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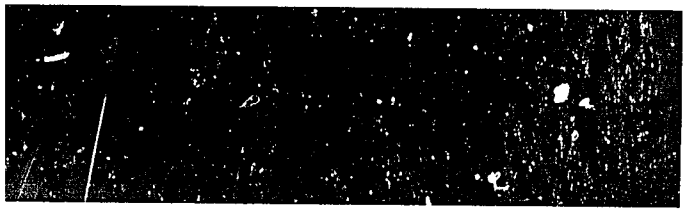

PROCEEDINGS

Workshop on Strengthening Local Government in Malaŵi

23-26 January 1990

Sponsored by the Ministry of Local Government

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These proceedings were prepared by the Research Triangle Institute, Research Triangle Park, North Carolina, U.S.A., under contract to the USAID, Regional Office for Housing and Urban Development, East and Southern Africa (RHUDO/ESA).

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WORKSHOP FOR STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT IN MALAWI

WORKSHOP BACKGROUND

The Government of Malawi, recognizing the potential contribution of local governments to national economic and social development, has recently moved to begin reforms to the long standing local government system. These reforms will provide a more supportive policy environment and adequate human and financial resources for local authorities. The Statement of Development Policies, 1987-1996 describes many actions which Government anticipates taking to increase the financial resources, define service responsibilities, and to provide a pool of trained personnel to local governments. The goal of these actions is to make councils more active and efficient partners in the development process.

In addition to these development policies, many agencies are undertaking, in some cases with foreign assistance, programs aimed at tackling facets of local urban development. Examples include the Department of Housing and Physical Planning's initiative with German KFW assistance to plan and build infrastructure in four pilot urban areas, the UNDP's assistance to the Ministry of Local Government to strengthen the Ministry's ability to provide technical services assistance to councils, the British ODA provision of three town clerks to the largest councils, and USAID's assistance in developing a training capacity in the Ministry of Local Government. In addition, the World Bank has been asked to assist in preparing a project to strengthen the urban management system including the capacities of the Ministry and local authorities.

Local government is clearly an important issue in the current phase of Malawi's development. In the context of Government policy reforms and the variety of foreign assistance programs, this is a propitious time to define a national policy framework for strengthening local government. There is a need to ensure that strengthening actions target key problems and opportunities and that assistance programs are coordinated and complementary.

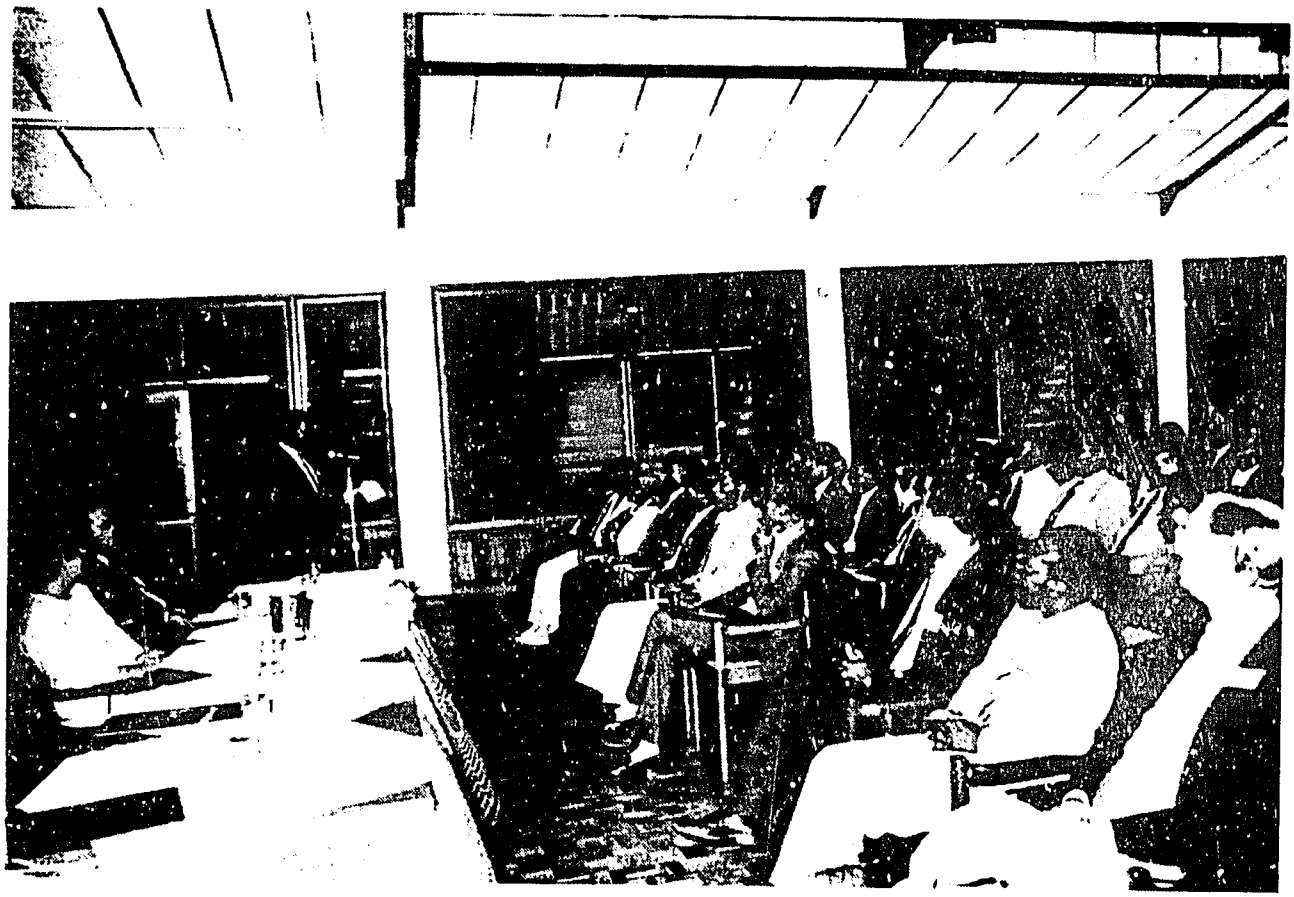
WORKSHOP OBJECTIVES

In view of this need, the Ministry of Local Government sponsored the "Workshop on Strengthening Local Government in Malawi" on January 23 to 26, 1990 to consider the required actions to reinforce the decentralization process to which Government is committed. The principal objectives of the workshop were to:

1. Build consensus on a national policy framework to foster decentralization and enhance the effectiveness of local authorities;

2. Identify key problems and solutions to strengthen the policy environment, institutional setting and the financial and technical capacities of local authorities;
3. Identify a framework for donor assistance including the scope of various donor assistance programs.

The experience that has already been gained in local government operations constitutes the best point of departure for a discussion of how to achieve these objectives. Therefore, the workshop was designed to allow representatives of Government, local authorities, local interest groups, and the donor community to discuss issues and identify courses of action. The format of the workshop consisted of a few technical presentations but was largely devoted of work groups. The technical presentations and group discussions are summarized below. The complete products of the work groups are presented as appendices.



The opening ceremonies

OPENING ADDRESS

HONORABLE F.P.O. BWANALI, M.P.
MINISTER OF HEALTH

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

The Resident Representative, UNDP,

The Resident Representative, World Bank,

The Mission Director, USAID,

The District Chairman, MCP,

The District Chairman, League of Malawi Women,

Distinguished Participants,

Ladies and Gentlemen .

1. It is a privilege and an honour to be here this evening to officially open this very important Workshop on Strengthening Local Government through Decentralisation, on behalf of His Excellency the Life President, Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda.

2. I wish to extend to you all a very warm welcome. I would like to welcome in a very special way, those of you who have come to Malawi for the first time. It is my hope that you, like many other visitors, will find our peaceful country friendly and true to the saying that Malawi is the "WARM HEART OF AFRICA".

3. From the outset, I would like to pay tribute and express my profound gratitude to His Excellency the Life President, Ngwazi Dr. H. Kamuzu Banda, Father and Founder of the Malawi Nation for establishing local government authorities in Malawi, through which the ordinary man and woman at the grassroot level is able to participate fully in the decision making process and in the development activities for the social and economic well-being of the people in the rural areas as well as in urban areas

4. The Government of Malawi recognizing the potential contribution of local government to national, economic and social development, has for sometime wished to carry out reforms to the long standing local government systems, in order to provide a more supportive policy environment and adequate human and financial resources for local authorities to do their job efficiently. Local Government is no doubt an important issue in the present phase of Malawi's development and this is an opportune time to define a national policy framework to strengthen local authorities.

5. I understand that the main objective of the workshop will be:-

(a) to build consensus on a national policy framework to foster decentralisatin and enhance the effectiveness of local authorities;

(b) to identify issues, topics and actions to strengthen the policy environment and the management, financial and technical capacities of local authorities; and

(c) to identify a framework for donor assistance, including the scope of various donor assistance programs and a proposed World Bank Urban project and the studies which will be carried out for its preparation.

