have reached around 90 per cent of children. However, these gains were more than offset by increases in adult mortality, closely related to the impact of HIV/AIDS. An estimated 225,000 AIDS cases had been identified by 1995 and HIV prevalence among women attending ante-natal clinics was 30 per cent.

The persistently high levels of infant and child mortality can be readily linked to the high rates of malnutrition, infectious diseases and malaria. Rates of malnutrition in Malawi have been consistently higher than in neighbouring countries. In 1995, some 48 per cent of children were estimated as stunted

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[9]   The 1998 World Bank Country Strategy Paper estimated that at existing population growth rates, Malawi needed to grow at an annual average of 5.3 per cent in order to keep the number of poor from increasing.

[10]   The poverty line was based on daily consumption requirements per person. Adjusted to September 2000 prices, these were: southern rural MK15.33, central rural MK18.30, northern rural MK22.04, urban MK50.15.

(low height for age) and 30 per cent as underweight. The 1997/98 IHS indicates little change in these figures and also estimates that around 10 per cent were wasted (low weight for height), reflecting periods of acute malnutrition. Extreme food scarcity in Malawi is generally associated with the impact of drought and flooding. However, in the 1990s it ceased to be self-sufficient in maize[11] even in non-drought years and became chronically dependent on food imports and food aid (Devereux 1999). Over the same period, market liberalisation led to higher prices in response to devaluation and increased transport costs. Characteristically, high levels of malnutrition were associated with high levels of morbidity. The 1992 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey reported two-week incidence rates of 15 per cent for acute respiratory infections, 40 per cent for fever and 22 per cent for diarrhoea among children under five. Reliance on unsafe sources of drinking water in almost 60 per cent of rural households surveyed and the absence of any form of sanitation facilities in more than 30 per cent undoubtedly contributed to these rates.

Figure 2.2 Mortality indicators 1980–2001
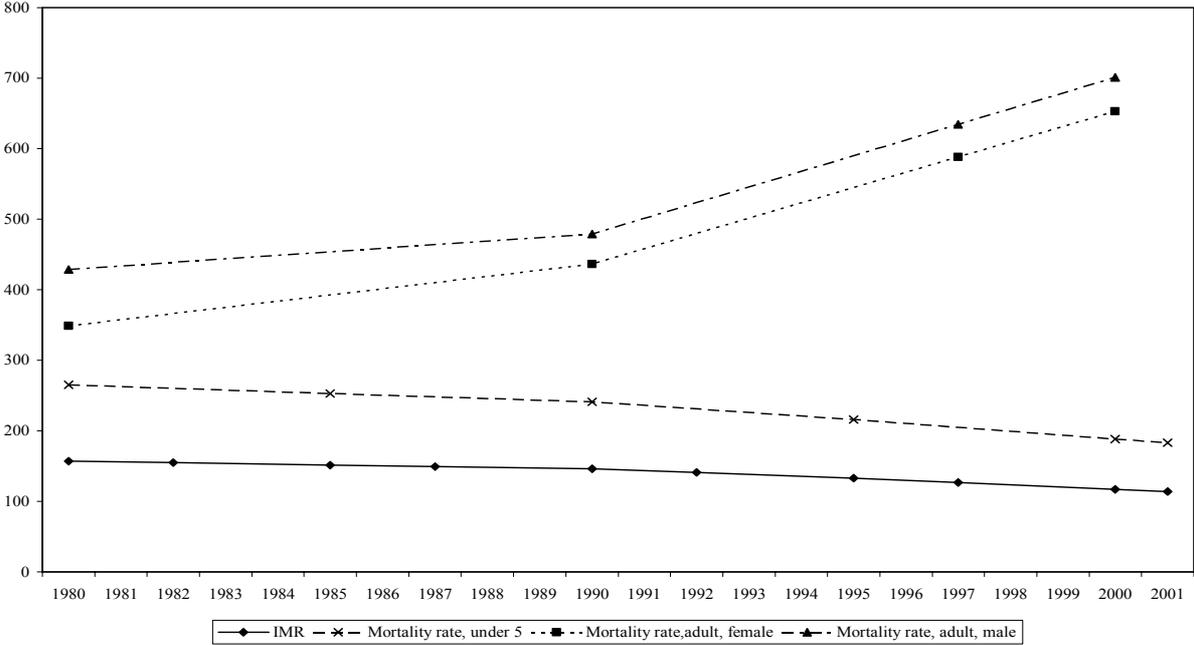
It is generally accepted that education status, especially of mothers, is another major contributory factor to reduced levels of infant mortality. Here again, Malawi lagged behind its neighbours. In 1995, an estimated 60 per cent of women and 30 per cent of men over 15 were reported as illiterate. Even for young adults (15–24), the figures were 44 per cent and 21 per cent. As indicated above, this reflected a long period of relative neglect of basic education for the majority of the population. The education system was characterised by low enrolment combined with high repetition and drop-out rates. Primary fees deterred

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[11]   Maize is estimated to account for almost 70 per cent of calorie consumption.

many from enrolling children in a system which also suffered from dilapidated buildings, large class sizes and a lack of basic equipment and books. In 1994 the incoming government eliminated the fees and substantially increased education spending to finance an additional 20,000 teachers. By the next academic year, primary enrolment had increased by over 60 per cent, from 1.8 million to almost 3 million. Even with the additional spending, this dramatic surge in numbers overwhelmed the capacity of the system. The number of pupils per qualified teacher rose from 78 in 1992/93 to 131 in 1994/95. Salaries consumed 97 per cent of the total recurrent budget, reducing the annual expenditure for all non-salary items to less than US$0.30 per pupil. With few additional school blocks provided, there was a substantial increase in the number of pupils per classroom, which had already exceeded 100 in 1992/93.

2.3 Evolution of poverty alleviation strategy from 1995 policy paper to Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP)

As discussed above, economic development policy in Malawi in the years following independence focused on a narrow range of commodity exports, with most of the benefits flowing to a relatively small segment of the population. That same group was also favoured in terms of social sector expenditures biased toward the provision of relatively high quality services for the elite. Poverty reduction was an often stated objective of government but this does not appear to have been reflected in specific policies or interventions. The structural adjustment programs introduced in the 1980s did little to change this situation. They generally followed the pervasive arguments of the period that providing a favourable financial and economic environment for the private sector was the most effective and sustainable approach to addressing poverty issues in the long term. It was not until the "social dimensions of adjustment" era of the 1990s that donors in Malawi seriously began to use conditionality to press the government for policies targeted, for example, at improving the position of smallholder farmers, increasing expenditure on education and healthcare, and providing safety nets for those at greatest risk. These policy debates eventually fed into the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), which the UDF government initiated soon after their election in 1994.

A series of PAP Technical Working Committees were given the task of assessing the nature and extent of poverty and developing relevant policies and programmes. These inputs were used by a Programme Coordinating Unit, established within the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, to produce a policy framework that was launched by the President in 1995 (GOM 1995). A Poverty Monitoring System (PMS) was set up in 1996 to collect, analyse and disseminate poverty data in order to improve the effectiveness of PAP-targeted interventions. The close links between the development of the PAP and MASAF have been discussed at length in Chapter 1. It may also be noted that the Poverty Monitoring Support Facility (PMSF) component of MASAF was specifically intended to finance capacity-building in institutions responsible for the implementation and maintenance of the PMS.

The central tenet of the PAP was the need to broaden the base for economic growth and extend basic social services to the whole population. The chosen strategy emphasised increased participation by the poor in the economic, social and political development of Malawi. Encouraging a more productive use

of labour – their major resource, ensuring rights over natural resources and extending access to credit were to provide the basis for the economic advancement of the poor, which would provide the basis for enhanced social and political engagement. One key element was to be a major expansion of access to education as a means of improving both employment and self-employment opportunities. The strategy also emphasised decentralisation and community-led participation in local decision-making, in order to encourage a sense of self-reliance and community empowerment. Specific policy proposals included: liberalisation of tobacco production to encourage smallholders to grow this important cash crop; a reduced role for parastatals and the encouragement of competitive markets; elimination of primary school fees; and an increased proportion of government expenditure allocated to the social sectors and to levels of service provision accessed by the poor. In 1996, the government initiated the high profile 'Vision 2020' series of public consultations on desired long-term objectives for Malawi, focusing on the poverty concerns and general aims of the PAP.

It has been argued that the PAP documents and the related Vision 2020 report should be seen as source documents for the development of the MPRSP, in effect, that the MPRSP represents the operationalisation of the PAP.[12] However, there appears to have been no formal process that was intended to achieve this objective and it seems much more likely that the origins of the MPRSP lie in discussions held in 2000 around the inclusion of Malawi within the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) initiative (Jenkins and Tsoka 2001). As in other HIPC countries, this involved agreement on a series of 'Completion Point Triggers', conditionality targets to be met by the GOM. These targets were mainly derived from a rapidly produced Interim PRSP document, developed by government officials in collaboration with World Bank staff and to a certain extent based on the Policy Framework Papers relating to earlier structural adjustment programmes (GOM 2000a).

The full PRSP process began in September 2000 with the establishment of a PRSP Technical Committee, chaired by a member of the National Economic Council. Thematic Working Groups, which included representatives from civil society and donors, began work in January 2001 and a consultation process was initiated which focused on a programme of district-level workshops. The final version of the PRSP was presented in April 2002 (GOM 2002).

The PRSP identifies the main causes of poverty as limited access to land, low education, poor health, lack of off-farm employment and inability to access credit. It declares its central objective to be 'sustainable poverty reduction through empowerment of the poor'. It is structured around four "pillars":

1   *Sustainable pro-poor economic growth* – economically empowering the poor by ensuring macroeconomic stability, access to credit and markets, skills development and employment generation.

2   *Human capital development* – ensuring the poor have the health status and education to lift themselves out of poverty.

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[12]   Though the first chapter of the final draft of the PRSP underlines that it "is a major departure from previous plans and strategies".

3   *Improving the quality of life for the most vulnerable* – providing sustainable safety nets for those who are unable to benefit from the first two pillars.

4   *Good governance* – ensuring that public and civil society institutions and systems protect and benefit the poor.

Four general issues that cross-cut these pillars are identified: HIV/AIDS, gender, environment, and science and technology.

Pro-poor growth strategy focuses on the agriculture sector. Proposed interventions are intended to contribute both directly in terms of improved productivity, for example by improving the availability of inputs and extension services, and by providing a conducive environment, for example through the establishment of micro-credit organisations and improved rural infrastructure. The key concerns under the latter heading are identified as rural feeder roads, water supply, sanitation, electrification and telecommunications. Human capital development is to be achieved by: increased provision of basic education; technical, entrepreneurial and vocational education; an essential healthcare package; and promotion of good nutrition. In education, the key issues are seen as improved training and compensation for teachers and increased access to teaching and learning materials. In health, training and remuneration of providers is again seen as a priority, alongside increasing the availability of drugs and the construction of rural health centres.

Four types of safety net are identified to address the problems of the most vulnerable: distribution of free agricultural inputs to the poor; public works programmes; targeted nutrition interventions; and direct welfare payments for those not adequately supported by the other programmes. The strategy on good governance, very much in line with the emphasis on self-reliance in the PAP, begins with the message that 'the poor have to solve their own problems . . . the Government alone cannot do everything'. It stresses a need to move away from the idea that communities can achieve 'material gain in return for electoral support'. Government's role is seen as providing an enabling environment. This includes protection from 'crime, violence, arbitrary state power and injustice', which contribute to insecurity and inhibit wealth accumulation by the poor. It also requires effective pro-poor public expenditure management, with adequate provisions for accountability and transparency and established procedures to detect and prosecute all forms of corruption. Decentralisation is seen as a key element of good governance, to the extent that it encourages popular participation and decision-making at local level. To this end, the MPRSP advocates capacity-building of local governance institutions and the transfer of functions to district level.

2.4 A framework for thinking about sustainable poverty reduction

This study was commissioned in response to requests from decision-makers at the highest level in Malawi, many of whom regard MASAF as having achieved considerable success in terms of both poverty reduction and community empowerment. They view its continuation and expansion as a key element in Malawi's current poverty reduction strategy. In formulating the approach to this review, it was therefore

considered essential that it be set within the context of the MPRSP and, to the extent possible, relate to the concerns of that document.

The MPRSP, as might be expected given its origins, adheres very closely to the general PRSP rubric as defined in the World Development Report (WDR) (World Bank 2000a). In that document the objective of a poverty reduction strategy (PRS) is to integrate poverty-reducing policies within a coherent, growth-oriented macroeconomic framework. A PRSP should assist countries in achieving a balance between good macroeconomic management and sound social, structural and human policies.

The four "pillars" of the MPRSP can similarly be readily mapped onto the three key action areas described in the WDR: empowerment, security, and opportunity. The empowerment section focuses on the need for decentralisation, support for poor community groups and organisations, and giving poor people a voice in all stages of decision-making. It emphasises the institutional context, where institutions are defined very broadly as humanly devised constraints that structure human interactions. The section on security can be seen as deriving from earlier work on safety nets, risk management and coping strategies, combined with elements of the rights-based approach to human development. The discussion on opportunity links economic growth to elements of the entitlements agenda and emphasises the need to enable poor households to improve their livelihood strategies by asset building. This includes not only financial and capital assets, but also a range of intangible assets, such as employment, education, health, and access to clean water.

Two other central concerns of both the WDR overview and the MPRSP are relevant for the present report. The first relates to the need for a more sophisticated, multidimensional, approach to the concept of poverty, which recognises the importance of dimensions other than income, including education, health, security and empowerment. The second identifies the limitations of national average figures for poverty incidence, and examines how development policy might impact differentially on the poverty status of particular population groups.

Tracking PRSP implementation typically gives rise to problems associated with the movement from general concepts to measurable indicators. For example, although they almost always embrace the multidimensionality of poverty in theory, PRSP monitoring systems will usually be forced to adopt a much narrower perspective when attempting to identify relatively simple indicators to determine, for example, the impact of specific poverty reduction initiatives. The current review faced a serious additional constraint, in that it was attempting to derive measurable indicators relevant to the MASAF I period, 1995–2001. Clearly, it would have been unrealistic to rely on the recollections of individual beneficiaries to provide detailed evidence as to the impact of PWP or CSP projects in which they may have been involved up to seven years prior to this study. An added complication was that such beneficiaries would have no reason to distinguish between projects under MASAF I and MASAF II, which began in 1998.

There would also have been little point in seeking to assess the impact of MASAF I by looking for a general reduction in poverty, for example using national household survey data. When poverty is as pervasive and widespread as in Malawi, it is unrealistic to expect that a project such as MASAF can transform the general situation of the poor. As indicated in Chapter 1, the total budget for MASAF I was

$56 million, to be disbursed over a five-year period, i.e. an average of some $11 million per year. This can be compared with a poverty gap, as reported by the 1997/98 Malawi household survey, of around $350 million.

A further consideration was the need to respond to a concern that has been stressed from the initial commissioning of the review: the need for "evidence-based" findings which would include reliable *quantitative* indicators of the poverty reduction impact of MASAF. As understood by the study team, this was not intended to underestimate the importance of qualitative research; it simply emphasised the need for the review to go beyond previous studies, for example the beneficiary assessments. Given the apparently insuperable difficulties of meeting this requirement in terms of quantitative income-poverty impact indicators, it was decided that one feasible approach would be to consider the current value of the physical assets which were the most obvious outputs of MASAF I. Again, in order to ensure the statistical robustness of the findings in terms of the number of sampled assets, it was decided that just two types of sub-project should be considered, those centred either on school blocks or standalone boreholes. This choice of assets was determined by the fact that of the 1,392 community sub-projects completed under MASAF I, 735 involved school block construction and a further 479 boreholes.

By considering the quality of these assets, their continued utilisation and, in the case of school blocks the availability of complementary inputs such as qualified teachers and books, it was seen as possible to derive indicators of improved access to education and to potable water, thus addressing two key poverty dimensions. The sub-project sites sampled were also used to derive indicators which can be linked to a third poverty dimension, that of empowerment. Information gathered at each site through key informant interviews and a household survey allowed the estimation of a series of attitudinal indicators which can at least provide some insights into the claims that MASAF I empowered communities.

In summary, the study attempts to determine the extent to which MASAF I contributed to poverty reduction, and to understand the reasons for its successes and failures, by explicit consideration of available evidence relating to:

- income poverty reduction (through PWP or CSP employment)
- income poverty security (through employment by PWP)
- human capital development (access to schools and clean water)
- empowerment (ability to influence use of public resources).

3 Investment in community assets
Henry Lucas

The primary objective of this chapter is to provide quantitative evidence on the extent of the poverty reduction impact of the community sub-projects component of MASAF. As discussed in Chapter 2, the review focused on access to education, access to potable water, and empowerment as the three dimensions of poverty to be directly addressed. It opens with a description of the CSP and considers the distribution of sub-projects between districts and traditional authorities, focusing on the extent to which this was linked to their relative poverty status. It then presents evidence on the impact of that investment on poverty. Its primary focus is on the physical state of assets and their current utilisation but it also examines the proportion of households that benefited directly from employment during project implementation. Finally, it explores indicators of empowerment, based on the attitudes of people towards these assets and towards MASAF and other government agencies.

3.1 Distribution of CSP asset creation and expenditure by poverty status

It has been argued that demand-led approaches favour communities capable of both preparing proposals and lobbying to have them appraised, and that these approaches therefore disadvantage the poorest localities. The evidence (see Chapter 5) points to the importance of an active traditional leader. But did poor communities do particularly badly? This issue was explored at district and traditional authority levels. Figure 3.1 explores possible links between the distribution of per capita expenditure among districts and their poverty status, using the poverty headcount ratio at district level provided by Benson *et al.* (2002). There appears to be no obvious pattern. Rumphi, Chitipa and Likoma had the highest spending per capita. While the first two have a poverty index greater than the national average of 63.4 per cent, the value for Likoma is much lower at 52.5 per cent. The two districts with the highest headcount ratios, Ntcheu and Lilongwe, have almost the lowest per capita expenditures. Overall, the data reveal a very weak negative correlation (-0.02) between this indicator and expenditure per capita. A similar result is obtained if the number of sub-projects is considered, with the correlation coefficient between this and the poverty headcount being just 0.04.

Figure 3.2 repeats the analysis using data at the traditional authority level. Again, the evidence does not indicate any systematic relationship between levels of poverty in a locality and its share of project resources. The peak of expenditure per capita was in a TA with a poverty headcount of 57 per cent, below the national average. The correlation coefficient between per capita expenditure and poverty status in this case was -0.13, while that between number of projects and poverty was -0.07. It is important to note that almost all traditional authorities have large numbers of people living in poverty. This kind of analysis does not rule out the possibility that the very poorest communities within individual TAs were less likely to secure funding for a sub-project. The public works component of MASAF, which did not require any

community contribution, was meant to compensate for this. However, it shows only slightly more targeting of poor TAs (Chapter 4).

Figure 3.1 CSP expenditure and poverty headcount ratio by district

☐ Poverty Headcount Ratio   ■ Expenditure per Capita
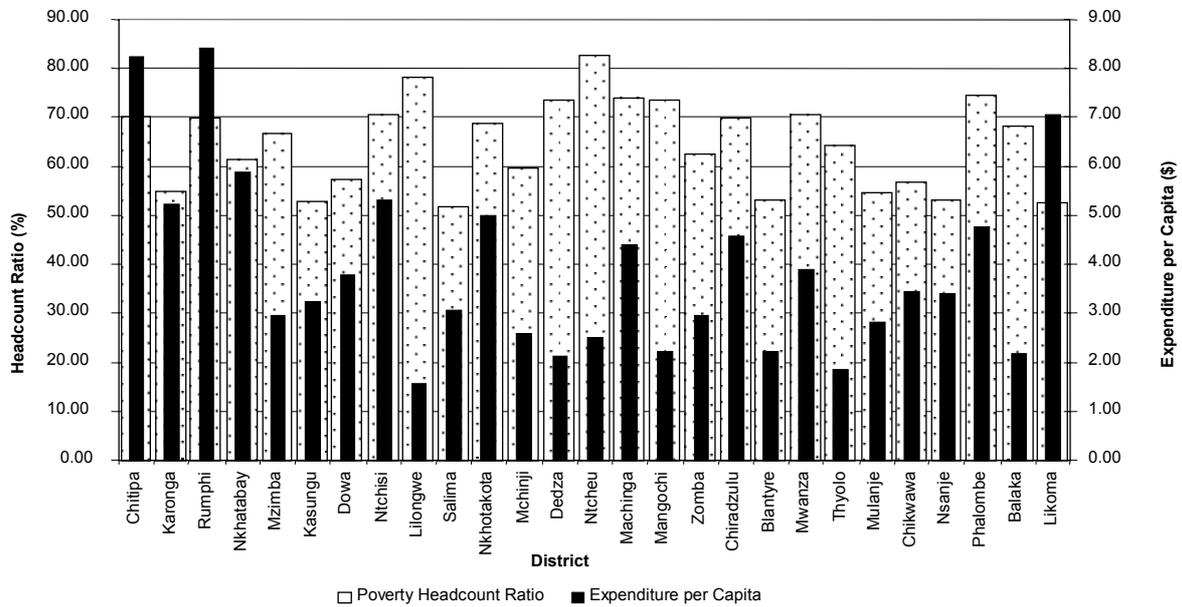
Figure 3.2 CSP expenditure and poverty headcount ratio by TA
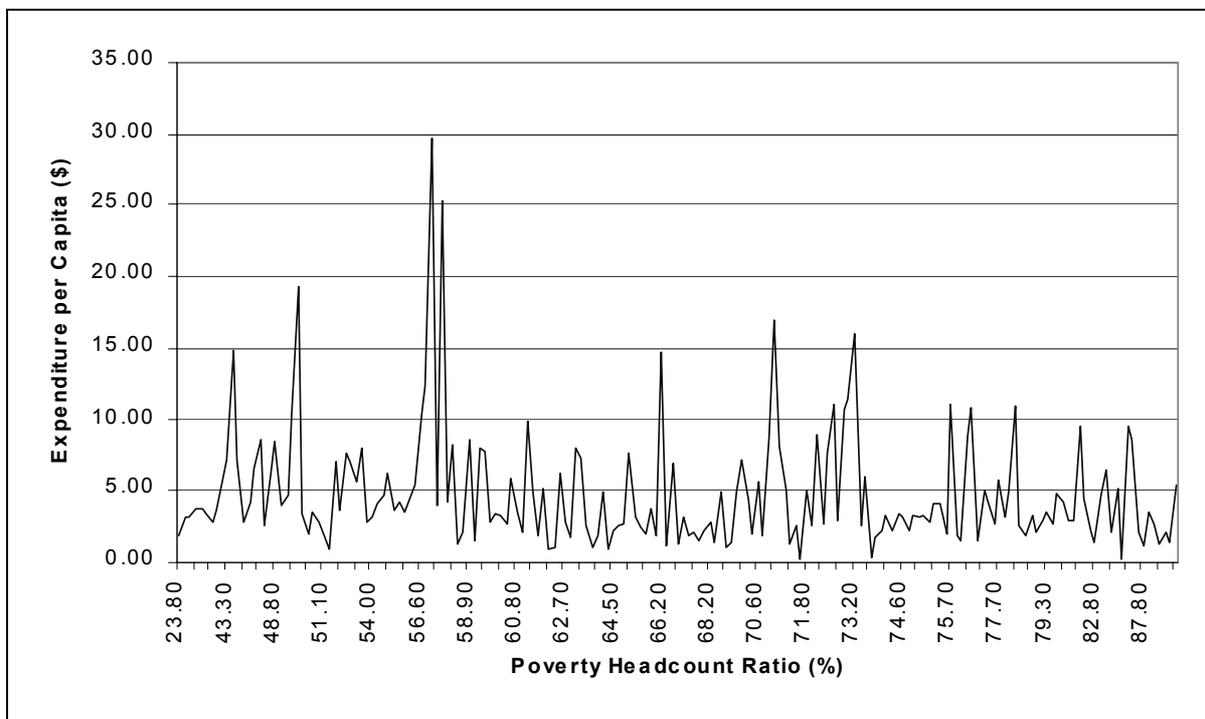
3.2 The benefits derived from MASAF I asset construction

In this section an attempt is made to assess the various benefits that communities may have derived from two types of MASAF I sub-projects – those relating to education and water. Not surprisingly, almost all households responded positively to a direct question on the benefits derived from sub-project assets. One initial, though probably relatively minor, such benefit was the direct income effect from employment in those projects. In the study household survey almost 16 per cent of households now resident in education sub-project sites report that at least one member earned income from the construction of school blocks, teachers' houses or related components. As might be expected, only four households, 1.8 per cent of the total, report similar employment on a standalone borehole project.

Table 3.1 Perceptions of project by household heads (%)

	School	Water
General approval	98.4	98.9
Benefit from implementation	15.6	1.8
Benefit from access	95.7	99.7

Current condition of MASAF I assets

The value of the benefits flowing from the use over time of the constructed assets clearly depends on their longevity and continuing ability to fulfil their designed function. Some doubts have been raised as to the sustainability of MASAF I assets. A review made by MASAF itself states:

> Measurement of the soundness of the infrastructure is somewhat subjective. From an urban standpoint, the fabric of the schools and other buildings, although of sound construction, is very basic. However, when measured by the yardstick of what stood before, what was lacking, or the inadequacy of previously existing buildings, they are a source of pride and satisfaction throughout the communities.

> (MASAF 2002a: 38)

In the initial phase of the Poverty and Sustainability Review (PASR), the team saw examples of school block floors having crumbled. They also had reports of a number of other quality problems with MASAF structures. Some building projects were said to have neglected termite treatment of the foundation, damp-proofing or appropriate nailing of roofs. A recent Implementation Completion Review (ICR) of a World Bank Population, Health and Nutrition (PHN) project compared a small sample of staff houses built by MASAF and by a contractor. It concluded that the latter produced better buildings.

To obtain statistically robust evidence on the current condition of the assets produced by the selected sub-projects, a trained enumerator undertook a simple visual assessment at a sample of 121 education (school blocks and teachers' houses) and 30 borehole projects. The following checklists were adopted to classify selected aspects of the relevant assets:

	Good	Problems	Bad
Buildings			
Floors	Even	Uneven	Broken/holes
Walls	No cracks	Cracks	Holes/fallen
Roofs	No leaks	Leaks	Major leaks
Boreholes			
Flow	High	Slow	No water
Quality	Good taste	Bad taste	Not drinkable

Table 3.2 provides the results of the assessment of classroom blocks and teachers' houses. It should be noted initially that at all sub-project sites sampled, the specified assets were readily located. At the very least, the evidence was that all MASAF sub-projects that were funded were constructed. School blocks had been provided in 86 and teachers' houses in 64 of the 91 sites. Internal inspection of the teachers' houses was possible in 61 sites. Overall, some 35 per cent of school blocks and 18 per cent of teachers' houses were reported as having a serious defect. As might be expected the teachers' houses, subject to much less wear and tear, were generally in good condition, while almost 50 per cent of the school blocks had at least some damage to their floors.

Table 3.2 Quality of classroom blocks and teachers' houses

	Floor (%)	Walls (%)	Roof (%)
School Blocks			
Good	50.6	57.7	79.3
Problems	18.3	32.7	7.4
Bad	31.1	9.6	13.3
Total cases	86	86	86
Teachers' Houses			
Good	66.2	64.7	89.6
Problems	18.3	15.3	8.7
Bad	15.5	19.9	1.7
Total cases	61	63	64

Table 3.3 provides information on the quality of boreholes. Both those associated with the construction of school blocks and those provided by specific water sub-projects were assessed. Some 50 per cent of school block boreholes and two thirds of standalone boreholes were described as providing an adequate flow of fresh drinking water, while 20 per cent of the former and 10 per cent of the latter were no longer functional.

Table 3.3 Quality of classroom block and standalone boreholes

	Flow (%)	Water quality (%)
Classroom Block		
Good	58.1	73.6
Problems	20.7	26.5
Bad	21.2	0
Total	60	38
Standalone		
Good	79.9	92.1
Problems	11.8	7.9
Bad	8.4	0
Total	30	23

3.3 Current utilisation and indicators of quality of services provided

Clearly, the fact that assets remain useable does not necessarily imply that they will be used, or used for their intended purpose. The absence of complementary inputs – for example health workers in the case of MASAF I health facilities, or preferred alternatives – for example boreholes providing better-tasting water or a higher flow rate, may also reduce the perceived value of the asset. Again, assets may be diverted from their original use. A "teacher's house", for example, is not only suitable accomodation for a teacher. This section therefore attempts to determine the actual utilisation of MASAF I assets.

Education sub-projects

School blocks were mostly constructed at sites with an existing school. The new buildings may have led to increased enrolment, or simply provided an improved teaching and learning environment. It is difficult to quantify the flow of benefits to pupils as these obviously depended on the availability and quality of complementary inputs. Two main issues were raised during the first phase of this study. First, the MOE recruited many unqualified teachers during the rapid expansion of enrolment and the proportion of such teachers remains high. Second, it was reported that many schools lacked basic books and other materials. Both issues are addressed below in relation to the sampled sites.

Of the 86 sites provided with school blocks, 83 were reported as still in use. All of the teachers' houses were said to be currently occupied by teachers. Table 3.4 indicates the average number of pupils per site attending lessons in MASAF I school blocks.

Table 3.4 Number of pupils currently using MASAF school blocks

Region	Mean	Median	N
Northern	149	143	20
Central	190	171	25
Southern	308	272	38
Total	228	183	83

If the proportion of sites with school blocks currently in use and the overall average of 228 pupils per site are applied to the 735 education sub-project sites, it can be estimated that some 152,847 pupils are currently benefiting from the use of MASAF I school blocks.

These pupils are reported to have an average of around one book in each of the subjects Chichewa, Mathematics and English. Table 3.5 indicates that in the majority of cases they have at least three books for every four pupils. Less than 10 per cent of sites have less than one book for every four students.

Table 3.5 Books per 100 pupils currently using MASAF school blocks (%)

Subject	<25	25–49	50–74	75+
Chichewa	6.9	14.8	13.2	65.1
Mathematics	2.3	7.6	19.6	70.5
English	8.2	7.4	21.2	63.2

On average there were some eight teachers and six qualified teachers per site. A large majority of these teachers were male and the average number of qualified female teachers was just one per site. Estimating the standard pupil/teacher ratio for sub-project sites would be problematic, in that the value of this indicator would be lower where a smaller proportion of children of school age attended school. Instead, Table 3.6 estimates the total number of children aged 6-12 per teacher and per qualified teacher. This calculation is based on the estimated total beneficiary population taken from MASAF I sub-project Management Unit Review form, which is adjusted using the proportion of 6-12 year olds in the household survey.

Table 3.6 Sub-project sites by number of children 6–12 per teacher (%)

Children 6–12 per teacher	All teachers	Qualified teachers
<50	18	10
50–99	31	20
100–199	30	33
200+	21	38

The table indicates that only around 18 per cent of sites have less than 50 primary school age children per teacher, with the corresponding figure for qualified teachers being just 10 per cent. Some 51 per cent of sites have more than 100 such children per teacher, and 71 per cent have more than 100 per qualified teacher.

Water projects

The poverty impact of MASAF I standalone boreholes can be in terms of the extent to which households make use of the water provided. Table 3.7 shows how many households in each region are currently using the functioning boreholes.

Table 3.7 Number of households using MASAF borehole as main source of drinking water

Region	Mean number	Median number	Projects	Household mean size
Northern	76	63	6	5.9
Central	95	98	10	5.0
Southern	80	45	11	5.3
Total	85	60	27	5.3

Applying the above estimates of the proportion of standalone bores still functioning (27/30), the average number of households using these boreholes, and the average household size, to the total number of standalone borehole sub-projects under MASAF I, suggests that some 194,210 people are now using theses boreholes as their main source of drinking water.

3.4 Attitudes to assets funded by MASAF

Finally in this chapter, the influence of MASAF I sub-projects on beneficiary attitudes is considered in an attempt to address the claims that MASAF has "empowered" communities. First, the question of local "ownership" of assets is considered by examining attitudes to asset maintenance. It is assumed that a genuine sense of ownership should imply a willingness to take responsibility if the asset owned requires maintenance or repair.

Attitudes to assets maintenance

The review team could not locate any documented comparisons of maintenance arrangements for assets constructed with support from MASAF and other donors. The MASAF I beneficiary assessments raised questions as to how newly constructed facilities would be maintained. According to that undertaken in 2001, most communities were aware that they were required to maintain the assets. Many formed maintenance committees and maintenance funds. They were also reported as asking for more training for their committees. However, they expected government to help with major repairs. During visits to newly built schools in the first phase of this study the review team found a great deal of uncertainty about the role of the Ministry of Education in financing and carrying out repairs. The general impression was that maintenance issues had not been resolved.

In the sample sites, an overwhelming majority of households reported that community organisations had primary responsibility for maintaining school blocks. Of the 816 responding, only 18 indicated that MASAF had responsibility, 7 identified the government, 2 their Member of Parliament and 2 their local councillor.

Table 3.8 Institution identified as responsible for school block maintenance

Institution	Percentage of households
School committee	77.3
Community	6.9
Project Management Committee	5.6
Pupils and teachers	2.5
MASAF	2.2
Traditional leader	2.1
Other	3.4

A similar pattern was found for boreholes. In this case, only two households regarded MASAF as having primary responsibility for maintenance.

Table 3.9 Institution identified by households as responsible for borehole maintenance

Institution	Percentage of households
Project Management Committee	80.7
Community	7.8
School committee	4.8
Traditional leader	4.8
Other	1.9

Clearly, holding the community responsible is not the same as accepting direct responsibility oneself or acting on that responsibility. To assess actual willingness to participate in repairs, each household was asked to report requests for such assistance and their response. Households in 39 education project sites said that they had been asked to help in the repair of a MASAF I asset. However, in 23 sites only one of the sampled households reported such a request and more than 3 households were approached in just 4 sites. This may imply that only households likely to consent were asked to assist, which would explain why almost all did so. The position was markedly different in terms of boreholes. Almost all the borehole projects sampled, 26 of 30, had generated requests. At least 7 sampled households reported being approached in 16 sites and all 9 households in 8 sites.

The form of assistance also varied. For school blocks around two-thirds of requests were for labour inputs, while for boreholes nearly all requests were for financial contributions, almost certainly for

replacement parts. Again, almost all those reporting requests said that they had provided help, though of course there is no way to obtain independent corroboration.

Table 3.10 Households reporting requests for assistance in maintaining assets

	School block	Borehole
Asked to assist	73	163
Provided assistance	70	158
Type of assistance:		
Labour	45	10
Materials	4	2
Money	21	146

Involvement in project

One innovative aspect of MASAF was the decision to ask communities to manage their own projects. According to MASAF personnel, community empowerment was the main reason for choosing this approach. Table 3.11 indicates the extent to which household heads felt that their household had been involved at various stages of the two types of project. It shows that almost 60 per cent reported involvement in project selection, 30 per cent were engaged to some extent in project preparation, 50 per cent in election of the project committee and 80 per cent in the implementation phase. Involvement in project maintenance differed greatly as between education and water sub-projects, with 10 per cent reporting that they contributed to the former and 60 per cent to the latter. As discussed above, this would seem to relate to the nature of the required maintenance: labour and materials for the school block as against money for repairs to the borehole pump.

As the discussion in Chapter 7 indicates, the simple yes/no measure of involvement adopted here cannot capture the complexity of people's perceptions. Those who report "involvement" to the extent that they were consulted or invited to participate in discussions may still feel that they had little effective influence on key decisions. Chapter 7 also suggests that in some cases specific sections of the intended beneficiary population (sometimes whole villages) were not invited to participate.

Table 3.11 Reported involvement by households in project activities (%)

Activity	Education sub-project	Water sub-project
Selection of project	58	57
Proposal development	27	27
Election of committee	49	53
Implementation	79	79
Maintenance	10	59

3.5 Has experience of a MASAF sub-project influenced attitudes to government?

If involvement in MASAF I sub-projects did succeed in empowering communities, it might be expected that this would be reflected in their current attitudes to investment needs and how various agencies, including government, might assist in meeting those needs. The survey first asked household heads to identify what new assets were currently most required by the community. The results are shown in Table 3.12. Note that boreholes and health facilities dominated these preferences, with education sub-project sites selecting boreholes as the most important and water sites, which had already been provided with at least one MASAF borehole, selecting health facilities.

Table 3.12 Reported most important new asset required by community (%)

Important new asset	Project type	
	School	Water
Boreholes	38.8	21.6
Dispensary/Clinic/Health Centre	27.6	36.1
Road construction	8.8	9.3
Bridge	6.2	6.7
Staff houses	5.6	2.2
School block	4.6	6.3
Irrigation agriculture	1.9	1.1
Maize mill	1.6	4.1
Other	5.1	12.6
	100.0	100.0

Table 3.13 Actions proposed by household heads (%)

Proposed action	Project type	
	School	Water
Collect materials or money	65.0	63.2
Seek assistance from a Traditional Leader	7.7	8.6
Ask MASAF for funding for the project	7.2	7.5
Seek assistant from the MP	4.3	2.3
Seek assistance from NGOs	2.0	1.1
Seek assistance from the District Commissioner	1.7	0.0
Seek assistance from the councillor	1.5	1.5
Seek assistance from Agricultural offices	0.0	0.4
Community should meet to decide where to seek assistance	1.1	0.8
Seek assistance from the Government	1.0	2.6
Seek assistance from the President	0.2	0.4
Collect money	0.2	0.4
Other	1.3	0.8
Don't know	7.0	10.9

These household heads were then asked what community members should do first to obtain this asset. Table 3.13 indicates that more than 60 per cent proposed some form of immediate preparatory action in terms of raising money or producing building materials. This was the standard requirement for obtaining MASAF I sub-project funding and might indicate the influence of earlier MASAF experience. However, as reported in Chapter 7, this self-help approach was common practice in many communities prior to MASAF and cannot necessarily be interpreted as reflecting changed perceptions or attitudes.

