



DEMOCRACY, RIGHTS, AND GOVERNANCE

“Local Governments can move beyond simply delivering basic services, to driving economic growth.”

– Charles Kalemba, PS, Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development

It has been more than 20 years since Malawi first held multiparty elections. While democracy has expanded freedom and justice, Malawi’s political transition after 30 years of one-party rule has not been without challenges. Still reeling from the 2013 “Cashgate” financial scandal and contending with more recent corruption issues, the Government of Malawi (GoM) is striving to fulfill its mandate to provide citizens with fair and competent governance with limited resources. Malawi’s Public Sector Reform agenda faces daunting challenges, but it must succeed for a citizenry grown weary of poor services, lack of input, and unaccountable government systems.

PROGRAM SUMMARY

USAID supports GoM and civil society efforts to address governance issues that affect sustainable development, including accountability, service delivery, and public sector performance at both the national and local levels. USAID works with Malawian civil society groups to help increase citizen engagement in decision-making and build capacity to advocate for responsive, effective, and fair government policies and services. To ensure USAID addresses the intersection of political and economic dynamics in Malawi, we work to integrate democratic principles, including accountable and responsive governance, in health, education, environment, and economic development activities.

STRENGTHENING GOVERNMENT INSTITUTIONS

In support of the GoM Public Service Reform initiative, USAID supports the Office of the President and Cabinet, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, and 28 district councils to reform the civil service, restructure government, and bring decision-making and services closer to the people.

CIVIL SERVICE REFORM: USAID supports GoM efforts to reform its performance management laws, policies and systems, and to create incentives for excellence and consequences for poor performance. USAID also supports human resources managers operating throughout government to promote transparent and merit-based hiring, improved labor productivity, and appropriate staffing levels.

DECENTRALIZATION: USAID’s Local Government Accountability and Performance (LGAP) activity supports the Government as it devolves personnel, finances, and service delivery responsibilities to increasingly autonomous local government bodies. In the first year of implementing LGAP (August 2016-September 2017), the GoM officially devolved management of local level civil servants from the central government to the country’s 28 local government councils. With support from LGAP, the GoM transferred the payroll management of 113,000 government personnel from the central government to local governments - including health workers, teachers, and other front line civil servants - with minimal disruption.

STRENGTHENING EVIDENCE-BASED POLICY REFORM

PARLIAMENT: USAID, through its Supporting the Efforts of Partners (STEPS) program, supports the Parliament's effort to advance evidence-based policy making by building its capacity to conduct policy research and budgetary oversight. The research will bring new rigor to policy debates and development among government committees. It will also support Parliament's review of the proposed national budget, the development of amendments (based on citizen priorities), and increased accountability around public funding. USAID, through the Regional Political Party Strengthening Program, works to strengthen the electoral process and Parliament through long-term capacity building for political parties, with a particular focus on institutional strengthening and platform development.

SUPPORTING FREE AND FAIR ELECTIONS

USAID helped the Malawi Electoral Commission and civil society to prepare for, conduct, and oversee the 2019 Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government elections. Assistance included support for voter registration through deployment of a biometric National ID, pre-election systems reforms, long and short-term observation, media assistance, political party training, and electoral security.

BUILDING CIVIL SOCIETY VOICE AND AGENCY FOR CHANGE

Strong democracies require an active and engaged citizenry. USAID supports communities, religious leaders, traditional authorities, and activists to advance locally owned and led initiatives, building self-reliance and greater agency for reform. Through the STEPS and Localworks direct grants, USAID supports over 30 Malawian organizations to become more sustainable and well managed by improving their internal governance, financial, human resources, strategic management, and advocacy capabilities. In doing so, partners are more powerful advocates in Parliament, more effective elections observers, and stronger voices for accountability.

IMPACT

- USAID supports 30 key Malawian organizations to better deliver on their mandates and increase locally led development, by strengthening their internal governance, project management, financial management, HR systems, and strategic planning. Twenty-two partners will graduate in 2019 and will better be able to pursue donor resources to deliver their health, education, agriculture, environment, and democracy programs.
- USAID supported the GoM effort to conduct the May 2019 presidential, parliamentary, and local government elections by helping the Malawi Electoral Commission to implement critical reforms and register 6.8 million voters, strengthen civic and voter education particularly for youth, conduct three presidential debates, monitor fairness and accuracy in reporting, and conduct a parallel vote tabulation to ensure the integrity of the results.
- USAID helps the GoM to execute its decentralization agenda. District governments have seen their national budget allocation grow from MK 3 billion in 2005/2006 to over MK 45 billion in 2017/18, and as of 2017, district governments were responsible to pay staff salaries for over 113,000 positions nationwide.
- USAID launched a public/private partnership with the GoM, Airtel, and mHub to: a) use an Airtel mobile money platform to help district councils collect and account for revenues, and b) launch an SMS-technology that enables citizens to know who their representatives are and to communicate with them directly.
- USAID helped the GoM conduct the Local Authorities Performance Assessment (LAPA) of all 35 local governments in Malawi to help improve government performance through informed policy, planning and decision-making. The LAPA will also inform USAID and other donor partners capacity building efforts.
- With technical and ICT upgrades provided to the Malawi Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC), USAID is supporting the GoM to fully use its existing Human Resource Management Information System (HRMIS) for improved civil service and financial management. This support will help eliminate duplicate employee records

and loan repayment data while technical assistance builds capacity to use the enhanced HRMIS data for workforce management of the nearly 197,000 civil servants.

IMPLEMENTING MECHANISMS/PARTNERS

Activity Name	Total Estimated Cost	Implementation Period	Implementing Partner
Local Government Accountability and Performance (LGAP)	US \$24.9 million	August 2016 – August 2021	Development Alternatives Inc. (DAI)
Supporting the Efforts of Partners (STEPS)	US \$16 million	June 2014 – June 2019	Counterpart International
Malawi Electoral Integrity Program (MEIP)	US \$3 Million	August 2018 – October 2019	National Democratic Institute (NDI)
Regional Political Party Strengthening Program	US \$3.5 million	September 2017 – September 2020	Democracy Works
Malawi Electoral Cycle Support Program	US \$1 million (USAID contribution to multidonor fund)	August 2018 – December 2019	UNDP
Sociological research on traditional authorities and chiefs in Malawi	US \$109,000	February 2018 – May 2019	University of Malawi, Chancellor College
Sociological research on faith leaders and belief in Malawi	US \$135,000	February 2018 – September 2018	DR Consulting, Malawi