6. Mr. Chairman, the topic of this Workshop, "Strengthening Local Government through Dencentralisation", is appropriate for our elected officials, local government personnel and central government representatives to consider at this juncture of our country's development.

7. Malawi has a long standing commitment to local governments. Under the colonial system, the Local Government Ordinance of 1953 laid the foundation for a District Council system based on the British Model. Subsequently, the first District Council was established in Thyolo in 1954. By 1957, there were eleven such Councils. Further changes in legislation in 1961 and 1962 provided for the establishment of elected councils, a majority of the Councillors being elected on a widely-based franchise, and these organisations assumed more responsibility for local services.

8. However, the Malawi Congress Party Manifesto in 1961 established the basis for the current system of Local Government when it declared that no enduring edifice could have a weak foundation. Hence a strong National Government must be built on strong Local Government. The legal basis for the current system is found in the Local Government (Urban Areas) Act and Local Government (District Councils) Act of the Lows of Malawi.

9. Our system recognises that centralised Ministries in a distant Capital City cannot respond to the specific needs of a given locallity. Much of the impetus for planning and managing the services that lead to the development of a village, town or city must come from the people of that country. We have, through a system of local authorities, entrusted local population needs of a growing and aspiring population.

10. We in Malawi count on the local authorities to provide the mechanism for the local population to participate in decisions that affect its destiny, to inform Government of its needs and to respond to development goals as they are defined by Parliament.

11. Providing and administering local services that are required by the population is not a simple task. A responsive and efficient local authority needs informed councillors and will trained staff. It needs financial resources that are efficiently channelled into services and infrastructure. It needs an educated population that understands that to

receive services and infrastructures, it must be willing to pay its share of the burden through taxes and fees.

12. The Local Government Acts laid the foundation for our system of local authorities. However, the system is not static. It is dynamic. We have sought through the years to find the best formula for matching the service responsibilities of the councils with their financial and technical capacity. Some responsibilities have been expanded, others have been reduced. At times, members of local authorities have abused the public trust placed on them and the system has had to be modified.

13. By the same token, the challenges of development has changed. After independence, we had the task of building a nation, establishing one people from many, and laying the rules for a modern state. Now we confront new challenges.

14. The World and Regional pressure severely constrained Malawi's economy. Central Government resources are scarce and local revenues must pay for increasingly costly materials and supplies. At the same time, there is continuing need to strengthen the rural and agricultural foundation of the economy to expand employment opportunities in rural areas as well as in town.

15. The nation's population is growing at a faster rate than before. Although the large majority of the people live in rural areas, small towns and cities are growing at a faster pace than the country as a whole. We must ensure that services and infrastructure are available in large and small urban places to house, feed and provide jobs for this growing population.

16. It is true, ladies and gentlemen, that the private sector, formal and informal, will provide the greatest number of jobs for our workforce. But local authorities must seek to provide a supportive environment in terms of infrastructure, services and regulations for expansion of the private sector.

17. In evaluating the ability of the local government system to respond to these challenges, we find inadequacies . Local authorities are faced with inadequate financial resources and insufficient trained manpower. Their ability to provide services and capital investment is eroded by lack of resources. Vehicle fleets are ageing, some to the point of inoperability. Basic infrastructure system cannot be maintained, to the required standard as expected by the community.

18. Sound management requires a trained and motivated workforce. But because of the limited incentives found in local authorities, we experience flow of qualified staff to private sector, leaving many key mind and senior management positions in local authorities unfilled.

19. Indeed we must ask ourselves what changes are necessary to strengthen local authorities so that they may perform in the efficient way we would like them to. What must be done to permit central government to continue to guide, assist and manage local authorities.

20. The Statement of Development Policies has taken a first step by identifying a number of actions that government intends to take advantage of the system. They include an expansion of the Ministry of Local Government's capacity to supervise local authorities and co-ordinate actions with other Ministries; the introduction of new standard terms of service for local authority personnel; revisions in the structure of local government revenues; the expansion of local responsibility for low cost housing and education; increased training opportunities; and a programme of capital investment.

21. The Ministry of local government in collaboration with other concerned Ministries and local authorities has already begun to tackle many of these issues while other require clear definition before they are tackled.

22. While the subject of local government management is the subject of many gatherings, I believe that this workshop presents a unique opportunity. Gathered here are local elected officials, local government officers, representatives of many private sectors, and representatives of many of the international donor organisations. This being the case, I believe you have the capacity to forge a consensus about strategies and actions for improving our local authority system. In order to achieve anything tangible in bringing about meaningful change and improvement in local government system, it is imperative therefore, that you should address yourselves the following questions :-

(i) What should be the emerging role of local authorities and government agencies in providing services and infrastructure for social and economic development?

(ii) What actions are required to improve the administrative, financial and technical capacities of local authorities?

(iii) How can the Central Government co-ordinate its actions and better formulate local authority policy?

These are some of the questions you will be grappling with over the next two and half days. Your task is not easy but an important one.

23. It is my earnest desire and sincere hope that this workshop will come up with concrete practical recommendations aimed at improving overall capacity of local authorities in Malawi and lay the basis practical recommendations aimed at improving overall capacity of local authorities in Malawi and lay the basis for international donor assistance, as stipulated in the objectives of the Workshop.

24. In conclusion, I wish to extend my sincere gratitude to the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), the World Bank and the Office of Housing and Urban Programme of USAID, for sponsoring this workshop and I would like the Resident Representative of these organisations to know how grateful the Government of Malawi is for their continued support in our efforts to carry out reforms to local government systems. This is a clear testimony of the trust these organisations have in the leadership of this country.

25. Once again, I would like to welcome you all to this workshop. I am certain that you will not only find it stimulating and informative, but a pleasure and memorable experience to be here at Club Makokola. It is my sincere hope that you will find the facilities placed at your disposal adequate and thus providing an atmosphere that is conducive to stimulating and fruitful deliberations.

26. Mr. Chairman, I now have the honour and privilege to declare the Workshop on Strengthening Local Government through Decentralisation officially open.

THANK YOU !

The participants at the opening ceremonies

TECHNICAL PRESENTATIONS

Keynote address: "Strengthening Local Governments through Decentralization"

The workshop began with a keynote speech delivered by Mr. Henry P. Minis, Jr of the Research Triangle Institute (USA). Mr. Minis has been responsible for preparing the World Bank's Local Government Review which served as the basis for his presentation.

Mr. Minis noted that decentralization is not a new concept in Malawi but it is now receiving attention as a solution to economic development problems Decentralization is seen as a way to reduce adminstrative and financial burdens in the central government, increase responsiveness to local problems. and provide a mechanism for participation in government. There are four principal forms of administrative decentralization including:

deconcentration of central government services to regional offices;

delegation of specific service responsibilities to semi-autonomous agencies such as marketing boards or housing corporations;

devolution of the responsibility to finance and manage public services to autonomous local governments, and;

privatization of urban services through public/private partnerships or simply private arrangements.

The decentralization of central government services typically involves a mix of these forms depending on the requirements of specific services and the capacities of the institutions that may be responsible for service delivery.

Spatial decentralization is a complement to administrative decentralization. It involves the geographic distribution of investments and services to reinforce policies of dispersed development. Spatial decentralization can reinforce the role that secondary cities and towns play in rural development. Ideally spatial decentralization and administrative decentralization policies are closely linked as they can be mutually reinforcing.

In summarizing world-wide experience in decentralization programs, Mr. Minis stated that success depends on factors such as making sufficient financial and technical support available to decentralized units, planning over the long term, shifting the central government role from one of control to one of facilitating and guiding, providing training for central and local staffs, and establishing strong linkages of support and coordination between the central government and local governments.

Turning to decentralization experience in Malawi, Mr. Minis noted that, in addition to government policy, population growth and economic development are molding the future of cities and towns. Currently 10.5% of the national population live in urban areas, a smaller percentage than in neighboring countries. The urban population is growing at an average annual rate of 5.9% which is considerably faster than the overall national growth rate. Recent trends indicate that the fastest growth is taking place in small towns (not the large cities) but that the majority of the population will continue to live in the four largest cities, Blantyre, Lilongwe, Mzuzu and Zomba. Cities and towns must equip themselves to accommodate this rapid growth.

Although formal sector employment in the larger cities and towns is dominated by public sector employment and manufacturing, the service sectors have shown the greatest growth in recent years. However, despite this growth, formal sector employment has lagged behind population growth. As a result, a smaller percentage of the population was employed in the formal sector in 1985 than in 1977. Data indicate that the proportion of formal private sector employment increases with city size. In addition, the informal sector is a significant source of employment although little is known about it. If towns are to be effective agents of development, service and investment decisions must take into account each town's linkages to its rural hinterland and the needs of the formal and informal private sector.

Turning to local government experience in Malawi, Mr. Minis noted that Malawi has had a longstanding commitment to local government. His analysis of the local authority system was drawn from the World Bank Local Government Review which focused primarily on urban councils. Data for the analyses were drawn from the 1985-86 budget year, the most recent year for which audited final accounts were available at the time of the study (in 1989) for the seven urban councils analyzed.