Around 7 per cent proposed making a second application for MASAF funds, though in principle this would not be permitted. Others suggested seeking assistance. The most favoured candidate was the traditional leader, with the local MP some way behind. Encouragingly, only around 10 per cent said that they could not think of any course of action that would be of use.

3.6 Conclusions

To what extent did the asset construction activities of MASAF benefit the poor in Malawi? The evidence provided by examination of quantitative data extracted from the management information system and the estimates derived from the sample survey suggests that the benefits were certainly substantial, though limited in scope, and appropriately, if not systematically, targeted. On the last point, the study found no relationship between the degree of poverty at either district or traditional authority level and the corresponding allocation of MASAF I resources. This finding has both positive and negative aspects. While there might be a preference for allocation mechanisms which favoured the very poorest, it had also been suggested that richer areas, because of their possibly greater ability to prepare and advocate sub-project proposals, might have captured a disproportionate share. Given that this does not appear to be the case, and allowing for the widespread prevalence of rural poverty in Malawi, it would seem probable that the great majority of sub-projects were sited in locations which included a large proportion of poor households.

It can be argued that the nature of the benefits were limited, given that out of the 1,392 community sub-projects, 1,214 focused on the construction of school buildings or drilling of boreholes. However, this can to some extent be understood in the context of the massively increased demand for school places triggered by the policies of the new government in 1994. MASAF can certainly claim to have made a major contribution to poverty alleviation in this area. As indicated in Chapter 5, MASAF I funded around one-quarter of the classrooms built between 1994 and 2001 (with MASAF II providing a similar number). Almost all of those buildings are currently in use, though around 35 per cent are estimated to be in serious need of repair. On the basis of the survey estimates, they are currently providing spaces for more than 150,000 pupils. To put this number in context, it represents around 13 per cent of the 1.2m increase in primary school enrolment which occurred in 1994.

Survey estimates similarly indicate that some 200,000 people are currently using MASAF I boreholes as their primary source of drinking water. Here the position on sustained use is less impressive. Only half of the boreholes linked to education sub-projects and two-thirds of standalone boreholes are currently providing a reasonable supply of palatable drinking water.

Quantitative assessment of the benefits in terms of empowerment is more problematic. This necessarily implies reliance on subjective judgements by current community members of the impact of activities which took place up to seven years prior to the fieldwork. Overall, however, there are some encouraging indications. Almost 60 per cent of respondents reported involvement of members of their household in sub-project selection. More impressively, 27 per cent said that members had participated directly in project preparation. As remarked above, this quantitative evidence is somewhat simplistic, since it does not address the degree of "involvement" (see Chapter 7), but it does at least suggest that the process was not simply confined to a small elite.

The great majority of respondents, around 80 per cent, accepted the MASAF community responsibility guidelines in terms of regarding their education committee or project management committees as having primary responsibility for maintenance of school buildings and boreholes created with MASAF support. Attitudes as to how further investments might be obtained might also be regarded as in line with MASAF principles, in that around 65 per cent of respondents proposed that the first step would be to collect money or building materials before seeking external assistance.

4 Providing income security through public works and paid employment
Ephraim W Chirwa

4.1 Introduction

Public works programmes (PWPs) have been important interventions in rural development in both developed and developing countries. The main objectives of PWPs are to provide a safety net to vulnerable poor groups while at the same time embarking on rural development based on the labour resources of the poor. As safety nets, PWPs achieve transfer and/or stabilisation of benefits to the poor while using their labour to build infrastructure for development (Subbarao 1997). More recently, PWPs have been important instruments in the fight against poverty in developing countries. Ravallion (1999) argues that PWPs can reduce poverty by providing paid work for the unemployed from poor households and by producing goods and services that are valued by poor families. There is a vast literature on the design, implementation and performance of anti-poverty public works programmes in developing countries including programmes in India (Datt and Ravallion 1994; Ravallion 1991b; Dev 1996; Gaiha 1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2000), Bangladesh (Hossain and Asaduzzaman 1983), Argentina (Ravallion 1999; Jalan and Ravallion 1999), Mexico (Skoufias *et al.* 2001), Botswana and Kenya (Teklu and Asefa 1997, 1999), South Africa (Adato and Haddad 2002) and Malawi (Chirwa *et al.* 2002).

In Malawi, government attempts at a public works programme on a national scale first came into operation on a pilot basis in 1995 and later in July 1996 as a national intervention through the PWP component of MASAF. The purpose of this chapter is to review the targeting, management and impact of the public works programme. It is organized in four sections. Section 4.2 reviews the conceptual literature and experiences in other developing countries. Section 4.3 reviews the processes and performance of the PWP component of MASAF. Section 4.4 provides concluding remarks.

4.2 The conceptual and empirical literature review[13]

The international literature on public works programmes raises issues with respect to targeting of participants, remuneration, institutional and administrative frameworks, appropriate technology, determinants of participation, and impact on employment and poverty.[14] Public works programmes can be classified into (a) relief works to address food insecurity under circumstances of extraordinary food and income distress, (b) income-augmenting programmes in response to seasonal fluctuations in incomes, (c) long-term employment-generation programmes designed to cater for employment needs among those caught up in structural unemployment, and (d) low-cost infrastructure programmes that emphasise the creation of infrastructure rather than income augmentation.

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[13]   This section draws on Chirwa *et al.* (2002).
[14]   See Subbarao (1997), Teklu and Asefa (1999), Dev (1996), Datt and Ravallion (1994), Gaude and Watzlawick (1992), Hossain and Asaduzzaman (1983), Edmonds and de Veen (1992), Ravallion (1991a, 1991b) and Gaiha (1996a, 1996b, 1997, 2000).

One of the design features of poverty-oriented public works programmes with implications for performance is targeting. There are two levels of targeting that are considered in poverty-oriented public works programmes: targeting of communities and targeting of beneficiaries. Targeting of communities requires information that identifies the geographic locations or groups of individuals with similar characteristics of poverty or vulnerability. In many developing countries data on the geographical distribution of poverty or covariates of poverty are not readily available, and this creates challenges in selecting the project sites for public works programmes. The literature on targeting of communities varies. In demand-driven programmes such as the community-based public works programme in Western Cape in South Africa, the project applications were ranked according to labour intensity, training, community participation, budget, management and maintenance, and the ability of the applicant to implement the project (Adato and Haddad 2002). In other programmes, such as the PROGRESA in Mexico, targeting of communities is based on a marginality index constructed from census data which takes into account access to basic social services (Skoufias *et al.* 2001). Reddy (1998) notes that in some social safety net programmes geographical units are ranked by levels of poverty as indicated by a wide range of features including infant mortality, literacy, and access to basic sanitation.

Once communities have been selected for interventions, project implementers need to identify households or individuals that qualify as beneficiaries of the public works programme. This is the most problematic area in the design of poverty-oriented public works programmes. In countries where poverty is widespread, it becomes difficult to adopt a specific targeting criterion for public works employment because of the imperfect information about the poor available to implementers of the programmes. Several targeting approaches at beneficiary level have been used. First, in many programmes the use of a wage rate for public works projects that is not greater than the minimum wage acts as a self-targeting device which eliminates the non-poor in the community by targeting those with low reservation wage rates (Ravallion 1991a). However, Subbarao notes that, while a low wage rate is likely to keep those that are not poor out of the programme, it may result in lower transfer earnings per (poor) participant, and hence the resulting reduction in poverty may not be significant. The empirical evidence on the levels of wages in PWPs varies across countries. Subbarao cites ten programmes, four of which paid the minimum wage, two a minimum wage higher than the market wage, two less than the minimum wage (one with a minimum wage greater than the market wage), two less than the ruling market wage and one more than the ruling market wage.[15] Eisenstadt (1998) also reports that the low wage rate was the main targeting mechanism for the TRABAJAR programme in Argentina.

Second, other programmes use some means testing using quantitative individual or household characteristics that are covariates of poverty. According to Skoufias *et al.*, in the PROGRESA programme in Mexico targeting of beneficiaries is based on a brief census of household socio-economic characteristics of all households in the marginal localities selected for the programme from which per capita adult income

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[15]　Miller (1992) reports similar variations in 11 countries. For example, in Uganda the public works wage rate was higher than the minimum wage which in turn was higher than the ruling wage rate, while in Burkina Faso the public works wage rate was 29 per cent of the minimum wage but 86 per cent of the ruling market wage.

is computed and compared to the cost of the standard food basket to determine the poor and non-poor. Using discriminant analysis for each region, variables that discriminate best the poor and non-poor are used in a parsimonious equation to compute a discriminant score that is used for developing the rules for classifying the poor or non-poor households. The third targeting approach entails isolating individuals or groups with particular fixed and visible characteristics such as the landless or female headed households. However, Reddy (1998) argues that the use of these fixed characteristics is likely to stigmatise the beneficiaries with the resultant low participation and high cost of administration.

The imperfect information available to implementers of targeted programmes leads to two types of targeting errors (Stewart and van der Geest 1995). E-type errors result in non-poor also receiving benefits. F-type errors result in the exclusion of some of the poor. Stewart and van der Geest conclude that supply-driven schemes that used low wage as a self-targeting instrument generally performed better than demand-driven schemes in terms of both types of errors of targeting. Gaiha (2000), in the analysis of rural public works and the integrated rural development programmes in India, found that leakages to the non-poor were increasing due to the high wage rate and the payment of wages in-kind. Although the E-errors were low (around 3 per cent), the F-errors were high (around 24 per cent) in both programmes.

The wage rate set for public works programmes is an important design feature. The extent of coverage of poverty-oriented public works programmes depends on the wage rate set for the programme. The principal benefit received by a worker from public works is income earned from the labour services rendered, and this is critical in the supply of labour services. The determination of the wage rate in PWPs is critical both for targeting and the benefits that the poor generate from their participation, but may also have wider implications for the local economy (Subbarao 1997; Ravallion 1991a; Gaiha 1996b, 1997). In any case, it is important to strike a balance between the objectives of self-targeting and ensuring that workers receive a meaningful transfer. Too low a wage keeps the overall participation rate low, while at the same time ensuring a disproportionately larger number of poor workers than would be observed if the wage rate were higher.

The administrative structure and the number of institutions involved in the implementation of public works programmes vary from country to country. Gaude and Watzlawick (1992) argue that proper decentralisation of the design and management of local infrastructure works has far-reaching implications for the effectiveness of public works programmes. Van Imschoot (1992) observes that public works projects implemented in India, Madagascar and the Sudan are highly decentralised and encourage the active participation of the local authorities, technical departments and target groups, with the responsibility of the ministry (central government) being that of coordinating the activities of other technical services at decentralised levels.

In Bangladesh, the management of the public works programme was mostly devolved around local government structures, responsible for the identification of projects, preparation of proposals and project plans, and project approval and prioritisation, with projects being mainly initiated at local village meetings (Hossain and Asaduzzaman 1983). The role of the collaborating institutions is also critical for realising the intended safety-net effect. Implementation of PWPs brings together a number of government (and

sometimes non-government) agencies for their expertise in various aspects of project activities. Inefficient and costly linkages adversely affect the share of programme resources that eventually filters down to participants (Zgovu *et al.* 1998).

4.3 The public works programme under MASAF I

The public works programme is MASAF's safety net component. It supports labour-intensive activities in construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of economic infrastructure such as rural access roads, rainwater-harvesting structures and improved natural resource management. This component accounted for 29.4 per cent of MASAF I expenditure.

Targeting of communities and beneficiaries

Targeting of communities

In the implementation of MASAF I, the Vulnerability Assessment Mapping (VAM), conducted in 1996, was used as a basis for geographical targeting of communities for public works programmes. The VAM focused on food poverty and food insecurity of households measured in terms of kilocalories. During the implementation of MASAF I, VAM was the only geographic information about food availability linked to poverty that was available. The largest geographic area for targeting PWP projects was the Extension Planning Area (EPA).[16] The MASAF Management Unit (MU), in conjunction with the Poverty Monitoring Unit (PMU) of the National Economic Council (NEC) decided on the vulnerability index (the minimum available kilocalories) below which EPAs were eligible for public works. In each zone, EPAs were ranked according to average household kilocalories, and EPAs with the lowest kilocalories were targeted for public works consistent with available resources. There is evidence that VAM data had become out of date and no longer provided an accurate picture of food insecurity due to lack of updates (Mvula *et al.* 2000).[17] In recognition of this problem, some flexibility in targeting EPAs was allowed in which the District Executive Sub-Set (DSS) – a technical sub-committee of the DEC – was permitted to justify targeting different EPAs from those identified by the MASAF MU.[18] The DSS comprised the District Development Officer, Clerk of Council and Sector Technical Supervisors from relevant ministries at district level.

There were two main ways of identifying project sites and project types in practice (Mvula *et al.* 2000), both of which were documented in the project implementation manual. First, once the communities for targeting are selected, proposals were identified from an existing list of projects approved by the district development committee (DDC) compiled by the DEC. This provided the initial list of

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[16]   The EPA is a geographic area that follows the agricultural extension system of the Ministry of Agriculture. It is usually larger than the traditional authority (TA). There were approximately 250 TAs in the rural areas compared to approximately 150 EPAs (Benson *et al.* 2002).

[17]   At the time of implementation of most PWP projects, VAM was the only available national indicator of spatial vulnerability in terms of food security in Malawi.

[18]   This variation was however approved by MASAF-MU based on a justification letter from the DEC.

demand-driven projects requested by the communities through the local government structures. These projects were identified by communities and submitted through their village development committees (VDC). The VDCs refer the identified projects to the area development committee (ADC), which consists of all group village heads under the traditional authority, who chairs the committee. The ADC then sent project proposals to the DDC. The DDC, during the implementation of MASAF I included traditional authorities, Members of Parliament, district chairpersons of all political parties and other interest groups. With the technical assistance of the DEC, the DDC approved the project for possible funding and inclusion on a list of community projects to be implemented subject to availability of funds. However, the number of projects that were selected from the existing list of projects compiled by the DEC was small.

Second, the DSS identified projects in target EPAs, in consultation with the communities, using participatory methodologies. This was the most typical procedure used in the selection of projects. The project proposals were approved by the DDC before submission to MASAF for funding. This approach provided a fast track that bypassed district development structures. Mvula *et al.* observed variations in the degree to which communities were consulted on the identification of projects. Many communities reported little consultation in identifying their needs. Some District PWP Officers noted that some decisions on project type were made either at district or traditional authority levels. There were also reports of cases where political groups strongly influenced project identification. For example, the 2000 beneficiary appraisal referred to a project that politicians brought without consulting the community. There is insufficient evidence to assess how often such cases occurred.

Following the receipt of proposals by MASAF MU, the MASAF Zone Managers conducted a desk appraisal followed by a field appraisal with the assistance of the DSS. The projects were evaluated in terms of the content of unskilled labour and the environmental impact. The required proportion of unskilled labour changed with time. In the 1996 project operation manual the public works proposals were expected to allocate at least 50 per cent of project costs to unskilled labour. In 1998 this proportion was reduced to 35 per cent. Due to the macroeconomic instability, particularly the high levels of inflation experienced during the period, it was difficult to achieve the initial 50 per cent labour content in public works due to increasing costs of materials. The proportion of project costs allocated to unskilled labour rose from 38 per cent to 48.4 per cent. Some informants suggested that the need to achieve a high unskilled labour content led to compromises on the quality of created assets.

A comparison of the poverty headcount and public expenditure per capita at district level may provide a rough picture of the efficiency of poverty targeting using the VAM data. However, caution must be exercised in the interpretation of the relationships because targeting was done on the basis of VAM data which captured food insecurity that is just one element of poverty while the poverty headcount is more encompassing.[19] In addition, VAM data were available at EPA level which is a geographic area larger than the TA level. The southern region accounted for 46 per cent of disbursements while the Central and

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[19]   In a subsistence economy like Malawi, food insecurity is expected to be highly correlated to overall poverty as captured by the headcount ratio.

Northern Regions accounted for 28 per cent and 26 per cent, respectively. However, per capita expenditure in the regions was $1.25, $0.86 and $2.70, respectively. Using financial data on 471 public works projects out of the total of 472 completed under MASAF I, comparisons were made between expenditure per capita and the poverty headcount index at district and traditional authority levels. The analysis revealed a weakly negative association between project resources per capita and the poverty index. The correlation coefficients between US dollar expenditure per capita and the poverty headcount ratio were -0.191 and -0.022 percent at district and traditional authority levels, respectively. These coefficients are statistically insignificant. This suggests that PWP resources were not targeted to the poorest districts or traditional authorities.

Overall expenditure on PWP per capita at district level ranged from $0.35 to $13.13, with a mean of $3.28. Figure 4.1 shows the inter-district variations in expenditure in relation to the poverty headcount index while Figure 4.2 shows the pattern of expenditure per capita in traditional authority areas. Both figures show no systematic relationship between poverty and per capita expenditure on public works programmes.

Figure 4.3 provides an alternative approach for exploring the relationship between poverty and expenditure in the public works programme under MASAF I. It shows districts ordered by their share of the total population below the poverty line and their corresponding share of PWP expenditure. At one end of the scale, Lilongwe has around 11 per cent of the total poor and receives some 4 per cent of expenditure, while at the other Karonga has less than 1 per cent of the poor but received almost 4 per cent of expenditure. Similar to the CSP allocation, the analysis of the PWP seems to indicate that smaller districts are advantaged in terms of resource allocation.

Figure 4.1 Poverty headcount ratio and PWP expenditure per capita by district
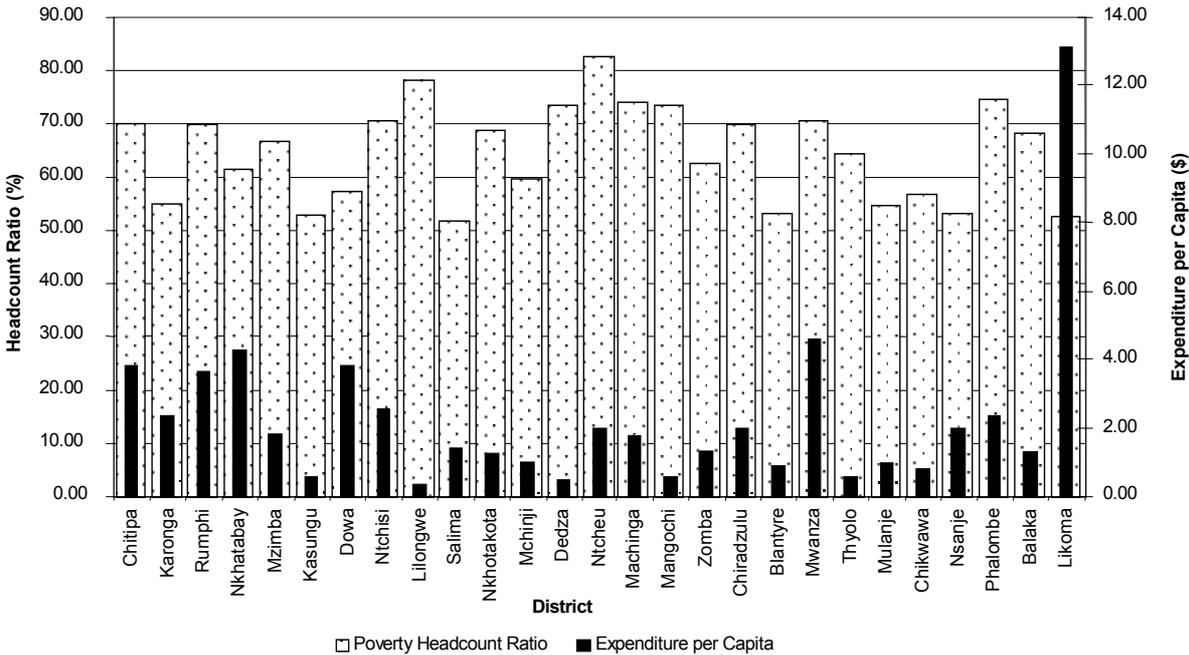
Figure 4.2 Poverty headcount ratio and PWP expenditure per capita by TA
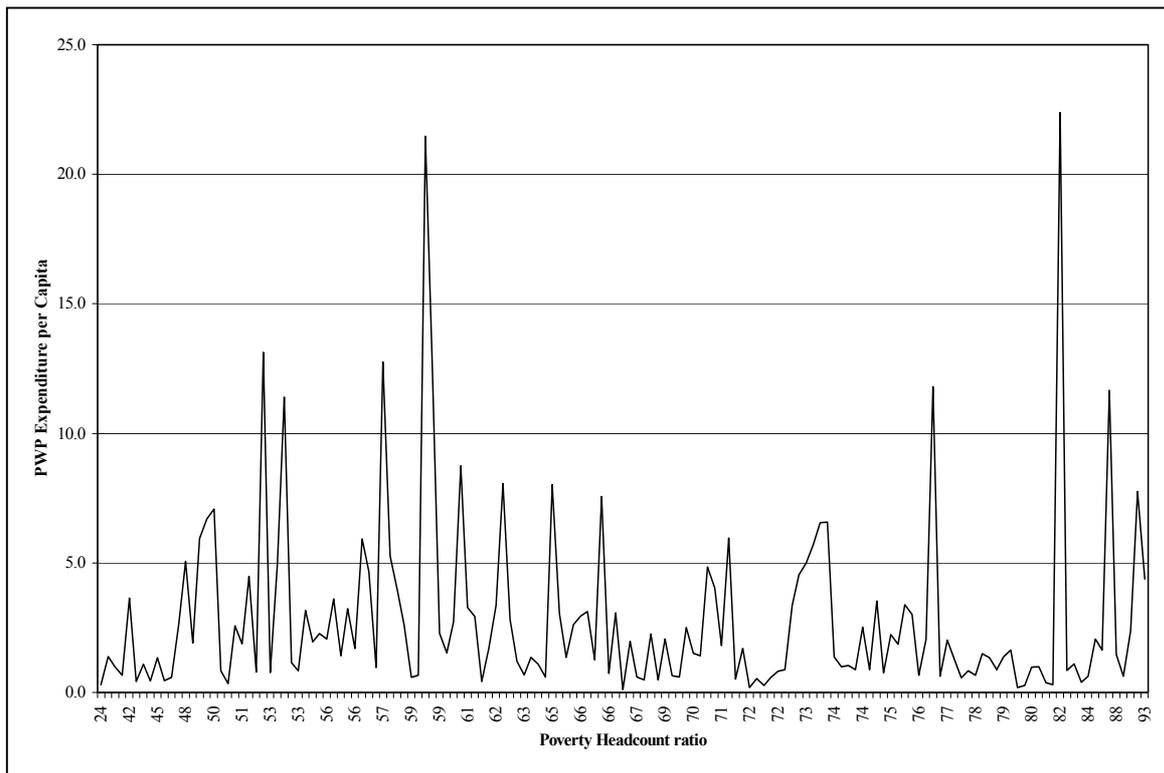
Figure 4.3 Percentage of population below poverty line and percentage of PWP expenditure by district
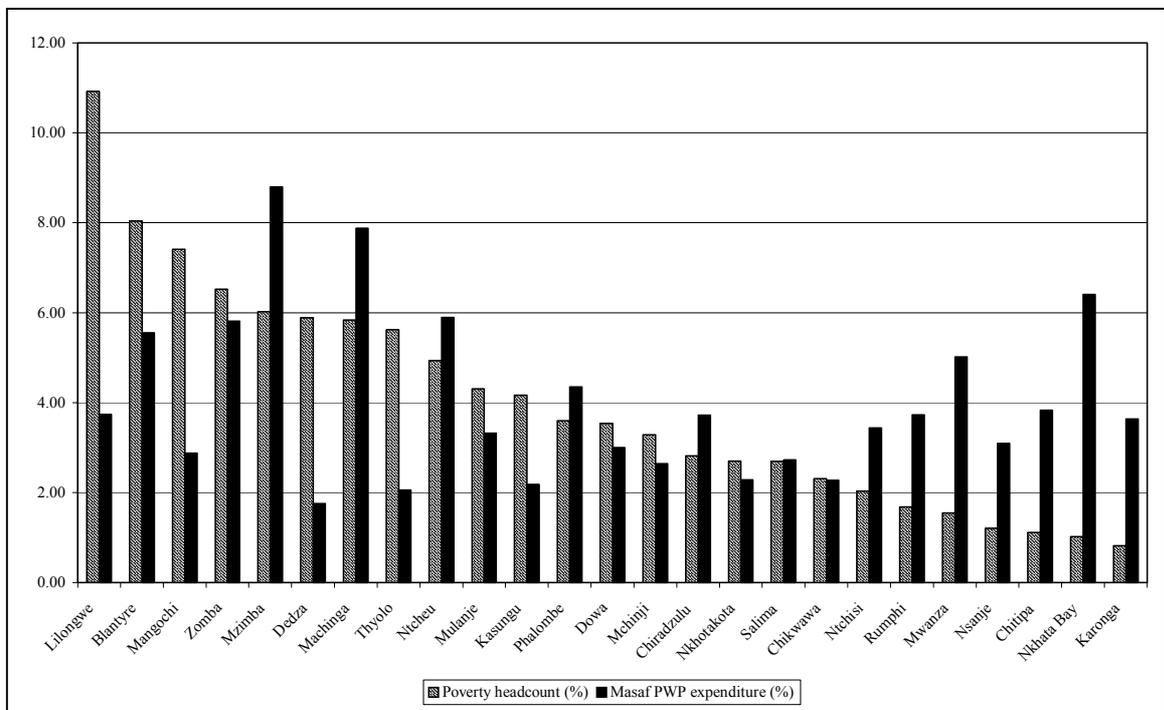
The analysis of PWP expenditure and poverty data shows no evidence of targeting public works projects to the poorest districts or traditional authority areas. It must be recognised, however, that PWPs were targeted based on a food insecurity index or justified on the basis of food insecurity; the measure of poverty used in this analysis is more encompassing and includes income aspects of poverty and uses different geographic areas different from those used in the targeting of PWPs under MASAF I. The resulting relationships should therefore be interpreted with these shortcomings.

Targeting beneficiaries at household level

Targeting of beneficiaries or project workers in localities where poverty is pervasive is a major challenge. MASAF I was implemented against the background of 54 per cent of the population being below the poverty line. It adopted a self-targeting strategy by setting pay below the government minimum wage. The assumption was that the reservation wage for poor households was lower than the minimum wage. The management of project activities and identification of workers at the community level were done by the Site Foreman and the Project Committee. The Site Foreman was identified and recruited by the Sector Technical Supervisor. The Project Committee was elected by the potential beneficiaries. The Site Foreman was responsible for labour recruitment and technical management of the project, with the assistance of the Project Committee and traditional leaders through identification of vulnerable groups. Although MASAF expected the communities through the Project Committee and local leaders to assist the Site Foreman to identify vulnerable households, there were no guidelines on the parameters that would guide the committee and the foreman in identifying the most vulnerable groups. Some MASAF I projects implemented revised criteria under MASAF II in which female-headed households were singled out as requiring special consideration in recruitment (Mvula *et al.* 2000).

The beneficiary assessments raise questions about the selection of beneficiaries. According to Zgovu *et al.* (1998) and Mvula *et al.* (2000), communities (the Project Committee) were ill-informed about the targeting principles, the demand for public works tended to be overwhelming relative to the budget, and committees used their own criteria that did not prioritise the vulnerable groups. In many projects the foreman and project committees recruited workers on a "first come first served" basis and on the basis of fitness. For instance, Mvula *et al.* (2000) report that only 42.4 per cent of a sample of 1,404 unskilled project workers mentioned poverty as a criterion for recruitment of workers (Mvula *et al.* 2000). The beneficiary assessments suggest that targeting errors were evident, although the extent is not known. For instance, the beneficiary assessments find that the socio-economic characteristics of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries were similar, casting doubt on whether the programme was free of targeting errors. In some cases, jobs were rationed as the demand was overwhelming compared to the number required for recruitment in a particular area. This may have excluded some poor households who registered but were not selected due to late registration and favouritism by the Project Committee (Mvula *et al.* 2000).

Overall, the evidence from beneficiary assessments indicates that the self-targeting approach tended to attract the vulnerable, although this does not imply that the programme was free of targeting errors. Many people perceived the wages to be low compared to alternative employment, increasing the

likelihood of attracting the poor. This was particularly the case for men during peak labour demand periods on farm employment (Mvula *et al.* 2000; Adams 2001). All the beneficiary assessments concluded that targeting tended to favour the poor, while they did not rule leakage out. Chirwa *et al.* (2002) further analysed the data from the beneficiary assessment and found that the probability of participation was higher amongst the less educated, those from female-headed households, the food insecure, those lacking assets and those whose reservation wages were below the statutory minimum wages for rural areas. Nonetheless, the evidence on targeting in the public works does not shed light on the extent to which different categories of the poor are included and excluded from participation in the programme, that is, the extent to which E-errors and F-errors were made under MASAF I in Malawi.

Wage-setting in public works programmes

The wage rate in PWP under MASAF I was an important instrument for targeting of beneficiaries. Initially, the principle was to set the MASAF wage per task at or below the government minimum wage as a way of self-selecting programme participants.[20] The MASAF wage was initially set at a daily rural minimum wage of MK7.50 per task and in 1996 the wage rate was increased to MK10.50 which was above the unchanged daily rural minimum wage. In 1999 and 2000, the MASAF wage rate was set at MK15.80 per task but the daily minimum wage in rural areas was MK15.90. MASAF believed that these wages were slightly below the prevailing rural market wage rates for similar activities.

Although the MASAF wage was usually set at or below the government minimum wage, the effective wage was nearly twice the government minimum wage because most of the participants completed their tasks in less than the daily normal working hours that are a basis for the minimum wage. The baseline study (Zgovu and Mvula 1998) and the beneficiary assessment (Mvula *et al.* 2000) estimate that the tasks allocated to each worker were completed in 4 hours, or half the normal working day. However, Mvula *et al.* find that the average local minimum wage in the sixteen project sites was MK25.90 per tasks equivalent to the tasks under the PWP.[21] In addition, the average reservation wage among the beneficiaries in 2000 was MK17.90 per PWP equivalent task while the average reservation wage for a sample of non-beneficiaries was MK31.80 per equivalent task. These figures show that the effective daily rate for PWP in 2000 was equivalent to MK31.60 per normal working day (eight hours), which was twice the minimum statutory wage of MK15.90 per day but much lower than the prevailing market wage of at least MK51.80 per day for similar activities. The wages offered under PWP were seen by participants and non-participants as low, compared to what was offered in alternative employment (Zgovu *et al.* 1998; Mvula *et al.* 2000).

While the project guidelines recommended use of the minimum wage as a basis for determining the MASAF wage, in most cases the minimum wage was unrealistic given the high inflation that existed in

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[20]   This assumed that the government minimum wage rate was higher than the market clearing wage and that the communities were aware of the existing minimum wage, hence the reservation wage of the poor was slightly above the government minimum wage. However, many participants in the rural labour market do not know the minimum wage (Zgovu 2000).

[21]   This is the average of the lowest local wages offered for equivalent tasks.

Malawi during the implementation of MASAF I. The minimum wage in Malawi was rarely adjusted to reflect the changing costs of living, and the higher than minimum wage effective MASAF wage could be justified based on the fact that the benefits from public works employment needed to contribute significantly to reducing the vulnerability of the poor, provided it was not so much more than the prevailing market wage that it would distort the rural labour market. Nonetheless, the existing data do not allow some analysis that would provide answers to the question whether the higher than minimum wage MASAF wage rate had some impact on the development of wage rates in the local markets. Elsewhere, Gaiha (1997) finds that wages in the employment guarantee scheme increased the agricultural wage by 18 per cent in the long term through gains in productivity and a shift in the demand for agricultural labour, and through higher reservation wages due to guaranteed employment options in slack periods.

Management of public works programmes

The management of project activities at community level was entrusted to the Site Foreman who was recruited by the Sector Technical Supervisor. The Site Foreman was responsible for all technical aspects of the project including labour recruitment and management of the project. The Site Foreman was assisted by the Project Committee, elected by potential beneficiaries. The Project Committee was responsible for identification of vulnerable households and assisting in labour recruitment, labour management, issues relating to right of way and certification of labour attendance. Since the Project Committee members were not supposed to be available on a daily basis, especially where they were not beneficiaries, a Workers Committee was elected among workers for each localised work area to assist in the day-to-day management of the labour force.

The financial management of the public works programme was highly decentralised. PWP resources were disbursed in tranches to District Assemblies to use according to the agreed budget. The beneficiary assessments found that weak financial management was a major constraint to effective and efficient project implementation in most districts. Their financial systems remained largely under-developed, although MASAF provided training to district accountancy staff on MASAF accounting procedures.

The system was associated with inefficiencies that led to delays in wage payments due to failure by the District Assemblies to provide justification for expenditures. Mvula *et al.* found that beneficiaries experienced average wage delays of 45 days in 16 projects. In areas with alternative safety nets, the MASAF public works programme experienced larger wage delays and funded shorter periods of employment. Adams (2001) noted that delays in wages led some beneficiaries to fall into debt on *katapila* terms.

Early in the project there were instances of district officials claiming allowances for supervisory visits they did not undertake. This led to the requirement that the Project Committee endorse that supervisory visits took place before claims were honoured. Zone Managers were made signatories of the district accounts. These measures reduced the cooperation of some District Assemblies and introduced delays (Mvula *et al.* 2000), although this was not typical.

It is difficult to determine the leakage of resources associated with weaknesses in accounting for money. The problem of district-level financial management will remain a major constraint in ensuring that benefits reach the target communities. Elected district councillors are now in post, but their ability to control the bureaucrats and enforce accountability may still be limited.

Impact of public works projects

Public works programmes have two direct effects on participating households and communities. First, they raise incomes by providing paid employment to poor households and individuals participating in the projects. Second, they create physical infrastructure including roads, bridges, dams and irrigation facilities, soil conservation, water facilities and markets. This infrastructure can improve economic productivity and promote rural development that is necessary for long-term and sustainable livelihoods. The extent of the impact on poverty depends on the wage rate, the timing of the programme (execution and disbursement of funds), the social benefit of the project and the costs associated with the forgone opportunities (Subbarao 1997; Ravallion 1991; Datt and Ravallion 1994). Ravallion (1998) acknowledges the difficulties in estimating the cost and benefits of public works programmes.

The achievements of the MASAF I public works programme were remarkable *vis-à-vis* the project targets. The public works programme quarterly report revealed that the public works division disbursed $12.796 million from a total allocation and commitment of $13.474 million for MASAF I (MASAF 2001a). Unskilled wages accounted for 48.6 per cent and skilled labour for 13.6 per cent. Administration expenses were 11.5 per cent and material purchases and transportation accounted for 15.5 per cent of total expenditure. In total 472 sub-projects were completed, comprising 396 projects in rural road rehabilitation and upgrading, 59 afforestation projects and 22 rainwater-harvesting structures.

The PWP in MASAF I also transferred MK197.65 million in wage income to beneficiaries and created 14.42 million person days between 1996 and 2001 (MASAF 2001a). The income transferred represented 78.4 per cent of the target for the public works programme in MASAF I. One explanation for failing to meet the targeted income transfers is the faster than anticipated increase in the cost of materials and transport due to inflationary pressure. The number of beneficiaries benefiting from public works employment was 721,155. MASAF I constructed and rehabilitated 5,144.6 kilometres of rural roads representing 112.7 per cent of the target, and completed afforestation projects covering 1,664 hectares with 2.8 million trees and created 17 community dams totalling 100,000 cubic metres.

The evidence on the socio-economic impact of the public works programme is limited. First, there is the problem of attributing changes in socio-economic indicators to participation in the programme. Second, although one beneficiary assessment used baseline data, there were a lot of intervening factors between the times the baseline and beneficiary assessments were done. Third, there was no attempt to collect data for the analysis of changes in the income of beneficiaries. Fourth, the beneficiary assessments were unable to capture and quantify the indirect benefits of public works projects convincingly.

The main methodology used in the assessment of impact was the "with and without" approach, by drawing a sample of beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries in the project areas. The results revealed little

difference in socio-economic status between beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries. Zgovu *et al.* (1998) found insignificant differences in per capita income, occupation, cropping pattern, asset composition, means of livelihood, housing, water and sanitation between the two groups. Zgovu and Mvula (1998) found no significant difference in the nutritional status of children between beneficiary and non-beneficiary households. It is not possible to conclude that this was due to the MASAF interventions because of the many other factors that were not controlled for in the study.

A study by Mvula *et al.* (2000) attempted to capture changes in economic status by using a matched sample of beneficiaries between those captured in the 1998 baseline survey and those in the beneficiary assessment. They reported the following indicators of impact attributed to participation in PWP:

- Public works created new paid employment for 39.9 per cent of beneficiaries.

- Nearly 71 per cent of interviewees said that their participation in public works projects had improved their social economic status in the communities, with half revealing they were better off or could afford basic necessities.

- The major sources of income for beneficiaries shifted towards crop sales and away from small businesses, salaried employment and *ganyu* (casual labour) between 1998 and 2000.

