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# STRENGTHENING PLURALISTIC AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN MALAWI

A MEAS Rapid Scoping Mission  
January 7-27, 2012

April 2012

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# STRENGTHENING PLURALISTIC AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION IN MALAWI

Report on the MEAS Rapid Scoping Mission  
carried out January 7-27, 2012

Final Report submitted to USAID/Malawi  
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## ACRONYMS

ADD	Agricultural Development Division
AEDC	Agricultural Extension Development Coordinator
AEDO	Agricultural Extension Development Officer
AGRESS	Agricultural Gender Roles Extension Support Services
ASWAp	Agriculture Sector Wide Approach program
ASWAp SP	Agriculture Sector Wide Approach program Support Program
CAADP	Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Plan
CISANET	Civil Society Agricultural NETWORK
CNFA	Citizen Network for Foreign Affairs
CONGOMA	COuncil for Non-Governmental Organizations in MALawi
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
DADO	District Agricultural Development Officer
DAECC	District Agricultural Extension Coordination Committee
DAES	Department of Agricultural Extension Services
DAESS	District Agricultural Extension Services System
DEC	District Executive Committee
DARS	Department of Agricultural Research Services
DC	District Commissioner
EAS	Extension and Advisory Services
EPA	Extension Planning Area
EMS	Extension Methodology Services (DAES Branch)
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization
FICA	Flanders International Cooperation Agency
FISP	Farm Input Subsidy Program
FLW	Front-line worker
FN	Food and Nutrition (DAES Branch)
FRM	Farm Radio Malawi
FtF	Feed the Future
FUM	Farmers' Union of Malawi
FVR	Farmer Voice Radio
GoM	Government of Malawi
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
MDTF	Multi-Donor Trust Fund (ASWAp)
MEAS	Modernization of Extension and Advisory Services (USAID LWA Project)
MAIWD	Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development
M&E	Monitoring and Evaluation
NASFAM	National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NRC	Natural Resources College
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PDA	Personal Digital Assistant
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
RSM	Rapid Scoping Mission (MEAS)
RUMARK	RUral MARKet development trust
SAFE	Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension Education

SMS  
USAID  
WV

Subject-Matter Specialist  
United States Agency for International Development  
World Vision

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# EXECUTIVE SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

## Introduction

At the request of the USAID Malawi Mission, the MEAS project (Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services – a USAID funded project) conducted a rapid scoping mission to examine the pluralistic extension system in Malawi and to develop recommendations for strengthening extension and advisory services in the country. The fieldwork for the assessment work was carried from 3-27 January, 2012 and included in-depth interviews with Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MAIWD) staff at all levels, international and national non-governmental organization (NGO) directors and staff, lead farmers, university faculty, agricultural researchers and private sector representatives. To the extent possible, interviews were carried out on the “shop floors” of the different respondents, allowing the MEAS team to visit farms, area and district extension and project offices, universities and training centers, and research facilities. The mission aimed to understand the institutional landscape, identify the principal actors, ascertain respective resources levels, targets, operational modalities, inter-organizational relationships, areas of conflict and gaps. Based upon the information collected and observations the team identified a number of key issues within the pluralistic extension system in Malawi that will need to be addressed in order to develop a more sustainable, farmer-led and market driven system of extension and advisory services.

## Recommendations for Consideration:

### Governmental EAS

- As currently structured, the DAES program is out of scale with its budget and needs to be reviewed in light of the resources that are and will likely continue to be available. To do this in a rational manner, the DAES needs to know what its base funding level will be for the next three to five years -- only then can it make informed decisions on the type of activities that are appropriate for it to undertake and the scale at which these can be pursued. The ASWAp investment plan appears to be the appropriate platform through which to undertake this review. Key factors to consider are objectives, tasks, human resource requirements (numbers and education levels), material support (EAS materials, communication, transportation) and infrastructure needs at all levels. The need for operational and maintenance costs is typically underappreciated, leading to constraints and decline of services when they are not adequately budgeted for, such oversights must be guarded against. Ideally, organizations should employ only the number of staff members that it can fully support in performing their duties. Given the noted gaps and current vacancy rates, the DAES is attempting to do too much with too few resources and needs to scale its programs appropriately.
- The DAES should review and consider undertaking appropriate actions to transition itself from a service delivery organization to a development facilitation organization. To follow this path, key considerations will need to be given to identifying a core set of practices (e.g., the Five Skill Set modules) that would be introduced at the community and/or association level to enable target groups to organize and increasingly pursue their own development agendas in an independent manner; setting the appropriate sequencing and timeframe for introducing and allowing groups to acquire these skills, with the concept that communities/associations would effectively graduate to a level of higher order but less resource-intensive support; using a rolling staffing plan in which human resources would be concentrated in targeted areas until communities/associations graduated, then would be redeployed in new areas and replaced by a lower density of more highly qualified and equipped “super AEDOs.” Such a strategy would facilitate the organization in operating with fewer but more mobile and better equipped staff

