

CEPPS/IRI Quarterly Report: January 1 – March 31, 2005
MALAWI: POLITICAL PARTY STRENGTHENING
USAID Cooperative Agreement No. DGC-A-00-01-00004-00

Project Dates: October 1, 2003 to February 28, 2005

Total Budget: \$800,000; Expenses to Date: \$725,447

Project Code: 7033

I. SUMMARY

Having concluded its core program activities in December of 2004, IRI used the first quarter of 2005 to plan for a possible extension of its Malawi program. Because of IRI's efficient financial management throughout the life of its Malawi grant, the Institute was left with some funds that could be reprogrammed for more activities. It was later determined that IRI had met its program objectives by completing all the activities from its original grant and would return the remaining funds to CEPPS.

II. BACKGROUND

The Malawian political system has historically been one of the more stable on the African continent, and one of the few that has not endured any international or domestic armed conflict. Following independence from the United Kingdom in 1964, Hastings Kamuzu Banda, leader of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP), assumed the presidency and in 1970 appointed himself President for Life. However, Malawians voted overwhelmingly in favor of multi-party democracy and held the country's first national elections on May 17, 1994.

Bakili Muluzi, a former cabinet minister under Dr. Banda's regime and leader of the United Democratic Front (UDF), won Malawi's first national elections in 1994 handily. The elections were generally regarded as free and fair, and Dr. Muluzi impressed international donors by moving quickly to open the country's economy and draft a new constitution.

Dr. Muluzi won the country's second democratic elections on June 15, 1999 with a plurality of votes. His second term is generally regarded as significantly less sterling. Governmental corruption was considered widespread: as of April 2003 the cabinet had swelled to 46 ministers. And, in the midst of the country's worst famine in the past century, the government inexplicably sold its grain reserves without accounting for the profits. Dr. Muluzi's government has also done little to strengthen democratic institutions. Although fraud did not likely alter the outcome of the 1999 elections,

observers believe fraudulent practices have occurred more frequently in the parliamentary elections occurring since.

Press freedom remains limited, and the state-owned – and patently pro-government – Malawi Broadcasting Corporation is the only radio station that operates reliably outside major urban areas. Dr. Muluzi launched a bid to amend the constitution to allow himself the right to seek a third term and instituted a ban on public demonstrations against the proposed amendment. In one of the few victories for democratic institutions, the Malawian High Court, under the direction of its presidential-appointed judges, eventually struck down both the ban and the amendment.

Dr. Muluzi handpicked Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, a Western-educated economist, to be the UDF candidate for the May 2004 elections. The nation's second largest opposition party, the Alliance for Democracy (AFORD), announced very late in the election season that it would endorse Mutharika's bid for the presidency, which gave Mutharika a distinct advantage.

Malawians went to the polls in May of 2004 and elected Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika to be the nation's second democratically-elected president with 36% of the vote. Dr. Muluzi stepped down, as promised, to allow his successor to take office. John Tembo of the MCP was the runner-up with 27% of the vote, and Mgwirizano Coalition leader Gwanda Chakuamba was a close third with 26%. National Democratic Alliance candidate Brown Mpinganjira took 9%, and independent candidate Justin Malewezi obtained a mere 3% of the vote. The voter turn-out was far lower than Malawi's 1999 elections; out of 5.7 million registered voters, only 3 million cast a ballot, which was a 52% turn-out.

Despite the success of UDF in the presidential election, they failed to win a majority in the parliament. This was a success for the opposition parties, many of whom formed their parties less than a year before the May 20th election. Since the elections, the National Democratic Alliance (NDA) has merged with the ruling UDF to join the Government of National Unity (GNU).

President Mutharika has thus far shown a commitment to limiting the size and waste within his administration. He has also begun addressing corruption through the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), which has been aggressively investigating members of the previous administration. Unlike his predecessor, he has given the impression that he is not interfering in the investigation process, although some have claimed that he is using the ACB to disrupt the internal workings of UDF.

Much attention in Malawi has now shifted to the growing rift between President Mutharika and former president Muluzi. Mutharika resigned from the UDF earlier this year after receiving much criticism from Muluzi. Though Mutharika's attempts thus far to lure other UDP members to join his new party, the Democratic Progressive Party, have so far been unsuccessful, he continues to draw out controversy among the UDF "old guard" and other Muluzi loyalists.

III. PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

All activities for this program were completed during the last reporting period. The only costs incurred this quarter were in designing possible reprogramming avenues for IRI's Malawi program.

IV. RESULTS AND ACCOMPLISHMENTS

IRI has already submitted its performance and monitoring plan containing detailed information on results/accomplishments.

V. EVALUATION

A final report of IRI's Malawi program will follow with a more extensive evaluation of the project.

VI. FUTURE ACTIVITIES

All activities for IRI's Political Party Strengthening program have been concluded.