- More beneficiaries were having meals three times a day in 2000 than in 1998 in food surplus months while the increase in the proportion having more meals per day was marginal in food deficit months.

- The problem of stunting among children under five worsened in 2000 compared with 1998, but low weight and wasting were substantially less severe in 2000.

Table 4.1 summarises those indicators. Perhaps the most reliable indicator of impact was the revealed perception of the impact on social economic status as subjectively evaluated by the beneficiaries. Nonetheless, it falls short of establishing the extent to which the public works employment wages contribute to poverty reduction or to financing the minimum consumption basket.

There are reasons to question whether the PWP had a long-term impact on poverty.[22] The programme was implemented on a spontaneous relief basis, without repeat interventions in the same area. The period of employment was short. Mvula *et al.* found that the average duration of employment was 114 task rates equivalent to 57 full working days, generating mean earnings of MK1,810. Assuming an average household size of 5 members, the public works earnings represent a per capita earning of MK362 per annum or MK1 per day. The rural poverty line at 2000 prices was between MK14.42 and MK20.74 per person per day (NEC 2000). This implies that the public wage employment wages represented between 4.8 per cent and 6.9 per cent of the annual income required to reach the poverty line.

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[22]   Although, the intention may not have been addressing poverty in the long term, an effective safety net should sustainably protect the vulnerable by ensuring that the poor move out of danger in the short- and long-run.

Table 4.1 Selected impact indicators of the Public Works Programme in Malawi

Impact Indicator	1998	2000
Unemployment and quality of life (% of beneficiaries)		
Unemployed in the 12 months prior to PWP	-	39.9
Participation in PWP changing quality of life	-	70.9
Main sources of income (% of beneficiaries)		
Crop sales	59.7	75.4
Small business	10.0	6.1
Salaried employment	7.1	1.0
Ganyu or casual employment	18.0	11.2
Average number of meals per day (% of beneficiaries)		
Food surplus months		
One	8.8	0.0
Two	76.9	37.0
Three	14.4	60.0
Food deficit months		
One	54.4	41.8
Two	39.6	47.0
Three	5.7	11.3
Nutritional status of children (% of children)		
Stunting (height-for-age)	50.0	58.6
Underweight (weight-for-age)	31.2	22.1
Wasting (weight-for-height)	6.3	3.3

Source: Zgovu and Mvula (1998) and Mvula *et al*. (2000).

Since public works employment was not repeated in a given area, the earnings may only have had short-term effects. A study by Chirwa *et al*. (2002) found that beneficiaries who had recently participated in public works employment were more likely to reveal that their participation uplifted their socio-economic status than those who participated in earlier periods. The MASAF I public works programme was implemented as an "emergency" social fund in which widening of coverage appears to have been given higher priority than deepening of coverage. As the World Bank (2001a) remarked, social funds usually finance a single investment in each community, which may increase the total number of sub-projects and beneficiaries at the expense of depth of involvement and development impact. All indicators in the quarterly reports of the public works programmes and the commissioned beneficiary assessment studies reflect the widening of coverage. The problem of widening coverage was exacerbated by the fact that MASAF PWP was the only safety net programme through public works available on a national scale, although in other areas non-governmental organisations were implementing similar programs (Mvula *et al*. 2000).

Functionality and sustainability of assets

The beneficiary assessments established that communities value the assets created through public works projects. The communities attached greater value to assets whose benefits were appropriated more by the local community, such as dams and afforestation, than to the assets that were extensively used by the general public, such as roads. One advantage of assets created under public works is that they do not require human resources from the local or central government to make the facilities functional.

The main problem is the sustainability of the assets in the absence of commitments to maintain them by communities, local government or central government. The most recent beneficiary assessment found that it is easier for the communities to maintain assets that have localised benefits such as dams and afforestation projects than those in which freerider problems are apparent such as roads (Mvula *et al.* 2000). Furthermore, most of the road projects had not been maintained and communities demanded a repeat of the MASAF public works project in order to maintain them. During a recent field visit by the study team to one of the roads in Thyolo district, the lack of maintenance was clear, with only patches being maintained along peoples' gardens. The lack of maintenance of the assets implies that the functionality of the assets are transient, hence the assets may not be sustainable, unless there is longer-term investment in construction and maintenance.

4.4 Conclusions

The performance of the public works programme in terms of delivery of the project outputs was remarkable and there is evidence that resources reached a good proportion of the poor in the targeted areas. All the financial resources allocated to the components under MASAF I were exhausted by the end of 2001, although about 5 per cent of the projects were uncompleted. The estimated income transfers were 78.4 per cent of the target level, 12.7 per cent above the target level of roads were rehabilitated and in addition MASAF ventured into new infrastructure development through 1,664 hectares under afforestation and 17 community dams.

Despite the achievement of project targets, an in-depth analysis raises questions about the level of participation by communities in project identification, geographic poverty-targeting and the potential for the programme to reduce poverty. Analysis of the financial data shows little relationship between the distribution of PWP funds among districts and traditional authorities and their headcount poverty level. On the other hand, targeting of individual beneficiaries tended to favour the poor. Most beneficiaries were poor, although some poor households were excluded and a small number of non-poor got jobs. However, it is difficult to establish the extent to which the targeting mechanism allowed some leakages.

The beneficiary studies emphasise the short-term nature of the employment benefits. The average earning of a beneficiary was equivalent to a small proportion of a year's income for a household at the poverty line. In these circumstances, it is unlikely that the PWP contributed substantially to sustainable reductions in poverty although it might have reduced the vulnerability of the targeted beneficiaries.

5 Demand-led and sector planning approaches

Gerald Bloom

5.1 Introduction

There is a lot of disagreement internationally about the relationship between social funds and national administrative and political structures. Some reports have made ambitious claims about the capacity of social funds to rapidly meet the needs of the poor and empower communities. Tendler (2000) questions these claims and suggests that the popularity of social funds is not warranted by the evidence. Joshi and Moore (2000) warn of the need to differentiate between the rhetoric and reality of the performance of social funds.

There are several areas of concern. One is about the interaction of sector planning with the need to respond to felt needs of communities. Advocates of social funds emphasise the role of "demand-led" approaches in ensuring that resources address priority needs. Opponents draw parallels with populist policies that respond to the loudest demands. Another concern is about the role of politics. There is broad agreement that political commitment is essential to the effective implementation of poverty reduction strategies. However, many point to the danger that groups with specific economic or political interests will "capture" social funds.

Discussions with key informants in Malawi revealed strongly-held views. Some pointed to government shortcomings in planning and management of public resources and argued that MASAF was better at getting resources to poor people. They also emphasised the role of MASAF in empowering communities. Others suggested that MASAF favoured better-off communities and those with links to powerful people. They argued that it would have been better to plan and allocate funds as part of a systematic national poverty alleviation programme.

This chapter explores these issues, drawing on MASAF monitoring data, a review of MASAF files and interviews with government officials, political leaders, parliamentarians and officials in donor agencies. It also draws on an interview by the African Region Debriefings Library programme at the World Bank with Sam Kakhobwe, Executive Director of MASAF (Kakhobwe 2003). It begins with a review of the reform of public sector planning and management; it reviews sector planning and the MASAF project cycle; it explores these issues in depth for education and health and it reviews political involvement in MASAF.

5.2 The reform of public sector planning and management

The administrative system that the new government inherited in 1994 was not performing well (Adamolekun *et al.* 1999). There were major weaknesses in the systems of resource planning and financial management (World Bank 1990). Some of these problems worsened during the period of uncertainty before the elections and afterwards when people with little government experience took charge of the ministries. The government, with donor support, launched a wide range of reform initiatives that included

restructuring some ministries, establishing an Anti-Corruption Bureau, reforming personnel management in the public sector and strengthening decentralised political and administrative structures.

The implementation of these reforms was complicated by tensions between political leaders and the bureaucracy. These were partly due to the new leadership's doubts about the political neutrality of senior civil servants with long experience under the previous regime. It also reflected major differences in understanding of the respective roles of politicians and civil servants and of the meaning of loyalty and professionalism in the civil service. Adamolekun *et al.* (1999) report on back-to-back policy seminars organised for ministers and higher civil servants in 1995 that revealed profound disagreements on these issues between the two groups. These political tensions made it difficult to reach a common understanding about the need for reform of public administration. Jenkins and Tsoka (2001) suggest that a 'culture of loyalty and paranoia' impeded genuine public debates that could have led to realistic thinking about options for development.

The government faced several other constraints to the implementation of reforms. One was the low morale of government employees, associated with the history of political repression and the persistence of low levels of pay. The periodic strikes by government employees were a sign of dissatisfaction and a source of pressure on government. Another constraint was the severe shortage of skilled personnel, which was exacerbated by the low pay and the high levels of infection with HIV.[23]

The reform initiatives had limited success, according to a recent review by Fozzard and Simwaka (2002). Despite efforts to improve civil service performance, controls of recruitment remained weak. There was some improvement in public sector pay, but it remained very low. There was little progress in the decompression of pay scales. The Anti-Corruption Bureau provided a focus for discussion about corruption and it investigated a number of complaints. However, there were several major cases of corruption. The 1994 Constitution provided for elected local authorities with a number of responsibilities. However, the government took time to implement it, approving a decentralisation policy in 1998 and holding the first local elections in November 2000.

The government initially intended to make poverty alleviation the driving force of its reforms. It established a Presidential Committee on Poverty Alleviation and a technical steering committee based in the MEPD. The technical committee eventually became the Poverty Alleviation Programme Coordinating Unit, staffed by a minister responsible for the poverty alleviation programme and a principal secretary. The Unit's role was never defined precisely and did not have much influence on the planning and implementation of sector strategies (Jenkins and Tsoka 2001).

It is difficult to identify the reasons for the demise of this effort to implement policy-driven reforms. According to a key informant, the unit was isolated within its ministry. Many of the most senior civil servants in government resisted the effort to use it as a means of reorienting government policies and practices to the new political priorities. It was difficult to convene meetings of permanent secretaries and

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[23]   Bennell *et al.* (2002) report that annual mortality rates in 2000 for primary school teachers were 2.5 per cent for female and 2.0 per cent for male primary school teachers and 0.9 per cent and 1.0 per cent, respectively, for secondary school teachers. They suggest that more than two-thirds of this mortality was HIV-related.

impossible to push them to integrate poverty into their sector plans. The unit eventually collapsed. The Presidential Committee persisted, but the meetings consisted of presentations by each ministry of their sector strategies.

The centrepiece of the effort to reform public sector planning and management during the second half of the 1990s was the medium term expenditure framework (MTEF). The government reviewed its implementation in 2000 (GOM and World Bank 2000). It found that government allocations to social services had risen substantially.[24] Much of this increase could be accounted for by a large rise in the education budget to finance the construction of schools and employment of many new teachers. There were persistent problems with expenditure control. Also, allocations within sectors had not changed much. There was poor coordination of donor support. Anipa *et al.* (1999), the World Bank (2001) and Jenkins and Tsoka (2001) draw similar conclusions.

A World Bank report identified three reasons for the disappointing progress in the implementation of the MTEF (World Bank 2001b): the limited support provided by politicians and senior civil servants, the lack of a clear sequencing strategy, and weak linkages with programme implementation. This suggests that the reform strategy did not take sufficient account of the source of the problems and the constraints to change.

Some aspects of the capacity of government to plan and implement development projects deteriorated during the second half of the 1990s. Until 1995, all donor projects were listed in a public sector investment plan (PSIP), derived from a ten-year development strategy. The PSIP provided a framework for keeping track of donor support projects. It has not been updated since 1995 and government agencies have negotiated for project support directly with donors rather than go through the National Economic Council (now the MEPD). This has contributed to a lack of coordination between donors.

The capacity to implement construction projects diminished. The Ministry of Works, which had been very powerful, was restructured after 1995; the Department of Water was shifted to its own Ministry, the Buildings Department was placed under the Ministry of Lands and Housing and the National Roads Authority was established. Meanwhile, donors diverted work to implementation units in sector ministries or to newly established implementation teams. Skilled people left regional and district works departments. The Systematic Client Consultation for MASAF (Chimbwete *et al.* 1995) showed that some were working as local builders. The National Construction Industry Council (NCIC) was established to regulate the private construction industry. However, many small contractors are not registered with it. In fact, there is very little coordination or regulation of small-scale rural construction.

The problems with public sector planning and management have persisted. Jenkins and Tsoka (2001) quote a letter from the IMF to the government in July 2001, which drew attention to the growing fiscal gap and the lack of prioritisation of pro-poor expenditure. These problems, coupled with some prominent

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[24]   According to Fozzard and Simwaka (2002), government allocations to the social sector rose from 21 per cent of the total in 1991/92 to 37 per cent between 1995/96 and 2001/02.

cases of weak governance, led several donors to reconsider the provision of balance of payments support. Meanwhile Malawi formulated a Poverty Reduction Strategy, which attracted broad support. However, doubts have been voiced about the government's capacity to implement it (World Bank 2003a).

The explanations for the disappointing outcome of these reform initiatives are similar to those for the poor progress in implementing the MTEF. There was insufficient political support, reflecting the lack of agreement amongst members of the governing elite (political leaders and senior bureaucrats) on the broad direction of reform. There was no explicit analysis of the constraints to implementation and, therefore, there was no clear strategy for sequencing reforms. There were insufficient links between institutional reforms and programmes. For example, donors used competing approaches to implement school construction projects, although they espoused strong support for sector planning and the establishment of strong district administrations.

The poor performance of the government administration is reflected in the attitudes of the political elite.[25] Members of Parliament from all three parties expressed serious reservations to the review team about the capacity of sector ministries to use resources in the interests of the population. They complained that ministries were unresponsive. They did not see the government administration as a major mechanism for meeting popular needs (or responding to political demands). But they did not suggest how the situation could be improved. Even senior politicians seriously considered the possibility of creating sector social funds to overcome the inertia of the ministries.

This cynicism reflects, in part, the failure of the political and managerial elite and donor agencies to reach a common understanding about realistic strategies for managing the transition in the government administrative system. Each acted in their own institutional interest, resulting in an overambitious agenda without a coherent implementation strategy. There was often competition between agencies. This experience points to the need for a better understanding of the interaction of agendas for institutional reform and measures to meet immediate needs in the context of systems of competitive elections. Political leaders, senior civil servants and donor officials need to find better ways to manage political change.[26]

5.3 Sector planning and the MASAF project cycle

The project cycle
The MASAF project cycle provided several opportunities for national priorities to influence the outcome:

1   public information campaigns created wide awareness of MASAF's menu of funding opportunities
2   communities identified sub-projects and submitted proposals

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[25]   A recent study in eight villages found similar attitudes amongst rural people, who gave high ratings as useful institutions to traditional leaders, religious institutions, NGOs and MASAF and low ratings to government services and elected representatives (Ellis *et al.* 2003).
[26]   This is an extreme example of a more common problem in which the election of a new government complicates the implementation of a previously agreed programme of sector support or budget support. The author is aware of at least two instances where the implementation of a health sector-wide approach was seriously disrupted by the election of a new government.

3   the desk appraisal assessed whether MASAF procedures were followed and the proposed project was consistent with sector policies

4   the field appraisal assessed the community's capacity to implement the project and the appropriateness of the asset's siting

5   the PSC, on which senior officials of all relevant ministries sat, approved proposals

6   district personnel supervised implementation.

MASAF's message was disseminated widely through public information campaigns and speeches by political leaders. MASAF offered communities a menu of sub-projects in education, health, water, and transportation. Public awareness of MASAF and its menu was very high (Chilowa *et al.* 2000; MASAF 1997a and 2001b). One survey found that 98 per cent of people in communities with a sub-project and 93 per cent of people in communities without a project had heard of MASAF (Kapoor and White 2003). Some sectors were more effective in getting their messages to communities. The government policy of expanding access to primary education was particularly influential. Many people associated MASAF almost exclusively with school building.

MASAF messages focused on investment in assets. Community contributions were understood to be the provision of sand and of bricks. Some informants criticised MASAF for giving communities the impression they could address their needs simply by building infrastructure. They suggested that its publicity should have given more emphasis to other aspects of the delivery of services, such as the availability of staff and other inputs.

The design of MASAF was based on an assumption that there would be a limited number of proposals, inappropriate ones would be weeded out during appraisal and the rest would be funded. The review team were told about some sub-projects that were approved inappropriately. It is impossible to assess how frequently this occurred. Possible explanations include failure to adhere to agreed procedures, insufficient understanding of national policies by district personnel and pressure on appraisal teams to ignore national guidelines (Chapter 6). The appraisal processes appear to have improved over time.

The project was designed to be demand-driven. There were no guidelines concerning the balance of sub-projects between sectors or allocation between localities. The minutes of the PSC, which approved all sub-projects, do not mention these issues. MASAF did not provide the PSC with analyses of the pattern of allocation.

MASAF I spent $33.6 million on community sub-projects, or 63 per cent of total funds (MASAF 2002b). It completed 1392 projects made up as follows: 735 education, 48 health, 477 water and 132 bridges and other projects. These projects were distributed throughout the country. Figure 5.1 shows districts ordered by their share of the total population with the corresponding share of CSP expenditure. The largest district, Lilongwe, has over 12 per cent of the total population and received around 7 per cent of expenditure, while the smallest, Chitipa, has some 1 per cent of population and 3.5 per cent of expenditure. This reflects the general pattern: expenditure shares are roughly in line with population, but the largest districts receive less and the smallest more than their share.

In terms of the share of CSP funds, the north, central and south accounted for 19.7 per cent, 35.5 per cent and 44.8 per cent, respectively. However, expenditure of CSP funds per capita was higher in the northern region with an average of $4.83, as against $2.65 in the central region and $2.93 in the southern region.[27]

One explanation for this outcome is that the number of sub-projects in a district was limited by the capacity of districts to appraise proposals and of zones to support project implementation. If this were the case, one would expect more sub-projects and higher levels of expenditure per capita in less populous districts.

Figure 5.1 Percentage of population and percentage of CSP expenditure by district
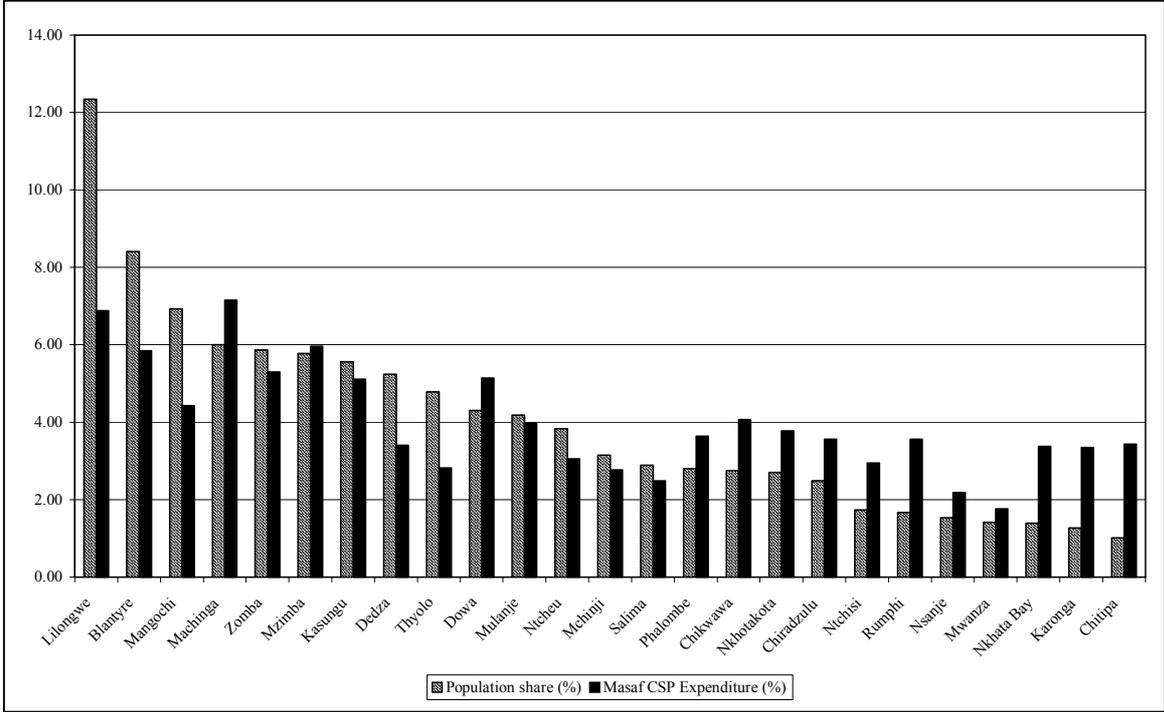
The situation is quite different when the analysis is extended to the level of traditional authorities (TAs). There was a great range in the number of projects per TA. Many had only one, but some had more than 50. In fact, half the projects were situated in only ten per cent of the TAs and three-quarters were in 22 per cent of TAs. This pattern is repeated at district level. In 20 out of the 26 districts, more than half the projects went to a single TA. It is interesting, in this regard, that the findings of the survey at the sample project sites found that 60 per cent of household heads identified the traditional leader as the person most responsible for project identification (Section 5.5) This pattern suggests that traditional leaders strongly influenced the number of project proposals submitted and/or appraised. The analyses in Chapters 6 and 7

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27   These findings are consistent with those of Schroeder (2000).

suggest that these leaders did, indeed, influence decisions at district level and that they had a great deal of influence on community-level decisions about project selection.

It has been argued that demand-led approaches favour communities capable of preparing proposals and lobbying to have them appraised and that they disadvantage the poorest localities. The evidence points to the importance of an active traditional leader. But there is no evidence of a relationship between the headcount index of poverty and the level of MASAF investment per capita (Chapter 3). It is important to note that almost all traditional authorities have many people living in poverty. The analysis in Chapter 3 does not rule out the possibility that the very poorest communities within individual TAs were less likely to secure funding for a sub-project.

The original concern amongst project managers was that the demand for projects would be low. People had doubted that many communities would develop proposals. MASAF managers gave a lot of attention to raising awareness about the project and helping communities put together proposals. As it turned out, there were many more proposals than anticipated. MASAF I set a target for 800 CSPs and received more than 3000 proposals. By May 2003, MASAF had received over 14,000 proposals for community sub-projects (Table 5.1). Only 26 per cent of them were appraised and approved. A relatively small number failed appraisal, but the numbers are not available.

Table 5.1 Proportion of proposals appraised by MASAF I or MASAF II*

Sector	Proposals	Projects approved			Proportion of projects approved (%)
		MASAF I	MASAF II	Total	
Education	4,894	735	655	1,390	28
Water	7,328	477	1,362	1,839	26
Health	544	48	28	76	14
Other	1,259	132	210	342	27
Total	14,045	1,392	2,255	3,647	26

* A small proportion of proposals appraised were rejected. The data on the number of rejected proposals are not available so the total number of proposals is an underestimate.
Source: Reports by Zone Managers.

Initially proposals were appraised in the order they were submitted. As the backlog grew, this principle was no longer applied. After the midterm review MASAF management decided to rationalise the distribution of projects. Districts were asked to take into account the distribution of projects and the MASAF objective of benefiting very poor communities. According to Zone Managers, the process for deciding which proposals to appraise varied from place to place. This gave discretion to the people who chose projects for appraisal, and created incentives for traditional leaders and politicians to lobby for support.

Communities submitted many more education and water proposals. Section 5.4 explores the reasons for the large numbers of education proposals. Despite the fact that there were fewer proposals for health facilities, a smaller proportion of them were appraised. This probably reflects the reluctance of the

Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP) to support health projects and the ongoing problems with staffing of completed facilities.

Table 5.2 presents data on the number of proposals per 1000 population received by May 2003 and the percentage of proposals approved for either MASAF I or MASAF II. The districts are sorted by the number of proposals per 1000. The districts with the fewest proposals tended to be in Southern or Central Regions and those with the most were in northern or central regions. Several districts in the south had a much smaller backlog of projects than the other districts.

Table 5.2 Proposals for community sub-projects received by May 2003 and number of sub-projects approved for MASAF I & II

District	Proposals per 1000 population (1/1000)	Headcount poverty index (%)	Population ('000)	Proportion of proposals approved (%)	Region
Thyolo	0.5	77	462	76	S
Phalombe	0.8	84	270	67	S
Mulanje	0.8	67	404	50	S
Kasungu	0.9	49	537	30	C
Zomba	1	73	567	21	S
Chikwawa	1.1	55	266	51	S
Dedza	1.2	73	507	24	C
Mangochi	1.4	70	669	16	S
Nsanje	1.5	51	148	62	S
Mchinji	1.5	68	305	24	C
Machinga	1.5	64	580	19	S
Ntcheu	1.6	84	371	26	C
Dowa	1.6	54	416	21	C
Mzimba	1.7	68	558	19	N
Rumphi	1.9	66	161	40	N
Chiradzulu	1.9	74	240	28	S
Mwanza	2.1	71	136	35	S
Nkhotakota	2.2	65	261	23	N
Salima	2.2	61	279	28	C
Ntchisi	3.2	76	168	20	C
Nkhata Bay	3.5	48	135	27	N
Chitipa+Karonga*	5.6	66	303	17	N
Urban districts					
Blantyre	0.9	62	813	31	S
Lilongwe	0.7	58	1193	24	C

* The zone provided the data for both districts together.
Source: Reports by Zone Managers.

5.4 MASAF-sector linkages in education and health

This section explores in more depth the relationship between MASAF and sector planning for education and health. It does not discuss water, although this sector accounted for a significant proportion of sub-projects. The water projects were implemented differently. The MASAF Management Unit used drilling companies to do the work. Each contract would cover a number of boreholes situated relatively close to each other. It is not clear how this different implementation arrangement affected the choice of proposals to appraise.

Education: policy-driven implementation

During the 1994 election, the UDF gave a lot of emphasis to a promise to provide primary education for all children. One of the first acts of the new government was to abolish primary school fees. This was followed by a 50 per cent increase in primary school enrolment. Kadzamira and Rose (2001) argue that economic factors alone cannot explain this major increase. They suggest that the combination of mobilisation for democratic reform and a promise of improved access to school convinced people that their children had a right to schooling. This put pressure on government to build more classrooms and provide more staff and teaching materials. Over the next few years, the government gave high priority to measures to respond to this pressure.

Siting of school sub-projects

The publicity given to free primary education influenced many communities to submit proposals for classrooms. The major increase in school attendance made the need for them obvious to all. The Ministry of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) was pushing hard for investment in schools and it sought support from District Education Officers, headmasters and parent-teacher associations. There is evidence that these people urged communities to seek MASAF funding. Several studies have found that local elites influenced the decision to apply for school classrooms, but that communities were mostly happy with their choice (MASAF 1997a and 2001b; Kapoor and White 2003). The community survey undertaken for this study draws similar conclusions; 97.0 per cent of respondents said they were happy with the asset and 81.6 per cent said they would not have preferred another type of project. However, focus group discussions revealed dissatisfaction with the decision-making process (Chapter 7).

There were problems with project appraisal at first. The review team was told about new schools that are still not registered and about others built in response to political pressure. These early problems reflected inadequacies in the appraisal process and weaknesses in planning within the education sector.

During the second half of the 1990s the MoEST prepared an inventory of schools and entered the information into a geographical database. The Ministry subsequently helped each district to produce an education plan. These plans provided a better basis of information from which District Education Officers could appraise community proposals. After the midterm review MASAF signed a memorandum of understanding with the MoEST that required sub-projects to be consistent with the newly developed district plans. The initial problems with project appraisals did not recur.

Implementing rural construction

MASAF I funded around a quarter of the classrooms built between 1994 and 2001 and MASAF II funded at least as many again.[28] The rest of the construction was funded by government and a variety of donors. The team heard strong opinions about the pros and cons of the different approaches taken to construction. But it could not find a systematic comparison in terms of cost and quality.

MASAF paid money directly to communities, who elected project management committees (PMCs) to buy inputs, appoint a local contractor and supervise construction. This strategy depended on the degree of accountability of PMCs to their community and on their capacity to carry out their tasks. MASAF provided training to the PMCs.

The 2001 beneficiary appraisal explored the selection of PMCs and their relationship with communities. It found cases where local politicians or chiefs dominated the choice of the committee. Some communities voiced suspicions that PMC members were deriving personal benefit from their role. A small number of complaints were made to the Anti-Corruption Bureau. The MASAF accounting department ensured that all financial reports were reconciled with attached invoices. Also, external auditors visited all sub-project sites. These measures found few examples of serious fraud.

A number of problems arose with community procurement of materials. There are stories about PMCs that travelled to the city to buy locally available goods and of others that paid too high a price in a local shop. The most serious concerns are about the procurement of key materials. There are examples of committees buying cheap hardware that wore out quickly, neglecting to buy anti-termite solution or purchasing the wrong nails for roofing. These matters are well known by Zone Managers and they suggest that one role of technical supervision has been to minimise the negative impact on the quality of assets.

The decision to use unregistered contractors reduced cost and created opportunities for local people. But its success depended on good supervision. The high volume of work put stress on the supervision arrangements. After the midterm review MASAF employed district supervisors to carry out this task, although problems persisted. The decision to employ unregistered contractors made technical supervision particularly important. It was to be undertaken through monthly visits by government workers or persons contracted by MASAF who were provided with transportation and accommodation expenses.

Despite the problems outlined above, the MASAF approach worked better than the two largest government-implemented primary school building projects. The World Bank primary education project was designed to respond rapidly to the shortage of classrooms revealed by the free education policy. The construction component was funded through the MoEST, which employed a single contractor. Its Development Management Unit supervised implementation. The project completed 858 classrooms instead of the planned 1,600 and there were substantial cost over-runs. The World Bank implementation completion review found that supervision was weak and it rated the project unsatisfactory.

The government allocated a special budget to the MoEST to construct facilities. Its Development Management Unit issued contracts to a number of construction companies. These companies were paid,

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[28]   Data on total classroom construction supplied by MoEST.

despite the fact that they did not complete many of the schools. The Parliamentary Public Accounts Committee reviewed this programme and estimated total losses in excess of MK125 million (GOM 2000b).

It is difficult to compare the performance of MASAF with construction funded by other donors and implemented through special management units, non-government organisations or other models involving communities. This is due to differences in the design of buildings and to a lack of knowledge about the importance of leakage and loss of building materials in the different projects. Such a comparison would require the physical inspection of facilities funded by the different agencies. No such study has been carried out despite the large investment these agencies have made in schools and the heated debates between them about the merits of alternative approaches to the management of construction.

Translating infrastructure investments into sustainable benefits

Education policy during the second half of the 1990s was driven by the promise of universal access to primary education. The government made big efforts to increase the stock of schools. It recruited 22,000 untrained teachers in 1995/96, of whom it subsequently trained 12,500 (MoEST 2003). It increased education's share of government recurrent expenditure from 10.5 per cent in 1990/91 to 21 per cent in 1997/98, although it fell back to 16 per cent in 1999/2000 (World Bank 2001b). The government also secured a substantial grant from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for school textbooks.

Shortly after the announcement of the free primary education policy, the MoEST began to prepare a policy and implementation framework. This document went through several drafts during the second half of the 1990s, largely in response to issues raised by donors. The education sector produced an inventory of schools, established an education management information system and produced plans for all districts. This framework provides a more systematic approach to the development of the education system than previously, but questions remain about the realism of some of the plans.

The expansion of primary education was particularly beneficial to the poor. The gross enrolment rate for the poorest quintile increased from 58 per cent to 110 per cent between 1990/91–1997/98 whilst the rate for the richest quintile rose from 110 per cent to 119 per cent (World Bank 2001b). Despite these gains, a number of questions remain about the impact of increased enrolment on the wellbeing of the poor. One area of concern is the quality of education. The government recruited many untrained teachers and there are few data on the impact of these teachers on the quality of education. The education budget does not include sufficient funding to upgrade them all. More generally, government and donors will need to maintain high levels of funding of primary education for many years (Kadzamira and Rose 2001). The fall in education's share of the government budget after the 1999 elections is an ominous sign.

The story of the relationship between MASAF and the education sector illustrates how influential a clear government commitment to achieve a measurable result can be. The political leadership publicised widely its promise to expand access to primary education. This led to great changes in the behaviour of parents and to pressure to provide classrooms, teachers and books. Some questions remain. Will the new

buildings be maintained, or will they deteriorate rapidly? Will the government retrain the new teachers, or will it find itself with a commitment to pay large numbers of unproductive staff for many years to come? Will government and donors continue to fund primary education, once it is no longer as politically visible? The slow progress of the reforms of public sector financial planning and management has meant that it is impossible to answer these questions.

Health: planning for a sector-wide approach

In October 1996 members of the PSC made a field trip to the North. They visited several communities, whose proposals for a new health facility had been rejected because they lived less than 8 kilometres from an existing facility. One community had asked for a health facility, but had been given school classrooms instead. The team reported that the communities had little access to health services and were very unhappy that MASAF was ignoring their needs. It stressed the seriousness of this problem and urged MASAF to give it urgent attention.

This was not the first time this issue had been raised. In September and October 1995 MASAF organised workshops for Members of Parliament, traditional leaders and district officials. Every workshop complained about the MoHP refusal to approve proposals for a heath facility in localities within eight kilometres of an existing one (MASAF 1995a). This section explores the continuing difficulties that MASAF and the MoHP experienced in trying to respond to community demands whilst the latter was formulating its reform and development strategy.

The first difficulty concerned the type of asset to include in the MASAF menu. MASAF financial ceilings for sub-projects made it impossible fully to fund health centres. In October 1995 the MoHP agreed that communities could select a dispensary or a maternity centre. It changed its mind in 1997, saying it preferred MASAF to fund entire health centres. This led to discussions about specifications for a lower-cost health centre. The outcome of these discussions did not satisfy the MoHP. When the review team met MoHP officials five years later, the conversations largely concerned the low quality of MASAF-funded facilities.

The second difficulty concerned the reconciliation of community proposals with sector plans. From the start MASAF managers treated education and health sub-projects differently, because the latter would mostly be new facilities. According to the 1996 Implementation Manual, all proposals for health centres were to be reviewed and approved by district and national health officials.

There were a number of problems, despite these measures. Some proposals were approved for localities closer than eight kilometres to an existing health facility. The MoHP planning department claims that it learned about some facilities only when a request came to staff it and provide a budget. The planners expressed concern that these unexpected facilities diverted scarce human and financial resources from their planned use. It is impossible to ascertain exactly where communications between MASAF, the MoHP and the planning department of that ministry broke down.

The MoHP undertook a planning exercise during the second half of the 1990s, which culminated in the publication of A Vision for the Health Sector in Malawi and a National Health Plan 1999–2004

(MoHP 1999a, b). These documents outlined many problems associated with severe constraints in human and financial resources. They committed the MoHP to the formulation of a sector-wide approach for financing and managing health services.

The National Health Plan provides data on the percentage of people living within five and eight kilometres of a health facility and suggests the latter distance as the minimum target. It also includes plans for the construction and rehabilitation of district hospitals, upgrading of a number of health centres and improvement of a number of primary care facilities. It does not provide explicit criteria for the siting of new facilities, but provides a list of facilities to be improved. The first document implies that investments should be limited to the approved list to avoid "manipulation" of decision-making.[29] This left district medical officers with a difficult dilemma when appraising requests for facilities not included in the plan.

There was lobbying to have proposed projects approved. The 1996 report to the PSC reflects the strong feelings in the communities. Communities contacted Members of Parliament and other power brokers. MASAF files contain a number of letters from MPs supporting health projects. MoHP officials told the review team of an instance when the pressure reached their Minister. They felt this threatened the systematic approach to facility planning.

A third difficulty was a lack of staff to run the newly completed facilities. The midterm review identified this as a major problem. In 1998 MASAF decided that the MoHP would have to make a written undertaking to staff a facility before a health project was approved. These problems persisted and in 2000 MASAF ceased funding new facilities that would require staff and other supplies. It continued to fund small local outreach points in communities. This decision signalled the end of serious attempts by MASAF to respond to health-related demands.

During the second half of the 1990s the burden of sickness and premature death was very high. Life expectancy at birth had fallen from 45 years in 1982 to 42 years in 1998 and rates of maternal mortality and under-five mortality were very high at 620 per 100,000 and 229 per 1000, respectively (Picaro 2002). At the same time, people experienced great difficulty in getting access to competent and affordable health care. A survey of rural households identified a number of factors influencing access (Chilowa *et al.* 2002). These include physical inaccessibility, staff shortages and a lack of drugs at public facilities. The proposals for health facilities submitted to MASAF indicate the importance that communities gave to these problems. This was confirmed by the household survey undertaken for this study, which found that 18 per cent of respondents in communities that built a school or borehole said they would have preferred something else and that 6.7 per cent said they wanted a health facility.

MASAF's response to this growing need was to offer communities a menu of new health facilities. Its decision to remove these items from the menu reinforced the impression that community sub-projects had to be physical assets. In the case of health, quite different kinds of investment were required.

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[29]   'The MoHP is aware that facility construction is an easy target for manipulation. This is why it has invested in a comprehensive, district-by-district study of all health facilities, so as to base preparation of a national Facilities Development Plan on the most objective, up-to-date information' (MoHP 1999a: 57).

During the second half of the 1990s the MoHP gave a great deal of attention to the formulation of a development plan and to efforts to attract substantial donor funding for a sector-wide approach. It defined an essential package of health services that would cost approximately $17 per capita. According to a financial analysis prepared for the sector-wide approach (SWAP), the government health budget would have to triple to finance these services (MoHP 2002).[30] This planning process took a lot of time and energy. Meanwhile, the MoHP was unable to spend its existing allocations of donor funds. According to the Ministry of Finance and Economic Planning (MoFEP) (2001), the MoHP absorbed just 47 per cent of donor health allocations available to it in 1994–1999. This was related to major weaknesses in management and governance.