Organization and staffing

Councils are organized along functional lines. The more complex structures in the larger cities reflect the greater range of services they provide. Staffing patterns vary considerably, but the variance is not necessarily due to population differences or service performance. For example, Salima and Zomba have the greatest overall number of staff per 1000 population of seven urban councils studied. Salima and Mzuzu have the greatest number of financial staff per population but not the best revenue performance. Imbalances between managerial level and line staff appear to exist. Lilongwe has the greatest number of line staff per manager. In general, councils lack mid-level managers.

Urban services

Councils provide a wide range of services and have shown the ability to provide and maintain infrastructure. Still, inadequate attention is paid to maintenance. The lack of funds for capital investments constrain maintenance of infrastructure, replacement of

aged facilities and their expansion to meet the needs of a growing population. For example, many of the water, sewer and road networks in the larger cities require reconstruction and expansion. In addition, there are unclear or overlapping service responsibilities with central government agencies.

Financial management

Urban council revenue sources are composed principally of rates and service fees. Rates predominate in larger councils while service fees are more important in smaller councils. Government contributions account for only about 5% of council revenues. Rate collection efficiency appears to be reasonably high, 70% to 80% although many areas are not rated, particularly Traditional Housing Areas. Transfer of THA management responsibility to councils and the use of special rating areas may resolve this problem although the transfer will impose management costs on councils. Recovery of service costs through fees is an accepted concept in councils. However, service fees do not appear to reflect actual operating and capital costs of services and infrastructure. Internal management improvements to reduce service costs and equating fees with actual costs would increase revenues.

Concerning government contributions, there are disturbing imbalances. The Minimum Tax payments do not appear to correspond to council population growth. Payments in lieu of rates constitute a small portion of the actual amounts due. Finally, clear criteria for the allocation of grants do not exist.

Other problems in financial management include difficulty in maintaining current accounts and in producing final accounts in a timely fashion, the long amount of time often required for central government approvals, and a poorly developed internal audit function.

In concluding, Mr. Minis identified issues that deserve special attention as Government establishes a strategy to strengthen local authorities. Elements of the strategy include a) improving understanding of the roles of towns and cities in economic development, particularly rural development; b) clearly delineating the responsibilities of local authorities from those of central government agencies; c) shifting the role of Government, particularly the Ministry of Local Government, from one of control to one of facilitating and guiding by reducing required approvals and streamlining procedures; d) establishing a national training capacity for local government and creating attractive conditions of service so that local authorities attract and maintain qualified staffs, and; e) expanding revenues for operating expenses and capital investments to correct current inadequacies and to meet future needs.

TOWN CLERK PRESENTATIONS

Presentation of the Town Clerk of Blantyre

Mr. Robin Mitchinson's comments focused on problems and solutions in financial management in Blantyre. He highlighted the procedural and legal constraints on effective management. Regarding rates, the largest resource in Blantyre, there is a large amount of uncollected rates for which the enforcement procedures are cumbersome. Moreover, the QVR has not been completed, leaving the city undervalued. Collection of sewerage charges, the most important fee resource, is also difficult to enforce because of the sole recourse to civil action. In addition, many of the unpaid charges are due by government and parastatal agencies. Mr. Mitchinson suggested that councils be provided with the power of distraint to enforce collections. He also suggested that fee schedules be reviewed annually and be regulated by council resolution rather than Ministry approval.

Capital investments in Blantyre are currently inadequate or non-existent. In the past, the city has borrowed from private sources although the terms of these loans have been onerous. Mr. Mitchinson recommended that the capital budgeting process could be improved by introducing rolling multi-year capital budgets and by the creation of a Capital Loans Board that would provide favorable terms and conditions for local authorities. He also suggested that councils use sound asset management as a way to produce revenues for capital financing.

Financial management in the city is constrained by a lack of qualified staff: many positions are unfilled and existing staff are generally under-trained. The process for filling vacant positions is cumbersome and slow. Mr. Mitchinson recommended rapid staffing of vacant positions and the establishment of a local government training program. Overall, he suggested that a review of the Local Government Act would be useful to adapt the statute to the current problems and thinking on local government management.

Presentation by the Town Clerk of Mzuzu

Mr. Vic Butler, Town Clerk of Mzuzu, addressed problems of staffing and organization in local authorities. The principal need in staffing local authorities is to clarify and perhaps modify the roles of the institutions involved: the Ministry, the Local Government Service Commission, and councils. Clarifying roles could involve a) streamlining the recruitment process by removing the need to "create" a post, b) allowing councils to advertize directly for positions up to a specified level, c) establishing a comprehensive program of short term and long term training for council staff, and d) strengthening the LGSC role in establishing attractive conditions of service and a staff development strategy and in identifying overall council staffing needs. He also suggested more council participation in the interviewing process.

Regarding organizational issues, Mr. Butler stressed the uniqueness of each council and suggested that flexibility should be allowed in finding solutions to local government

problems. To increase central government sensitivity to local needs and provide local authorities a greater voice, he suggested that there could be more council representation on national bodies dealing with local management. In closing, he suggested that as Government reviews its policy regarding local government, consideration could be given to alternative models of management, such as the United States city manager model.

Presentation by the Town Clerk of Lilongwe

Integrated urban management was the topic of Mr. Ron McGill, Town Clerk of Lilongwe. He underlined the problems that await local managers as urban populations increase dramatically in the coming years. As many international assistance agencies have acknowledged, the ability of governments to cope with this growth and allow urban centers to make a significant contribution to the national economy depends on effective urban management. Effective urban management means that services and infrastructure are provided in the right place at the right time. Integrated urban management refers to the "integration of spatial, sectoral, economic, financial, and institutional planning so as to achieve urban development goals." Lilongwe is currently seeking to develop an integrated approach through the use of an urban information system that combines financial and spatial development information through the use of micro-computers. This experience could be a pilot project for other cities in Africa.

Presentation of the Working group reports

SUMMARY OF THE WORKING GROUPS

Identifying urban problems and the role of local authorities in finding solutions

Each of the six working groups were asked to identify the five most important physical, economic, or social problems in urban areas (urban meaning any sized population center, district or urban council). While most of the groups focused on general problems as they would be perceived by citizens, some groups identified problems specifically pertaining to local authorities. In all the groups identified and ranked 13 different problems. Of those, the most highly ranked were:

1. Inadequate infrastructure,
2. Limited local authority revenue base,
3. Inadequate housing,
4. Unemployment, and
5. Inadequate education facilities.

Other problems identified included lack of proper sanitation, lack of trained staff in councils, poor roads, inadequate health facilities, land pressures, squatter settlements, lack of social services and overly high expectations on the part of citizens.

Following this first exercise, each group was asked to identify the role which local authorities could play in resolving the identified problems. Several different types of roles were suggested, for example:

primary responsibility for financing and managing a service;

serving as a catalyst for development by coordinating the planning of services and investments;

providing secondary support to another agency with primary responsibility for the service;

no direct responsibility.

Local government role in infrastructure: Two of the groups felt that local authorities should have primary responsibility for certain types of basic infrastructure such as roads, sewerage,street lights, and drainage. They felt that councils should play a catalytic or coordinating role (with the central government) in other types of infrastructure such as water and electricity. One group commented that the local authority role in water could evolve into a primary one. Two other groups linked the

problem of infrastructure to local government financing. Local authorities should play a coordinating role with central government in assuring that an adequate flow of funds for capital investment is available (for example, through the reactivation of the Local Authority Loan Fund).

Local government role in raising revenues: Three of the groups recommended that local authorities serve as a catalyst in enlarging the revenue base by providing infrastructure and services to stimulate private investment. The groups suggested that local authorities could manage selected revenue generating services directly after careful review of management practices to ensure that costs were carefully controlled. Two of the groups suggested that local authorities could be given more autonomy by the central government in managing their resources. Central government could pass certain sources to local authorities and should pay the full amounts of contributions in lieu of rates.

Local government role in providing housing: All of the groups who identified the problem of housing suggested that local authorities should, above all, play a catalytic role in resolving housing shortages. This role would be exercised through the provision of serviced plots on which the private sector could build houses, supporting housing development by other public sector institutions, and planning for the construction of all types of housing. One group suggested that local authorities could establish housing services. As local authorities take over the Traditional Housing Areas, they will also become more involved in housing provision.

Local government role in employment generation: The groups who identified unemployment as a problem agreed that local authorities could play a catalytic role in employment generation by providing a favorable environment for the private sector through the provision of services, serviced plots, and infrastructure such as warehouses. They can also provide fiscal incentives and amend by-laws that inhibit entrepreneurial development.

Local government role in providing educational facilities: The groups that identified the lack of educational facilities did not propose similar local government roles. One group proposed that LA's should have a primary role in financing and administering primary schools and encourage the development of private schools. The other group felt that primary education was more the responsibility of the central government. Local authorities, however, could encourage self-help construction of primary schools.