One can discern two parallel responses to the growing health problems. Communities submitted proposals to MASAF for new health facilities. They put pressure on local politicians to lobby, when their requests were rejected. Meanwhile, the MoHP gave priority to the formulation of an ambitious development strategy, for which it believed it would secure a great deal of donor funding.[31]

The MoHP experienced the pressure from MASAF and politicians as a distraction from its efforts to formulate and fund a sector strategy. It was suspicious of politically motivated proposals for facilities not on the agreed list. Its concern that the construction of new health centres would not necessarily address priority needs was well-founded. But it did not provide communities with alternative approaches to their problems.

The story of health highlights the need to link long-term sector planning to measures that meet existing needs. These measures may involve investment in facilities or human capital as well as inputs required to make services more effective. It also makes clear the role of public information and political speeches in creating popular understanding of the choices that have to be made. Whilst the promise of free primary education was soon followed by pressure to provide classrooms, teachers and books, there was no analogous pressure for the inputs needed for effective basic health services.

In primary education, MASAF supported a major government effort to expand access. In health it funded a modest number of facilities, some of which are still not operational. Eight years after the publication of the framework for poverty alleviation, the MoHP has formulated a strategy and invited donors to finance it. Communities are still waiting to have their health problems addressed.

5.5 Political involvement in MASAF

The review team heard many comments about the relationship between MASAF and the political process. Some spoke of the high level of political commitment, others criticised the politicisation of investment in

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[30]   Even more resources would be required to fund the running costs of the proposed new and upgraded facilities. A recent analysis of the plan argues that it does not take this into account and that the 'NHP wish list needs to be translated into a prioritised, phased and properly costed set of activities' (Picaro 2002).

[31]   In 1999 the President proposed the Bakili Muluzi Health Initiative, which would provide a small number of essential drugs to all health posts and recruit retired health workers back into post (MoHP 1999c). The review team gained the impression that this initiative was not implemented on a large scale.

development. This section explores this issue, drawing on a review of documents, discussions with key informants and interviews with 16 Members of Parliament belonging to the three major parties.

It is difficult to disentangle the meanings of the terms *political commitment* and *political interference.* The former tends to refer to positive aspects of the involvement of politicians in policies and programmes and the latter to negative aspects. This section explores several elements of political commitment and politicisation. On the one hand, it reviews the level of support those in power gave to MASAF, the degree to which opposition political leaders viewed MASAF as a national, as opposed to a party political, institution and the involvement of politicians in its implementation. On the other hand, it explores the degree to which the flow of benefits was associated with political considerations and to which political parties or individual politicians used the project to derive unfair political or financial benefits.

A review of politics and MASAF must take into account the transition from one-party dictatorship to a regime of multi-party competition for elected office. Political leaders and Members of Parliament had to invent their new roles. The transition was complicated by the inheritance of years of bitter conflict between the previous ruling party and the opposition. Both sides had to find a way to live together, whilst competing for power.

Political support?

From the start the new political leaders saw MASAF as an important strategy for implementing the poverty alleviation policy. The President attended the launches of the pilot project and the full project. He made many speeches in support of MASAF. He eventually moved the project into the Office of the President and Cabinet. He wrote personally to the President of the World Bank to request a second project, when the MASAF I credit was fully committed. His Ministers followed his lead. This publicity made it abundantly clear to the population that they considered MASAF to be very important.

The other parties opposed MASAF at first. This applied particularly to the MCP, after the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) joined the UDF in government. According to the opposition MPs interviewed, their constituents suspected that MASAF would only benefit communities that supported the UDF. They were particularly worried that the government would appropriate the community contributions. It seems that the politicians discouraged communities from engaging with MASAF out of fear that government supporters in their constituencies would use it to build their political base. As a result of this opposition, MASAF received far fewer proposals from Central Region, the stronghold of the MCP, at the start of the project. However, the political cost of non-cooperation with MASAF rose, as it became clear that resources flowed to localities where communities submitted proposals. Meanwhile, the UDF decided to reach a *modus vivendi* with the MCP.

MASAF organised briefing sessions for politicians to explain the actions it was taking to reduce opportunities for local UDF supporters to gain unfair political advantage. Eventually, opposition MPs began to urge their constituents to apply for projects. Party officials spoke publicly in favour of MASAF. For example, a newspaper article in May 1997 reports a strongly supportive speech by John Tembo, a high

official in the MCP.[32] Communities in opposition constituencies subsequently produced at least as many proposals as other districts (Table 5.2).

The review team explored the attitudes of MPs from the different political parties. They all expressed strong support for MASAF. They unanimously said they preferred investment in rural infrastructure to be funded through MASAF than through sector ministries, because resources were more likely to reach the communities.

One sign of the general support for MASAF was that both government and opposition politicians blamed the backlog of unfunded projects in their constituencies on different kinds of political interference; government politicians blamed politically motivated officials in the MASAF Management Unit and sector ministries, whilst opposition politicians blamed zone offices or the districts. When these issues were explored in depth it emerged that the politicians felt that MASAF was mostly non-partisan, but that some problems were due to politics.[33]

Most MPs who attended interviews had a good basic knowledge of MASAF procedures. They had strong opinions about good and bad aspects of the project, citing examples from their own constituencies. They gave an impression that they invested quite a lot of energy in MASAF-related activities.

The MPs said they played several roles. One was to follow up proposals that communities had submitted to MASAF. Several MPs complained of difficulties in following the progress of proposals. Also, the procedures for deciding which proposals to appraise were not well defined. This led communities to ask their MPs to provide assistance. MASAF files contain records of 34 parliamentary questions between July 1997 and July 2001, of which 30 concerned delays in appraising projects. MPs also lobbied Zone Managers and district personnel. Those with more influence contacted the Management Unit, directly (see below).

Another area of concern for parliamentarians was petty corruption. They cited a number of examples of malpractice by project management committees and by district and zone personnel and said that MPs should play a role in exposing these problems.

Politicisation?

MASAF was highly political, but was it politicised? This section explores whether supporters of a particular political party benefited disproportionately from the project and whether specific parties or individual politicians derived inappropriate benefits from involvement in the project. It also asks whether the ruling party used MASAF to strengthen its political links with particular client groups (Medina and Stokes 2002).

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[32]   *The Nation*, 16 May 1997.
[33]   One cannot discount the possibility that the MPs were hesitant to voice serious criticisms of MASAF out of a belief that the findings of the review would influence future World Bank loans.

Allocation of benefits

There is no evidence that constituencies belonging to the ruling party received an unfair share of community sub-projects. Figure 5.2 shows districts ordered by the percentage of the vote that went to the UDF during the last Presidential election alongside the investment in community sub-projects per 100 population. If anything, it suggests a tendency for allocation to be inversely related to the UDF vote. Closer examination reveals that this is probably a reflection of the higher allocation to smaller districts discussed earlier in this chapter, as these districts also have a lower than average proportion of UDF voters.

All but one government MP said that MASAF allocated funds fairly between constituencies. The other said that the data in Figure 5.2 were inaccurate. Several opposition MPs said that ministers' constituencies received favourable treatment. However, the general view was summed up by one senior opposition politician who said that although ministers obtained benefits for their constituencies, they were relatively modest. The consensus seemed to be that allocation was about as fair as could be expected.

Rules of political engagement

Interviews with several people who had been involved in the design of MASAF suggest that they had set out to change the relationship between politicians and communities. They claimed that investments in community assets were regarded during the previous regime as personal gifts from the President and other political leaders. The strategy for changing this was to establish transparent procedures for communities to apply for projects and for district personnel to appraise them.

The Executive Director emphasised the importance of this aspect of the project. The interviewer drew his attention to the letters in MASAF files from senior political leaders requesting assistance for particular communities. He said that he always replied that the communities should submit proposals through the normal channels. He said that attitudes changed gradually. Eventually the President stopped promising to provide communities with a project and simply urged them to apply to MASAF. The Executive Director said this represented a major step towards the establishment of rules-based processes for allocation of investment for development.

One flaw in this strategy was that after the first couple of years there was a persistent backlog of projects. Communities sought people with influence to ensure that their proposals were appraised. The review team heard stories from members of civil society organisations about promises by senior politicians that communities would get a MASAF project. All MPs said that lobbying was important. They complained that the procedures for selection of projects for appraisal were not transparent. This created opportunities for political leaders to influence decisions. It is likely that proposals backed by a senior politician had a better chance of being appraised quickly. The District Commissioner, who usually accompanies senior politicians on their visits to communities, could influence the choice of projects to appraise. It is difficult to assess how important this kind of lobbying was.

Figure 5.2 CSP expenditure per capita and UDF presidential vote at district level
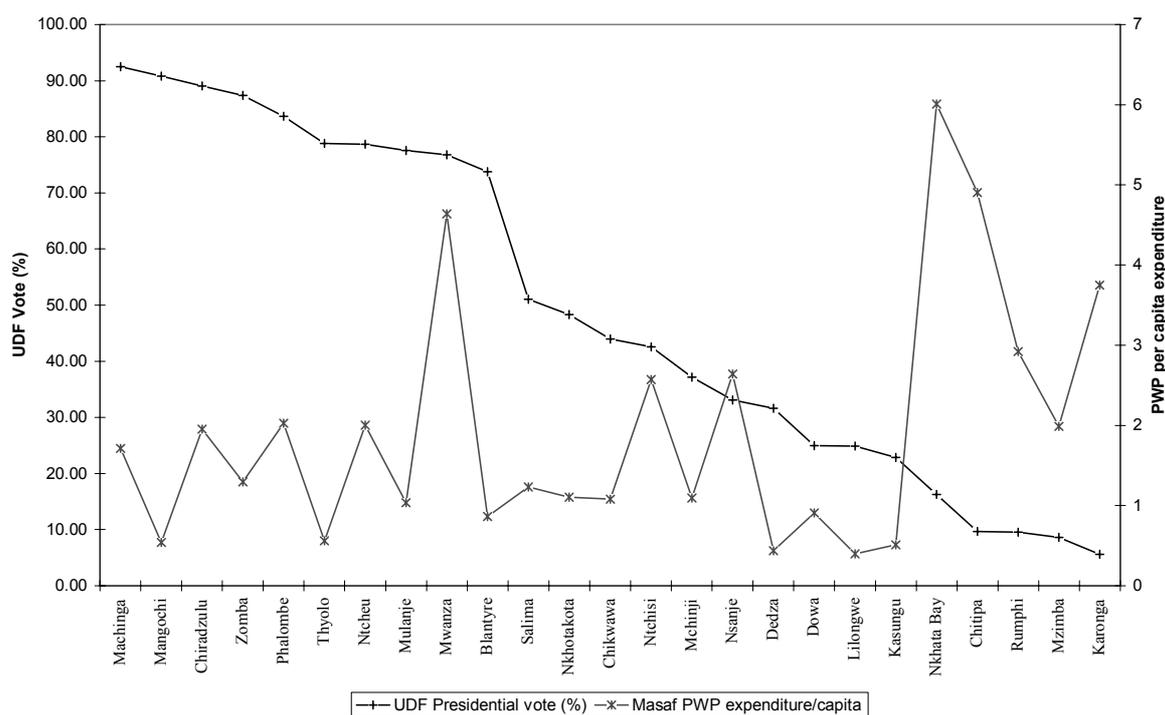
The following paragraphs present different viewpoints on the role of politicians in MASAF sub-projects. They begin with the people living in the vicinity of a sample of 121 sub-projects; they then present the views of the politicians themselves.

Table 5.3 The most influential person at different stages in the project cycle according to heads of households at a sample of sub-project sites

Category of person	Percentage of household heads identifying person as the most influential at different stages in the project cycle		
	Selection (%)	Securing funding (%)	Implementing (%)
Traditional leader	60.1	16.6	12.1
Community as a whole, PMC, School committee	15.4	59.0	78.4
MP, Minister or the President	5.7	8.0	0.7
Other	8.0	4.2	2.1
Don't know	10.9	12.3	6.8
Total	100.1	100.1	100.1

Source: Household survey at 121 sub-project sites.

The survey of households living near to the sample sub-projects included questions about the people who influenced different phases of the project cycle (Table 5.3). The most striking finding is that a majority of household heads believed that local people were the most influential. The proportion identifying the

traditional leader, the project management committee, the school committee or the community as a whole were 75.5 per cent for selection, 75.6 per cent for securing funding and 90.5 per cent for implementation. This is consistent with the finding that a large proportion of projects were situated in a relatively small number of traditional authority areas. Only a small proportion of people thought that a Member of Parliament, a Minister or the President were the most influential. Very few identified a teacher, government employee, religious leader or member of an NGO. These views are consistent with the official one of MASAF as largely a community initiative.

The findings reported in Chapter 7, suggest that decisions were highly influenced by traditional leaders. Some focus group discussions reported a belief that ordinary people had little say in the choice of projects. We need to know more about the local politics of decision-making and how it links to party politics.

The survey asked heads of household what party they supported. People who supported UDF were more likely to believe that their MP was the most influential person. However the numbers were relatively small; 9.4 per cent of UDF supporters, 0 per cent of MCP supporters, 1.4 per cent of AFORD supporters and 6.1 per cent of those who did not state a political preference thought their MP was the most influential person in securing funding (Table 5.4).

Table 5.4 The relationship between the political affiliation of the head of household and the belief that a Member of Parliament or national political leader was the most influential person at different stages of the project cycle

Political affiliation of household head	Percentage of household heads identifying a Member of Parliament of national political leader as the person as most influential at different stages of the project cycle		
	Selection (%)	Securing funding (%)	Implementing (%)
AFORD	0	1.4	0
MCP	1.6	0	0
UDF	7.3	9.4	0.8
Non-partisan	3.1	6.1	0.6

Source: Household survey at 121 sub-project sites.

The survey team interviewed someone with special knowledge of the MASAF asset at each sample site. The majority of these key informants said that local people were the most influential. However, 6.6 per cent said that MPs were the most influential in selection and 18.3 per cent in securing funding. The proportion varied between constituencies held by different parties. The MP was identified as the most influential person in securing funding at 25.7 per cent of sites in UDF constituencies, 13.0 per cent in MCP constituencies and 4 per cent in AFORD constituencies (Table 5.5). This may reflect the more active role that MPs from the governing party played during the early part of MASAF. It may also be a sign that UDF politicians had more opportunities to influence decisions, or claim to have done so.

Table 5.5 The relationship between the political party that held the constituency before 1999 and the belief by a key informant that the MP was the most influential person at different phases of the project cycle

Party holding constituency before 1999	Percentage of key informants identifying an MP as the person most influential at different stages of the project cycle		
	Selection (%)	Securing funding (%)	Implementing (%)
AFORD	4.0	4.0	0
MCP	13.0	13.0	0
UDF	5.6	25.7	0
All parties	6.6	18.3	0

Source: Key informant interviews at 121 sub-project sites.

In an interview recorded at the World Bank, the Executive Director of MASAF outlined how MPs slowly became convinced that the rules of the project cycle would be enforced (Kakhobwe 2003). At first they expected to follow the old pattern of claiming to communities that they had brought them projects. A report to the PSC in 1996 told of local politicians pressing district officials for permission to join field appraisals. There are records in the files of attempts by politicians to influence decisions. For example, an MP threatened to damage the career of a Zone Manager because his constituency had fewer projects than neighbouring ones. Another politician complained that delays in project appraisal were damaging his credibility with communities.

At first, MASAF excluded politicians from all aspects of project appraisal and implementation. But soon its managers decided to develop rules of engagement with MPs. It organised briefing sessions for politicians, out of which emerged the definition of a role for MPs as facilitators of development activities. They helped communities to fill out MASAF application forms. MASAF published lists of approved projects and this stimulated competition between MPs. One sign of the change in attitudes is a statement by an opposition MP that the districts which first got projects were more active and aggressive.

The review team did not find much evidence of politicians deriving financial benefits from the community sub-projects. Several MPs complained that they had not been consulted on the choice of local builders. The team did not hear stories of builders with political connections influencing the choice of projects. It did hear complaints about petty corruption in the selection of local suppliers and transporters. However, the combination of systematic financial audit and community control seems to have limited the opportunities for rent-seeking. The team did not explore the very different arrangements for the drilling of boreholes, which was not implemented by communities. The MASAF Management Unit awarded contracts to a small number of companies to undertake this work.

At first opposition politicians feared that MASAF would be used for local party political purposes. These issues were raised at a series of meetings for MPs and traditional authorities in 1995, at which participants complained that UDF district officials in opposition constituencies were manoeuvring to play a prominent role in MASAF activities (MASAF 1995a). MPs repeated these claims in discussions with the review team. Opposition politicians claimed that the governing party manoeuvred to get its supporters

elected to project management committees. They also complained of being excluded from events that would enable them to gain political credit for the project. Local politicking continued throughout the life of MASAF I. After the elections to Distritct Assemblies in 2000 MPs and councillors began to compete for political credit for sub-projects.

According to the Executive Director of MASAF, the combination of Presidential backing and community control of resources was key in keeping the opportunities for politicking and corruption under control.[34] Ministers hesitated to use personal pressure on MASAF Zone Managers to secure a project, because of Presidential backing. This provided incentives for local politicians to compete to make MASAF work well. The fact that communities managed their own money made it difficult for outsiders to touch it. There were examples when communities acted. For example, there is a report in the newspaper of a community that established a roadblock and made drivers of vehicles pay a toll, because a public works programme had not paid their salaries.

The UDF reaped major political benefits from MASAF's success. The President was closely associated with the project, which he frequently mentioned in his speeches. The UDF manifesto for the 1999 elections gave prominence to MASAF. This created difficulties for opposition politicians, who supported the benefits that MASAF brought their communities, but resented the political capital accruing to the governing party. They articulated this in a complaint that the UDF claimed credit for MASAF, when it was really a World Bank project. This hints at the tension implicit in attitudes to a national project in the context of competitive party politics.

MASAF clearly established itself as a player in Malawi. It became widely known and people saw it as a major source of funding for community development. Communities submitted more than 14,000 proposals to MASAF. They took the submission of these proposals seriously. The review team heard many stories about communities that put pressure on politicians to follow up proposals and lobby to have them appraised. It did not hear similar stories about activities for which sector ministries are responsible. This suggests that they felt entitled to have a response to their proposal, whilst they had little expectation of other government initiatives. This sense of entitlement was backed by a widely-held belief that active communities, which had submitted proposals and organised their contribution to the project, had earned MASAF investment.

The review team also heard complaints about MASAF's inadequacies. Officials of donor agencies and NGOs spoke of insufficient popular participation. The focus group discussions held by the review team at a number of sub-project sites revealed similar perceptions (Chapter 7).

Discussions with politicians found a universal belief that MASAF delivered benefits to the population. Politicians viewed the rules of the MASAF project cycle as appropriate and fair. The strength of feeling about MASAF's failure to provide feedback on the progress of individual projects and its lack of rules for deciding which proposals to appraise suggest an acceptance of the rules that do exist. MASAF sub-projects did not suffer the severe leakage of funds that afflicted some government investment

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[34]   The MASAF Executive Director discusses this issue in his interview at the World Bank (Kakhobwe 2003).

projects. There were complaints about petty corruption and there is no reason to assume this did not occur. However, it appears that a large proportion of funds reached the communities. MASAF has established a reputation as an institution that follows rules. Politicians continue to manoeuvre for party and personal advantage, but they take seriously the rules of engagement defined by MASAF.

6 The interface between MASAF and government bodies at district level
Arild Schou

6.1 Introduction

This chapter looks at two aspects of the implementation of MASAF's CSP projects; (i) the day-to-day interaction between MASAF's project structure and (central and local) government bodies at district level and (ii) the interface between MASAF and the decentralisation process in Malawi. It looks at the relationship between MASAF, district bodies and communities in the identification, appraisal and implementation of community sub-projects. It assesses the roles of civil society leaders, particularly the chiefs, in decision-making. It also examines the relationship between MASAF and district executive and political structures, and considers variations in the implementation of MASAF between councils that benefited from the government pilot programme for strengthening local governance and development management, the so-called "local impact areas" (LIAs) and those that did not. In the pilot councils technical personnel were trained in participatory development planning methods. The team followed MASAF in assuming that these districts would implement community sub-projects more effectively and efficiently (MASAF 1997b).[35]

The first section (6.2) presents an analytical framework for the analysis. The following sections (6.3 and 6.4) describe the development of Malawi's local government system and the way MASAF's operations were integrated into that system. The sections after that analyse the interface between MASAF and local government structures (6.5, 6.6 and 6.7) and whether MASAF affected the implementation of the decentralisation reform in the country (6.8).

6.2 The African state as development agent

Many recent analyses of the shortcomings of African states in promoting development highlight the importance of the nature of links between state and society and the absence of clear boundaries between them. Important examples are the recent contributions by Bayart (1993), Boone (1998), Chabal and Daloz (1999), Crook (2003), Medard (1995), Mamdani (1996) and Munro (1996).

The main picture that comes out of this literature is that the clear boundary between state and society that exists in many developed countries is seldom found in African societies. Here the boundaries are blurred, and power relations are reproduced mainly through informal channels between the state leaders and local elites. In Malawian rural areas the traditional authorities have been historically the most influential elites. This is also the case in contemporary Malawi, where they continue to exercise important functions concerning the allocation of land under customary tenure and the validation of the individuals within the society (Graham 1956).

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[35]   MASAF's 1996/1997 Annual Report notes that the capacity of the district staff was slightly higher in LIA than in non-LIA districts (MASAF 1997b).

The relationship between state and traditional authorities in Africa has often been analysed in terms of these authorities' potential for restraining local development (elite co-optation, patrimonial ties, elite capture etc.). These are relevant perspectives in the context of implementation of MASAF. However, the team has also uncovered examples of chiefs who were extremely active in bringing development to their societies. Thus, it is also relevant to present a perspective (elite-society cooperation) which captures the chiefs' potential for enhancing development. This gives the following three ideal types of state-civil society relations at district level.

Elite co-optation

In his book *Citizen and Subject*, Mahmood Mamdani describes the African state as "bifurcated" (Mamdani 1996). By this he means that the relations between state and society were – and are – fundamentally different in urban and rural areas. In urban areas one finds a separation of state and society and the guarantee of citizens' rights are upheld by the state. In rural areas, however, state-society relations take on a different form. Here, according to Mamdani, state power is exercised through traditional leaders as intermediaries of indirect rule (also termed "decentralised despotism"). This system, established under colonialism, involves the co-optation of traditional authorities into the state, making them key elements of state power at the local level.

Elite capture

Another phenomenon, often associated with the introduction of decentralisation processes in the 1980s and 1990s, is that central governments use decentralisation schemes to consolidate their alliance with local elites based on the availability of patronage, or to establish a new alliance (Crook 2003). Thus, even where the rural poor have achieved some representation through democratic decentralisation, accountability mechanisms are generally not strong enough to ensure that they are represented effectively in policymaking. Instead, there has been widespread elite capture of local power structures. Elite capture is also frequently found in connection with the implementation of community-based development schemes like the World Bank's Social Funds (Platteau and Gaspart 2003).

Elite-society cooperation

Evidence from successful implementation of government infrastructure development programmes in the Indian states of Rãjasthãn and Maddhya Pradesh points to the importance of development-oriented elites (Krishna 2002). Historically, feudal village strongmen have provided the linkage between villages and public officials in rural India. However, increasingly younger and better-educated village leaders, in some instances sons of traditional leaders, have started to make their way into village politics. When explaining why some villages benefited more from the programmes than others, two factors were particularly important: social capital and development-oriented local leaders. Social capital did not account for all the

observed variation.[36] It was also dependent upon the new leaders who, on behalf of their communities, helped make beneficial linkages with state organisations.

This chapter also feeds into an ongoing international debate about the relationships between social funds and processes of political decentralisation in developing countries.[37] Comparative studies of social funds and decentralisation point at possible positive spillover effects from funds to local governments, particularly where decentralisation is underdeveloped (World Bank 2000b, 2003b). In some cases social funds have encouraged the expansion of decentralisation and made an important contribution to jump-starting a broader decentralisation process. In other instances social funds have pointed at mechanisms which governments could imitate in their own decentralisation strategies (e.g. successful popular participation in operation and maintenance systems). On the other hand, there are concerns in donor circles that decentralisation and social funds sometimes work at cross purposes. For example, if social funds establish parallel channels for local expenditure and community participation without building local accountability and financial sustainability, they may weaken nascent local governments and impede decentralisation.

6.3 MASAF, decentralisation and government structures at the district level

The CSP projects were implemented in cooperation with the government system which existed at the district level in the mid-1990s. This was a parallel system of governmental bodies with a central government administrative (de-concentrated) body known as the District Executive Committee (DEC), headed by the District Commissioner, and a devolved local government body, the District Council. This government structure replicated the dual character of many other Anglophone countries in Sub-Saharan Africa (Eriksen *et al.* 1996). In some respects the Malawi system was unique; the council's elected assembly was abolished in 1995 and political decisions regarding DEC's development activities were left to the District Development Committee (DDC), whose members were appointed by the central government.

MASAF used both types of government body at the district level; community sub-projects were implemented through the central government system and public works projects were implemented (during the two first years) through local government.

The district government system was inherited from the British colonial administration at independence in 1964. At that time, the councils were relatively strong, being chaired by an assembly of elected ward councillors. They had responsibilities in key areas such as education and health and they raised sufficient revenues in the form of fees, rates, dues, cesses and a poll tax (Apthorpe *et al.* 1995). In 1967 the government established the District Development Committees (firstly as an administrative body)

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[36] "Social capital" in Putnam's (1995: 67) sense of the word refers to 'features of social organisation such as networks, norms, and social trust that facilitate coordination for mutual benefit.'

[37] Political decentralisation (devolution) must be clearly distinguished from administrative decentralisation (de-concentration). In this chapter political decentralisation is defined as the transfer of functions or authority from central levels of government to local institutions which are based on local political representation. Administrative decentralisation, however, refers to the transfer of authority to local "branches" of central government (Mills 1990).

with mandates similar to those of the Councils. This led to competition for resources, with the DDCs receiving the lion's share of government resources and political support at the expense of the Councils, which were the legal local government bodies. During the 1980s, the government began to reduce the Council grants, withdrawing services, reducing their resource base and controlling staff appointments and dismissals, promotion and disciplining. The power of the Councils was further weakened when the government abolished the Assembly of Councillors in 1995 (GOM 1996: 8).

Decentralisation featured prominently on the agenda immediately following the change of government in 1994. The Malawi Government called for an in-depth review of the decentralisation policy. In 1995 the commission appointed to carry out the review set out its findings and proposed an amalgamation of local government and the district administration under the District Assembly (DA) (Apthorpe *et al.* 1995). Although the government concurred with the recommendation, it took no action and it regularly postponed local council elections. In October 1998 the Cabinet approved a national decentralisation policy, which involved the establishment of elected assemblies in districts and major urban centres and the devolution of significant central government functions to them. The adoption of the decentralisation policy was followed in December 1998 by the passing of the Local Government Act (No 42 of 1998).

In 1999 the DDCs were abolished, their staff transferred to the DA and an interim officer appointed to head the new unit. The amalgamation had no significant implications for relations between MASAF and the government at the district level, because no central government sector functions were devolved to the DAs. In the period from 1999 to 2001, the DAs' sector staff were paid by and reported to their respective sector ministries. In November 2000, the government held local government elections. Although district councillors were involved in implementing MASAF projects for about half a year, because of the brevity of their involvement in district decision-making, the team did not look in detail into their role in the implementation of MASAF I.

The Local Governance and Development Management Programme

When MASAF was launched in 1994, the government was already piloting a system for planning and implementing small-scale infrastructure projects through the DDC, the District Development Fund (DDF). The DDF was part of a pilot programme, funded by Government of Malawi /UNDP/UNCDF – the Local Governance and Development Management Programme (LGDMP). In 1995–96 this programme supported a trial of decentralisation policies and procedures in six pilot districts, with the aim of establishing a participatory planning system and a funding mechanism for local level investments. The pilot districts produced district profiles containing a great deal of information. It was the intention that MASAF should engage with new structures in the pilot districts such as Area Development Committees (ADCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs).

In 1997 the government began to replicate LGDMP in the other councils. However, there is little country-wide evidence of the effect on the operations of the planning systems of the other councils. A 2000 midterm review of the programme concluded, on the basis of visits to seven DAs (some LIAs and

some non-LIAs), that; (1) progress had been made in establishing an institutional framework for decentralised planning and management; (2) the DDCs and sector government staff had been successfully trained; (3) key personnel such as district development officers and DDF accountants were in place; (4) all districts had produced district socio-economic profiles; and finally, (5) that DDF funds were "well accounted for" (p. v). In addition, it reported that all the Local Impact Area (LIA) districts had prepared draft District Development Plans. The review found it difficult make a proper assessment of the functioning of the sub-district planning structures (GOM 2000c).

In 2001, the government carried out another review of the LGDMP which also considered the workings of the emerging district planning system. The conclusion drawn by this review, which collected information from six DAs (a mix of LIAs and non-LIAs), is that planning decisions were basically taken at the DDC level and that there was hardly any development planning by ADCs and VDCs (GOM 2001a).

Thus, during the implementation of MASAF I, there were two government-initiated systems for infrastructure development at the district level – MASAF and the DDF.[38] MASAF was set up as a quasi-autonomous agency under the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development (up to 1998) and the DDF was implemented by the Ministry of Local Government and Housing through the Decentralisation Secretariat. The joint Donor–Government Appraisal Team in its August 2000 review of Malawi's decentralisation plan strongly recommended that all donors involved in the funding of local capital development projects pool their resources in the DDF structure (GOM 2000d).

DDF operations bore many similarities to those of MASAF. Both had a bottom-up approach to project selection and used district personnel in project implementation. There were several differences, however: in DDF projects the funds remained with the districts and procurement and management of contracts was by district staff; MASAF had far more resources than DDF; and finally DDF made use of the emerging planning system in project identification, while MASAF established its own procedures for project selection (see Section 6.5.2)

6.4 Government bodies at the district level during the implementation of MASAF

During the implementation of MASAF a number of political and government structures at district level provided parallel functions. The councils – weak local government bodies – played a marginal role in the implementation of MASAF. Three central government agencies, however, interacted with MASAF zone offices and MASAF project management committees at village level. They also worked closely with the traditional authorities at ward and village levels (see Figure 6.1). These bodies were

1   District Development Committee, an executive body
2   DEC, a technical body
3   District Commissioner's Office.

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[38]   Several other donor agencies were involved in similar projects (European Union (EU), Norwegian Agency for Development Cooperation (NORAD), Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), DFID and others) but in none of these projects was the project structure part of the government structure.

Figure 6.1 Main institutional linkages and direction of accountability in implementation of MASAF I in the period 1994–99
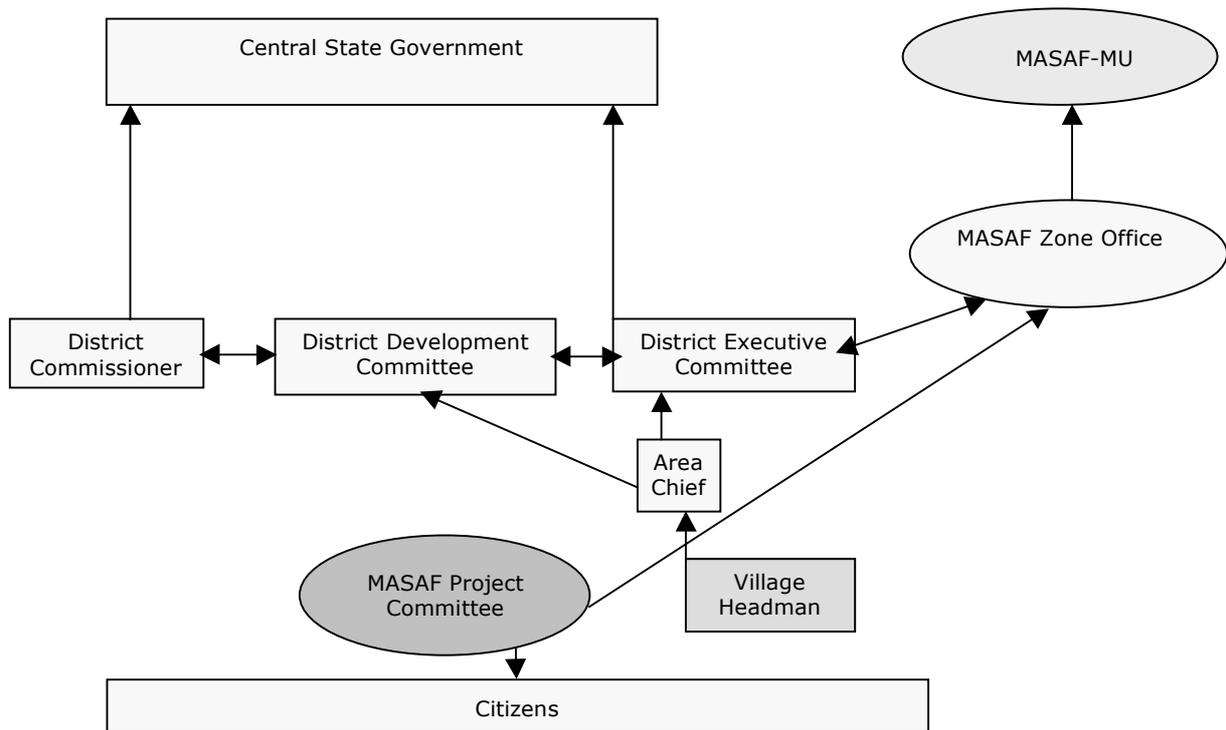
According to a 1993 Cabinet Paper, the DDC was established to provide district development planning and enhance efficient and effective development of micro-projects in each district through popular participation (GOM 1993). Unlike the councils it had no statutory power to raise revenue. The Committee comprised MPs, local party cadres, traditional leaders and representatives from civil society and the private sector. It was responsible for development spending funded by donors and the national budget. It had no staff of its own and was chaired by the District Commissioner.

The DEC was the technical screening body for the DDC. It comprised district sector ministry staff, i.e. a District Education Officer, District Water Officer, etc. It was chaired by the District Community Development Officer in the case of the LIA districts and the (Assistant) District Commissioner in the other districts (GOM 1996).

The functions of the District Commissioner's Office (DCO) included administration of chiefs' affairs, land matters and coordination of district activities within central government. The office staff of the DCO generally comprised two–four people with management and supervisory functions (at a minimum, one executive officer and a clerk). The office was headed by the District Commissioner, who held the highest central government position at the district level and was answerable to the Principal Secretary (District Administration) at the Office of the President and Cabinet.

There were also regional government offices in the shape of the Regional Administrators' Offices. Most regional offices, however, had no decision-making or resource allocation powers and were all abolished on the amalgamation of the councils and DDCs in 1999 (GOM 1996).

When MASAF was introduced in 1994 the machinery of government at district level was in deep malaise. Not only were there overlapping functions between the various bodies, but resources were inadequate in terms of money, equipment and people to respond to the most basic of needs. Decision-making within each district sector agency was heavily controlled by top management in Lilongwe and there was virtually no communication between agencies at district level (GOM 1996).

Officials of the Department of District and Local Government Administration (DDLGA) and the MASAF MU have all noted that the original idea was that MASAF would utilise and strengthen the weak public bodies at district level.[39] The hope was that district government officials would play an important role in implementing MASAF-CSPs and thereby develop new and better working practices, through planning guidelines and standards for new facilities and participation in project identification, appraisal, approval and implementation. The head of government at district level – the District Commissioner – would give final approval to all applications.

6.5 Role of government bodies in MASAF projects

In more practical terms government support for CSP implementation was required in relation to five areas: project selection, desk appraisal, field appraisal, project launching ceremony, and technical monitoring and supervision. In this section we analyse these steps of the project cycle.

Sensitisation

For the community to apply for MASAF-assisted project funds they needed to be aware of what MASAF had to offer. The CSP Implementation Handbook from 1998 states that DEC members 'may' be involved in sensitisation sessions together with MASAF staff.

The general impression from the fieldwork is that this process functioned quite well.[40] While district-level staff were not heavily involved, it was reported that extension workers were active at such sessions and did much to educate people about MASAF.[41] The major responsibility for sensitisation rested with MASAF MU. Its Information, Education and Communications (IEC) Unit had an especially important role in mobilising the poorest communities (underserved areas) to improve the targeting for poverty reduction.[42]

Although public awareness of MASAF and its menu was very high (see Section 5.3), there are indications that sensitisation did not always lead to a thorough understanding of MASAF procedures, nor did it reach out to everyone. Studies report that people had limited information on the options for sub-projects and the 2001 beneficiary assessment revealed that many communities knew little about the roles of different categories of health facilities (clinics, maternity units, and dispensary), alternative kinds of

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[39] Interview with DDLGA April 2002 and MASAF-MU May 2003.
[40] In the period 28 April–16 May the team carried out semi-structured interviews with lay informants in four of the six study districts: Dedza, Nkhotakota, Mangochi and Balaka. These districts were selected randomly.
[41] Interviews with District Community Development Workers.
[42] The IEC was renamed Development Communication Unit (DCU) in 2001.

water points (borehole, shallow well, community dam) or different ways to bridge a river (MASAF 2001b). Moreover, several of the district fieldwork respondents claimed that remote areas were not properly sensitised and that information did not always reach the grassroots.[43] As noted by one of them,[44]

> The sensitisation of village leaders did not go far enough. The consultation happened at the area level where zone officers consulted village heads and extension workers. However, the villagers themselves were not particularly actively involved and the VDC were not properly sensitised.

Project selection and submission

After being sensitised the next, and crucial, step to be taken by the community was to decide *which type of project* to apply for. As shown in Chapter 5, most proposals were for classrooms and boreholes. It is also evident from former evaluations (also accounted for in Chapter 5) that the high interest in school projects can partly be attributed to the MoEST alliance with actors at the district level – such as District Education Officers, headmasters and parent-teacher associations – who pushed for such projects. Our interviews in the districts support these observations. There was energetic lobbying by parent-teacher associations for school projects.[45] Extension workers actively lobbied for such projects. The Primary Education Advisors, for example, took part in sensitising teachers and the community. Even community development workers, who would normally listen to the concerns and wishes of the people, tended to push for education projects, sometimes in opposition to the articulated desires of the poor for boreholes.[46] District staff mentioned that school blocks were particularly attractive because they could be implemented together with a package of other projects such as boreholes, staff buildings and latrines.

Marginal role of district officials

The beneficiary assessment reports found that teachers, local MPs, traditional leaders and community development assistants played a role in deciding which type of project to opt for and where in the district the project should be located. The household survey and the informant interviews (see Table 7.5) clearly show that traditional authorities, village headmen and area chiefs had most influence on project selection, with government frontline workers playing a marginal role. Other government officials such MPs are considered to be more influential than civil servants, but wielded far less influence than the traditional authorities. Our interviews showed that MPs tended to be more active in the period leading up to the parliamentary elections in 1999 but that they did not always exercise their power in the formal decision-making bodies at the district level – the DDC. Instead, they engaged in "selling" individual projects to the community. There are reported instances of MPs taking application forms to their constituents and asking them to send the completed forms to the zone office in expectation of their approval. Also, MPs would

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43   Interview with technical advisors, 31 April, 8 and 12 May.
44   Interview with Director of Information in Nkhotakota, 2 May 2003.
45   Interview with District Educational Officers from several districts.
46   Interview with Community Development Workers, 4 and 15 May 2003. The rationale was that educational projects are more beneficial for the poor in the long term than boreholes.

fill in the forms themselves together with a select group of individuals.[47] In both instances, MPs personalised and usurped the initiative that would otherwise be in the hands of the chiefs, the community or the elected project committee. As one district commissioner put it; 'too many project applications reflected the MPs' needs and not the community's needs'.[48]

Which district areas sent applications?

The CSP projects were not equally distributed between the Traditional Authority Areas (TAs) – see Section 5.3.1. In fact, a relatively small number of localities secured a substantial share of all MASAF I sub-projects. There are indications of inequalities within TAs as well, related to the influence of local strongmen. Since there are no figures on the distribution of CSP projects below the TA level, the team was unable to provide quantitative evidence on this issue. However, the impression gained during fieldwork is that some geographical areas were left behind, partly due to elite capture and partly to socio-economic disadvantages. Several respondents said that traditional authorities at various levels tried to channel projects to areas where their own extended families lived.[49] As noted by the District Planning Officer in Dedza,

> The most interesting aspect of equity (both for the CSPs and PWPs) is whether or not MASAF managed to target the most vulnerable sections within each TA unit. The area chiefs tended to favour their own family members. When they operate in public settings, however, they tend to talk on behalf of the entire community. I doubt whether there has been a complete grassroots consolidation ever. During the implementation of the MASAF's CSP projects, it was the most vocal part of the community that was able to send in applications.[50]

It is widely believed that MPs tried to channel projects to their own constituencies.[51] According to one respondent, they **"bulldozed"** in order to affect implementation at district and MASAF-zone level. The purpose was to expand or consolidate their political constituency.[52]

Socio-economic disadvantages of certain areas meant that some leaders were not as well qualified to prepare applications as others. These areas lagged behind in terms of political awareness, geographic isolation, education resources, "cultural constraints" and attributes of their chief.[53] These areas, which

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[47] These perceptions of MP actions are for the most part provided by the District Community Development Officers in the districts concerned.
[48] Interview with DC in Balaka, 14 May 2003.
[49] Interviews with sector heads for health, education water and public works.
[50] Interview in Dedza, 31 April 2003.
[51] Interviews with sector heads for health, education water and public works.
[52] Interview in Balaka, 15 May 2003.
[53] Several of these factors, including cultural constraints, were brought up at a series of nine workshops for MPs and traditional authorities held during the autumn of 1995. See Executive Summary on The Zone Workshops for Members of Parliament and Traditional Authorities, MASAF-MU (1995a).

needed infrastructure projects more than others, were the losers in the first-come-first-served system of resource allocation. One respondent called it the "dark side" of MASAF's bottom-up approach.[54]

Project appraisal

Project appraisals were carried out by the DEC with the MASAF zone officers acting in a facilitating role. The rigour of this process varied from district to district. The team found it fruitful to distinguish between the periods before and after 1997. The logic of project appraisals differed significantly between the two periods due to the sharp and unanticipated rise in the volume of applications submitted to DEC after 1997. Before 1997 the DEC appraised incoming projects on a first-come-first-served basis; projects that passed the desk-appraisal were field-appraised and sent to the MASAF zone office for funding. After 1997 the appraisal procedure seems to have become less rigorous (see next section). Backlogs of project applications waiting for appraisal built up in some districts.

Desk appraisal

The DEC was meant to take a leading role in the desk appraisal of projects. Its members were, together with the zone officer, supposed to conduct appraisals of applications at routine meetings (cf. the 1998 Implementation Handbook, MASAF 1998c). In these meetings the DEC members were supposed to give each application a technical score and on this basis select projects for field appraisal. Table 6.1 ranks DEC's members by level of activity in the desk appraisal decision-making process during the first years of the implementation of MASAF.[55]

The role of the technical staff

Table 6.1 shows that government staff members were more active in the desk appraisal decision-making process than MASAF officers in terms of the frequency with which they signed application forms. The most active government officials were District Community Development Officers (33 forms) and District Commissioners (21). MASAF officers signed less than one-third of the applications (18).

It is striking that the district sector officers, particularly the District Education Officers who were expected to play a key role in assuring that sub-projects were consistent with sector plans and priorities, were not very active in desk appraisal decisions (11 forms).[56] This finding contradicts what these officers reported during our fieldwork, but confirms the observations made in Chapter 5 (5.4.1) about inadequacies in the appraisal process of education projects in the early phases of the implementation of MASAF. The relatively high activity of the District Community Development Officers may reflect the small scale of the MASAF projects under appraisal – usually development schemes with some degree of popular involvement. The facilitation of such activities would typically be the core responsibility of the Community Development Office, and to a lesser degree the responsibility of sector district heads

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54   Interview with the District Educational Officer in Balaka District Council, 14 May 2003.
55   The great majority (85 per cent) of the project proposals were appraised in 1996.
56   They were only signing 11 out of 60 appraisal forms.

Table 6.1 Ranking of most frequently recurring signatories of application forms by LIA and non-LIA persons. Total number of signatures in brackets

| Signatories (up to 3 per project) | Desk Appraisal | | | | |
| | Signed forms | | | Not signed | All |
	LIA	Non-LIA	All		
District Community Development Officer	9	24	33		
District Commissioner	6	15	21		
MASAF Officer	3	15	18		
Area Development Committee	1	11	13		
District Education Officer	6	5	11		
Traditional Authorities	1	8	9		
District Water Officer	0	4	4		
District Human Resource Officer	2	1	3		
District Health Officer	3	0	3		
Others	14	66	80*		
N (signatures)	(45)	(150)	(195)		
N (desk appraisal forms)	15	52	67(B=7, S=60)†	35	102

* This category refers to other signatories such as district officers, extension workers and planning officers. However, no particular group of signatories was more active than those mentioned in the table.
† B= borehole, S= school block

Prominence of traditional authorities

One unexpected finding is that traditional authorities were signatories of one-third of the desk appraisal forms (22 forms were signed either by traditional authorities or the Area Development Committees which were headed by these authorities).[57] The frequency of their involvement was almost the same as that of MASAF officers and DCs (21 and 18). This finding confirms the findings from several of the other chapters that the traditional authorities played a major role in the implementation of MASAF (cf. Table 5.3). What this finding adds to this picture is that they were extremely important actors in the government's formal technical decision-making at the district level.

Why were they so important? Firstly, their prominence raises the question of how strictly the guidelines were applied and whether DEC members, including MASAF officers, understood their role in desk appraisals. This is not a particularly plausible explanation given that both district and (particularly) MASAF officers had benefited from training about MASAF guidelines and regulations. Moreover, if there was confusion about the guidelines would not this have allowed for interference also from MPs? Second, there might be a chance that there was a confusion about the roles of the District Development and

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[57] The active role of the Area Development Committees suggests a high level of involvement of traditional authorities, because these committees were, up to the passing of the Local Government Act in 1998, chaired by the area Chief and their geographical borders coincided with the area of the Chief's jurisdiction. According to the planning system that was implemented after the passing of the Local Government Act, the chiefs should *not* chair the ADCs (GOM, Development Planning System Handbook for District Assemblies, August 2001). In the 2001 review of the District Development Planning System, however, it is noted that the pre-1999 system still prevailed in many district (GOM 2001a: 26).

District Executive Committees and that project appraisal meetings therefore were basically political meetings. However, if this implies an active role of the DDC as a group in technical decision-making, one would have expected that other DDC members, such as MPs, would have signed appraisal forms. Perhaps the DDC was involved, but the MPs were unable to challenge the chief's role. District staff reported that the role of chiefs in desk appraisals was partly to verify (or refute) claims contained in individual applications and partly to justify the passing of applications from their own area in discussions on project distribution among TA areas, but never included signing appraisal forms.[58]

LIA/non-LIA variations

It is clear from the table that the most active government officers – the District Community Development Officers and the DCs – were slightly more involved in the LIAs than in the non-LIAs (20 per cent as against 16 for District Community Development Officers and 13 per cent as against 10 for the DCs). However, this finding does not confirm our hypothesis that LIA districts would perform better on certain aspects of implementation of MASAF projects. Moreover, if we had found significant variations in government staff involvement it would have been difficult to explain them on the basis of attributes of the LGDMP programme alone. Several factors, other than professional training, are likely to determine the involvement of district officials in the desk appraisal process, such as the organisation culture in a given council and the staff's formal educational qualifications.

The figures in the table also indicate that the involvement of the traditional authorities (Area Development Committees included) varied significantly between non-LIA and LIA districts. The authorities were less active in non-LIAs (signed 13 per cent of the forms) than in LIAs (signed 33 per cent). At first sight this seems to be a counter-intuitive finding given that the LIA district personnel had been trained in formal planning exercises. On the other hand there is a chance that the training of Area Development Committees in development planning, combined with an influx of DDF projects in the LIA councils, had made the chiefs particularly aware of the possibilities of influencing decision-making at district level in these councils.

Which projects were appraised?

Prior to 1997, desk appraisal of projects followed a first-come-first-served pattern. Subsequently, piles of unappraised applications grew ever higher as new ones arrived every day. Unprocessed applications were deposited in storage at the DC's office. This situation raises several questions about the procedures for selecting projects for desk appraisal. For instance, which of them should be appraised on the release of a tranche of funds from MASAF MU – the incoming ones or some of those already filed at the DC's office? Moreover, what criteria were used for choosing project applications for appraisal?

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[58]   There is some evidence that equity questions were on the agenda. For example, there seems to be consensus in several councils that boreholes should be equally distributed in all TA areas. (Interview with District Water Management Officers, 27 April and 5 May.)

These are crucial questions, because the decision to desk-appraise an application mostly determined its fate, as only a small proportion of applications were turned down during field appraisal. Out of a total of 3,347 project requests submitted by 30 June 1997, for example, only 1.8 per cent were turned down (MASAF 1997b). According to the fieldwork interviews almost every application that was desk-appraised was automatically field-appraised.[59]

The data acquired during fieldwork do not allow us to provide any definite answers to these questions. On the one hand, there were cases where DECs simply selected project applications at desk appraisal meetings randomly from the heaps of old applications and from the newly received ones. On the other hand, there were cases where the DEC deliberately picked out specific applications for appraisal.[60]

Who influenced decisions about funding of projects?

That said, the household survey data and key informant interviews provide some information on *who* could have benefited from the breakdown of the first-come-first-served system. Table 6.2 gives an impression of who the community perceived to be the most important decision-makers when it came to getting MASAF projects funded.

Table 6.2 Community perceptions of the most influential person in funding of CSP projects. Figures from key informant in brackets (%)

District and project type	Person							
	TA	Community	Teacher	Politicians	Gov.+NGO extension workers	Head of project committee	Others/ don't know	All
All	17 (20)	2 (1)	1 (5)	8 (18)	2 (4)	56 (36)	14 (12)	100%
LIA	18 (25)	2 (0)	1 (4)	14 (13)	2 (2)	49 (33)	14 (15)	100%
Non-LIA	16 (18)	2 (1)	1 (5)	5 (21)	2 (5)	60 (40)	14 (10)	100%
Boreholes	29 (44)	3 (0)	1 (3)	9 (26)	1 (0)	35 (13)	20 (14)	100%
Schools	13 (13)	1 (1)	1 (6)	8 (19)	1 (6)	63 (46)	13 (9)	100%
N=	181	19	12	90	18	613	156	1089

The community considered the project committee to be the most important player in getting funding for the CSP projects (56 per cent) while the traditional authority was considered to be the second most important player (17 per cent). This trend is confirmed by figures from the key informant interviews (36 and 20 per cent).

The communities' perceptions of the role of the politicians (8 per cent) contradicts the perceptions of some district respondents, who considered MPs to be important players in district-level decision-

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[59]   In cases where projects did not pass the desk appraisal, this was in most cases due to a lack of community contribution (lack of bricks or sand).

[60]   Interview with Zonal Technical Advisor, 29 April and interviews in MASAF-MU, 15 May.

making.[61] The perceptions of the key informants (18 per cent) are more in line with those of district respondents. These findings regarding the role of the politicians can be interpreted in various ways: they can indicate the extent of political lobbying and they can be interpreted as an indication of successful lobbying – whether lobbying was widespread or not.

District and sector variations

There is no significant difference between LIA and non-LIA districts in relation to power relationships. Whilst politicians are considered by the household respondents to be more influential in LIA districts (14 per cent) than in non-LIA districts (5 per cent), our key informants are of the opposite opinion (13 per cent versus 21 per cent).

The table also shows significant sector-specific variations in perceptions of power and influence. The project committee is perceived by the household respondents to be far more influential for the funding of school projects (63 per cent) than for the funding of boreholes (35 per cent) – which is in line with the perceptions of our key informants. The perceived difference may have something to do with the longer life of the school PMCs relative to the borehole PMCs. The school PMCs would normally function for several months, while boreholes were drilled by drilling companies, and the borehole committees probably had a shorter and less conspicuous life. Another significant sector-specific variation concerns the perception of the traditional authorities as more influential in getting funding for boreholes (29 per cent) than for school projects (13 per cent).

Field appraisal

In order to cross-check the information found in the applications that had passed the desk appraisal screening, the appropriate DEC members would "accompany" the zone officer to conduct field appraisals as set out in the Implementation Handbook (MASAF 1998c). The field appraisal teams would also assist the community in carrying out the detailed project design and the DEC representatives on the team would sign the field appraisal form indicating support for the project application.

Since the monitoring reports only covered funded projects, the team lacks valid statistical data on *how many* desk-appraised projects were rejected at the field appraisal stage and why. However, key informant interviews at district-level indicate that very few projects were rejected at that stage. The impression we received from MASAF and government staff was that most projects easily passed the test, but that there were instances where applications failed due to inadequate community contributions (sand or bricks) or because the project committee was not democratically elected.[62]

The monitoring data show which DEC members and social elites were most active in field appraisal decision-making during MASAF's first years of implementation (Table 6.3).[63]

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[61] CSP Zonal Technical Advisor in Dedza, 5 May 2003 and District Commissioner in Balaka, 15 May 2003.
[62] Interviews with Zone Managers and DCs.
[63] The great majority (75 per cent) of the project proposals were appraised in 1996.

Table 6.3 Field appraisal by position of signatories of approved applications by LIA/non-LIA (total number of signatures in brackets)

Signatories (up to 6 per project)	Field Appraisal				
	Approved/signed				
	LIA	Non-LIA	All	Not signed	All
District Community Development Officer	10	13	23		
MASAF Officer	5	13	18		
Area Development Committee	1	11	12		
Traditional Authorities	0	9	9		
Primary Education Advisor	0	8	8		
Project Committee Representative	0	7	7		
District Education Officer	0	6	6		
Area Educational Officer	1	3	4		
Others	22	80	102*		
N (signatures)	(41)	(160)	(201)		
N (forms)=	11	45	56 (B=8, S=48)†	56	102

* This category refers to a variety of other signatories,` such as district officers, extension workers and planning officers. However, no particular group of signatories was more active than those mentioned in the table.
† B= borehole, S=school block.

Water officers were lacking in appraisals

Field appraisal decision-making bore many similarities to desk appraisal. Government officers were the most active signatories of appraisal forms. MASAF officers signed only one-third of the applications, and in the non-LIA districts, only a quarter. The most active government officials were the same: District Community Development Officers (22) and District Commissioners (18). Moreover, various educational officers – District Education, Primary Education Advisor Officers – were also active. They were signatories of 19 forms altogether. What is striking, however, is that although one-fifth (8 out of 56) of the signed forms were for boreholes, District Water Officers input is almost entirely lacking in the field appraisals, a finding that, nonetheless, confirms the impression given us by the Ministry of Water concerning the district's capacity to appraise water projects. One informant at the Ministry said that it did not receive information on new boreholes on a regular basis.[64] He suggested as a reason a shortage of skilled personnel capable of formulating and supporting the implementation of a systematic water development strategy. He also said that district water departments do not have the capacity to appraise and supervise borehole projects.

Education officers were junior

What was the professional quality of the field appraisal team? There has been a concern on the part of the Zone Manager that government staff who participated in field appraisal teams were junior staff with limited technical knowledge. This is confirmed by the table, which shows that a high proportion of

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[64]   Interview at Ministry of Water, February 2002.

signatories from the "education sector" were junior officers – Primary Education Advisor (8) or Area Education Officer (4). The Primary Education Advisor was actually more active than the head of the districts' education office – the District Education Officer (6).

According to MASAF staff this was partly to do with lack of adequate field allowances for senior people and general lack of ownership of MASAF projects on the part of the DEC staff. It was also said that DEC staff did not consider the field appraisal of MASAF projects as their "normal" duties. In addition, the occasional lukewarm relationship between MASAF and DEC staff may have contributed to a situation in which field appraisal of MASAF projects was not the top priority of the District Education Officer.[65]

Traditional authorities played an active role

The traditional authorities also played an active role in field appraisal decision-making (21 forms were signed either by TAs or ADCs that were headed by these authorities). While this finding may call into doubt how strictly the guidelines were applied and understood by the district-level officers, it is less striking than the finding that the traditional authorities tended to sign desk appraisal forms more than field appraisal forms. The field appraisals were carried out at the project site where the traditional authorities would normally be heavily involved in all kinds of development activities. Moreover, since the field appraisal was a means of cross-checking the information supplied from the desk appraisal form, the traditional authorities would be in an optimal position to verify information on individual project proposals.

Was the District Development Committee part of the approval process?

According to the 1998 CSP Implementation Handbook and the 1996 CSP Orientation Handbook, the DDC has no role in the appraisal process. In the 1998 handbook, the Committee is hardly referred to at all, though the later handbook notes that the head of the DEC will keep the Committee informed of projects that *have been* (author's emphasis) appraised (MASAF 1996 and MASAF 1998c: 9). This is apparently confirmed by a study that showed that the DDC was not part of the approval process (Schroeder 2000: 428). It is evident from our data, however, that individual members of the DDC, particularly the traditional authorities, were involved in both desk and field appraisals. Moreover, as several of the district fieldwork respondents noted, the DDC as a group was also active in appraisals. How much power it exercised and how formal its role was, varied considerably between districts. In Nkotakota, for example, the DEC prepared the desk and field appraisals and then presented a written report to the DDC.[66] At this meeting the DC and a few of his district technical advisors had meetings with the DDC to

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[65]   One of the DCs described the relationship in the following way: 'During MASAF I the working relationships between the DA (which has very few responsibilities), DC and the MASAF structures were not all that good. They were characterised by competition, distrust and duplication of functions and many DC staff envied the MASAF staff their salaries and working conditions'.

[66]   District Water Officer in Nkotakota (interview 5 May 2003).

discuss a development plan for MASAF and other projects. In Dedza, on the other hand, members of the DDC were regularly called upon when the DEC was doing its desk appraisals.[67]

Supervision and monitoring

According to MASAF implementation guidelines, the DEC or its district-level staff were responsible for the technical supervision of sub-projects from the launch ceremony to finalisation. They were supposed to visit the project site at least once a month to monitor progress, and report back to the zone officer (MASAF 1998c).

Evidence from the ground indicates little involvement by DEC members in project supervision and monitoring. The MASAF midterm review documented problems with the DECs' appraisals of the technical aspects of construction projects (MASAF 1997c). After that review, MASAF employed district supervisors to fulfil that duty. As shown in Table 6.4, most of the monitoring was carried out by MASAF staff. When our informants were asked if 'anyone from outside your community visited the project to see how things were going on', more than two-thirds (70 per cent) claimed they had been visited by an MASAF official. Only 7 per cent said that a government official had visited them. There were only minor differences between LIA and non-LIA districts, and MASAF and district officials were also less active in monitoring boreholes than school buildings.

Table 6.4 Project monitoring by institutional affiliation, project type and LIA/non-LIA district. Persons. Percentage in brackets

LIA/Non-LIA district and project type	Institutional affiliation			
	MASAF	Government	Others/missing	All
All districts	97 (70%)	9 (7%)	15 (23%)	121
LIA	32 (78%)	3 (7%)	6 (15%)	41
Non-LIA	65 (81%)	6 (8%)	9 (11%)	80
School blocks	80 (89%)	8 (9%)	2 (2%)	90
Boreholes	17 (57%)	2 (3%)	12 (40%)	31
N=	97	9	15	121

The low involvement of government staff can partly be explained by capacity constraints. At the district level, lack of transport facilities and, in some instances, lack of motivation and incentives on the part of the government officials to undertake the supervision, affected technical supervision. In some cases

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[67] Interview with MASAF officer in Dedza, 31 April 2003. We also see from our district key informant data what seems to have been wide inter-council variations concerning the involvement (or non-involvement) of the DDC *after* the finalisation of the field appraisal. In some districts the DDC was involved *before* the applications were sent to the MASAF zone office, in others the project applications were sent directly to the MASAF zone office without passing through the committee.

MASAF zone offices had to provide funds to run the District Commissioners' vehicles in an attempt to overcome the problem.[68]

Another challenge related to staff incentives may have been what was known as the "allowance syndrome". The syndrome appears when certain donors/projects are perceived as being more generous in their allowances than others. The result is that government officials in charge of project monitoring tend to opt for those well-remunerating donors. According to one of our respondents MASAF paid MK860 daily in subsistence allowances, compared to the government rate of MK900. Some donors, including those that channelled funds to the districts through the DDF system, offered close to MK1000 per day.[69]

Of the district staff it would normally be the Community Development Workers and the district's Building Foreman who would be monitoring the physical implementation of projects. When a project ran into difficulty the Community Development Workers would help the community with moulding more bricks. If any serious technical hitches arose, the Building Foreman reported to the DC office or to the MASAF zone office. However, as he did not always communicate with the head of the sector at district level, the latter were often ill-informed about the progress of the project when they reported to their sector headquarters on the completion of a MASAF project within their sector.[70]

Government officials were equally involved in project monitoring in LIA and non-LIA districts. Given that the LGDMP actually underpinned DEC's professional capacity more in LIA districts than non-LIA districts, one would have expected them to be more inclined to monitor development projects than their colleagues in the non-LIA districts.

6.6 District development planning

During the MASAF implementation period several DECs and DAs (after 1999) started to prepare draft sector development plans for small-scale infrastructure, intended for incorporation in draft district development plans. The team was unable to confirm whether such plans were used during MASAF implementation.[71] It was difficult to find copies of the Socio-Economic Profiles and Draft District Development Plans from the implementation period.

Based on interviews with district personnel the review team found, in line with the existing evaluations of the planning systems, little to indicate widespread sub-district planning in the districts during the implementation of MASAF. In a few areas the Area Development Committee was reported to have produced plans, though they had little relevance to MASAF project selection. This has partly to do with the fact that MASAF applied its own project selection procedure. Secondly, those project proposals

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[68] In Mangochi the lack of transport facilities was so critical that the DC divided the district into five zones for general monitoring/inspection. Every officer had responsibility for project monitoring in a particular district. When they were out in the field, they would monitor as many district projects as possible within all sectors, irrespective of their sector competence.

[69] Interview with government technical advisor, 7 May 2003.

[70] Interview with District Commissioner, 10 May 2003.

[71] The only evidence that one of these instruments was used could be found in Mangochi. Here the District Commissioner noted that the preparation of the Socio-Economic Profile was useful in all forms of planning for small-scale infrastructure. Interview, 10 May 2003.

that were supposed to emanate from the communities as part of the councils planning process were meant to feed into the District Development Plan, without indicating popular priorities for MASAF projects. Thirdly, the development plans were meant to reflect any project idea articulated by the community while MASAF had a restricted menu of project options.

Some ministries produced investment plans for infrastructure and technical guidelines for infrastructure investment. Several respondents noted that these plans were not particularly relevant for MASAF projects. They cited a number of reasons.[72] One was that they lacked access to the plan. Another, suggested by a district health officer, was that they focused mainly on large-scale investments and had limited applicability for MASAF.[73] Yet another, suggested by a District Education Officer, was that they were not sufficiently tailored to district needs.[74] Several respondents reported that they were not aware of sector-specific guidelines for the implementation of MASAF projects. They claim to have used the general sector guidelines that set out the implementation of small-scale infrastructure projects.[75]

As a part of national sector planning, government officials at the district level are supposed to submit reports on completed infrastructure projects to their ministerial heads. The interviewed officers claim to have done so on a regular basis. However, in their reports the source of funding was not always identified. This may have contributed to a situation in which ministerial heads did not always have a complete overview of the status of MASAF projects in the districts.[76]

6.7 The role of traditional authorities: patrimonialism or development-oriented behaviour?

One of the most interesting findings is the prominent role of traditional authorities in several aspects of district-level decision-making. In this chapter we have particularly noted their prominence in the District Development Committee and in desk and field appraisals. We have also documented that the community perceived them to be important. From Chapter 7 (Tables 7.5 and 7.6) it is evident that they also played a key role in project identification. Moreover, from Chapter 5 it is evident that a limited number of TAs in each district were the main beneficiaries from MASAF. It is reasonable to interpret the latter finding as the outcome of successful manoeuvring and lobbying by the Area Chiefs concerned in attracting projects to their TA. Although the team was not able to study the micro-processes at work in these specific TAs, it is reasonable to assume that powerful and active chiefs were successful in identifying projects, developing project proposals in their area, mobilising their communities to contribute to project implementation (e.g. bringing in local building materials like sand and rock, and moulding bricks) and influencing district decision-making.

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[72]   Interviews with sector heads for health, education water and public works.
[73]   Interview in Mangochi, 7 May 2003.
[74]   Interview in Balaka, 15 May 2003.
[75]   Interviews with sector heads for health, education water and public works.
[76]   The Annual Primary School Census Questionnaire, used by the District Education Officer, does not contain a space to enter information on the donor(s) that contributed to new school buildings. The District Education Officer in Mangochi considered this to be an obstacle to reporting of MASAF projects (interview, 5 May 2003).

Is the prominent role of the chiefs an expression of traditional patronage policies or do we see examples of development-oriented chiefs who use all sources of power at their disposal to take advantage – on behalf of their own community, their families or themselves – of a large-scale district development programme? The three main analytical categories presented at the beginning of this chapter – elite co-optation, elite capture and elite-society cooperation – can shed light on this issue.

The elite co-optation model is only partly relevant because indirect rule was the typical form of state-society relations during the colonial period. In the one-party era some of their powers were eroded by the mobilising efforts of local cadres from the Malawi Congress Party (Cross 2001). However, this model is not wholly irrelevant. One may ask whether the abolition in the mid-1990s of the elected District Assemblies and the establishment of District Development Committees had strong elements of attempted elite co-optation. It would have served the interests of the ruling elite to have a loyal political body at the district level that could increase the centre's power and legitimacy at a time when donors started to channel funds to the district level. However, the evidence from this review suggests that chiefs actively influenced decisions and that their power in project decision-making did not primarily rest on their close ties with the centre but on their credibility and legitimacy in their own community.

The elite capture model is also only partially relevant, because it applies more to a situation when new political space is created in connection with processes of democratic decentralisation – such as when the new Malawi local government units were established in 1999 followed by local government elections in 2000. Nevertheless, the patronage perspective inherent in the model is still relevant for analysing state-society relations in the review period. There is little to indicate from the review findings that the central government managed to use MASAF projects as a means of creating dependent local chiefs by offering them large opportunities for patrimonial practices. First, the relationship between the central government and the chiefs was not typically characterised by dependency, because the chiefs were able to outmanoeuvre party officials (MPs and local party cadres) in district-level decision-making. Second, although the chiefs took advantage of the blurred boundaries between the state and civil society at the district level, their activity took on more the form of lobbying rather than typical patrimonial practices (corruption, nepotism, etc.). Third, although there might have been elements of patrimonial practices, these would not have been what made them the most important local strongmen.

As for the elite-society coordination model, it is difficult for the team to assess whether or not a high level of social capital existed in those TA areas that managed to get most access to MASAF projects. What we know is that the chiefs played an important role in mobilising the community for development activities – in terms of community labour. However, their relationship with the community was not necessarily characterised by a high level of trust (a major ingredient in social capital). The focus group discussions seem to suggest considerable levels of resentment of the way that chiefs made decisions (see Chapter 7).

It is evident that chiefs went beyond dealing with customary law. They were active in community mobilisation, proposal development and in decision-making at the district level concerning the technical screening and geographical targeting of MASAF projects. These activities do not in themselves render

chiefs development-oriented in the sense of having altruistic motives or having the wellbeing of the entire society in mind. What is evident is that they were active in trying to bring development to their community. Moreover, the development activities of the most powerful chiefs probably contributed significantly to the fact that a large share of the MASAF CSP projects in their districts was channelled to their area.

6.8 MASAF and the decentralisation reform

During the MASAF I period the district planning system was piloted in six districts. The DDCs and District Councils were amalgamated in 1999 to create the District Assemblies, which were headed by an elected assembly of councillors after the local government elections in 2000. These were important milestones in the establishment of a decentralisation process in Malawi. But no substantial progress was made in the transfer of central government responsibilities, personnel and financial resources to these assemblies. It was not until *after* MASAF I was implemented that the government invited donors to take part in the financing of the main decentralisation implementation plan.[77] It was difficult for the team to trace any influence of MASAF on decentralisation. It has also been difficult to find evidence that MASAF brought important learning into the local government system. The 2001 review of the District Development Planning system, for example, refers to MASAF I practices, but fails to draw any lessons for improving local government performance (GOM 2001b).

MASAF may have facilitated an expansion of decentralisation in the longer term by using government bodies at district level. The data from this review show that government staff were extensively involved in MASAF's desk and field appraisals, an exercise which may have given the staff valuable professional experience they could utilise if and when the decentralisation process takes off. This "capacity-building", however, did not have any *immediate* effect on decentralisation progress. At the end of the implementation stage of MASAF I in 2000, the government was still identifying capacity-building at the assembly level as 'very critical' for effective implementation of decentralisation policy (GOM 2000d: 21).

Did MASAF slow down the reform process? One of the criticisms of MASAF I from a decentralisation point of view was that its financial resources were not channelled through the DDC. The Decentralisation Secretariat (DS) was eager that all donors should use the DDF as a common set of rules for financing rural infrastructure,[78] a point of view echoed by the October 2001 joint Government/Donor review of decentralisation. Here we read that it is

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[77] The first Donor Round Table Conference on Decentralisation in Malawi was held in Lilongwe 24–25 August 2001 (GOM 2001).

[78] Interview with the Decentralisation Secretariat, February 2002.

critical that such large flows of development finance to the local level . . . are supportive of the legitimate role of District Assemblies in planning and managing resources within their mandate. Parallel planning systems or funding channels at local level cause unnecessary confusion, overburden already weak capacities and undermine the accountability of local representatives.

(GOM 2001a: 14)[79]

A similar point is made by Schroeder in a study of social funds (among them MASAF) and local government in Malawi. He claims that a parallel system of infrastructure development spending could potentially 'undermine support for local councils' (Schroeder 2000: 437).

It was difficult for the team to address these points of view empirically in the context of this review. The relationship between the establishment of MASAF and the form and pace of decentralisation is complex and does not allow for simple explanations. One could argue that had MASAF channelled its funds through the DDF mechanism the legitimacy of the DAs would have been enhanced and there would have been a demand for a faster implementation of the reform. One could also argue, to the contrary, that doing so would have led to increased economic mismanagement by council officials, which would have delayed decentralisation. The DLGA's (2000) implementation plan for decentralisation and the Government/Donor Review (2001) of the decentralisation process both indicate other obstacles to reform than the existence of MASAF (GOM 2000d and GOM 2001a). They see political commitment, increased council capacity, the establishment of an inter-governmental fiscal framework, sector commitment to devolution, and donor support to the decentralisation process as important conditions for a speedy process of decentralisation reform. The 2001 review points to many of the same factors, but adds government commitment, strategy for sector devolution and donors' commitment as particularly important for speedy reform (GOM 2001a: 18–19).

6.9 Conclusion

This chapter has explored two aspects of the implementation of MASAF I. First, the extent to which the government bodies at district level contributed to the implementation of MASAF-CSP in terms of project selection, identification, appraisal and implementation of projects on the ground. Second, we also wanted to examine whether MASAF influenced the decentralisation process positively or negatively, both in terms of the speed of the process and in terms of MASAF designing forms of decentralised service provision that would be incorporated into the government's decentralisation strategy.

Government's technical contribution: low profile of the sector ministries at district level
The relationship between MASAF and government bodies at district level was established at a time when the machinery of the government at this level was in deep malaise. Nevertheless, district government staff were actively involved in various activities in connection with the implementation of the programme, such

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[79]   This review based its conclusions on the government's own status report for the decentralisation process, existing secondary sources and a few short visits to DAs.

as project selection, desk appraisal, field appraisal and technical monitoring and supervision. The main arena for their technical contribution was the appraisal of project proposals. The two most active officers in this process were the District Community Development Officer and the District Commissioner. However, key sector staff such as District Education Officers and District Water Officers had a surprisingly low profile. Most notably, district water officers were entirely absent in field appraisals and the district education offices were often presented with junior officers. When it comes to project supervision and monitoring, district staff had an even lower profile. Most of the monitoring was carried out by MASAF staff themselves.

LIA/non-LIA variations

Another notable finding is that there were few significant differences between LIA and non-LIA districts in MASAF implementation. The findings do not support our original hypothesis that the LIA councils would perform better than other councils in implementing MASAF projects. This raises questions about the efficiency of the Local Governance and Development Management Programme in improving the performance of district personnel.

MASAF and decentralisation reform

It has been difficult for the review team to see that establishment of MASAF I had any significant impact on the implementation of Malawi's decentralisation reform. Indeed, while the programme provided valuable training for district staff in implementing small-scale infrastructure projects it has been difficult to trace any impact of MASAF on the pace of the reform or to ascertain empirically whether it brought any substantial learning into the design of the decentralisation set-up or the reform itself. In the period when MASAF was implemented, the government was preparing for the implementation of the reform. Implementation started after MASAF I was completed.

Recommendations

Both the decentralisation reform and future MASAF programmes need to reflect more deeply on the nature and type of structure whereby participation in development activities could be taken to the district level. The objective of community participation in development is seen in the Local Government Act as a central task for the DA and the Area Development and Ward Development Committees. The enhancement of community participation and bottom-up processes are also core objectives of MASAF's project selection process at district level. However, in both systems little attention has been given to the way it is working on the ground. The findings of this review indicate that the chiefs are amongst the most important players in these processes, not only at sub-district level but also at district level. Thus;

- In designing future MASAF programmes and fostering local democratic processes in the District Assemblies, there is a need to increase knowledge about chief-community relations and how chiefs interact with other power elites at district and national level. When doing this, the focus should be both on the conditions that lead to elite capture of resources and decision-making processes, and on the circumstances in which one might find active social capital and development-oriented relationships between chiefs and their environments.

The fact that LIA districts did not perform significantly better than non-LIA ones in any aspects of implementation of MASAF projects raises questions about the efficiency of the Local Governance and Development Management Programme in improving the performance of district personnel. With this background there is a need to continuously assess the capacity of the new DAs in implementing small-scale development projects and to establish a performance-based system to enable MASAF to integrate its activities fully into the DA operations.

7 Participation and community management of assets

Wycliffe Chilowa, Ephraim Chirwa, Peter Mvula and Maxton Tsoka

7.1 Introduction

Prior to the mid-1990s the government took a top-down approach to community development, with decisions made by planners and local elites. Communities were treated as providers of labour and materials, with no influence on decisions. This denied communities the opportunity to build a capacity to manage their own development work. The top-down approach to community development has been widely criticized for failing the poor. This has led to the promotion of a bottom-up approach to rural development, in which the poor, themselves, have real decision-making power.