Summary of Technical Group Discussions

Each of the six work groups had been designated to discuss a specific facet of the local government system after the general session identifying urban problems and local government roles in their resolution. The six areas of discussion corresponding to the work group titles included:

1. Strengthening the policy formulation for decentralization (for Principal Secretaries);
2. Strengthening the financial capacity of local authorities;
3. Promoting employment generation;
4. Improving the local government personnel system;
5. Strengthening the technical capacity of local authorities to plan and manage infrastructure and services;
6. Establishing a national training capacity for local authorities.

Each of the groups were given a series of questions to frame their discussions. The questions generally focused on identifying problems in the specific area, identifying actions to improve the situation, and on future research needs. Each group's discussions are summarized below. The output as presented at the final workshop session, is included in the appendices.

Group 1: Strengthening policy formulation

The group was asked to identify how the policy formulation process might be strengthened and in what areas. To answer the question, the group identified domains in which the policy process and content needed attention: education, health, works, personnel, finance, and development policy. In these areas, the primary concern was to define more clearly the role, generally increasing, of local authorities.

Regarding education policy, more responsibility could be devolved to local authorities in financing (collection of fees), infrastructure, and staffing as local capacity is built. In the area of curriculum, the group felt that primary responsibility should be retained by the Ministry of Education although input from the LA's should be sought. The group suggested that LA's could try to encourage private schools as way of meeting the expanding demand for education services.

Health policy should be studied to provide clear guidance on the role of local authorities in health delivery. The role should generally increase, including expanding local financing through reasonable charges and reviewing the surtax charged to local clinics (to reduce local costs).

Regarding works, the group recommended that more authority should be devolved to LA's to develop land for housing, in part by the transfer of certain Malawi Housing Corporation responsibilities to councils. In addition, policy should provide encouragement for a greater private sector role in housing.

Policy regarding recruitment, training, career development and salaries of local government personnel should be reviewed with a view to improving the calibre of local staff. Also, the group suggested reviewing the Local Government Service Commission's role in recruitment, possibly allowing for more local responsibility in the hiring of lower level staff.

With a view to strengthening local finance, the group recommended that policies be reviewed to improve collection enforcement and to broaden the revenue base and reduce central controls on revenue generation and collection. The distribution of responsibilities (central or local) for revenue mobilisation should also be reviewed.

Regarding Development policy, the group reaffirmed the direction toward decentralization contained in Devpol.

To strengthen institutional support for decentralization, the group recommended that technical ministries play a greater role in training local authority personnel. Mutual secondment of staff to strengthen capacity and improved coordination between central and local governments through the creation of task forces and committees were also identified as ways to support decentralization.

Regarding the role of donors, the group suggested that more donor support be made available directly to local authorities and local government should be better represented when the central government and donors negotiate projects involving LA's.

Group 2: Strengthening local financial capacity

Group 2 was first asked to identify problems in revenue generation in terms of the statutory framework, relations with central government, internal management and relations with tax payers. The group generally found that the Local Government Act is acceptable but regulations governing enforcement, particularly recourse to civil debt action, are cumbersome. They also recommended a review of the range of revenue sources, particularly fees on customary lands and forests, that could be made available to district councils.

Problems in relations with the central government relate to the number of local issues and time required for central government review. A second problem area concerns the distribution of revenue sources: underpayment of contributions to urban and district councils in lieu of rates, lack of clear grant distribution criteria, and centrally held lands that could be transferred to local councils for development as revenue sources.

The group identified a lack of training for staff and elected officials as a factor contributing to poor internal management. In terms of revenues, internal management problems are reflected in services where costs exceed revenues. Local development projects' feasibility should be studied to contain costs and assure a good financial return.

The group felt that there might be a question of public confidence about local services as taxpayers are not aware of how their taxes are used. In addition, charges such as rates and fees do not necessarily correspond to a given quality of public service.

The principal problems in budgeting and financial control concern the lack of trained staff, unclear procedures and concern over presenting unbalanced budgets to the Ministry. These give rise to inaccurate estimates. The group also identified the long time

required to approve budgets, in part due to excessive control requirements, as a constraint on implementing council activities.

Several actions were identified to strengthen local financial capacity. They included: increasing local autonomy in setting fees; strengthening enforcement procedures through the use of distress powers; limiting central government review to budgets and important local policy matters; improving staffing through recruitment of accounting staff, establishing more attractive conditions of service and training; and improving capital financing and capital budgeting procedures (multi-year rolling budgets).

Group 3: Promoting local employment generation

Group 3 was first asked to identify the types of economic activities that should be promoted in secondary cities and towns. At the village level, cottage industries are most appropriate. Councils can encourage these activities by providing storage, market and transport facilities. In secondary centers, the manufacture of semi-finished products as inputs to larger scale manufacturing should be encouraged. To this end, local authorities can set up processing areas and collaborate with financial institutions in providing credit. Land held by central government should be transferred to local authorities for development of small industrial estates and commercial uses. This would also strengthen the financial base of councils.

Constraints on local employment generation include public mistrust of private sector pricing mechanisms and regulations such as by-laws or licencing procedures that are cumbersome or costly. This includes local regulations as well as the work of the Malawi Bureau of Standards. Lack of plots, inadequate infrastructure and insufficient maintenance of existing infrastructure such as roads, electricity and telephone also prevent business expansion. Finally, the group identified the rigidity of the banking sector as a constraint.

Actions to promote employment generation include increasing private sector representation in local planning, decreasing inhibitions on the informal sector, and reducing public concern over price increases. The group also recommended joint venture activities between local authorities and financial institutions and between local authorities and bus operators. Local authorities could also facilitate the establishment of technical training programs.

Group 4: Strengthening the local authority personnel system

Group 4 was first asked to identify the principal constraints on recruiting and maintaining qualified staff. They indicated that the recruitment procedure is cumbersome as three different agencies are involved: the Ministry of Local Government (for seconded and loaned staff), the Local Government Service Commission (for clerical staff and above) and councils (for laborers). The group noted that the majority of top managers in town and district councils are seconded or loaned staff but the councils have little say

in the assignment of this staff. Regarding the recruitment of clerical and mid-level staff, the LGSC is responsible but there is insufficient council representation at interviews and a long time lag between the advertisement and filling of a position because of LGSC procedures. The group also observed that there is no proper salary structure in place and that the salary scales and grades for cities are not uniform.

While the mobility of seconded and loaned staff is out of the control of councils, the group noted that transfers are too frequent and there is frequently little consultation between the Ministry and councils about transfers. Locally hired staff have little chance for internal promotions. The lack of a career structure, the lack of attractive conditions of service such as pensions, unrealistically low allowances (travel, for example) and the inexistence of pre-service and in-service training linked to professional certification were also seen as constraints.

The group proposed a variety of solutions to these problems. Regarding recruitment, the solutions included formulating attractive conditions of service, allowing cities and municipalities to recruit up to mid-level managers and allowing districts and towns to recruit up to clerical officers. This recruitment, although locally performed would be carried out in the presence of a LGSC official. The group also recommended that councils should be consulted about the loan or secondment of central staff, they should not imposed on councils.

Salary structures should be formulated by the Ministry of Local Government, in consultation with local executives, as soon as possible. Salary levels should be competitive to attract qualified staff, eliminating the need for seconded staff. Certain posts, such as the Treasury staff, should receive special attention.

Training for all levels of staff will play an important role in improving the system. Many local institutions, including the Malawi Institute of Management, could participate in training programs. An in-service certification program should be part of the training offered to council staff.

In conclusion, training needs assessments and proper job analyses should be conducted. The Ministry should mount a campaign to attract qualified staff and begin to define a training program in consultation with MIM and councils.

Group 5: Strengthening local technical capacity to plan and manage services and infrastructure

In identifying current problems and solutions in providing services and infrastructure, the group spent considerable time discussing the inadequate definition of service responsibility. Although the Education Act spells out the responsibilities of education authorities, members of these authorities are not aware of their responsibilities leading to confusion. The group recommended that the Ministry of Education conduct workshops and meetings to clarify roles.

In health services, the group identified problems in overlapping functions, standards, and supervision of local authority health services, despite relatively clear delineation of responsibility. The group recommended closer collaboration between the Ministry of Health, MLG, and local authorities in planning and implementing services. The formulation of clear policy on personnel, standards and supervision would be useful.

The responsibility for traffic lights, street lights, and verges on roads in urban areas is unclear. Closer collaboration between the Ministry of Works, MLG, and urban councils is required to define responsibilities.

The group also identified unclear responsibility in the planning and management of sewerage systems. The group recommended that the agency responsible for planning must ensure that systems are integrated into urban development plans. At the planning stage, responsibility for maintenance should be defined. Also a policy on an integrated approach to sewerage should be formulated.

Regarding water supply, responsibilities are currently clear, although continued decentralization of responsibility should be the goal.

Group 5 indicated that the lack of financial resources and trained personnel are serious constraints on the effective provision of services and infrastructure. While other work groups have addressed solutions to finance and personnel, the group recommended that internal management improvements would result in the more efficient use of available resources and deployment of personnel. Similarly, internal organization should be rationalized. The use of management information systems to integrate financial, personnel and geographic information would strengthen council management of services and infrastructure.

Group 6: Establishing a training capacity for local government

Group 6 identified a number of problems in local government training the most important of which is the lack of focus on local government despite the existence of in-service training institutions and relevant departments in the University. Little is known about the current and projected target audience. There is a lack of relevant indigenous training material and few skilled local trainers. In meeting a serious need for training to retain council staff, a training program should strike a balance between the cost a training a few staff overseas and providing less costly training for many in Malawi.

To overcome these problems, there should be a sustained institutional focus on local authority management which would include a) a sequence of courses linked to career advancement, b) training leading to professional certification, c) a balance between academic and on the job training (the latter being important), d) a central government commitment to training as part of the decentralization program, including the establishment of a training section in the Ministry of Local Government, and e) the development of indigenous training materials.

The program should begin with an assessment of needs that should be the joint responsibility of the Ministry, councils, ALGAM and training institutions. The needs assessment would serve as the basis for a national training plan. The implementation of the plan should be the responsibility of the Ministry and training institutions in consultation with councils. Priority for training should be given to mid-level staff as they are currently the weakest link in the system. Financing for training should be provided by the central government and councils. The Group recommended the establishment of a central training fund. based on contributions from councils and matching funds from Government. The Fund would be managed by the central government in consultation with local authorities.

CLOSING ADDRESS

MR. D.C.W. KAMBAUA
PRINCIPAL SECRETARY (ADMINSITRATOR),
OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT AND CABINET

Mr. Chairman,

Your Excellencies, Members of the Diplomatic Corps,

The Resident Representative, UNDP,

The Resident Representative, World Bank,

The Mission Director, USAID,

The District Chairman, Malawi Congress Party

The District Chairman, League of Malawi Women,

The Distinguished Participants,

The Distinguished Guests,

Ladies and Gentlemen.

1. It is a great honour and privilege for me this morning to officially close this very important Workshop on "Strengthening of Local Government through Decentralisation".

2. At the outset permit me, Mr. Chairman, to echo the words of the Minister of Health when he was opening this workshop that the topic you have covered "Strengthening Local Government Through Decentralisation", is in fact quite appropriate and of concern to all of us here.

3. It is quite appropriate and of concern to us because structural changes in a number of countries have shown that the best results in promoting economic development are achieved through co-operative efforts between local authorities, central Government Ministries/Departments and the private sector.

4. Our discussions throughout the last two and half days have shown that this is indeed the case. I have no doubt, therefore, that this workshop has enabled the various Ministries and organisations gathered here to recognise the potential contribution of local government to national economic and social development of the country. For this to

materialise, however, there is need to have a well defined national policy framework on the strengthening of local authorities. This workshop came at the opportune time.

5. We are all aware of the objectives of this workshop which were:-

(i) to build a consensus on a national policy framework to foster decentralisation and enhance the effectiveness of local authorities;

(ii) to identify issues, topics and actions to strengthen the policy environment and the management, financial and technical capacities of local authorities, and

(iii) to identify a framework for donor assistance, including the scope of various donor assistance programmes and a proposed World Bank Urban project and the studies which will be carried out for its preparation.

6. I believe that we delved into these objectives. During the past two and half days we seriously discussed the problems and opportunities available to local authorities in Malawi; the role and functions of local authorities in responding to these problems and opportunities and the actions necessary to strengthen the local authorities' capacities to carry out their roles and functions.

7. It is my sincere hope that Government Ministries/Departments, local authorities, donor agencies and the private sector concerned will be able to fulfil their part of the role as discussed and agreed in this workshop.

8. We should remind ourselves again that this country counts on the local authorities to provide the mechanism for the local population to participate in arriving at the decisions that affect its destiny, as well as to inform government of its needs. But responsive and efficient local authorities need informed councillors and well trained staff. They need financial resources that are efficiently channelled into services and infrastructure. These have been covered in our deliberations.

9. Malawi recognises that it is at the local level of government where conditions are best provided for citizens to develop a sense of belonging, and of responsibility. Therefore, I totally agree that to function properly, local authorities should have an adequate and separate revenue base which should be locally determined and derived. In funding, as in function, there should be maximum local flexibility and autonomy.

10. The attaining of these and other principles is possible in conditions where the assertion of "partnership between central and local government" has real meaning. We have rededicated ourselves to that meaning.

11. I can say quite confidently that local authorities have since their establishment been very responsive to National Development needs and this has been in line with what His Excellency the Life President himself, then Prime Minister, said in 1965 during

the second reading of the Local Government Bill, and I quote: "It is clear that if the District Councils are to go forward and fill their proper place in political and administrative organisation of this country, they must be more responsive to the wishes of ordinary people. With this organisation I hope a new spirit and enthusiasm will be injected in the body of Local Government in this country, so that in association and partnership with the central Government, the District Councils can provide our people those services of economic, educational and social benefit which it is my earnest desire and I know the earnest desire of this Government to give the people of this country" unquote.

12. I would, therefore, like to thank all of you participants for the useful deliberations and practical recommendations which I promise the Government will consider sympathetically.

13. Last but not least I wish to repeat the sincere thanks extended to the UNDP, the World Bank and USAID for sponsoring the Workshop and to the Representatives of EEC, UNICEF, ADB, DANIDA JICA, KFW/GTZ and CIDA for their keen interest shown by their presence.

14. My special thanks go to the management of Club Makokola for permitting that the workshop take place here and for providing these excellent facilities.

15. Finally, I wish to thank His Excellency the Life President for his foresighted and dynamic leadership which has enabled this country attain unprecedented development within 25 years of our independence.

16. Mr. Chairman, distinguished participants, ladies and gentlemen I now declare this workshop officially closed.

THANK YOU

The workshop's secretariat

APPENDIX A

GROUP REPORTS

"What are the prinicipal physical, social and economic problems in urban areas?"

"What should be the role of local authorities in solving these problems?"

GROUP 1 - POLICY

MAJOR PROBLEMS

1. Limited Revenue Base
2. Inadequate Infrastructure
3. Inadequate Educational Institutions
4. Land Pressures
5. High Expectations

ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. Limited Revenue Base

   a) Planning how to stimulate/broaden economic base.

   b) Catalyst to encourage investment.

   c) Create attractive environment (e.g. infrastructure) to attract investment.

   d) Directly manage selected services after careful review (rest houses).

2. Inadequate Infrastructre

   a) Primary role for basic infrastructure in roads and sewerage, street lights.

   b) Catalytic/coordinating role in services such as water, electricity.

3. Inadequate Educational Institutions

   a) Primary role in financing infrastructure and in administration of primary schools.

   b) Catalytic/secondary role in encouraging private schools.

4. Land Pressures

   a) Primary planning role

      Boundary lines
      Rezonning.

5. High Expectations of citizens about government can provide.

   a) Secondary role (primary role for educating citizens is with the central government).

GROUP 2 - LOCAL FINANCIAL CAPACITY

MAJOR PROBLEMS

1. Inadequate Capital Investments
2. Lack of Housing
3. Unemployment
4. Inadequate Public Health Facilities
5. Inadequate Social Services

ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. Inadequate Capital Investments

   Provider of capital investments, should coordinate capital investments and facilitate continued role of Central Government in providing adequate flow of grant funding and external donor funding for capital investments. Recommends that capital investment fund be established to enable Local Governments to borrow or draw from such a fund.

2. Lack of Housing

   Catalytic role of Local Government in creating accelerated housing development, supportive role in encouraging other institutions and private sector to construct houses; direct provision of a housing service.

3. Unemployment

   a) Catalytic role by creating a favourable environment for increased economic activities including joint ventures with the private sector.

   b) Provision of tax incentives.

   c) Effective planning function.

   d) Effective licencing system.

4. Inadequate Public Health Facilities

   a) Role of a coordinator of health facilities provided by Church organizations, NGOs, and companies.

   b) Provider of health facilities.

5. Inadequate Social Services

   Catalyst and provider of social services and a coordinating role.

GROUP 3 - EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

MAJOR PROBLEMS

1. Insufficient Financial and Human Resources
2. Bad and Poor Infrastructure
3. Unemployment
4. Inadequate Financial Support Services and Incentives
5. Unavailability of Land for Development Purposes.

ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. Insufficient Financial and Human Resources

   a) Local Authorities should expand income generating activities.

   b) There should be good and timely revenue collection and proper cost control of services.

   c) Good human resource development, including training, is extremely necessary.

   d) There should be better conditions of service and incentives for local authority staff.

2. Bad and Poor Infrastructure

   a) Infrastructure is totally dependant on problem 1, as without revenue local authorities cannot provide good infrastructure.

   b) There might be a need to reactivate the Local Authorities Loan Fund or find some soft financing with attractive rates of interest. This might be an area where donors could help.

3. Employment

   a) The role of local authorities could only be catalytic to facilitate the development of the entrepreneur's spirit and perhaps encourage craftsmen etc. and again it was considered that this would probably be an area of donor interest. Local authorities might need to amend some by-laws that inhibit the development of entrepreneurship in their areas.

4. Inadequate Financial Support Services and Incentives

   a) These were summarised to include serviced industrial plots, trading shops, even produce warehouses, and maybe the provision of sites by local authorities for new businesses. This again maybe an area of donor interest.