The objectives of MASAF I were consistent with a bottom-up approach and included promotion of a participatory and community-empowering development paradigm and strengthening the capacity of local stakeholders. Communities were expected to ensure that everyone participated fully in all aspects of project identification and implementation (MASAF 1998c).

This chapter reviews the extent to which MASAF I achieved these objectives at a sample of sub-project sites. It is organised in seven sections. Section 7.2 presents a conceptual framework for understanding community participation. Section 7.3 reviews what communities understood participation to mean *vis-à-vis* MASAF's expectation. Section 7.4 explores community participation in the project cycle and Section 7.5 presents findings on actors in the project cycle. Section 7.6 presents the communities' perception of the impact of the sub-project in their community. Section 7.7 concludes the chapter.

7.2 Community participation: a conceptual framework

A bottom-up approach to rural development has gained currency in the development literature. As Hoddinott *et al.* (2001) note, the most widely held view is that local communities and beneficiaries should be involved in the design, implementation and monitoring of interventions for reducing poverty. It is argued that programmes that involve more community participation tend to have greater success in delivering benefits to the intended beneficiaries. Some argue further that projects designed and implemented by external agents do not answer the priority needs of communities (Bamberger 1991; Uphoff 1991; Dulani 2002). According to Cleaver (2001), the benefits of beneficiary participation include enhanced efficiency and effectiveness; sustainability of development interventions; and strengthening of democratisation and empowerment.

Several arguments have been advanced for associating the efficiency and effectiveness of projects with the degree of community participation.[80] First, beneficiary participation can lead to the design and implementation of projects that closely reflect the preferences and needs of the targeted communities. Second, beneficiary participation has the potential to reduce the cost of providing programme benefits. Third, community participation can contribute to empowerment of communities by enhancing

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[80] See, among others, Haddinott (2002); Miraftab (2003); Dulani (2002); and Haddinott *et al.* (2001).

organisational capacity, individual learning processes, or increased political voice. Fourth, communities tend to have informational advantages as they have a better understanding of the prevailing conditions, and are able to monitor the activities and mitigate the incentive problems (Platteau and Abraham 2002; Haddinott *et al.* 2001).

Central to the concept of community participation is the extent to which communities are empowered to define project goals and objectives, formulate policies, and implement and manage projects. Haddinott (2002) and Haddinott *et al.* (2001) identify two main types of community participation based on the extent to which communities control decisions relative to two other actors in the development process, i.e. financiers and providers. *De jure* authority refers to the formal authority or the right to decide. *De facto* authority implies effective control over decisions, the true delegation of the decision-making process (Miraftab 2003).

Wilson (1996), cited in Miraftab (2003), views the relationship between communities and other actors (financiers and providers) within a game theoretic framework in which power is assumed to be either a fixed sum or a flexible sum. With zero-sum games one party gets more power at the expense of the other. This creates a situation of "us and them" feeding fear, reducing trust and limiting community effort in development projects. Miraftab (2003) notes that when communities are limited to *ad hoc* participation through the provision of cheap labour and are excluded from decision-making, this can lead to zero-sum relationships in which there is a lack of mutual trust. He contrasts this with positive sum games, or synergetic relationships, in which the power of one party is not attained at the cost of the other. Positive-sum relationships occur where communities have been involved in initiating the process and participate actively in decisions guiding the projects, and where communities are able to operate with other actors on a level playing field (Miraftab 2003).

The extent of community participation depends on whether the process is initiated by community-based and civic movements that demand inclusive decision-making, by governmental enabling frameworks that promote or require participatory development, or by private sector developers. Some believe that the participatory process must be conceived at the community level to secure maximum effort and benefits. Thus, a participatory process should emerge as a result of a community's definition of its objectives. By extension, when the participatory process is initiated by outside agents, the community's autonomy from the state is undermined (Miraftab 2003). Such agent-initiated processes run the risk of being captured by local elites in lineage-based societies (Kumar and Corbridge 2002; Platteau and Abraham 2003).

Platteau and Abraham (2002) and Miraftab (2003) emphasise the importance of the local and institutional environment in enabling the participatory process. They argue that there are endogenous state and community imperfections in most communities that blur the social and political environment necessary for the effective delegation of authority. These imperfections include the historical dominance of the elite and lack of local and state democracy. Platteau and Abraham (2002) argue for a gradual approach to participatory development that begins with strengthening community institutions before a substantial amount of money is channelled through them. Furthermore, training in basic principles of

governing local organisations and the functioning of participatory development programmes should aim at the entire community, not just community leaders, whether traditional or elected leaders (Platteau and Abraham 2002).

A UN (1977) publication conceptualises community participation as a continuum of the extent of decision-making power by the community. At one extreme is an approach synonymous with the top-down approach in which an elite group in the community, appointed by outsiders, has decision-making powers and the community has minimal involvement and no decision-making powers. At the other extreme, is an approach synonymous with the bottom-up approach in which the community has a majority representation on a decision-making body and attains full participation in controlling the actions of that body. Four intermediate levels of citizen participation in rural development exist between the two extremes. (See annex 7, this chapter).

It may be argued that full community participation is vital for the sustainability of social funds and the assets they create. Moreover, the willingness of the community to maintain a social fund-created asset may be related to their sense of ownership and the perceived benefits of the asset. Meaningful community participation enhances the sense of ownership and increases the likelihood of implementing projects perceived as beneficial to the community.

7.3 Participation: MASAF's expectation and community understanding

According to MASAF implementation guidelines (MASAF 1998c), community participation should start with attendance by local people at a meeting at which an outside facilitator would help them articulate and prioritise development needs and elect a project committee. The expected actors at this stage included the traditional leader, community members and the facilitator. Political leaders, if present, were supposed to be part of the community. The facilitator, who was by design supposed to be a government district official, could be in the company of MASAF officials and/or other district officials. The role of the traditional leader would be to ensure that the community members cooperated with the facilitator while the government officials were simply observers. The community members, aided by the facilitator using various PRA methods, were expected to make the decisions (i.e. prioritise projects and elect a committee). Political leaders and traditional leaders were not supposed to influence the decisions of the meeting unduly. This was a crucial step in MASAF I's approach to rural development.

The elected committee would then work on behalf of the community in most of the subsequent steps. The committee would apply to MASAF for funding of their highest priority project by completing the necessary forms and would be responsible for implementing the project once funded. In particular, the committee was to be responsible for procuring goods and services required for the implementation of the project. Local elites, government frontline officials and politicians were expected to assist the committee in completing forms and, at times, following up on the status of the application at MASAF zone offices. The work of the committee and the assistance rendered to it by knowledgeable community members were considered to be community participation at this stage. The key decision-maker was the elected project management committee (PMC).

During implementation, the community was expected to contribute labour, materials and finance. The role of traditional leaders during implementation included encouraging people to contribute. The key decision-maker was to be the PMC. It was expected, nonetheless that the PMC members would brief traditional leaders and the community from time to time. At this stage, community participation meant management of implementation by the PMC and direct contributions by community members.

Management of the asset, once the project was completed, was the responsibility of the community. However, an elected committee would manage the asset on their behalf. For school projects, a school committee was given that responsibility. For a water project, the PMC was trained to manage the asset. The community at large was expected to contribute labour, materials and finance. Just like under implementation, community participation at this stage included the work of the PMC and direct contributions from the communities towards maintenance of the asset.

It should be noted that the stage at which the community had a big say was during the selection of the project and election of the committee. Participation at this initial stage legitimised participation in the subsequent stages. Contribution during implementation made sense given that the project was selected by the community itself. Likewise, leaving the completion of forms and procurement of goods and services in the hands of an elected committee was also logical.

The above outlines the form that community participation was expected to take. Participation in a MASAF sub-project should have led local people to understand the meaning of "community participation" in the light of this experience. In fact, discussions with 66 focus groups revealed that understandings of that concept had not changed very much (Table 7.1). There was general agreement that communities were no longer forced to participate in projects and that they contributed labour and other resources on a voluntary basis.[81] In addition, a few communities defined community participation as making decisions and taking control of project activities. This is what MASAF was meant to achieve. However, most communities defined participation as moulding bricks, collecting sand and stones and fetching water on a voluntary basis.[82] Their type of community participation was restricted to the implementation of projects and maintenance of community assets and did not extend to decision-making at the project selection stage. This definition is not very different from the one that prevailed before the implementation of MASAF I. The only difference is that community members are no longer forced to participate. All communities visited had implemented community projects prior to MASAF I, the evidence suggests that implementation of a MASAF sub-project had not led to great changes in the understanding of participation.

The concept of participation, as understood by the communities, reflects the lack of *de facto* decision-making in many MASAF I sub-projects. When household respondents were asked how they would go about solving a community problem, their responses reflected this. It was expected that the respondents would mention convening a meeting where the community would discuss how to solve the problem,

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[81] This change has nothing to do with MASAF I but the advent of democracy and the attendant freedoms.
[82] Discussants were requested to discuss the concept of community participation from their own perspective. In other words how do communities define participation?

including approaching appropriate authorities or financiers like MASAF. Instead they spoke of contributing labour for moulding bricks (33 per cent of groups mentioned this activity); fetching sand (13 per cent); and collecting stones (10 per cent). Only 16 per cent of groups said they would ask for assistance and 7 per cent said they would apply for funds from MASAF.[83]

Table 7.1 Communities' understanding of the concept of participation (number of groups)

Definition of community participation	All districts
Provision of labour towards moulding of bricks, collection of sand and stones, fetching water, bricklaying	62
Decision-making and contribution of ideas, identification of problems and formulating solutions to development problems	4
Total number of groups	66

Source: Focus Group Discussions.

7.4 Extent of Community Participation

This section explores the degree of community participation using information and data from focus group discussants and respondents of key informant and household questionnaires[84]. The analysis is done by project stage.

Project identification and election of the committee

According to the focus group discussants, in some sites community leaders simply informed communities of decisions already made. Only a few communities carried out a participatory rural appraisal (PRA) to identify needs and priorities. In some cases, some villages (including their traditional leaders) in a project's catchment area, were not even involved in project identification. As can be seen from Table 7.2, five out of sixty-two groups said that the communities identified the project through some form of participatory rural appraisal with ranking of priorities. The rest indicated that local elites made decisions and informed the communities about the project without their full participation.

At some sites, discussants did not know who had identified the projects, suspecting it was their traditional leaders, teachers, school committees or Members of Parliament. In some communities, local elites and leaders appointed the PMC. At other sites, discussants did not know who elected the PMC.

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[83] Note that the percentages presented here were calculated after coding the open-ended responses to the question that requested households to state what they would do to solve a community problem.

[84] The three sources are not directly comparable by design. Only the focus group discussions were used to dig deep regarding the extent of community participation. On the other hand, the questionnaires for both the key informants and households did not define the type of participation. For instance, the household questionnaire asked whether a household member had participated in a project phase. Key informants were simply asked whether or not the community played any role in project stages. Thus in responding to the questions on participation, the respondents used their own concept.

Table 7.2 Ways of project identification (number of groups)

Methods of Project Identification	All districts
Village Headman and local committees, communities rubber stamping	57
Communities through PRA (including problem ranking)	5
Total number of groups	62

Source: Focus Group Discussions.

The picture painted by respondents to the household questionnaire survey is somewhat different from the one seen from focus group discussions. When asked if any member of their household had been involved in project selection and election of the committee, 58 per cent said yes to project identification and 50 per cent to participating in the election of the project committee. Key informants painted an even more positive picture regarding community participation. Over 90 per cent said the community participated in project selection and election of the committee. Just as many key informants rated community participation as 'very good'. These figures point to the fact that there was some participation, but raise questions about its quality. The rosy picture painted by the key informants (mostly traditional leaders) is suspect considering that they knew the principles of MASAF and also that they were alleged to have been key decision-makers in project and committee selection. They had the motive to paint this kind of picture. Further, key informants were responsible for facilitating community participation. Low levels of community participation would have reflected badly on them.

Project proposal development

Project proposal development was the responsibility of the PMC. Not many households (27 per cent) had a member involved in proposal development. Over 90 per cent of key informants said that the community had some role in proposal development and also rated the community participation as very good. Whatever the case, using the PMC as a representative of the community, the involvement of other community members should be taken as a bonus since the involvement of a PMC at this stage means full community participation.

Project implementation

Focus group discussants, key informants and household respondents all agreed that there was good community participation in implementation. According to the household questionnaire, 79 per cent of the respondents said a member of their household participated during this stage. Almost all key informants said there was very good community participation. This is over and above the day-to-day management of the project undertaken by the PMC.

Asset maintenance

Community participation in asset maintenance was through the school committee or borehole maintenance, as well as their contribution of labour, materials and finances. Asked whether a member of

their household participated in the maintenance of the community asset, 22 per cent said yes. Again, over 80 per cent of the key informants said communities were involved in asset maintenance, but less than 40 per cent indicated that the community's role was very important.

On the whole, there was community participation at every stage in the project cycle (Figures 7.1 and 7.2). However, project selection and committee election did not reach expected standards at many sites. Further, considering that *de facto* community participation in project development, implementation and asset management is by representation, it is important to underline the point that that representation is legitimate only when such representatives were elected by community members.

It is not surprising, therefore, to get sentiments to the effect that communities were "tied", or were like "labourers" or "outsiders", or 'tied to a rope that could be pulled anyhow' as depicted in Box 7.1. These sentiments stress the lack of real decision-making in some MASAF I projects. These sentiments, extracted from focus group discussion reports, are typical.

Figure 7.1 Household member participation at project stages (household questionnaire)
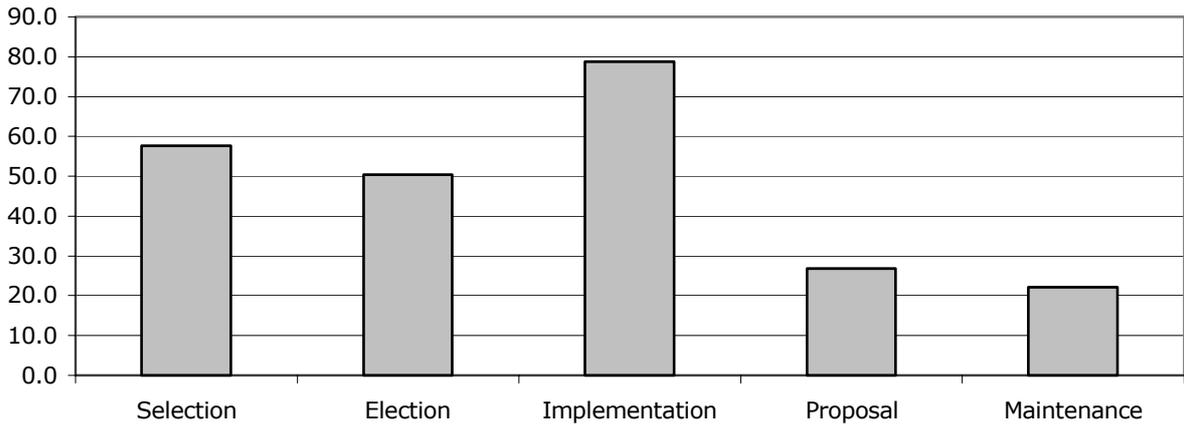
Figure 7.2 Community participation – role and levels (key informant interviews)

Reasons for lack of community participation

Members of households who participated at various project stages reported that they did so because they considered the project to be worthwhile (84 per cent), that it matched the communities' needs and that they considered their participation as a community obligation. The main reasons for not participating were that respondents were away when these activities were taking place or they were not invited to participate (Table 7.3). The reasons that attract some attention include 'not invited' and 'only officials involved'. If about a third were not invited during the project selection and committee election, who were invited then and who are these officials who were involved during project selection and committee election? The questionnaires did not probe this.

Table 7.3 Reasons for not participating (per cent)

Reason	Selection (n=462)	Election (n=542)	Implementation (n=232)	Proposal development (n=802)	Maintenance (n=855)
Was away	36	40.4	33.2	11.7	1.2
Not invited	34	32.1	21.1	42.8	26.6
Only officials involved	13	6.8	6.0	39.0	1.1
Too busy	5	6.8	6.0	1.5	0.4
Too old	4	0	0	0	0.1
Not interested	3	5.0	25.0	1.7	1.1
Others	5	5.0	8.7	3.3	3.6
No maintenance needed	–	–	–	–	65.9
Total	100	100	100	100	100

Source: Household Questionnaire.

7.5 Actors in MASAF I projects

Table 7.4a Most influential person – key informant questionnaire

Actor	Identification (n=120)	Proposal development (n=120)	Implementation (n=120)
Traditional leadership	57.9	19.8	16.7
Community as a whole	14.0	0.8	0.8
Member of Parliament	6.6	18.2	0.0
School Committee	5.0	7.5	1.7
Teacher	9.9	5.0	0.0
PMC	0.0	37.5	75.8
Government frontline worker	0.8	4.1	1.7
Government minister	0.8	0.8	0.8
Local politician	0.8	2.5	1.7
Religious leader	1.7	0.0	0.0
VDC Chairman	0.8	0.8	0.8
UDF Area Chairman	0.8	0.8	0.0
No community participation	0.8	0.8	0.0

Source: Key Informant Questionnaire.

The study reviewed the actors involved at various project stages using information from focus group discussants, key informants and household questionnaire respondents. In key informant and household interviews, respondents were asked to name the most influential actors at each stage of the project.[85]

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[85] "Person" in this case included committees, community members and politicians, as well as the community as a whole.

Focus group discussants were also asked to name the actors involved at each stage of the project and to rate their influence.

Tables 7.4a and 7.4b present the results on the most influential person by project stage. From both sources, traditional leaders were the most influential in project identification and, as expected, PMCs were more influential in subsequent stages (i.e. following their establishment).

Table 7.4b Most influential person – household questionnaire

Actor	Identification (n=1089)	Proposal development (n=1089)	Implementation (n=1089)
Traditional leadership	60.1	16.1	12.1
No idea/Unknown/DK	10.9	12.3	6.8
Community as a whole	9.7	1.7	14.8
Member of Parliament	4.7	7.3	0.7
School Committee	4.2	1.0	0.8
Teacher	4.0	1.1	0.2
PMC	1.5	56.3	62.8
Government frontline worker	1.2	1.0	0.5
Government minister	0.9	0.7	0.0
Local politician	0.8	0.2	0.6
Ward Councillor	0.7	0.6	0.8
Religious leader	0.6	0.0	0.0
NGO/CBO official	0.2	0.6	0.1
MASAF Project	0.2	0.0	0.8
VDC Chairman	0.0	0.3	0.1
UDF Area Chairman	0.0	0.2	0.3

Source: Household Questionnaire.

Table 7.5 summarises the number of times that the 66 focus groups mentioned the different actors. Some were identified during several phases of the project cycle and others were mentioned infrequently. The five actors that were mentioned most often were traditional leaders (mostly village headmen and to some extent group village headmen and TAs), the community as a whole, school committees, PMCs and teachers. The groups also mentioned MASAF personnel, district officials, religious leaders, district governors and government as actors at the community level.

Table 7.6 gives the ratings provided by the focus group discussants. Each group was asked to rank all relevant actors on a scale of 0–100. A composite ranking was calculated as the mean rank given by all groups that identified the particular actor. The aim was to show the relative importance of an actor's "words" when they became involved in a decision-making process. The advantage of this approach is that it gives a flavour of the potential influence of different actors. However, it may give too much weight to particular situations. For example, only four groups mentioned religious leaders, but in those four instances they were very influential.

Table 7.5 Actors mentioned in focus group discussions

Actor	Frequency	Share
Traditional leadership	171	24.2
Community	157	22.2
School Committee	122	17.3
PMC	91	12.9
School administration	47	6.6
No idea	31	4.4
MP	23	3.3
Local committee*	20	2.8
Pupils	11	1.6
Local politician†	6	0.8
Government frontline worker	6	0.8
District official	5	0.7
Religious leader	4	0.6
Councillor	4	0.6
Community member‡	4	0.6
MASAF	2	0.3
District Governor	2	0.3
Government	1	0.1
Total	707	100

*ADC, VDC, VHC, CCDC, and their chairs and members.
†Other local leaders other than MP and councillor.
‡Includes local experts or non-committee community members.
Source: Focus Group Discussion Reports.

Table 7.6 Decision-making ratings for actors by project stage

Actor	Identification	Proposal development	Implementation	Asset management
School Committee	29.3	49.9	34.1	53.2
PMC	0.0	39.4	58.1	58.7
Traditional leadership	40.5	50.0	31.6	25.0
Community	46.5	35.1	17.1	28.6
Member of Parliament	15.0	38.6	0.0	60.0
School administration	25.7	23.3	25.0	31.5
Local committee	11.7	36.7	23.3	31.8
Councillor	37.5	40.0	0.0	25.0
Community member	32.4	60.0	0.0	0.0
Religious leader	47.5	0.0	0.0	0.0
Pupils	0.0	0.0	10.0	29.7
District Governor	10.0	20.0	0.0	0.0
District Official	5.0	n.r.	0.0	20.0
Local politician	22.5	0.0	0.0	0.0

Source: Focus Group Discussions.

Project identification

Traditional leaders played a major part in project identification. The community as a whole was a very distant second. This confirms the earlier finding that community members were not meaningfully engaged in the identification of projects. It is not strange, therefore, to hear focus group discussants and household questionnaire respondents saying that they were just told to go and work, after MASAF had already approved and funded the projects. Others heard about the project during the project launch. Other actors, though belonging to the community, mostly hijacked the process leaving the community "unempowered".

When it came to rating the decision-making powers of the various actors, some focus groups identified instances where the community or religious leaders were particularly influential. In other cases, councillors, prominent community members, school committees and teachers were highly influential.

Project proposal development

The PMCs played the major role in the collection of application forms from MASAF, completion of forms, delivering them to MASAF and checking the status of the application. Other actors included traditional leaders and MPs. Some informants were ignorant about the actors at this stage. In some cases prominent and knowledgeable community members, like retired civil servants, became involved. This is one of the stages in which the community, through representatives, participated.

Project implementation

The PMC was the major actor in project implementation. The community's role was in terms of contributing their labour (bringing in local building materials like sand and rocks, and moulding bricks). The role of the local chiefs was to mobilise community members. Other actors rarely featured in project implementation. School committees, teachers and MASAF staff were important decision-makers during project implementation. This stage mostly belonged to the rightful actors – the PMCs and community members.

Asset management

Many informants were aware of who should be responsible for the maintenance of assets funded by MASAF I. The school committee, backed by the community, was most frequently identified. The project maintenance committee was mostly mentioned in the context of boreholes. Pupils and teachers were also mentioned. No one mentioned government. The relevant committees were said to be key decision-makers. Teachers, the community and traditional leaders also influenced decisions. For borehole projects, district officials were also considered to be important decision-makers.

When households were asked to mention the institution or person responsible for the maintenance of the asset, 59 per cent said the school committee and 29 per cent mentioned the PMC. It should be noted that the school committee took over the management of the school project while, in water projects, the PMC were trained to maintain the borehole after completion. Only 7 per cent mentioned the community as a responsible institution. However, the majority were willing to contribute towards

maintenance; 96 per cent said they provided assistance when requested and 97 per cent said they would provide assistance if requested.

Project as a whole

In terms of decision-making levels and averaging across all the project stages, the school committee is rated to have the highest decision-making powers, followed by the project management committee. The traditional leadership comes third and the community as a whole is regarded as the fourth important decision-maker. MPs and local elites were said to play supporting roles during proposal development.

Concluding remarks

This analysis has confirmed the findings of the earlier section that the extent of community participation, in terms of influencing the process, was limited. PRA exercises, that would have involved the community in identifying and prioritising their needs and electing a committee, were rarely done. There seems to have been no proper briefing of the community regarding the entire project cycle including their roles in a MASAF project. Communities were indeed acting like "followers" as traditional leaders and other actors made or influenced decisions. The communities, it must be said, expressed little surprise at the state of affairs since it was "usual" to them. Their role, ever since and even before MASAF, had always been to contribute their labour and in some cases, finances. Many were still willing to do so.

7.6 Perceived impact of the projects/assets

This section looks at the perceived impact of MASAF-funded schools and boreholes. The impact was assessed by asking focus groups to identify the problems their communities faced before the MASAF project and at the time of the discussion. The groups were also asked to assess the impact of the sub-projects on poverty and local capacities.

Table 7.7 presents problems that communities faced before the school or water assets were put in place with MASAF assistance. The top half of the table shows problems faced by communities hosting school projects and the bottom half shows problems faced by communities hosting water projects. Even if there was a multitude of problems, our main focus is on school problems (in the upper half) and water problems (in the lower half).

Overall, school projects were implemented where school blocks were needed and water projects where water was needed. However, in some districts, problems that were equally important were not addressed while in others low-priority projects were implemented instead.[86]

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[86]   This is found by comparing the total number of groups under school (for the upper part) or water (lower part) with the number of groups in the other projects. Where the number is high it means that most of the implemented projects addressed the most pressing needs. Where there are equal numbers of groups in the other columns it means there were equally important problems that were not addressed. Where the number is less than a number in the other columns it means that some of the implemented projects were not priorities for the community. These conclusions are on the assumption that the respondents were right in their problem analysis.

In school project areas, for example, only Nkhata Bay and Salima appear to have implemented priority projects. In Dedza, Rumphi and Machinga other equally high-priority problems were not addressed. In Mangochi and Balaka, school blocks and desks were not the most pressing problems. There were other problems that were thought to be more pressing.

Table 7.7 Problems communities experienced before the projects (number of groups mentioning problem)

School Projects							
	Problems						
District	School	Water	Road/ Bridge	Health Facility	Postal Facility	Market	Police Unit
Nkhata Bay	9	5	5	5	6	3	1
Dedza	2	2	2	2	0	0	0
Mangochi	3	3	5	1	1	0	0
Rumphi	4	4	0	2	0	0	0
Chiladzulu	8	7	8	4	0	2	1
Nkhotakota	3	2	2	3	2	0	0
Balaka	8	9	8	6	2	3	4
Machinga	8	8	8	8	2	4	0
Salima	7	3	3	1	1	3	0
Water Projects							
	Problems						
District	School	Water	Road/ Bridge	Health Facility	Postal Facility	ADMARC	Market
Nkhata Bay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dedza	5	6	4	6	1	0	0
Mangochi	3	3	2	3	4	1	2
Rumphi	3	3	3	1	1	0	2
Chiladzulu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nkhotakota	3	4	0	4	0	0	2
Balaka	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Machinga	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salima	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Focus Group Discussion Reports.

There was one mismatch in water projects. In Mangochi, some water projects were implemented instead of postal facilities. Similarly, in districts where water projects were implemented school projects were equally sought after. This is true in Mangochi and Rumphi districts. Again, in Rumphi, road or bridge construction was equally sought after.

The question one would like to ask is whether once the projects were implemented, communities considered the problem solved. Table 7.8 presents problems experienced after the sampled project was implemented.

Of all the school-implementing districts only Salima still cited schools as their most pressing need. Rumphi is the only district where water supply was still the most sought-after project even after implementing water projects. In Dedza and Nkhotakota districts water and school projects were still sought after even after water supply projects were implemented.

From the two tables one other message that one gets is that these communities had a number of problems which needed to be addressed and that it was sad that MASAF could only take care of certain problems. Some of the problems that were not addressed limited the projects' impact.

Table 7.8 Problems communities experienced after the projects (number of groups)

School Projects							
	Problems						
District	**School**	**Water**	**Road/ Bridge**	**Health Facility**	**Postal Facility**	**Market**	**Police Unit**
Nkhata Bay	3	5	5	8	2	2	0
Dedza	3	2	1	2	0	0	0
Mangochi	2	3	4	2	1	1	0
Rumphi	3	3	2	4	0	0	0
Chiladzulu	2	6	7	5	0	0	0
Nkhotakota	3	4	3	3	0	0	0
Balaka	4	9	11	8	2	5	0
Machinga	4	6	6	8	2	5	0
Salima	8	7	6	7	1	3	0
Water Projects							
District	**Problems**						
	School	**Water**	**Road/ Bridge**	**Health Facility**	**Postal Facility**	**ADMARC**	**Market**
Nkhata Bay	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Dedza	5	5	3	5	1	0	0
Mangochi	3	2	3	3	1	1	2
Rumphi	3	4	4	1	1	0	1
Chiladzulu	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Nkhotakota	3	3	1	4	0	0	2
Balaka	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Machinga	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Salima	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

Source: Focus Group Discussion Reports.

Overall benefits from MASAF projects

Most sub-projects addressed a problem the community had identified as a priority and there was general satisfaction in the management of the project. Indeed, 97 per cent of the respondents were satisfied with the asset.[87] The few who were not satisfied said it was because the facility was not in good condition (27.3 per cent), was of poor quality (36.4 per cent), was too far from the household (21.2 per cent) or was not relevant to the household (12 per cent).

Again, 96 per cent of the household respondents said they had benefited from the asset. Asked whether they would have preferred another project to be selected, 82 per cent said 'no'. For those not satisfied with the facility, the preferred projects were health facility (40 per cent), borehole (18 per cent), school (11 per cent) and road construction (11 per cent), respectively.

Perceived impact of schools on poverty

One gets the impression from the focus group discussions that most communities felt that a single school project would not alleviate their poverty. In some communities (Box 7.2), people felt that the social problems of long distances to schools and learning in open grounds had been alleviated with the building of school blocks with the assistance of funds from MASAF. Pupils who before the project could not go to school because of distance could now easily do so. Those pupils that were learning in open grounds could now learn in permanent and enclosed structures. Lessons could thus carry on regardless of any rain.

Box 7.2 Perceived impact of school projects

'The annual maintenance of temporary structures has now stopped'.

'Children are now learning in a shelter, thus they are no longer afraid of being soaked in the rains or failing to attend classes on a rainy day'.

'Parents and guardians have been eased of the problem of buying soap frequently for children who always came back home with dirty clothes due to dirty floors at school. School has cement floors and desks'. (Female FGD – Nkhata Bay)

'The distance which the children used to cover has been minimized as they go to a nearby school'. (Male FGD – Nkhotakota).

'Children no longer start school when they are old. They no longer travel long distances to get to school'. (Female FGD – Nkhotakota).

'Pupils learn peacefully without disturbances from school just because they were afraid of getting soaked with rains in the leaking grass thatched school blocks'. (Female FGD –Rumphi).

'The school we have been given is not enough; we need teachers' houses'. (Female FGD – Chiladzulu)

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87   These findings are consistent with what others found. For instance, Rao and Ibanez (2003) in a study of social funds in Jamaica found that although the project process was largely elite-driven about 80 per cent of the community expressed satisfaction with the project output.

In most cases the impact was thought to be minor because other problems that directly affected pupil performance were not addressed. These problems included the absence of bridges on some rivers. In such a case, despite the fact that schools are near, some pupils cannot reach them. Another problem was the lack of teachers' houses. Despite a beautiful school structure, the impact on education was less, as there were fewer teachers, due to lack of accommodation. In some cases, there was a shortage of classroom space because the project put up only one block. The intervention was just scratching the surface.

As the tables on problems before and after the projects show, roads, bridges and health facilities were serious problems at most sites. Sorting out the problem of classrooms may not have been enough by itself. Access could have been hampered during the rains. Pupils could also have problems going to school because of ill health and lack of a medical facility nearby.

Perceived impact of water projects on poverty

Analysis of the focus group reports on water projects show that there was positive impact on the livelihoods of the communities that acquired the boreholes through MASAF. People had access to clean water and some reported that the incidence of waterborne diseases reduced. The other impact was that women walked shorter distances to get to the water point, releasing some time for other activities that would improve household wellbeing. Just as was the case with the school projects, the impact was sometimes limited due to the size of the catchment area and the attendant frequent breakdowns. The extracts from the FGD reports in Box 7.3 provide a glimpse of the feelings of the communities.

Box 7.3 Perceptions of the impact of water projects

'The community's poverty has in a way lessened in that a number of people now have access to safe drinking water even though others do not benefit from the boreholes. '*Munthu ukagona pansi nkufunda saka utadya sima yagaga ndiye pano ukagona pamphasa utadya sima yagaga yomweyo sungayamike?*'. (Male FGD – Dedza)

'Not much of a change since many villages use one borehole'. (Male FGD – Dedza)

'The MASAF water project has reduced the community's poverty only a little bit because it is only a few people who benefit from the boreholes, i.e. less than half of the population have access to them'. (Male FGD – Nkhotakota).

'As a result, people choose to draw water from unprotected wells, which are on the hill, because of easy access. Cholera outbreaks are thus frequent due to taking of water that is not protected'. (Female FGD – Nkhotakota)

'We are still leaving our husbands in bed at night to wait for water at the well . . .' (Female FGD – Nkhotakota)

'One borehole that was drilled is not enough to serve the whole community. Other people still draw water from shallow wells. One borehole is serving two villages and for this reason, water still remains a priority problem'. (Male FGD – Rumphi).

Perceived impact on capacity-building

The obvious impact of schools projects was skills the people and committees derived from implementing the project. People learned how to make bricks, lay bricks, and plaster. Several PMC members were reported to have gone on to manage other community-based projects. A number of PMC members were reported to have taken up positions in churches and political parties; others were involved in food distribution in the famine of 2001/2. According to the focus groups, this was due to their dedication to duty and not to skills acquired during the management of a MASAF project. Box 7.4 presents some community perceptions of the impact of schools projects on capacity-building.

In the case of boreholes, the key skill acquired was borehole maintenance. Since the PMCs in water project sites were not involved in any management, it was not expected that the PMC members would acquire management skills. Some PMC members were subsequently elected to other committees. This may simply reflect their standing in the community. However, it is possible that participation in a water project may have increased their standing and capacity. Box 7.5 presents a sample of community perceptions of the impact of water projects on capacity-building.

Table 7.9 summarises the findings from the key informant interviews regarding subsequent activities of members of project management committees. Some committee members became members of other community committees. Chairmen were more likely to get involved in a leadership position in religion, politics or traditional leadership. They were also the most likely to go into party politics. There was minimal employment of the committee members by either government, NGOs or CBOs. Secretaries and treasurers and the first committee member got employed more than the other members, including the chairman. Only one committee member became a councillor.

It is difficult to conclude that the MASAF experience gave committee members an edge. However, the fact that some continue to be active in community-level activities gives the hope that the experience gained in MASAF I could be used in the running of the committees they are in.

7.7 Conclusions and recommendation

One of the main objectives of MASAF was to promote a new participatory and community empowerment development paradigm that reflects a bottom-up approach to development. While the design features of MASAF are supply-driven, a demand-driven approach to the project processes was a central principle in MASAF interventions. The latter implies that communities have the *de facto* authority over decisions in the project process. While *de facto* authority over decisions was indeed passed on to communities under MASAF I, it was traditional leaders and local elites who exercised that authority at the expense of the community at large. This was particularly so at the critical stage of project and committee selection.

The result is that MASAF I did not change communities' mentality regarding participation. Many communities still understand participation as the provision of labour and finances. Traditional leaders, local politicians and local elites strongly influenced most project activities and the community just

followed suit. Some PMCs were elected by the elites and even where the communities were involved in the election of PMC members, these committees were not accountable to the communities.

Box 7.4 Perceived impact on capacity-building – school projects

'The activities of the PMC have not been useful to neither the members as individuals not to the community. This is so because we do not see them as potential managers of other community based projects that may take place in future because if they have been potential managers, they would have been chosen to manage the Chilala junior primary school project which came after the Ching'oma school project which they managed'. (Male FGD – Nkhata Bay)

'Did not learn anything new'. (Female FGD – Mangochi)

'None has progressed further than the project they worked on. (Female FGD and Male FGD – Balaka)

'None of the members in PMC have been elected into public office'. (Female FGD – Nkhotakota)

'No one in the committee has been elected to any public office and no one has been employed in any CBOs or any NGOs nor in the government'. (Male FGD – Dedza

'From the group, Nyamwali and Mr. Mkoka have so far been employed in Government agencies. Nyamwali is a teacher at an adult literacy centre. Mr. Mkoka is a teacher at Mkala community day secondary school, where at first he was a primary school teacher'. (Male FGD – Nkhata Bay)

'All the members of the project management committee (PMC) are only involved in subsistence farming except for the chairman, Mr. Vuma Mwase who is now undergoing priesthood training for the CCAP church, at Bandawe'. (Male FGD –Nkhata Bay)

'If there is a thing which the people have learnt, it is the knowledge of a procedure to ask for assistance and the purchasing procedures, thus purchasing all the required items at once'.

'Have learnt bricklaying, mixing sand, plastering walls and painting'. (Male FGD – Mangochi)

'Gained leadership skills and one PMC member had gone to manage another MASAF project'. (Male FGD – Dedza).

'The PMC members have managed other community based projects. Some of them were elected to other public offices such as Osman Banda – Chairman of village development committee, Norias Banda – Village committee member, Commando Chirwa – village development committee member. But none have ever been employed in CBOs/NGOs/government agencies'. (Male FGD – Nkhata Bay)

'Mr. Mwaza was elected Vice Chairman of the UDF in the area. Mr. Chapweteka is the Secretary for the Family Planning Project funded by ADRA. Mrs. Kombezi is the Chairlady of the women's guild (Amayi amvano) of the area. (Female FGD – Balaka)

'Mr. Nsume was also chosen as a contractor in a project run by Save the Children Federation and also as a contractor in the project of the construction of the Police Unit'. (Male FGD – Dedza)

'Veronica Mzoma has been elected into public office (Mothers' Union) as a treasurer after the MASAF project. She is also a treasurer at church (Anglican) elected after the completion of the project. But neither of them has been employed in CBOs or NGOs or government agencies.' (Female FGD – Nkhotakota).

Box 7.5 Perceived impact on capacity-building – water projects

'We have not learnt any new ways of doing things through the MASAF I project'. (Female FGD – Dedza).

'Those who are involved in the maintenance committees have learnt to fix boreholes through the training they got.' (Male FGD and Female FGD – Dedza)

'A number of PMC members were involved in a couple of other activities (orphanage, food distribution, chairman of Young Democrats, and church elder)'. (Male FGD – Dedza)

'Some of the members of the PMC after completion of the project had been elected into public offices. Thomson Kaunda is now working under the committee of health as a volunteer. M. Nyakaunda is a Chairlady of the health committee. Mr. T. Kaunda is the secretary of community policing. The experience the PMC members gained will further assist the community in future because the community might choose the same people because they worked well.' (Male FGD – Nkhotakota).

'Among all the committee members it was only Maurice Mkwakwa who had been elected to a public office. She is the chairperson for UDF.' (Male FGD – Nkhotakota).

'In the maintenance committee, Arnold Chirambo has also been elected as chairman of the Village Development Committee and Baldwin Chipofya has been elected as the secretary for both the Village Development Committee and the School Committee. Kondwani Chirambo was elected as secretary of the Village Development Committee in his village.' (Female FGD – Rumphi).

'The maintenance committee members have individually benefited from the experience in that they learnt how to fix boreholes.' (Male FGD – Rumphi).

Table 7.9 What the committee members have been doing

	Chairman (n=120)	Secretary (n=119)	Treasurer (n=119)	Member 1 (n=119)	Member 2 (n=113)	Member 3 (n=109)	Member 4 (n=106)
Chair or member of another committee	25.0	22.7	24.4	16.8	17.7	15.6	15.1
Just staying/farming/ running business	23.3	32.8	31.1	48.7	47.8	51.4	52.8
Gone into religious leadership	20.0	13.4	10.9	3.4	4.4	5.5	1.9
Gone into party politics	10.0	2.5	5.9	8.4	5.3	3.7	2.8
Became ward councillor	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.8	0.0	0.0	0.0
Gone into traditional leadership	9.2	6.7	10.1	8.4	5.3	2.8	0.9
Deceased	3.3	5.0	1.7	0.8	0.9	1.8	4.7
Don't know	3.3	9.2	7.6	10.1	13.3	17.4	19.8
Employed	2.5	4.2	4.2	2.5	4.4	0.0	0.9
Moved to another district/abroad	1.7	1.7	2.5	0.0	0.0	0.9	0.9
Self-employed	1.7	1.7	1.7	0.0	0.9	0.9	0.0
	100	100	100	100	100	100	100

The evidence in this study suggests that MASAF I activities had a limited impact on promoting a new participatory development approach. If anything, the project processes have strengthened the patronage systems and the socio-political position of elites that were driving the project process.

Community participation in the project process can, at best, be described as nominal and, at worst, exploitative. At most sites, the community was not empowered. It was mostly used to provide labour and local materials but not local expertise and knowledge. There were very few cases where communities were involved in *de facto* decision-making.

Non-conventional actors featured highly in project identification because communities were not properly organised to articulate their needs. Where meetings were organised during the project identification stage, most such meetings were used to inform the community of the selected project and also solicit their cooperation during project implementation.

Most of the actors involved in project proposal development were community members. PMCs feature as key players at this stage while knowledgeable community members were crucial in tidying-up the technical aspects of form-filling. This stage assisted communities, especially the PMC members, to learn how to go about soliciting funds for community development.

Community participation at the project implementation stage was powerful in that the PMC made critical decisions on project implementation while traditional leaders mobilised their subjects for the development work. There was a marked absence of other actors at this stage, implying that there was little or no outside influence, apart from some advice from MASAF. However, the participation of the community as a whole was nominal because of the lack of community participation in project identification and committee selection. Further, most PMCs rarely briefed the communities they purportedly represented.

Asset management was left to the community, led by the relevant committees with these in turn using traditional leaders as "mobilisers" of community members. The community rarely considered themselves as responsible for the maintenance of the asset but as "instruments" to be used during maintenance.

MASAF I projects have been of value to the communities they serve. This is despite the fact that there were some mismatches between what was implemented and what would have been priority needs at the time of project implementation. The high demand for socio-economic infrastructure in the rural areas gives any "shot in the dark" a good target. The bottom line is that MASAF I only "scratched the surface" and meaningful impact would only be achieved with the implementation of many more such projects in the future.

The main recommendation is that MASAF should strive to involve the communities more at every stage of the project cycle, and particularly so in decision-making processes. This is so because there are advantages in promoting meaningful community participation. After all, social funds are for communities and communities should, therefore, drive social fund-financed community projects right from the start.

Annex 7   Modes of citizen participation

Identity of participants	Locus of power	Functions	Assessment in terms of direct exercise of power by the people
1. "Solid citizen" educated group appointed by outside authorities	Planners and local elites	Legitimises outside-planned programmes through endorsement and implementation via local elites.	People minimally involved. If at all, in decision-making
2. Appointed local leaders in the government bureaucracy	Planners and local elites	Legitimises outside-planned programmes through endorsement and implementation via local elites; facilitates implementation of outside programmes since local elites have authority from above.	People are minimally involved in decision-making, although official character of leaders' authority encourages people to join in programme activities as followers or recipients of the benefits entailed.
3. Planners in *ex post facto* consultation with people's groups	Planners, people to a slight degree	Legitimises outside-planned programmes by having people feel that they have a say in matters affecting them; allows some feedback from people on their views about plans.	People's involvement in discussion of plans after they have been formulated allows few genuine options; participation exists but only in token fashion.
4. Planners in consultation with people's groups from the beginning of plan formulation	Planners and people, but planners have more authority than people	Allows a meeting of minds and views between planners and people; gives people more realistic understanding of planning process and need to establish priorities.	People's involvement in the formulation of plans and in the manner of their implementation gives them a significant share in decision-making; planners still control the process, however.
5. People have one or two minority representations on a decision-making board	Planner-administrators and people, but people have major decision-making power as the majority membership	Legitimises the concept of people formally having voice in local affairs through direct participation and representative vote; also legitimises boards with outside elite in control.	People's participation is significant because they share in decision-making by having an official vote on a local governing board
6. People have a majority representation on a decision-making board	People and planner-administrator, but people have a major decision-making power as the authority membership	Legitimises the concept of people having the dominant voice in local affairs through direct participation, control of votes, and selection of technician-planners to assist them as advocates.	People have attained full participation in controlling the actions of the official decision-making body

Source: UN (1977).

8 Sources and research methods

Henry Lucas

This chapter will use a review of MASAF I monitoring systems and experience gained in undertaking the present study to draw lessons which may be relevant to future monitoring and evaluation procedures. The first section considers the effectiveness of the activities designed to support poverty monitoring which were implemented as one specific sub-component of MASAF. The second explores MASAF's CSP management information system (MIS) and the third looks at the beneficiary assessments which were intended to provide complementary qualitative information during project implementation. Section four focuses on issues arising from a PASR exercise based on the attempted recovery of detailed MIS information for a sample of MASAF CSP sites. Section five discusses the sample survey of sub-projects and related households and section six the qualitative research activities undertaken.

8.1 MASAF Poverty Monitoring Support Facility

The Poverty Monitoring Support Facility (PMSF) component of MASAF was intended to finance capacity-building in institutions concerned with the poverty monitoring and assessment system (PMS). It was co-financed by a US$1.51 million IDA loan and a US$1.8 million DANIDA trust fund grant. The PMS was established in 1996 to collect, analyse and disseminate poverty data in order to improve the effectiveness of targeted interventions under the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). The National Economic Council (NEC) provides the secretariat for the PMS while primary data collection and analysis is undertaken by the National Statistical Office (NSO) and the Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi (CSR). The International Food Policy Research Institute (IFPRI) provides technical assistance to the PMS.

Specific activities under the PMSF were decided on an annual basis by the PMS Technical Working Committee (TWC) in agreement with the World Bank. Between 1996 and 2000 the facility has provided support to three major data collection activities. The Integrated Household Survey (IHS) is seen as central to the activities of the PMS. However, in order to examine the *dynamics* of poverty, the CSR was given the task of conducting a Complementary Panel Survey (CPS). Approximately 800 households surveyed under the IHS were selected for a series of follow-up studies. They were interviewed every six months to reassess their welfare and provide insight into the determinants of movement into and out of poverty. The first round of the CPS was conducted during the 2000 rainy season. The Qualitative Impact Monitoring (QUIM) surveys, undertaken in 1997 and 2000, were intended to assess the impact of poverty alleviation programs on the poor by soliciting their qualitative perceptions of various poverty alleviation initiatives.

A number of specific studies have been undertaken that were 'intended to inform policymakers about the current state of poverty and the methodologies used to measure poverty'. Reports published by NEC include: 'Malawi Social Indicators Survey' (1995) (information on the wellbeing of Malawian children); 'Indicators of poverty and living conditions' (1990–95*)*; 'Factors explaining rural household

incomes and recommendations for aiding the transition out of poverty'; and 'Smallholder supply response to agricultural policy changes in Malawi'. There have also been a series of policy briefs under the general heading of 'The state of Malawi's poor' and a bi-annual 'PMS Newsletter'. The PMSF has also provided technical and financial support to the TWC and for the training of staff from the National Economic Council and the National Statistical Office.

Achievements and limitations

The Implementation Completion Report regarded this component of MASAF I as unsatisfactory, indicating that much of the funding was used to purchase equipment and provide training. It identifies lack of coordination within the World Bank team, staff turnover in both this team and the NEC, and weak linkages between MASAF and the NEC as major shortcomings.

The impression of the review team was that the PMS had involved a large amount of activity and produced a number of interesting though somewhat limited publications. However, it had marginal links to effective policy. For example, one of the main dissemination instruments of the PMS was intended to be an 'Annual Report on Poverty'. It would appear that only one such report has thus far been published, in December 1999, and a large part of this publication is taken up with macroeconomic issues and policy description. Very limited space is allocated to the discussion of the poverty situation or trends. Again, given the apparent range of PMS activity, there is a remarkable lack of both poverty description and analysis in the 2002 Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP).

The underlying problem would appear to be that poverty monitoring was established as a somewhat academic exercise, designed to produce a series of reports and briefings, rather than as a source of information that had a well defined role in an effective decision-making process.

One specific activity undertaken within the PMS is of special interest and concern for the purposes of this review. The Vulnerability Assessment Mapping (VAM) exercise undertaken in 1996 was intended to assess vulnerability to poverty and food insecurity. It has been used for targeting not only MASAF PWP activities but other poverty alleviation projects including the Starter Pack campaigns, the Targeting Inputs Programme and very recent famine relief work. However, it has generated considerable controversy (Mvula *et al.* 2000), with many arguing that it represents an outdated, unreliable and partial approach to vulnerability issues.

8.2 MASAF CSP Management Information System

One of the five "working principles" of MASAF I included 'transparency and accountability at all functional levels of the project management structure' (Bigio 1998). To support this principle a Management Information System (MIS) was designed to monitor the operational performance of sub-projects. This had two components, one relating to project accounting and the other to project tracking. Manual accounting systems were established at zone office, district and community sub-project levels, linked to a Sun computerised accounting system at head office (Mithi 1999). This was intended to be

closely integrated with detailed project tracking information. The latter entailed the use of four related databases:

- Information on each project at specified stages of implementation. This was to include reports on expenditures and project progress.
- Relevant sub-project documentation (project agreement forms, approval forms, bank letters and bank account information).
- A standard price list for materials that communities could procure directly.
- Stakeholder information on those working in partnership with MASAF.

The tracking databases were intended to follow each project from initial application to completion and to be linked to the accounting system when approved by the steering committee. To facilitate accountability of funds, resources were released to sub-projects in tranches (30, 40, 20 and 10 per cent) at specified points in the tracking cycle. Monthly summary reports about project implementation, costs and expenditures were to be prepared and circulated both within MASAF and to local government and community groups.

The accounting systems appear to have performed well in terms of their primary function and it should be said that many informants – not only those sympathetic to MASAF – viewed this as a major achievement. The use of individual bank accounts for each sub-project, the issue of specially designed accounting documents and the extensive training of Project Management Committee members in required MASAF financial procedures all indicate a high degree of concern with promoting and enforcing financial probity and the justification of expenditures. The success of these procedures has reportedly been confirmed by biennial external audits.

On the other hand, the intended integration between the accounting and tracking systems seems to have run into serious problems and has been a major limitation in terms of generating timely performance indicators and analysis. The ICR comments that this 'diminishes MASAF capacity to respond to changing needs in a timely manner'. The underlying problem may be that too little attention was paid to the motivations of those maintaining the system. While the need for strict *financial* control was seen as a key concern, the use of the information system for *quality* control and evaluation appears to have been less well appreciated.

One illustration of this position is provided by the difficulty encountered by the review team in relating sub-project accounting data to the corresponding geographical location. It emerged in discussion that, though District, Constituency and Traditional Authority (TA) names were formally required when data was entered into the accounting system, the last was frequently omitted (or sometimes guessed) because it was not necessary from an accounting perspective. TA-level analysis only became possible when the issue of geographical distribution of resource allocation was discussed with Zone Managers and they agreed to go through a list of sub-projects and identify their location. It is of interest that having been

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through this process they expressed a wish for future projects to be "geo-coded" to allow their precise location to be identified.

The tracking system itself appears to have functioned reasonably well in some zones. A number of Zone Managers were able to provide, at short notice, detailed status reports on all their community sub-projects. These contained information on specified outputs, launch date, number of intended beneficiaries, physical status and disbursement of funds, along with comments on any problems arising. This valuable source suffered from two limitations. Firstly, only a minority of Zone Managers were able to provide it. More interestingly from a monitoring perspective, there was no simple link from the sub-project to the corresponding accounting records. Matching had to be done on the basis of the name and location of the project, a process with obvious problems in terms of both the time required and reliability of the matching.

8.3 MASAF beneficiary assessments

Beneficiary assessments were to be undertaken in a yearly cycle. The MASAF MU prepared the terms of reference for these studies. These were then submitted for consideration and possible revision by the TWC before being put out to tender. Reports from these assessments were to be submitted to both the TWC and MASAF MU.

In the event, two rounds of beneficiary assessment were undertaken, with reports dated April 1997 and February 2000. The information in these reports is of considerable interest. However, the overall impression, even in the 2001 report, is that the exercise remains at the level of exploration and provocation. Questions are raised in the context of a number of specific projects and general recommendations are made. However, the generally accepted objective of such appraisals – to provide *systematic* qualitative information to *complement* quantitative project information – does not appear to have been achieved. In general, the reports tend to provide very detailed and extended information on individual cases rather than maintain a focus on key issues.

The problem may lie less with the contracted consultants who undertook the study than with the terms of reference. These appear to leave considerable scope for interpretation. They make little mention of the need for triangulation of responses or assessment of the extent to which opinions expressed by individual respondents are truly representative of their community. Above all, they fail to stress the need for information that is amenable to systematic analysis and interpretation, for example by quantifying and tabulating findings where possible.

It is also of some concern that the sites were selected by MASAF – no rationale is provided in the reports other than that they are 'to represent a broad cross-section of project sites and experiences'. In 1997, 17 CSP and 4 PWP sites were chosen, somewhat less than the 22 and 5 indicated in the terms of reference. Just three non-project communities, one in each region, were selected to explore why they had not yet applied for funding. As the latter would seem to be a key issue, the very limited number of sites seems problematic.

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8.4 PASR exercise on MIS data

MASAF officials and Zone Managers agreed to assist the review team in assembling selected MIS data on each of the 121 sub-projects sampled for the field survey described in Section 8.5. A set of data collection instruments was provided for this purpose; these were essentially simplified versions of standard project forms covering the community sub-project cycle – project application, desk appraisal, field appraisal, MU review form, field activity monitoring form, financial report and completion review sheet. The forms were sent for initial completion to MASAF managers in the six zones where the sub-projects were located: Mzuzu, Dwangwa, Salima, Ntcheu, Liwonde and Zomba. Difficulties were then referred to the MASAF MU. Overall, partial data was eventually obtained for 104 of these sub-projects – 84 of 91 school blocks and 20 of 30 standalone boreholes. Problems arising were analysed by the MASAF Monitoring and Evaluation Officer.[88]

Missing data for the sub-projects submitted by zones most commonly related to the MU reviews, borehole financial reports and field activity monitoring. The major reasons given by managers for difficulties in providing information were: (1) missing forms on zone sub-project flies; (2) sub-project information not passed to the zones; and (3) limited use of some forms due to a more general failure to fully implement the MIS.

1   The zone files were sometimes incomplete because documents were sent to MASAF MU without retaining copies. Zones were required to send original project documents – application forms, desk and field appraisals, etc. – but in some instances did not retain copies. For other sub-projects certain forms could simply not be traced. One particular problem identified was that documents were lost in the course of zone re-alignment.

2   Information not passed to zones related mainly to payments for boreholes and final reconciled figures for funds disbursed on sub-projects. This information was retained only in the financial management system at MU.

3   There was reported to have been only limited use of some of the project forms, for example the form designed for field activity monitoring. Thus data relating to the quality of facilities which was to be derived from this form was often not available. It was possible to fill some of the gaps from MU files or the financial management information system. This was particularly relevant to data from the application forms, MU review, borehole payments and disbursements.

In reviewing the relevant sub-project files held at MASAF MU, the main impression was that the system had been overwhelmed by the variety and volume of information. It was difficult to discern any particular logic in the overall storage of sub-project files. There was always uncertainty as to whether the complete set of files for any particular district or zone had been located. Within each file, attempting to find the key forms relating to the project cycle entailed searching through a considerable volume of other unsorted documentation, for example subsistence reimbursement claims and similar detailed correspondence.

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[88]   The discussion here is an edited version of that provided by the MASAF M&E officer, Mr Murphy Zenengeya.

Clearly, computerisation of the main sub-project information should rectify this situation. However, if paper files are to be maintained as a back-up to the project database, much more thought needs to be given to ensuring that they are maintained in a fashion that will facilitate rather than obstruct their use.

8.5 The use of sampled MIS data and key informant interviews for district-level analysis

The project monitoring reports are the most important source of information for the analysis of the district-level project cycle in Chapter 6. Of the 121 sampled sub-projects, it was possible to compile reliable information on 102. Of these, more than one-third lacked information regarding desk appraisal signatories (see Table 6.2) and half of them lacked information regarding field appraisal signatories (see Table 6.4). Figures on signatories presented in Chapter 6 may therefore not be representative for MASAF as a whole. On the other hand, there is nothing to indicate that the missing information is systematic, for example in terms of geographical location of the project or project type (schools or boreholes). Thus, all in all we have no reason to believe that this is a biased sample.

The information regarding signatories of appraisal forms is important because it represents the best available quantitative indicator of district staff involvement in technical screening of project proposals. That said, these signatures only cover a limited aspect of the district's involvement. The frequency of signatures by district personnel is an indicator of how active the officers were at desk appraisal meetings. However, the team has limited information on other key aspects of staff involvement such as which persons exerted greatest influence at the meetings and which criteria were used in desk appraisal of project applications.

The district-level interviews that provide a major source of information for Chapter 5 were conducted from 28 April to 16 May 2003 in four of the six study districts: Zedza, Nkotakota, Mangochi and Balaka, and their respective MASAF zone offices. The districts were selected randomly and included two LIA districts.[89] Meetings were held with top officials at MASAF zone offices and at district council level. The zone office meetings included Zone Managers and technical advisors while the district council-level meetings included District Commissioners, District Planning Officers, Finance Officers, District Community Worker Officers, district technical sector officers and others. These meetings were also used to assemble planning documents relevant to the comparison of LIA with non-LIA districts.

Most aspects of district council involvement in implementing MASAF's CSP projects were covered during these interviews. However, some of the top management personnel, such as District Commissioners and District Planning Officers, had been in office for less than a year. This made it impossible to collect detailed information on the working relations between councils' executive branch and the technical team responsible for implementing MASAF projects. Although most sector staff had been in their positions for some years, the value of the interviews with these officers was restricted by memory lapses about processes that unfolded several years ago.

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[89]   The LIA districts were Dedza and Mangochi.

8.6 Sample survey of MASAF sites

The surveys of MASAF I community sub-projects were based on a stratified cluster sample of 121 sites, 91 involving education infrastructure and 30 standalone boreholes. Nine districts, one LIA and two non-LIA in each of the North, Central and Southern regions were sampled with probability proportional to population size. Within each district a systematic sample of some ten education and three borehole sub-projects was taken from a randomised list.[90] Nine households in each sub-project community were then randomly selected for a questionnaire-based survey of perceptions and attitudes, with a particular focus on the nature and extent of community participation in the creation and maintenance of the relevant assets. Table 2 presents the number and relative shares of the sampled sub-projects by district and type.

Table 8.1 Sampled sub-projects by location and type

Location	Type		
	School	Water	Total
Southern Region	41	13	54
Chiradzulu	9	4	13
Machinga	13	3	16
Mangochi	13	3	16
Balaka	6	3	9
Central Region	30	10	40
Dedza	10	4	14
Salima	10	3	13
Nkhotakota	10	3	13
Northern Region	20	7	27
Nkhatabay	10	4	14
Rumphi	10	3	13
Total	91	30	121

The surveys used three main types of instruments: quality checklists, questionnaires and focus group discussion guides (Annex II). The quality checklist was administered in all sites and attempted to provide a simple assessment of the current physical condition of sub-project assets based on inspection by an enumerator. For buildings, school blocks and teachers' houses, it rated the state of repair of the walls, floor and roof on a simple three-point scale. For boreholes, it rated the flow strength and quality of the water supply, again on a three-point scale. Where multiple assets of a particular type had been provided, one was selected at random for assessment.

Two forms of questionnaire were used. The first was administered to key informants – traditional leaders, school administrators and other knowledgeable community members. Only one questionnaire was

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[90] The original design specified 120 sub-projects. In practice, three additional sub-projects were visited in Chiradzulu, one less in Balaka and one less in Mangochi.

completed at each sub-project site but multiple key informants were requested to provide information relevant to the various sections. The second questionnaire was completed by household interview. It was administered to a total of nine households, randomly selected from those living in the "beneficiary villages" specified on the sub-project application form. School projects generally benefited a number of villages while boreholes were typically associated with just one. The respondent for this questionnaire was the person identified as the household head or their spouse.

The focus group discussion guide was used in a randomly selected sub-sample of fifteen sub-project sites. Two focus group discussions were held in one or two beneficiary villages in each selected site, one with male and the other with female participants. They were designed to allow detailed, in-depth discussion of community participation. In addition to the qualitative insights gained, an attempt was made to derive quantitative data from the reported findings by consolidating this information (Chapter 7). This was particularly useful in terms of understanding the importance of various actors in the project cycle. Discussants were asked to identify individuals or institutions that played various roles at each stage of the project and this information was then aggregated over focus groups and sub-projects. A similar procedure was used to determine quantitative "performance indicators" for these actors, in this case by averaging scores on various criteria across the groups.

Because there were considerable overlaps in the information gathered by the three instruments, it was possible to triangulate findings and thus increase reliability. It was also possible to compare the perceptions of the general population, expressed in the household survey, with those of individuals who played a central role in sub-project selection and implementation, often members of the community elite, who responded to the key informant questionnaire. The focus group discussions, though limited in terms of the number of sub-project sites covered, were of great value in allowing detailed exploration of the issues raised by the questionnaire-based surveys and thus contributing to the interpretation of the findings from these sources.

It is nonetheless recognised that the combined findings from the three sources have considerable limitations. A key issue was the recall period, with most of the sub-projects surveyed having been undertaken four or five years prior to the fieldwork. The implementation of a MASAF sub-project was clearly a major event in the life of a community and the main aspects are probably reasonably well remembered. However, it would have been unreasonable to expect that the details of the selection, design and implementation processes would still be well remembered. To minimise the implications of this limitation, it was decided at an early stage that only relatively simple questions should be included in the study. A second issue relates to the selection of the respondent for the household questionnaire. There seemed no simple alternative to the standard approach of interviewing the head or spouse of the head. However, it is appreciated that this individual may in a considerable number of cases may not have been the most appropriate in terms of their knowledge of the MASAF sub-project. A number may have been absent from their village at the relevant time, for example working or seeking work elsewhere. In some cases they may not at that time have been the head of household or indeed married to their current spouse. The high turnover of household heads in Malawi made this a serious issue, given the length of the

period considered. The overall effect would have been to underestimate the involvement of household members in sub-project activities.

The recognised limitations of the focus group discussion approach typically relate to issues around group dynamics and the difficulty of addressing complex issues within this essentially wide-ranging and relatively unstructured format. Bearing these points in mind, the current study chose to use focus groups only for relatively simple topics and arranged that the groups should not include traditional leaders or their relatives or councillors, aiming to minimise the possibility of dominance or intimidation.

9 Conclusions

This report has reviewed the experience of MASAF within Malawi's economic and institutional context with the aims of understanding what went well and what did not and learning lessons for the implementation of poverty reduction strategies in Malawi and elsewhere. Sections 9.1 and 9.2 present, respectively, the project's contributions to poverty reduction and institutional development, and section 9.3 highlights the lessons learned for the implementation of the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy.

9.1 Poverty reduction

The data did not enable the team accurately to assess the contribution of MASAF I to sustainable poverty reduction. During the period in question, the wellbeing of households was influenced by more powerful factors than MASAF. Malawi experienced serious economic difficulties and prices rose considerably. The HIV/AIDS epidemic had a major impact. In 2001–02 crops failed and food was scarce. Disputes between donor agencies and the government led to reduced aid flows. The relatively modest allocation to MASAF I could make only a minor contribution to poverty reduction. This section reviews the impact of the project in terms of income poverty and income poverty security, human capital and empowerment.

Income poverty reduction and income poverty security

The project addressed income poverty and income poverty security by providing paid employment in public works and, to a lesser extent, in community sub-projects. The household survey at sub-project sites found that 15 per cent of households at sites where classrooms were built had at least one household member who had earned income from the construction. It was not possible to estimate the number of person-days and total wages for unskilled workers in these projects. The public works component disbursed $12.8 million of which 48.6 per cent was for wages of unskilled workers. These projects employed 721,155 people for a total of 14.42 million person-days. According to a beneficiary assessment, 71 per cent of people said that participation in a project had improved their quality of life.

The strategy of keeping daily pay low in public works projects successfully discouraged people with alternative ways of earning money from seeking work. However, there was little effort to ensure that the poorest and most disadvantaged benefited. The relatively modest funding of PWP and the decision to spread the benefits widely meant that beneficiaries mostly received only one opportunity of employment during the life of the project. It is best to view the PWP during 1996–2001 as a short-term expedient to relieve severe poverty and as a test of an approach the government could subsequently scale up.

The experience of MASAF illustrated the difficulties that a scaled-up public works programme would face. There were disputes about the appropriateness of the relative needs of different geographical areas. These indicators would have to be updated frequently in order to command general support. In any case, there were strong political arguments for spreading the benefits quite widely, since every constituency had many very poor people.

The team did not find major leakages of funds to the better-off, nor did it find much targeting of the poorest and most vulnerable. It will take additional effort to channel funds to the latter, who tend to have less influence. There may be a conflict between the wish to benefit the poorest and the pressure to produce good quality assets.

Human capital development

The assessment of human capital development focused on construction of school buildings and drilling of boreholes, which accounted for 1,214 out of 1,392 sub-projects. One reason for the preponderance of schools is that the government eliminated fees for primary school shortly after the 1994 election and enrolment increased substantially. The new policy was given a large amount of publicity.

The study did not find a relationship between the level of poverty at district or traditional authority level and the allocation of MASAF I resources. This suggests that there was little targeting of the poorest localities but it also suggests that the richer areas did not capture a disproportionate share of sub-projects as a result of their greater ability to prepare and advocate for sub-project proposals. It is probable that most sub-projects were in locations with many poor households.

The evidence suggests that MASAF provided substantial benefits to the poor. This was certainly the case with regard to the provision of additional school places. MASAF I funded around one-quarter of the classrooms built between 1994 and 2001 (with MASAF II providing a similar number). Almost all those buildings are in use, though around 35 per cent are estimated to be in serious need of repair. On the basis of the survey estimates, they provide spaces for more than 150,000 pupils. This represents around 13 per cent of the increase in primary school enrolment of 1.2 million that occurred in 1994.

Survey estimates similarly indicate that some 200,000 people are using MASAF I boreholes as their primary source of drinking water. Here, the position on sustained use is less impressive. Only half of the boreholes linked to education sub-projects and two-thirds of standalone boreholes provided a reasonable supply of palatable drinking water at the time of the survey.

Empowerment

It was difficult to provide a quantitative assessment of empowerment. However, there are some encouraging indications. Almost 60 per cent of respondents reported involvement of household members in sub-project selection and 27 per cent said that members had participated in project preparation. This quantitative evidence is somewhat simplistic, since it does not address the degree of "involvement". The focus group discussions revealed how limited this was at many sites. Nonetheless, the data suggest that the process was not simply confined to a small elite.

The great majority of respondents accepted that their community was responsible for maintenance of school buildings and boreholes created with MASAF support. Attitudes about how further investments might be obtained could also be regarded as in line with MASAF principles, in that around 65 per cent of respondents proposed that the first step would be to collect money or building materials before seeking

external assistance. However, the focus group discussions suggested that many people had little idea of how to secure the additional support. The following section discusses these issues in more detail.

9.2 Institutional development

The new government inherited a poorly performing administrative system in 1994. It launched a number of reform initiatives including strengthening financial planning, restructuring some ministries, establishing an Anti-Corruption Bureau, reforming personnel management in the public sector and strengthening decentralised political and administrative structures. The outcome has been disappointing. The team reviewed the experience of MASAF I with this in mind, looking at the interaction between the project and government structures, assessing the influence of MASAF on the progress of reforms and identifying lessons for the implementation of Malawi's poverty reduction strategy.

MASAF and national planning

The team did not find guidelines for allocation of community sub-projects between sectors or between districts, nor did it find evidence that the Project Steering Committee reviewed the pattern of allocation. Despite the lack of explicit plans, the projects were distributed relatively equally between districts, with the less populous ones tending to have more projects and higher expenditure per capita. This seems to have been an outcome of the capacity of districts and Zone Managers to process applications. On the other hand, the allocation of projects between traditional authority areas was highly unequal and in 20 out of 26 districts more than half the projects were in a single traditional authority area. This suggests that traditional leaders played an important role in mobilising communities to submit proposals or in lobbying to have proposals appraised. Communities submitted many more proposals than anticipated, creating a large backlog. The team heard many stories about how political lobbying influenced the choice of proposals for appraisal.

The relationship between MASAF and the Ministries of Education, Science and Technology (MoEST) and Health and Population (MoHP) were quite different. The MoEST was under pressure from the highest political level to increase the supply of school buildings. At first there were problems of communication between MASAF and the Ministry and some schools were sited inappropriately, but these problems were resolved. The relationship between MASAF and the MoHP was very problematic. The MoHP was focusing on the preparation of a national plan and a proposal for a sector-wide approach for donor support. It opposed the construction of facilities not in its plan. There is disagreement between MASAF and the Ministry regarding the participation of district personnel from the Ministry in approving proposals for health facilities. Several completed facilities are not staffed. MASAF eventually discontinued funding of health facilities. Meanwhile, health status was declining and many communities put health at the top of their priorities. Neither the MoHP nor MASAF were able to respond to these expressions of need with an alternative to the construction of a new facility.

There is a great deal of dispute about the efficacy of the MASAF strategy of implementing rural infrastructure projects through elected project management committees. There is little doubt that MASAF

was more efficient than the MoEST Development Management Unit. It is more difficult to compare it with building programmes implemented through special management units, NGOs or other models involving communities. The lack of a systematic study of the alternative approaches for implementing the large school building programme is a sign of a lack of strategic thinking by government and donors.

Centralisation or decentralisation

The study team reviewed the degree to which implementation of MASAF was consistent with the government's commitment to decentralisation. It found that decentralisation of government functions did not progress very far during the period of MASAF I. Furthermore, district personnel working for sector ministries played little part in the appraisal of most MASAF projects. Rather, the District Development Officer and the District Commissioner were mostly responsible for sub-project appraisals. The study concluded that the project designers overestimated the capacity of district structures to support implementation and that many problems arose from insufficient district support. This was even the case in localities with pilot schemes for strengthening district planning. The review team concluded that the project had little influence on the process of formal decentralisation of government administration.

The centralisation/decentralisation dichotomy is not a helpful way to explain the relationship between MASAF and other institutional actors. MASAF's centralised financial accounting system and external audit were important factors in reducing opportunities for leakage. Also, the direct link between the MASAF Executive Director and the President played an important role in protecting Zone Managers from pressure from local politicians. On the other hand, communities did not believe that government personnel had much influence. Many decisions were made locally, by traditional leaders and project management committees. MASAF was centralised in some ways and decentralised in others.

The study found a strong power structure outside the government system. The traditional leader had the greatest influence on the choice of projects at many sub-project sites and he influenced other aspects of the project as well. The district development committees, on which traditional leaders sat, were the *de facto* decision-making bodies during much of MASAF I. The power of local leaders was illustrated by their influence on the technical screening of projects and by the heavy concentration of community sub-projects in a few traditional authority areas.

Participation and democratisation

It is difficult to piece together a story of what actually happened in a community several years in the past. The team addressed this difficulty by collecting information from several sources. It found that household members and local notables had similar recollections although the latter were more likely to believe that politicians influenced the decision to fund the project. The team supplemented these recollections with focus group discussions.

A high proportion of households reported some degree of participation at various phases of the project cycle. Detailed discussions revealed that most sub-project sites achieved only a modest degree of participation in the choice of projects. A few communities undertook PRA exercises to agree on priorities.

In most localities traditional leaders strongly influenced project selection, and other actors, such as teachers and Members of Parliament, were also influential. Religious leaders played an important role at a few sites. Very few respondents thought that government extension workers or local government officials had much influence on MASAF sub-projects.

There was general agreement that project management committees had played a key role in implementation. The team learned of incidents of faulty procurement or corruption, but the general impression was that most committees functioned reasonably well. There was little evidence that participation in a committee substantially increased the capacity of local people to undertake other projects.

It is not surprising that traditional leaders were influential. During the 1980s and 1990s the government had reduced the financial autonomy of local governments and discontinued elections for Distritct Assemblies. During the first half of the 1990s there had been a sustained political mobilisation against the one-party state. These events reduced the legitimacy of both levels of government, leaving a void for traditional leaders to fill.

The evidence on the impact of these leaders on the appropriateness of the choice of MASAF sub-projects and the fairness of resource allocation is mixed. Some focus group discussions revealed unhappiness about the role of traditional leaders. There were complaints that the community's views had not been taken into account when the sub-project was chosen. Informants at district level revealed examples of projects going to localities where the extended families of traditional leaders lived. Also, the team was made aware of instances of corruption, although they were mostly small-scale. On the other hand, some traditional leaders actively worked with communities to develop and secure a number of MASAF I sub-projects. This suggests that they were functioning as development agents, to some extent.

Decision-making processes could certainly be made more representative. The implementation of MASAF and the performance of District Assemblies would benefit from greater knowledge about chief-community relations and how chiefs interact with other power elites at district and national levels. It is particularly important to understand the conditions that lead to elite capture of resources and decision-making processes and the circumstances that encourage active social capital and development-oriented relationships between chiefs and their environment. This knowledge could be used to design simple procedures for ascertaining the views of the community and ensuring that they are followed and to encourage traditional leaders to perform more like development agents.

Monitoring project performance

The team found strengths and weaknesses in project monitoring. Financial data were kept up-to-date and substantial efforts were made to validate them through external audits and follow-up of complaints. This contributed to MASAF's reputation for financial probity. Other monitoring data were much less well organised. It was difficult to find sub-project files and many are incomplete. They were clearly not used for decision-making purposes. Also, the files of the Project Steering Committee did not contain any analyses of the pattern of sub-projects by sector or geographical area. For MASAF to participate actively

in strengthening of district- and national-level institutions, it is important that it improves its capacity to collect and analyse data on its sub-projects.

MASAF I carried out several beneficiary appraisals, which provided useful insights into project implementation. However, they did not provide systematic qualitative information to complement quantitative project data. Also, they tended not to focus on issues particularly relevant to specific stages of project implementation. These studies would be much more useful to managers and policymakers if they were undertaken as part of a systematic approach to monitoring.

Political commitment or politicisation

The team reviewed the positive and negative aspects of the relationship between MASAF and the political process. It found evidence that MASAF was seen as a national project. There was very high popular awareness of the project and Members of Parliament from all three parties said that investments in rural infrastructure were much more likely to benefit the community if funded through MASAF than through sector ministries.

The team did not find major political bias in MASAF. Constituencies held by the ruling party did not receive an unfair share of community sub-projects. Members of Parliament had limited influence over the choice of community sub-projects, although they seemed to have more influence in constituencies held by the ruling party. The team did not find much evidence that politicians derived financial benefit from community sub-projects, but it heard stories of politicking around the election of project management committees and participation in public events such as project launches. It also heard of competition between Members of Parliament and elected District Councillors to take credit for sub-projects.