5. Unavailability of Land for Development Purposes

a) There is need to reexamine the land tenure to ensure that local authorities have land for development purposes because in most of the local authority areas land is still owned by central government or traditional authorities. In low density as well as rural housing areas, the responsibility should be given to local authorities rather than the MHC.

GROUP 4 - LOCAL AUTHORITY PERSONNEL SYSTEM

MAJOR PROBLEMS

1. Inadequate Schools
2. Poor Road Systems
3. Inadequate Housing
4. Inadequate Sanitation
5. Inadequate Health Facilities

ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. Schools

   a) Primary Schools

   - should be the responsibility of the Central Government.

   - the LAs should be responsible for the mobilization of the public to carry out self-help construction

   Overall LAs should only act as catalysts but should leave the administration of the schools to the Ministry of Education.

2. Poor Road System

   a) Ministry of Works should continue to be responsible for construction and maintenance of major roads within urban areas.

   b) LA's should be responsible for the construction and maintenance of all secondary roads within townships through the private sector (i.e. contracting out to private sector).

3. Housing

   a) LA's should take over THAs currently being administered by MHC.

   b) Councils should explore the possibility of increasing serviced plot in the urban areas.

4. Sanitation

Includes:

Public Conveniences
Garbage
Sewerage
Drainage

a) While LA's should aim at improving sanitation in general, some aspects of sanitation could be privatised e.g. garbage collection and removal, i.e. possibility of contracting out to the private sector.

b) LA's should enforce their sanitation by-laws and probably impose fines or other form of punishment where necessary.

5. Health Facilities

a) Following the proposals made under the 4 previous headings, it was hoped that savings made as a result of privatisation could be used to improve the health facilities.

b) The surtax element in the purchase of drugs from Government should be scrapped to enable councils improve health facilities.

GROUP 5 - LOCAL AUTHORITY TECHNICAL CAPACITY

MAJOR PROBLEMS

1. Inadequate Housing
2. Inadequate Provision and Maintenance of Infrastructure
3. Inadequate Supply of Safe Water and Sanitation, Including Solid Waste Management
4. Unemployment
5. Squatter Settlements

ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. Inadequate Housing

   Powers to plan for housing, solicit funds, and ensure the construction of all types of houses.

2. Lack of Adequate Provision and Maintenance of Infrastructure

   Primary role for funding, execution and management of infrastructure such as roads, sewerage and drainage, and catalytic role with regards to electricity, telephones, water, etc. Water could however come in the first category.

3. Inadequate Supply of Safe Water and Sanitation, Including Solid Waste Management

   Safe water included in (2) above. Role should be primary in relation to sanitation.

4. Unemployment

   Catalytic role for example through provision of sites, shelters, craft centres, and deferement of charges in lieu of grants.

5. Squatter Settlements

   Primary role in providing serviced plots and in upgrading squatter settlements.

GROUP 6 - NATIONAL TRAINING CAPACITY

MAJOR PROBLEMS

1. Shortage of Revenues
2. Lack of Quality Technical Staff
3. Excessive Central Government Control
4. Public Ignorance of Local Authorities Functions
5. Lack of Housing

ROLE OF LOCAL AUTHORITIES

1. Shortage of Revenues

   a) The local authorities have a primary responsibility to raise and generate funds for financing local services, and the government should ensure that there are adequate sources of revenue. There should be less interference in the use of these funds.

   b) The Government should be persuaded to pass over to local authorities certain incomes e.g. vehicle licences, and the rates due to local government should be paid in full.

   c) The local authorities should have the freedom to manage locally generated revenues as they deem appropriate.

   d) The local authorities should improve the infrastructure and services e.g. roads, street lights, markets so as to encourage private sector expansion through the establishment of businesses. In so doing they widen their revenue base through the raising of fees and charges that would be payable by the private sector.

2. Lack of Quality Technical Staff

   a) The local authorities have a primary role and task to train their staff, and must initiate and identify training needs and institutions.

   b) The local authorities should also support national training institutions by releasing their qualified staff to help in the training of local authority staff.

   c) There should be an in-house training institution for the training of local authority staff - The Institute of Local Government Training.

3. Excessive Central Government Control

The group felt that the local authorities had no power over this, but can only be supportive in, for example, making suggestions about amendments to the Local Government (Urban Areas) Act. These amendments should reflect the needs and aspirations of the local authorities.

4. Public Ignorance of the Functions of the Local Authorities

The local authorities have a primary role through the civic leaders in educating the public through meetings in their wards, the press, radio, etc.

5. Lack of Housing

The local authorities do not have much power in resolving the problem but can have a supportive and coordinating role in the provision of infrastructure e.g. access roads, street lights, sewerage, etc. so that private sector can establish and build houses.

APPENDIX B

RESULTS OF THE TECHNICAL WORKING GROUPS

GROUP 1 ACTIONS TO STRENGTHEN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT POLICY ENVIRONMENT

General Observations

1. Strongly support further decentralization to Local Authorities in most areas and domains (e.g. health, education, works, revenue, land, housing, etc.)

2. Constraints on speed and degree:

   - ability of LAs to recruit well qualified staff;
   - conditions of service are not competitive with Central Government, parastatal agencies and private sector;
   - weak financial resource base of local authorities;
   - technical expertise weak in LA.

3. In some instances LAs not taking advantage of powers/authority permitted under existing laws and regulations.

4. Gradualism in decentralization needed to assure local capacity to assume responsibilities and services.

Specific Policy Domains Where Policy Process & Content Needs Attention For Decentralization

1. Education
2. Health
3. Works
4. Personnel
5. Finance
6. DEVPOL.

QUESTION 1: Does the policy formulation process need to be strengthened? How can this be done? What areas of policy regarding decentralization need refinement?

a) Education Policy Issue Areas

Financing - Fees collection; devote more to LAs as they need capacity.

- Curriculum - MOEC would retain primary responsibility but would welcome LA input.

- Physical Infrastructure - Need to explore new options/alternatives where LAs resume greater role (e.g. building schools and leasing to private management).

- LAs should encourage more private schools to meet demand.

- Staffing - MOEC should help LAs strengthen local staff capacity to handle local education management better.

b) Health Policy Issues

- Policy study needed to provide clearer direction/guidance on extent LAs should assume more health delivery responsibility.

- General view of group was that more responsibility should go to LAs but this requires qualified staff.

- Review surtax by medical central stores charged to local clinics for medication with a view to reducing or eliminating it.

- LAs should be able to charge reasonable health fees.

c) Works Policy Issue Areas

- Housing - provide more local capacity to develop land, plots for sale; devolve more of Malawi Housing Corporation's responsibilities to LAs where local capacity exists, consider complementing MHC's efforts.

- Encourage greater private sector role where possible in housing.

d) Personnel Policy Issues

- Re examine personnel policies on recruitment, appointment, conditions of service, training, salaries with view to improving calibre of staff.

- Re-examine Local Government Service Commission role, allowing lower level staff in LAs be appointed without Commission involvement.

- Develop career systems which offer promotion and training opportunities.

e) Finance Policy Issues

- Key issues are: need to strengthen local ability to enforce collection through better training and more appropriate legal instruments; broaden revenue base.

- Launch policy initiatives to explore jointly with LAs how/where to broaden base.

- Review/amend laws to remove controls on LA authority to enforce collection.

- Conduct policy research (by EP&D and others) to examine who (LA versus Central Government) should levy and collect various taxes, rates and fees.

DEVPOL Policy Issues

- Group reaffirmed direction toward decentralization stated in DEVPOL.

QUESTION 2: **What institutional support is required for effective decentralization? How can better coordination be achieved between technical ministries and local authorities? What should be the role of technical ministries in providing technical support to LAs?**

- Technical ministries should play role of providing training

- Seconding of Central Government, Technical Staff to LAs (and reverse) to strengthen technical capacity

- Improve coordination between Central Government and LAs through task forces, committees with joint representation to work through technical and delivery issues.

QUESTION 3: **What should be the role of donors? How can donor actions be harmonized?**

- Donor support should be available more directly to LA service delivery (e.g. health, works, education. etc)

- When Donors and technical ministries negotiate, involve LAs in discussions during planning, where appropriate, as well as Ministry of Local Government.

- GOM (especially EP&D, Ministry of Finance) need to take lead in coordinating LA involvement and donor harmony.

GROUP 2 BUILDING LOCAL AUTHORITY FINANCIAL CAPACITY

QUESTION 1: What are principal problems in revenue generation?