When the review team made its last visit to Malawi, in May 2003, Parliament was debating the establishment of MASAF as an independent entity. There was little opposition. This reflected MASAF's reputation as an institution run by Malawians that delivered benefits to communities. This was a major achievement in a country where the public had little trust in many institutions. This success can be attributed to strong political support combined with institutional arrangements that rewarded good performance and made corruption difficult.

Why did MASAF win political support? According to Toye (1999), it is much easier to construct an effective pro-poor coalition if elite groups believe in the social interdependence of rich and poor, the existence of a credible threat from the poor and the capacity of the state to meet the needs of the poor at an acceptable cost. In Malawi, the agitation for democratic elections had demonstrated the danger of instability. The new government responded with promises to provide benefits to the poor and it had to find a way to deliver. It had little faith in national ministries. MASAF provided an alternative approach. The President came to view MASAF as a major instrument for delivering on his promises and an important source of political support. It had the added advantage that it was largely funded from external grants and loans. Several factors provided incentives for MASAF to perform well:

- The President invested his credibility in the project and gave it a high profile, making it risky for other power-holders to use the project for personal gain.

- MASAF accountants reviewed all documentation that project management committees and councils submitted and withheld payment when there were reasons to doubt the veracity of financial reports. The external audit of all sub-project sites was an important factor for building trust.

- There was a lot of publicity about the sub-projects so that communities knew how much money was allocated and what it was meant to finance.

- The newness of MASAF, changes to the number of zones and the rotation of Zone Managers made collusion between zone and district personnel difficult, thereby limiting opportunities for corruption.

- MASAF created appropriate incentives by paying performance-related salaries and punishing corruption.

- The World Bank backed up the insistence by MASAF management on careful financial audit and publication of information on sub-project budgets.

Towards an enabling environment for the poor

The designers of MASAF I set themselves ambitious objectives. Table 9.1 reviews the degree to which they achieved them. The project was only the first phase of a long process of institutional development. The following paragraphs review progress made during 1996–2001 and identify additional tasks for the future in terms of the characteristics that Joshi and Moore (2000) associate with an enabling environment for the poor.

Tolerance

During the second half of the 1990s Malawi was emerging from a period of political repression and civil society's role was limited. Communities organised to prepare proposals and lobbied to have their proposals attended to. They mostly looked to traditional authorities for leadership. Action is needed to give the less powerful community members more influence. This should be based on knowledge of how local power structures operate. MASAF could provide opportunities for members of project management committees and community-based organisations to discuss common problems and it could provide them with relevant information. This could lead to larger-scale organisation around poverty issues at constituency and national levels.

Predictability

MASAF established clear rules for applying for projects and it informed communities about the kinds of investments that attracted support. There is evidence that people believed in the legitimacy of these rules; however, procedures for deciding which proposals to appraise first were not transparent and lobbying was important. MASAF should preserve its rules-based project cycle by monitoring who participates in sub-project appraisal and supervision. It needs to add procedures for choosing proposals for appraisal.

MASAF has to deal with the present backlog of project proposals in a manner that preserves its reputation for taking project proposals seriously, but without guaranteeing that all requests will be funded.

Credibility

MASAF was widely known and surveys uniformly found that villagers and politicians held it in higher esteem than government. There was a widespread belief that a large proportion of MASAF money reached communities. MASAF needs to maintain its reputation for financial probity as it becomes an established institution. This will involve strengthening its financial management, internal and external audit and other measures to limit opportunities for district and MASAF personnel to collude. It will also involve taking measures to ensure a more equitable allocation of resources within districts.

Table 9.1 Anticipated benefits and findings of review of MASAF

Anticipated Benefits	Findings of Review
World Bank Staff Appraisal Document	
Improved health, education and economic infrastructure and improved service delivery.	Assets were created (although some were not in good condition), and people were using them.
Increased capacities of CBOs, district, provincial and national government and NGOs to plan, appraise and complete capital projects.	The government has formulated several sector development plans; district personnel have participated in the MASAF project cycle; there is little evidence of direct influence of MASAF on performance.
Recognition of the value of self-help in development and maintenance of that creation.	Communities accept some responsibility for maintenance.
Revived spirit of self-help, increased sense of ownership and accountability, participation in decision-making for own development and empowerment of implementing communities.	Communities participated in the project cycle, but to only a limited degree.
Creation of income-earning opportunities through employment	Significant numbers of people obtained employment in public works projects.
Improved food availability in food-deficient areas.	Income from public works projects mostly went to poor households.
Implicit Objectives in Transition Management	
Integrate new actors into development institutions.	MASAF has been established as a well-regarded national institution.
Dynamise change in government performance by demonstrating alternative ways of doing things (mainstream lessons of small-scale projects and NGO experience).	Acceptance of the importance of community participation in the implementation of the PRSP. Some change in the understanding of the role of Members of Parliament.
Create new spaces for the expression of needs and interests.	Evidence that communities have lobbied to have their proposals attended to, but little organisation beyond community level.

Rights

Villagers had no legal entitlement to secure a project and they had no legal recourse if something went wrong.[91] Nonetheless, communities felt that the submission of a proposal to MASAF entitled them to a

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[91] Mvisi (2002) points out that communities do not have legal recourse if a building to which they contributed a substantial share of the cost is poorly built or un-staffed. She suggests that it will be necessary to establish mechanisms to resolve disputes in these transactions that take place outside the regulated, organised economy.

response. They put pressure on MPs to follow up delays. Communities felt they had earned support because they had submitted a proposal and committed their contribution. MASAF needs to define procedures for communities to follow when they have a grievance. For example, they need to know what to do when a building they co-fund is unsound or not staffed. This could involve the establishment of local systems of dispute resolution. It could eventually lead to the creation of legal rights to make claims against parties that do not carry out their responsibility. MASAF also needs to provide relevant information so that communities know how local institutions perform in comparison to elsewhere in the country.

9.3 Lessons for the Malawi poverty reduction strategy

In 1995 the President encouraged Sam Kakhobwe to resign as National Coordinator of the Poverty Alleviation Unit to become Executive Director of MASAF. It is not fanciful to suggest that this decision reflected a judgement that his skills would be better used in implementing MASAF than in trying to coordinate a cross-ministry initiative.

According to Mr. Kakhobwe, the attempt to reorient the national bureaucracy for poverty alleviation had not gone well.[92] He recalled that many senior civil servants did not attend meetings about the integration of a poverty perspective into sector plans. He had come to the conclusion that it would take a long time to turn the government system around. He said that MASAF provided an opportunity to test new ways to manage development investment and demonstrate to civil servants that a Malawi-run institution could perform well. It also provided a way to deliver something to the population. The hope, articulated in the project appraisal document, was that this would stimulate change within national and local administrations.

During the second half of the 1990s Malawi pursued competing institutional development strategies. One focused on implementing wide-ranging reforms to national and district administrations and formulating national development strategies. The other focused on delivering benefits rapidly, to meet needs and demonstrate new approaches for planning and implementation. Mr. Kakhobwe contrasts the two approaches with a story (possibly apocryphal) about a meeting between organisers of the decentralisation programme and a group of rural people (Kakhobwe 2003). After an official presented the plans for local government reform, a villager asked what projects this reform would support. The official answered that first local governments would establish the appropriate structures and then they would implement projects. The villagers responded by asking to meet representatives of MASAF. He concludes from this story that institutional change should be associated with the delivery of benefits, to win political support and inculcate different attitudes in government officials. The remainder of this chapter explores the implications for the implementation of Malawi's poverty reduction strategy

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[92]   Interview in May 2003.

Reconciliation of planning and demand-led approaches

In its discussions with politicians and bureaucrats, the team found proponents of three different criteria for the allocation of development finance: response to community demands, geographical equity (weighted in terms of need) and consistency with national plans.

Several senior politicians emphasised the need to change the prevalent understanding, during the one-party regime, of development funding as a gift from the President and other political leaders. These politicians claimed that this had encouraged communities and their leaders to be passive. They said it was important to encourage self-help and active political involvement. One person spoke of the need to inculcate values of working hard, thinking and being innovative. These politicians saw MASAF as a way to change attitudes by rewarding active communities, traditional leaders and MPs. One person viewed elections as a way to eliminate "lazy" MPs. The people who held this view linked the concepts of *competition* and *entitlement*. They spoke of communities earning the right to investment finance through their own efforts. Some argued that the suggestions that future MASAF allocations be based on principles of equity between districts and wards were misguided, because it would discourage self-help and encourage local patrimonialism.

Proponents of district planning argued that MASAF favoured better-off communities and localities with leaders who were well connected politically. The finding that a high proportion of MASAF I sub-projects were in a few traditional authority areas raises important questions from this perspective. Supporters of district planning suggested that allocation to localities should be based on criteria that take population and need into account. This would reduce the capacity of localities with powerful local leaders to gain a disproportionate share of resources.

Proponents of national planning argued that MASAF did not allocate investment resources according to national priorities. They emphasised the need to establish clear priorities between sectors and between items of expenditure within sectors. They also emphasised the need to ensure that recurrent costs would be covered and benefits sustained. By 2000 the education and health sectors had published plans that included requirements for facilities and other resources. These plans were incorporated into the poverty reduction strategy. However, these plans did not define clear priorities for resource allocation. According to the Minister of Finance, they were produced without a clear resource envelope.[93]

MASAF's experience with education and health sub-projects illustrates the issues that arise in trying to reconcile district-level planning, national sectoral planning and demand-led approaches. Investment in primary schools was motivated by the government's promise of free schooling. The survey found that the schools were staffed and had books. However, questions remain about the quality of schooling and the sustainability of the gains. Communities persistently asked for help with health problems. MASAF offered to fund new facilities, but the government could not guarantee to staff them. The MoHP wanted to prevent new construction, except at sites it had already identified, and it was giving priority to the design

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[93]   Interview with member of review team during May 2003.

of a sector-wide approach. In the meantime, there were no mechanisms to respond rapidly to community requests for help.

The challenge for the future is to incorporate the three perspectives in arrangements for resource planning. This will involve reconciling the achievement of geographical equity (including special support for the very poor) with the need to provide incentives for communities and their leaders to pursue development activity. It will also involve reconciling the perceived needs of communities with national priorities articulated in the PRSP. The following procedures could help:

- Communities and local leaders would be provided with a menu of options for meeting their needs, prepared in consultation with sector planners. They would rank these options in order of priority. Measures would be taken to ensure that the poor and less powerful have a voice.

- Sector ministries would provide technical guidelines regarding investments in their sector and the complementary inputs they would provide. They would define procedures for staffing and financing new facilities.

- Investment plans would be compiled for an agreed locality (traditional authority, ward or district).

- Some development funding would be allocated on the basis of geographical equity (with special provisions for very poor communities).

- Other development funding would be provided on a competitive basis, with clear rules for application and appraisal.

- Detailed information would be published on all investment decisions, showing distribution between localities and between sectors.

- Channels would be established for communities to put forward problems and requests not included in the menu. The roles of MASAF, districts and sector ministries in responding to these problems and requests would be clarified.

- MASAF would monitor the distribution of expenditure between localities and the delivery of benefits after completion of assets. It would also monitor the performance of local and national administrations in support of MASAF projects.

Future options

Discussions of social action funds often conclude by asking about the exit strategy. It will take a long time for Malawi to create effective development institutions. When one considers the effort involved in creating an effective institution such as MASAF, it may be more fruitful to discuss the evolution of its role rather than its disappearance.

The implementation of public sector reforms has been slow and questions remain about Malawi's capacity to implement its poverty reduction strategy. The public sector is caught in a vicious circle. It cannot secure sufficient donor funding because communities, politicians and donor officials hold it in low regard. This has prolonged the financial constraints, which limit its capacity to deliver benefits and provide

improved salaries. Low pay and low public esteem have contributed to the demoralisation of civil servants and a tolerance of behaviour by public servants that is against the public interest. The outcome is a poorly-performing administrative system and widespread cynicism about its capacity to improve. Discussions with senior policymakers revealed two broad options for MASAF in this context.

One option is to expand the previous approach. One senior politician suggested that sector-specific social funds would enable government to deliver more benefits. This approach would construct a structure parallel to the government system. It could run into problems if government and donors lost interest in supporting an administrative system that delivered little and was held in low esteem.

Another option is to combine the delivery of benefits with intensified institutional development. Many barriers to implementing reforms are much lower than in the mid-1990s. Each ministry would define short-term service delivery targets. The government would identify key functions that need to be strengthened to achieve these targets. Distritct Assemblies would carry out similar exercises. MASAF would help these government agencies achieve their goals. It would use its financial management system to ensure that funds were used appropriately. It would organise activities aimed at strengthening the management capacity of development actors. It would also use its good name to monitor progress and produce reports that all stakeholders would trust, including in-depth analytical studies to identify constraints to implementation and strategies for overcoming them. The success of this strategy would depend on the commitment by political leaders to an institutional development process and their willingness to give MASAF the independence to play an effective role.

MASAF built its reputation for competence and integrity on a strategic alliance forged during the first multi-party elections between leaders of the new ruling party and people who had been active in NGOs or experimental poverty projects within the government system. This alliance was expressed in MASAF in the relationships between the President and the Executive Director and between the latter and middle-level managers. MASAF now needs to find ways to institutionalise its position and reduce its dependence on a few individuals. This will involve strengthening appropriate decision-making procedures and ensuring that they are followed. It will also involve giving greater responsibility to the MASAF governing body and providing it with appropriate project monitoring information. It may also involve the establishment of more effective parliamentary oversight.

It is too early too assess the long-term impact of MASAF on poverty and the development of pro-poor institutions. MASAF faces a number of important changes. The way they are managed will strongly influence this assessment. Some questions remain to be answered. Will the next President continue to use MASAF for delivering on promises, rather than for patronage? Will the next MASAF Executive Director have the political skills to secure high-level political support without political interference? Can MASAF managers maintain their high morale and financial probity as their organisation matures? Will Malawi's political leaders permit MASAF to create the type of enabling environment described above? If the answers are yes, MASAF can evolve into a development bank which uses its technical competence and high reputation to support long-term institutional development as part of an effective poverty reduction strategy. Otherwise, its long-term impact will be limited.

Annex I   People consulted

Hon Aleke Banda, Minister of Finance at the time of the design of MASAF

Hon D.K. Banda, Member of Parliament for Nkhata Bay North West

Alf B. Benati, District Development Agricultural Officer, Mangochi

Hon W.D. Bongwe, Member of Parliament for Nkhotakota North East

George Chaguza, MASAF Zone Manager, Dedza

A.M. Chaonda, District Hydrological Officer, Nkhotakota

Taziona Chaponda, Country Economist, World Bank

B. Chibwana, Director, IEC Division

Eric Chidzungu, Project Engineer, Technical Services Unit, MASAF

Atanazio Gabariel Chieswana, District Commissioner, Balaka

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Mr Z. Chikhosi, Principal Secretary, Ministry of Education

Lana Chikhungu, Economist, Monitoring and Evaluation Department, National Economic Council

Hon J.B. Chirwa, Member of Parliament for Nkhata Bay South East

Dr. G. Chithope-Mwale, District Health Officer, Mangochi

Cliff Chiunda, Deputy Director, Development Division, National Economic Council

Hon N.F.S. Chuthi, Member of Parliament for Dedza North West

Charlie Clark, Permanent Secretary of the Ministry of Works until 1990

Chris Cosgrove, Social Development Advisor, DFID CA Education Office

A. Dambo, Assistant Development Agricultural Officer, Mangochi

Eric Raphael Dema, Director of Finance, Nkhotakota

Hon A.M. Fletcher, Member of Parliament for Zomba Changalumi

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Hon F.A. Jumbe, Minister of Finance and Economic Planning

Hon B.Z. Kachala, Member of Parliament for Dedza Central

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Mr. Kachewele, District Educational Officer, Mangochi

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Sam Kakhobwe, Executive Director, MASAF

Hon H.F. Kamba, Member of Parliament for Machinga South

Christine Kamwenda, Director SSP, MASAF

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Joseph Kuthemba-Mwale, Director of Planning, Ministry of Education

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Julius Liwonde, District Education Officer, Nkhotakota

Andrew Maclean, Construction Advisor, DFID CA Education Office

S.M.N. Mainala, Director of Water Resources, Ministry of Water

Hon B.B.C. Majoni, Second Deputy Speaker and Member of Parliament for Lilongwe Central

Hon W.A. Makala-Ngozo, Member of Parliament for Lilongwe Mpenu

Munday S. Makoko, Programme Analyst, UNDP

Hon R.M. Makoko, Member of Parliament for Zomba Chisi

George Manda, MASAF, Public Works, Zonal Technical Advisor, Dedza and Nkhotakota

Charles Mandala, Director, Community Sub-projects, MASAF

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Steve Masod, Community Development

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Beson G. Mtende, District Community Development Officer, Nkhotakota

E. Mthini, National Roads Authority

Norbert Mugwagwa, World Bank Task Manager during design of MASAF

Maurice Mulanga, District Information Officer, Nkhotakota

Hon H. Mussa, Member of Parliament for Chiradzulu East and Deputy Minister of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security

Mr. Mwale, District Health Officer

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Jack Nguluwe, Distrist Commissioner, Mangochi

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Annex II   Survey instruments

Centre for Social Research

Community MASAF CSP Survey

CONDUCTED FOR 'POVERTY ALLEVIATION SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW SECOND PHASE'

Project Quality Checklist

PART A: PROJECT IDENTIFICATION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

1 Region code		8. Year of project completion	
2 District code		9. Year spares (boreholes) or school supplies (desks, chalk boards) were delivered	
3 TA name		10. Surveyor code	
4 Village name		11. DE Clerk code	
5 HH No.		12. DE supervisor code	
6 Project No.			
7 Project Name			

[THIS CHECKLIST IS ADMINISTERED TO A COMPETENT KEY INFORMANT. FOR AN EDUCATION PROJECT THE HEAD TEACHER OR THE DEPUTY IN THE HEAD TEACHER ABSENCE IS PREFERRED. FOR A BOREHOLE, THE LOCAL TRADITIONAL LEADER OR THE CHAIR OF THE PMC ARE PREFERRED.]

[Please introduce yourself and the study after identifying the right key informant]

PART ONE: EDUCATION PROJECT

13. Name of the key informant: _____

14. Title of key informant _____

15. How many MASAF blocks do you have? _____

16. How many classes use the MASAF classrooms on a normal school day? _____

17. What are the sizes of each class? _____

18. For each class that use the blocks, how many books does each class have of

Class	Mathematics	English	Chichewa

19. How many teachers do you have? _____; female _____

20. How many of those are qualified? _____; female _____

21. How many MASAF teacher's houses were built? _____

22. How many are in use now? _____

23. Of those in use, how many are occupied by teachers? _____; qualified _____

24. How many desks were supplied? _____

25. How many are in use now? _____

26. Was a borehole included in the project? _____ *1- Yes 2 - No*

27. If yes, is it in use now? _____ *1- Yes 2 - No*

28. Were there any other project components included in the project? _____ *1- Yes 2 – No*

29. If yes, list them and indicate their original numbers delivered and those currently in use now

Other components	Number	Number in use?

[Please physically check the quality of each of the following using the indicators below:]

School block

Condition	Good	Poor	Bad	Comment
Floor	1	2	3	
Walls	1	2	3	
Roof	1	2	3	

Teacher's house

Condition	Good	Poor	Bad	Comment
Floor	1	2	3	
Walls	1	2	3	
Roof	1	2	3	

Borehole

Condition	Good	Poor	Bad	Comment
Flow	1	2	3	
Water quality	1	2	3	

Codes for quality of buildings

	Good	Bad	Poor
Floor	Even	Uneven	Broken/holes
Walls	No cracks	Cracks	Holes/fallen
Roof	No leaks	Leaks	Major leaks/blown off

Codes for quality of boreholes

	Good	Bad	Poor
Flow	High	Slow	No water
Water quality	Good taste	Salty	Not drinkable

PART TWO: BOREHOLES

13. Name of the key informant: _____

14. Title of key informant _____

15. Can you tell me roughly how many households use the MASAF borehole as their main source of drinking water?

16. Were there any other components?

17. If yes, can you please tell me what they were, their numbers then and how many are in use now?

Other components	Number	Number in use?

Physical Check

[Please physically check the quality of each of the following using the indicators below:]

Condition	Good	Poor	Bad	Comment
Flow	1	2	3	
Water quality	1	2	3	

Codes for quality of boreholes

	Good	Bad	Poor
Flow	High	Slow	No water
Water quality	Good taste	Salty	Not drinkable

Date of survey: (dd/mm/yy) ____/____/_____

Signatures – Surveyor: **Key informant:**

Centre for Social Research

Community MASAF CSP Survey

CONDUCTED FOR 'POVERTY ALLEVIATION SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW SECOND PHASE'

Key Informant Questionnaire

PART A: QUESTIONNAIRE IDENTIFICATION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

1	Region code		7. Interviewer code/Signature	
2	District code		8. DE Clerk code/signature	
3	TA Name		9. DE Supervisor code	
4	Village name		10. Date of interview (dd/mm/yy)	___/___/____
5	Project no.		11. Date of DE (dd/mm/yy)	___/___/____
6	Project name			

12. Start time of interview (hh:mm)	___:___
13. End time of interview (hh:mm)	___:___
14. Start time (hh:mm)	___:___
15. End time (hh:mm)	___:___

INSTRUCTIONS

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS ADMINISTERED TO A KNOWLEDGEABLE KEY INFORMANT. FOR A SCHOOL PROJECT, THE HEAD OR THE DEPUTY ARE FIRST PRIORITY INFORMANTS. HOWEVER, IF THEY CAME LATER THAN THE PROJECT, LET THEM BE ASSISTED BY TEACHERS WHO WERE THERE DURING THE PROJECT IMPLEMENTATION. IF THERE IS NO ONE AT THE SCHOOL WHO IS KNOWLEDGEABLE, THEN THE THEN SCHOOL COMMITTEE MEMBERS, ESPECIALLY THE CHAIRMAN OR THE VICE OR SECRETARY, SHOULD BE THE RESPONDENT. A GROUP OF KEY INFORMANTS IS ALSO ACCEPTABLE.

FOR A BOREHOLE PROJECT, THE VILLAGE HEADMAN OR THE CHAIRMAN OF THE THEN PMC OR BOREHOLE MAINTENANCE COMMITTEE SHOULD BE THE RESPONDENT.

NOTE THAT THE COMMUNITY BACKGROUND INFORMATION CAN BE OBTAINED FROM ANY KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSON IN THE AREA. IN FACT, THIS QUESTIONNAIRE CAN BE ASKED OF AS MANY KNOWLEDGEABLE PERSONS AS POSSIBLE TO ENSURE THAT THE CORRECT INFORMATION IS OBTAINED.   THUS GIVEN TIME, THE INFORMATION CAN BE CROSS-CHECKED FROM VARIOUS SOURCES. HOWEVER, THE VARIOUS SOURCES SHOULD BE DOCUMENTED.

[Before starting the interview with any key informant, please introduce yourself and the survey thoroughly (r*emember to move with you your introduction letter or identity card whenever you are conducting the interview*) and give the respondent a chance to ask questions and then respond politely]

Hello, I am ___ from the Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi in Zomba. The Centre for Social Research, in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies, is conducting a review of community-based projects implemented in the period 1995-2001 through MASAF. The review is focussing on projects in water and education sectors.

Out of the many projects, the _____ [please mention the project name] located at _____ [please mention the village name where the borehole is if it is a borehole or name of the school if it is a school] was selected to be reviewed. The objective of this interview is to assess this household's participation in the selection of the project, its implementation as well as its maintenance.

This household was randomly selected from households in the villages that are considered to benefit from the _____ [mention the project type]. I would like to assure you that the information you provide shall be kept strictly confidential. You and your household members will not be identified in any way in any report that may come out of this survey.

The interview will take at most one hour. Before I proceed do you have any questions that you

would like to ask me? [Please respond to the questions, if any, politely and then proceed]

Are you willing to be interviewed? [If yes, proceed]

Name of key informant	Title	Questions responsible for

PART B: COMMUNITY BACKGROUND INFORMATION

16. What are the major ethnic groups in the area surrounding this project site and their estimated proportions?

Ethnic group	Ranking (by #s)	Codes for ethnic group	
	1st	1=Chewa	9=Tonga
	2nd	2=Nyanja	10=Nyakyusa
	3rd	3=Yao	11=Lambya
	4th	4=Tumbuka	12=Senga
	5th	5=Lomwe	13=Sukwa
	6th	6=Ngonde	14=English
	7th	7=Ngoni	15=Indian
		8=Sena	16=Other (specify)

17. What is the political party of the area's councillor?
    1=AFORD; 2=MCP; 3=UDF; 4=Other, specify; 5=don't know

18. What was the political party of the MP before the 1999 elections?
    1=AFORD; 2=MCP; 3=UDF; 4=Other, specify; 5=don't know

19. What is the political party of the current MP?
    1=AFORD; 2=MCP; 3=UDF; 4=Other, specify; 5=don't know

PART C: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

20. List types of community-level projects, if any, the community implemented before this MASAF project and their funding agencies?		21. List types of community-level projects, if any, the community implemented after this MASAF project and their funding agencies?		Types of projects	Funding agencies
				1. afforestation 2. road construction 3. bridge construction 4. school infrastructure 5. shallow well 6. borehole 7. dam construction 8. savings and credit 9. health facility construction 10. other, specify	1. MASAF 2. Government 3. DA's DDF 4. World Vision 5. Action Aid 6. EU 7. Other, specify
Project	**Funder**	**Project**	**Funder**		

22. In your opinion, who was the most influential person in the _____? *1. Traditional leader; 2. Teacher; 3. Religious leader; 4. MP; 5. NGO/CBO official based in the community; 6. Government frontline staff/Community-based government official; 7. The community as a whole; 9. PMC; 10. Local politician; 11. Other, specify* **[If more than one ask for the most influential]**	
1. Selection of the project	
2. Making sure that the project is funded	
3. Making sure the project is being implemented	

23. Did the community play any role in the following stages of the project?	24. If yes, briefly explain the role they played [Note: coding will be done later]	
1. Selection of the project; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
2. Election of the committee; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
3. Implementation; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
4. Maintenance; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		

25. Were all villages (school project) or households (boreholes) in the community participating fairly during the ------?	26. If no, briefly explain why you think so [Note: coding will be done later]	
1. Selection of the project; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
2. Election of the committee; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
3. Implementation; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
4. Maintenance; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		

	28	29
27. Did anyone from outside this community visit the project to see how things were going on? *1 – Yes, 2 – No, 3 – Don't know*		
28. If yes, who were they? *1. District officials; 2. MASAF zone officials; 3.Other Govt officials; 4. other MASAF officials; 5. Other, specify*		
29. And how often for each visitor? *1. weekly; 2. once in two weeks; 3. twice a month; 4. monthly; 5. quarterly; 6. semi-annually; 7. once a year; 8. other, specify*		

30. Was the community informed of what was going on during the implementation of the project? *1 – Yes, 2 – No*	31. If yes, who did that? *1. Traditional leader(s); 2. MASAF officials; 3. Govt officials; 4. School administration; 5. PMC; 6. MP; 7. Others, specify _____*	

32. If you were to rate the community participation on the scale *[1 – very poor; 2 –; poor; 3.– fairly good; 4. – good; 5. – very good]*, **what rate would you give it overall?**

PART D: COMMUNITY MANAGEMENT OF ASSETS CREATED BY THE PROJECT

33. Has the school block/borehole ever needed repairs since its completion? *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		34. If yes, was it repaired? *1 – Yes, 2 – No*	
34. If it was repaired, who was responsible for the repairs? *1. School Committee; 2. Parents; 3. School itself (pupils with the help of teachers); 4. Community; 5. Government; 6. MASAF; 7. Other, specify*		35. If not the community, why is it so? **[Open-ended, write what the respondent says. Coding will done later]**	

36. If the facility required some repairs but has never been repaired, why is it so? **[Open-ended, write what the respondent says, coding will done later]**	

37. If the facility has never required any repairs, who do you think should be responsible if it needed some? *1. School Committee; 2. Parents; 3. School itself (pupils with the help of teachers); 4. Community; 5. Government; 6. MASAF; 7. Other, specify*	

PART E: MASAF PROJECT, COMMUNITY NEEDS AND EMPOWERMENT

[NOTE: This Part should be answered by a local traditional leader]

38. Do you think the project matched the needs of the community of that time? *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		39. If no, what would you have wanted instead of this project?	
		1. afforestation *6. borehole* *2. road construction* *7. dam construction* *3. bridge construction* *8. savings and credit* *4. school building* *9. health facility construction* *5. shallow well* *10. other, specify* _____	

40. Currently, what community problems require outside assistance?	41. Which one of these problems would you consider as the most pressing?
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

42. If the community was to deal with this problem, how could it go about it?   **[Write what the respondent says]**

PART F: CAPACITY-BUILDING OF MASAF PMC MEMBERS

 [NOTES: (i) it would be ideal if interviewer has a list of the PMC members; (ii) where possible follow up PMC members and find out their activities since project completion.]

43. Since the completion of the project, what have the various members of the PMC been doing?

Title	What s/he has been doing
Chairperson	
Secretary	
Treasurer	
Member 1	
Member 2	
Member 3	
Member 4	

44. Do you think the experience PMC gave its members would be useful to the individuals and/or community in future undertakings? _____

[Ask the following questions if the respondent is a PMC member, otherwise end the interview]

45. If yes, what knowledge or skills do you think would be particularly useful?
[Note: this will be coded after piloting]

46. After the completion of the project, have you been approached by members of the community regarding issues of maintenance or the possibilities of initiating other projects in the community? *1 – Yes; 2 – No*

47. If yes, can you please mention the main issues that have been brought to you?
[Note: this will be coded after piloting]

[End of interview]

End time: (to be transferred to page 1)

Thank you very much for your time and patience.

Centre for Social Research

Community MASAF CSP Survey

CONDUCTED FOR 'POVERTY ALLEVIATION SUSTAINABILITY REVIEW SECOND PHASE'

Household Questionnaire

PART A: QUESTIONNAIRE IDENTIFICATION AND GENERAL INFORMATION

1	Region code		7. Project name	
2	District code		8. Interviewer code	
3	TA name		9. Field Supervisor	
4	Village name		10. DE Clerk code	
5	HH No.		11. DE Supervisor code	
6	Project No.			

12.Date of interview (dd/mm/yy)	___ / ___ / _____
13. Start time (hh:mm)	____ : ____
14. End time (hh:mm)	____ : ____
15. Date of DE (dd/mm/yy)	___ / ___ / _____
16. Start time (hh:mm)	____ : ____
17. End time (hh:mm)	____ : ____

TO BE FILLED BY SUPERVISOR AFTER INTERVIEW

18.	Status of interview			19.	Respondent ID	
Interview completed = 1	*No competent respondent = 5*			Is this a replacement household?		
Refusal converted = 2	*No one available = 6*			*1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
Started not completed = 3	*Information not usable = 7*					
Refused = 4	*Other = 8*					

Enumerator Signature   _____

Field Supervisor Signature   _____

DE Clerk Signature   _____

DE Supervisor Signature   _____

INSTRUCTIONS

THIS QUESTIONNAIRE IS ADMINISTERED TO THE HEAD OF THE HOUSEHOLD OR THE SPOUSE ONLY WHEN THE HEAD IS NOT AVAILABLE. OTHERWISE THE HOUSEHOLD SHOULD BE REPLACED.

[Before starting the interview, please introduce yourself and the survey thoroughly (r*emember to move with you your introduction letter or identity card whenever you are conducting the interview)* and give the respondent a chance to ask questions and then respond politely]

Hello, I am _____ from the Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi in Zomba. The Centre for Social Research, in collaboration with the Institute of Development Studies, is conducting a review of community-based projects implemented in the period 1995-2001 through MASAF. The review is focussing on projects in water and education sectors.

Out of the many projects, the _____ [please mention the project name] located at _____ [please mention the village name where the borehole is if it is a borehole or name of the school if it is a school] was selected to be reviewed. The objective of this interview is to assess this household's participation in the selection of the project, its implementation as well as maintenance.

This household was randomly selected from households in the villages that are considered to benefit from the _____ [mention the project type]. I would like to assure you that the information you provide shall be kept strictly confidential. You and your household members will not be identified in any way in any report that may come out of this survey.

The interview will take at most one hour. Before I proceed do you have any questions that you

would like to ask me? [Please respond to the questions, if any, politely and then proceed]

Are you willing to be interviewed? [If yes, proceed.]

Name of the respondent: _____

PART B: DEMOGRAPHY

Please complete the following table for all household members.

[Household members are all those who lived, ate and resided in this household at least 4 days in the past seven days]

20. ID no.	*21.* Name	*22.* Sex *1 – male* *2 – female*	*23.* Age **In years** (if <5, yrs. & mos.)	*24.* Relationship to household head *1 – head* *2 – wife/husband* *3 – son/daughter* *4 – grandchild* *5 – father/mother* *6 – sister/brother* *7 – other relative of head or spouse* *8 – servant* *9 – neither a relative nor a servant*	*25.* *Religion* *1=Catholic* *2=CCAP* *3=SDA* *4=Pentecostal* *5=other Christian, specify* *6=Islam* *7=Traditional* *8=Hindustan* *9=Other, specify*	*26.* Political Affiliation *1=AFORD* *2=MCP* *3=UDF* *4=non-partisan* *5=not applicable* *6=other, specify*
01						
02						
03						
04						
05						
06						
07						
08						
09						
10						
11						
12						
13						
14						
15						

PART C: COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION AND PROJECT MANAGEMENT

27. What would you consider as current pressing community development needs?	28. Which one of these would you consider as the most pressing?
1	
2	**[NOTE: Write the community need in full above]**
3	
4	
5	

29. If the community wanted to have this problem solved, how could the community go about it?
[Write what the respondent says]

[Please before proceeding, explain to the respondent in brief the stages a MASAF project was supposed to go through]

Before I continue, I would like to explain what a typical MASAF project was required to go

through.   A community, in a meeting, was supposed to identify the project and elect a committee

to manage the project and the facility once completed, contribute building materials like sand,

rocks, bricks, etc, prepare a proposal to MASAF for funding, implement and after completion

maintain the facility.

30. Were you or any member of your household involved in:		31. If not involved, why not? *1 Not invited to participate* *2 Did not like those who managed* *3 Did not agree with the choice of the project* *4 Not interested* *5 Too busy* *6 Too poor* *7 Decisions were made by officials and not community* *8 Other, specify*
1. Selection of the project; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
2. Election of the committee; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
3. Implementation; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
4. Proposal development; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		
5. Maintenance; *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		

32. If a member of the household participated in some or all of the stages, why did they participate? *1 – forced by traditional leader; 2 – fear of being denied access; 3 – sense of community obligation; 4 – the project was worthwhile – it matched community's pressing need; 5 – political influence; 6. – other, specify*

[allow for multiple responses]

33. Are you happy with _____? **[Mention the facility]** *1– Yes, 2 – No*		34. If no, why not? **[allow for multiple responses]**	
		1 Not relevant to my household *2 Too far for my household to use* *3 Poor quality* *4 Other, specify*	

35. Going back to the time this project was selected, would you have preferred another project to be selected? *1 – Yes, 2 – No*		36. If yes, what type of project would you have preferred?	
		1. afforestation *6. borehole* *2. road construction* *7. dam construction* *3. bridge construction* *8. savings and credit* *4. school building* *9. health facility* *5. shallow well* *10. other, specify* ____	

37. Did the PMC manage the project well? *1 – Yes, 2 – No, 3 – Don't know*		38. If no, why not?	
		1 Not competent *2 Dishonest* *3 Not transparent* *4 No reports to community* *5 Other, specify*	

39. Who was the most influential person in the _____? **[if more than one person, let the respondent choose the most]** *1. Traditional leader; 2. Teacher; 3. Religious leader; 4. MP; 5. NGO/CBO official based in the community; 6. Government frontline staff/Community-based government official; 7. The community as a whole; 8. PMC; 9. Local politician; 10. Don't know; 11. Other, specify*	
1. Selection of the project	
2. Making sure that the project is funded	
3. Making sure the project is being implemented	

40. Did you or any member of your family benefit directly from the project during its implementation in terms of employment? *1 – Yes, 2 – No*	
41. Does your household benefit from _____ now? **[Mention the facility]** *1 – Yes, 2 – No*	

42. Who is responsible for repairs of the _____? **[Mention the facility]** **[allow for multiple responses]**	
1. School Committee; 2. Parents; 3.School itself (pupils with the help of teachers); 4. Community; 5. Government; 6. MASAF; 7. PMC; 8. Other, specify	

43. Has ____ **[Mention the facility]** ever needed repairs? *1 – Yes, 2 – No.* **[If no go to Q 49]**		44. If yes, was it repaired? *1 – Yes, 2 – No*	
45. If it was repaired, who was responsible for the repairs? **[allow for multiple responses]** *1. School Committee; 2. Parents; 3.School itself (pupils with the help of teachers); 4. Community; 5. Government; 6. MASAF; 7. PMC; 8. Other, specify*		46. Have you, as a household, been asked to assist in the repair of the ___ **[Mention the facility]** *1 – Yes, 2 – No*	

47. If yes, what type of assistance were you asked to provide? *1. Labour; 2. Materials and other bricks; 3. Money; 4. Community; 5. Other, specify*		48 Have you ever provided the assistance you were asked to provide? *1 – Yes, 2 – No*	

49 If _____ **[Mention the facility]** required major repairs in future, would you be willing to provide the required assistance? *1 – Yes, 2 – No, 3 – Don't know*	

[End of interview]

End time: (to be transferred to page 1)

Thank you very much for your time and patience.

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