Regarding statutory authority, the LA Act is acceptable but:

- prosecution for non payment too difficult,
- dispensing with property too difficult,
- civil debt action defeats spirit and intent of rates collection,
- make possible monthly payments of rates,
- need to address equity issues,
- powers to levy fees on forests and dips should be reinstated to district councils,
- district councils want review of fees on customary lands and forests by central government to take into account the costs of administration. These lands are equitably allocated,
- regarding poll tax - review of equitable distribution of revenues between local and central government,
- review appointment of evaluators,
- review range of revenue sources for districts,

Regarding relations with Central Government:

- central government approval of budgets, etc. should be automatic after set time period except for exceptional cases such as the allocation of revenues so that delays are not casued by minor details;
- fewer issues should require central government approval,
- financial autonomy district councils should be increased to that of urban councils,
- government land in statutory areas in urban councils should be given on long term lease or free hold to councils for use as a revenue source,
- need to extend urban administration to centres proposed by National Physical Development Plan (DEVPOL) subject to financial sustainability of individual urban centres,
- central government should make full payment in lieu of rates on their assessable property,
- grants to district councils should be reviewed regularly on the basis of population and development,
- review regularly payment of tax in lieu of rates in districts councils,
- Central government should transfer or mandate new or expanded functions or responsibilities to local governments only after careful study with local authorities, and only with commensurate and adequate revenue sources or authority.

Regarding internal management:

- lack of trained manpower
- need for injections of fresh skills
- elected member training important to improve participation in decision making,
- management of services needs improvement to reduce costs. To avoid deficits service fees should reflect costs,
- local government should endeavour to cut costs as means of enhancing revenue,
- projects should be subject to feasibility study to contain cost and assure return.

Regarding relations with tax payers:

- not enough information for tax payers on what the money is used for creating lack of public confidence.
- rates do not relate to quality of services,
- fees and charges should be regularly reviewed regarding their impact on cost recovery.

QUESTION 2: What are the principal problems in budgeting and financial control?

- anticipation of deficits causes some LAs to produce inaccurate budgets. LAs should prepare accurate and realistic budgets.
- staff is inadequate and untrained in budget process,
- late approval of budgets constraints ability to implement new programs.
- accurate estimates are necessary for effective budget control,
- process of generating and approving estimates should be simplified,
- estimates should be clear and concise an possible
- there should be less control in budgetary preparation.

QUESTION 3: What actions would strengthen the financial capacity of LAs?

- legislation should be amended to allow councils to set fees and charges without reference to Minister,
- modify statutory framework to provide distress powers through due legal process,
- Ministry approval should be limited to major policy and budgetary issues,
- ministry should become more supportive and be a facilitator of LA actions,
- establish or recapitalize local government loans authority to lend or facilitate LA borrowing from other sources,
- require LA multi-year rolling capital budgets,

- filling all accounting positions should be first priority,
- strengthen internal auditing systems,
- audit function should be independent but report to clerk not treasurer,
- MOLG should improve transport situation for rural councils,
- introduce new skills, e.g. estate management, to enhance revenue capacity of LAs,
- staff incentives should be improved/increased to attract and retain qualified staff,
- Recommend establishment of local/expatriate training teams to do in-service training to go from jurisdiction to jurisdiction,
- All staff should be trained in the basic skills necessary to do their jobs,
- MOLG should have an institutionalized training function <u>and</u> capacity,
- LA staff should be transferred less frequently,
- MOLG and LA staff should be increased.

QUESTION 4: **What further research or information would help in strengthening LA financial capacity?**

- research into alternative housing concepts and finance,
- Study Act and bye-laws effect/impact on efficient functions of LAs and their financing,
- study efficiency of management of respective LA services (comparative costs, cost recovery, etc.),
- study current arrangement of sharing certain revenue sources between central government and LAs,
- study of costs and benefits of proposed takeover of traditional housing areas by LAs,
- comparative study of local government revenue sources in other neighbouring countries,
- study of ways LAs can improve the environment for private investment and employment generating activities.

GROUP 3 PROMOTING LOCAL EMPLOYMENT GENERATION

QUESTION 1: What sectors or types of economic activities should be promoted in major cities and secondary towns and villages.?

A. At rural/village areas, there should be resthouses, and some cottage industry. For instance oil expellers, soap manufacturing, bakeries, maize mills, brick making, roofing materials (from sisal, etc) hand looms, tailoring and blaksmiths.

Local Authorities should provide adequate storage/and secure space. The success of the economic activities at village level will depend on a large market, roads that are in good repair and transport. This will also lead to healthy purchasing power and food security. Self help activities should be encouraged and promoted. Local authorities should play a catalytic role with SEDOM and DEMATT in financing and development of business management skills.

B. In secondary towns, consideration should be given to setting-up of "semi finished products" manufactured for supply as input to large manufacturers for example hand loom operation supply to textile manufacturers, raw cloth which can be finished to the grade required. Blacksmiths can supply to Agrimal semi-finished hoes, slashers, etc. We also see a potential for the thriving "KACHASO" distillers to supply to Malawi Distilleries for the manufacture of Malawi Gin - this process should be carefully looked into and checked.

The local authorities should set up processing areas. They should in collaboration with existing financial institutions give access to credit/loans.

Through existing organisations there should be "one stop centres" such as the proposed "small scale industry" of the Ministry of Trade, Industry and Tourism which will be set up in the urban area to begin with.

C. In urban centres, small scale industry should be promoted. For urban areas/centres to be successful the role of S.S.I. should be recognised and encouraged as has been the case in agriculture. It is in this area where job opportunities are created.

Malawi Housing Corporation and Central Government should transfer existing industrial estates and land to local authorities to strengthen their financial base.

The existence of the informal sector should be recognised and encouraged. This sector has a role to play.

The existing storage and refrigerated facilities should be expanded in the market for better utilisation. Other institutions could and should follow the example of ADMARC which has sold some of its warehouses to private sector.

QUESTION 2: What are the principal constraints on local employment generation in terms of :

A. local attitudes towards the private sector (formal and informal):

There appears to be a certain amount of mistrust in relation to the way priority is worked out the point of accusation of overpricing, the quality of locally produced goods, the syndrome or myth of "imported goods being superior to local manufacture". The shortages of some essential goods in some areas which may be as a result of price control, e.g. sugar.

B. regulatory requirements for plot sizes, zoning standards, licence fees (procedures and amounts):

There are some inhibitting by-laws in housings and health. There are too many licences and delays in obtaining them. The M.B.S. charge rather exorbitant fees for their work. The unavailability of plots for manufacturing and trading purposes constrains economic activities. Town planning should be under the municipality.

C. The availability of adequate services and infrastructure:

Electric power failures, telephones not working, lack of general road maintenance, poor transport services. Inferior feeder roads. Lack of infrastructure maintenance has a very high cost on commodities.

D. Other constraints:

Financial/Banking sector needs to be less rigid and more responsive to issues - for instance delays in transferring currency from one bank to another. They should be more flexible.

QUESTION 3: What actions are required to .....

A. Integrate private sector needs in planning and provision of infrastructure and services?

Private sector should be represented at municipal town planning. ESCOM should be more customer oriented.

B. Decrease regulatory pressure on the growth of formal and informal portions of the private sector?

There should be less public concern over cost effective price increases as prices are not controlled. The informal sector should be more accepted as they do have a role to play.

QUESTION 4: **Are there additional ways to promote greater public sector private sector cooperation in designing and financing infrastructure and services? If so, what would you recommend?**

A. There should be joint venture cooperation between local authorities and the private sector, such as financial institutions like SEDOM.

B. Export free zones should be set up. Joint ventures between local authorities and bus operators should be encouraged. Technical schools and colleges for the private sector apprenticeship and training schemes could be encouraged.

QUESTION 5: **What additional information or research would help in identifying ways to strengthen local employment generation.**

A. Set up a data bank or information service that would be readily available for use by both the public and private sectors.

B. There should also be a publication on "Investment opportunities".

GROUP 4 STRENGTHENING THE LOCAL AUTHORITY PERSONNEL SYSTEM

QUESTION 1: What are the principal contraints on recruiting nad maintaining qualified personnel?

A. Cumbersome recruitment procedure

1) Currently 3 recruitment agencies:-

- Ministry of Local Government for seconded/loaned employees, through the Public Service Commission;
- Local Government Service Commission (LGSC) for employees at clerical officer grade and above;
- Councils for employment of laboures and industrial class.

2) Secondments/loans to Councils:

- For seconded employes Councils have to reimburse the Ministry of Local Government for salaries.
- Loaned employees: no reimbursement to Government required.

  At the moment the majority of Districts and Town Councils are seconded/loaned e.g. Town Clerks, Clerks of Councils, Treasurers and Works Supervisors.

3) LGSC is responsible for advertising and interviewing of employees of clerical officers grade and above. Councils responsible for employment of Industrial/subordinate classes.

4) Representation at interviews conducted by the LGSC is not adequate: At times 5 to 10 councils may be represented by one council at interviews if posts they wish to fill are similar.

   Candidates may be imposed on councils - although they had no part in the selection.

5) Time lag too long between the advertisement and the actual filling of the post.

   Commission has to wait until other councils declare similar vacancies (in the guise of economy).

B. SALARY STRUCTURE AND GRADING

1) No proper salary structure and grades now in force - awaiting Ministry action.

2) For cities salaries and grading are not uniform.

C. MOBILITY AND INVOLUNTARY TRANSFERS

1) Mobility currently limited to loaned/seconded employees and not direct council staff hence no change in working environment.

Non-existence of promotion prospects.

2) Too frequent transfers and postings of seconded and loaned staff.

3) No consultation between councils and the Ministry when transfers and postings are effected as such staff are imposed on councils, particularly on cities and Municipalities which do not require their services.

D. OTHER CONDITIONS OF SERVICES

1) Lack of promotion opportunities particularly for direct councils employees e.g. in some cases recommendations for salary acceleration from councils are not approved, even if the councils may have budgeted for such an additional expenditure. While at the same time the Ministry have approved the budget with elements of such salary accelerations.

There is no clear career structure.

2) No conditions of service stipulated.

3) No pension schemes for District Town or even for larger councils e.g. City of Mzuzu.

4) Unrealistic subsistence allowances paid to direct employees (K6.00 per night) with seconded/loaned officers getting hotel accommodation plus breakfast plus additional allowances. The direct employees should get K25.00 minimum to cater/or both meals and accommodation if he goes to a district with a hotel or inn.

E. TRAINING OPPORTUNITIES

1) Pre-Service

None at the moment. It was discontinued in 1976.

2) In-Service

No on-going in-service training for Senior Officers of EO level and above.

No professional qualification or certificate obtainable by those at EO level and above.

F. OTHER CONSTRAINTS

1) Inadequate housing

2) No medical schemes

3) Financial inadequacies i.e. low revenue base.

4) Inadequate staffing.

5) Specialised training concentrated in larger councils e.g. cities.

6) Lack of qualified personnel.

What actions could be taken to improve the LA personnel system?

1. RECRUITMENT

a) Formulation of sound conditions of service as speedily as possible.

b) Cities and Municipalities should be accorded the mandate to recruit employees up to middle-management or supervisory levels.

c) District and Town Councils to be accorded the mandate to recruit clerical officers and below.

d) The Councils should be allowed to perform the recruitment as above but a representative of the LGSC should be present at the respective councils premises for interview.

e) Officers on loan from Local Government should be sent in consultation with the councils concerned. The present system acts as an imposition on councils of personnel whom those councils may not want.

f) Secondment of officers from Government should be made at the request of councils only.

2. SALARY STRUCTURE

a) Responsibility for framing a salary structure for town and district councils should rest with the Ministry of Local Government.

b) Responsibility for formulation of a structure should rest with the Ministry in consultation with the Chief Executives and this should be done as soon as possible.

c) Adequate salaries should be paid by councils to attract qualified personnel.

d) No need for seconding or loaning staff to cities or municipalities.

e) Some posts, particularly those that depend on demand and supply conditions e.g. Treasury staff should receive special attention and consideration.

3. TRAINING POLICY

a) There is a necessity for continued training of Local Government staff at all levels.

b) There Malawi Institute on Management, along with other institutions, could act as a focal point for Local Government training.

c) Need for progressive training in preparation for new positions and responsibilities.

d) An In-service certification programme should be instituted.

4. RECRUITMENT AND MAINTENANCE OF QUALIFIED PERSONNEL IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT

a) Training needs assessment surveys to be carried out.

b) Proper job analysis to be carried out.

c) Since it has been suggested above that M.I.M should act as the focus of Local Government M.I.M should be mandated to identify local institutions that can mount a crash training programme on a continuous basis for all Local Government staff grades.

d) Ministry of Local Government should mount a campaign in liaison with councils to interest/attract degree holders to join the Local Government service.

e) Local Government in liaison with councils and M.I.M should identity the type of courses that would be attractive to graduate trainees, who would form the nucleus for specialised training.

GROUP 5 - STRENGTHENING LOCAL TECHNICAL CAPACITY TO PLAN AND MANAGE SERVICES AND INFRASTRUCTURE

QUESTION 1: What are the current problems in providing services and infrastructure and what actions can over come these problems? Problems may be defined in terms of:

1. Inadequate Definition of Service Responsibility

Problem: Though the Education Act spells responsibilities of the LEAs, there is an unawareness among the LAs/LEAs in terms of their responsibilities thus leading to confusion.

Action: The Ministry of Education and Culture should educate the LAs/LEAs regarding their respective responsibilities through workshops and meetings.

Problem: Though generally there is a clear definition of responsibilities ad regards clinical health services, there are problems relating to overlapping functions, and the standards and supervision of LAs health services.

Action: There must be closer collaboration between MOH, MLG and LAs in the planning and implementation of health services.

Problem: As regards roads there is a problem in relation to who is responsible for traffic lights, streets lights, and verges on designated roads within urban areas. There is also a problem with regards to estate roads.

Action: Closer collaboration between MOW, MLG and LAs to iron out outstanding problems.

Problem: There is a lack of integration of sewerage systems in planning and responsibility for maintenance.

Action a: The authority responsible for planning must ensure that sewerage systems are integrated in all urban plans.

b: Responsibility for the maintenance of sewerage systems after construction should be clearly identified at the planning stage, and LAs should ensure that maintenance standards are maintained.

Problem: With regards to water supplies it is clear who is responsible but decentralisation should be considered.

Action: Decentralisation should be the ultimate goal.

2. Lack of Clear Policy on Services and Infrastructure

Problem: With regards to standards, personnel and supervision of LAs health services, there is no clear policy regarding the relationship between the MOH, MLG and LAs.

Action: Clear policy regarding standards, personnel and supervision of LA health centres should be formulated.

Problem: There is no clear policy regarding an integrated approach to sanitation (sewerage).

Action: A clear sanitation policy should be formulated.

Problem: In many other areas, e.g. education, there is a clear policy but there are problems of implementation.

Action: Where there are problems of implementation, solutions must be sought.

3. Lack of Financial Resources Materials and Trained Personnel

Problem: At LA level there is a serious lack of financial resources, materials, and trained and experienced manpower to effectively provide and manage infrastructure and services.

Action: (The Finance and Personnel groups have proposed solutions)

Problem: There is an inefficient use of available resources.

Action: There should be an optimization in the use of available resources.

4. Lack of Management Information Systems - in areas such as:

Problem: Income and expenditure balances.

Up-date personnel records.

Geographical information systems.

Construction and maintenance information systems.

Action: LAs must institute and strengthen management information systems.

5. Lack of Knowledge of Techniques for Planning and Managing Services

Problem: Critical shortage of qualified personnel.

Action: The recruitment process should be rationalised.

Problem: Critical shortage of relevant training.

Action: Central Government should assist with the training of LA personnel.

Problem: Misdeployment of personnel.

Action: Avoid such misdeployment

6. Inappropriate Internal Organisation

Problem: There are variations among LAs in terms of their internal organisational structure. In some of the LAs the structures are inappropriate in relation to their functions.

Action: Review and rationalise internal organisational structures.

GROUP 6 ESTABLISHING A NATIONAL CAPACITY FOR LOCAL AUTHORITY TRAINING

QUESTION 1: What are the main problems related to local authority training?

(a) Training institutions are in place but lack adequate and sustainable focus and skills in area of L.A. management. Continuity/follow-up are also lacking.

(b) Inadequate information about target training group exits at present. Projected manpower requirements are also lacking.

(c) Trained individuals are placed prematurely in management positions (without corresponding experience).

(d) There is an inadequate cadre of skilled trainers who also possess practical experience.

(e) Shortage of indigenous training materials.

(f) Insufficient focus on L.A. management subjects in university curriculum.

(g) There is a need to achieve appropriate balance between costly overseas training of few and less costly indigenous training for many in L.A management.

(h) Retention of trained L.A. staff.

(i) Need to establish training section in Ministry.

QUESTION 2: What actions are required to strengthen institutional and individual training resorces?

(a) Develop sustained institutional focus on training for L.A. management which includes the following elements:

- Sequence of courses which can be offered to L.A. employees as they progress through their careers.
- Training packages should be developed which lead to certification for L.A. officials.
- There should be balance between academic course work and on-the-job training. Importance of the latter should be recognized.

There should be a central Government commitment to a sustained training program over the long term in conformity with decentralization policy framework.

Indigenous training materials should be developed.

QUESTION 3: What actions are necessary to establish the capcity to assess training needs and inplement training programs?

Assessment of needs should be a shared responsibility of L.A.s, central Government, and training institutions. Design and implementation should be the responsibility of training institutions in consultation with L.A.s.

QUESTION 4: What is the highest priority for staff training (senior or mid level staff, line staff)?

Mid-level staff. They are generally weak at present. Also, well trained mid-level staff provide the pool from which senior staff are eventually selected.

QUESTION 5: What should be the relationship between L.A. training plans and natinal training plans ?

Such training plans are generally not available. There is a need for a national training plan prepared in consultation with L.A.s, ALGAM, and the Ministry. L.A.s should commit themselves to systematic planning for training. To provide inputs for national plan (to be prepared by Central Government.

QUESTION 6: How should local authority training be financed?

Should be shared by Central Government and Local Authorities. A central training fund should be required to contribute a proportion of annual income. This amount should be matched by central Government. Central Government should manage fund in consultation with Local Authorities.

APPENDIX C

LIST OF WORKSHOP PARTICIPANTS

WORKSHOP ON STRENGTHENING LOCAL GOVERNMENT
MANGOCHI, JANUARY 23-26, 1990

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