members. To enable DAES to monitor and track achievements of such a plan, it would need a more robust monitoring system. A review of monitoring options should be undertaken, including both traditional hard-copy approaches and new computer-assisted systems. The MAES-developed Farmbook system is one example of a system that may be able to provide the needed support to the DAES in this effort.

- The core functions analysis that is being implemented as part of the ASWAp process should be completed and used in reviewing the DAES structure and functioning, especially for its implications at the district level within the DEC, DAEC and stakeholder panels, as well as at the national level and the relationships between DAES and other departments within government and those outside of government. Recommendations for ensuring strong complementarity and coordination between activities of both civil society and private sector organizations and the DAES should be a priority of the analysis.
- The agribusiness section should be reintegrated into the DAES operational structure as a core, cross-cutting function of the Extension Methodologies and Training branch, not formed into a separate organizational unit. Moving the Agribusiness section out to function on its own creates unnecessary operational boundaries with the DAES without apparent benefit. Contingent upon decisions made to the issues raised above, staffing lines with skills in organizational development may be required, as well as more investments in staff members with advanced agricultural business development support capabilities.
- A permanent, formal liaison function with the DARS, working through the DARS Technology Transfer point of contact and offering backstopping assistance through the DAES ADD to the DARS technology transfer efforts at the regional level needs to be established.
- The DAES needs to begin providing all newly recruited (transferred or promoted) staff members with the necessary in-service training before they are posted, even if this means a delay in their posting.

### **EAS Training Programs**

- Commission a labor force needs assessment for EAS professionals in the governmental and private labor markets (including NGOs, producer associations and for-profit companies) so that the programs can appropriately scale their activities.
- Develop an investment plan to bring Bunda College and Natural Resources College facilities up to modern standards and commensurate with projected labor market needs and enrollment levels. This investment plan should reflect results of the commissioned labor study and final decisions, parallel investments in and the timetable for creating the new University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the decision about whether NRC will be included in this new university.

### **Enhanced Private Sector and Civil Society Involvement**

- Establish a formal linkage between the DAES and the national stakeholders panel. The panel should have a clear mandate and relationship with the DAES. If the cost of convening the panel is an issue, consider assessing organizational dues.
- Make area- and especially district-level stakeholder panels a more central feature in program planning and oversight of the DAES field programs. USAID should commission a review of entities best positioned to provide democratization training and continued support of the area- and district-level stakeholder panels. The team believes that FUM is best positioned to play this

role, but this warrants further investigation and confirmation. A review should be made of how other organizations (e.g., ZNFU and SACCAU) have managed similar roles. Development of a sustainable financing model (through dues or other revenue sources) needs to be a central feature of the planning process. The team feels that it is appropriate for the DAES to continue to serve as the convening body for the stakeholder panels, but independent smallholder involvement needs to be strengthened if these farmers are to play an effective role in the planning process and with holding DAES accountable. Cost has been cited as the major constraint in holding the district stakeholder meetings, especially the costs of supporting participation of smallholder farmers, who are to make up over 50 percent of the panel membership. There appear to be two critical times for convening meetings at the district level -- at the time of annual work plan preparations, so that farmers' interests are built into the program plans for that year, and halfway through the operational year to assess progress against these plans and to make midcourse corrections as needed. Monthly meetings of the area stakeholder panels may be too frequent. Strong bi-monthly meetings, with opportunity to call ad hoc meetings to address critical issues as needed, may be sufficient to address local needs and ensure that the program remains on track without overtaxing farmer involvement or holding meetings without agenda items to discuss.

The foundation for a strong and effective demand-led and market-driven EAS system exists in Malawi. The team believes that, with a concerted effort and targeted funding, it should be possible to capitalize on the existing potential and develop a highly effective pluralistic national EAS that, over a relatively short period of time, could become a model for other countries in southern Africa.

# STRENGTHENING THE PLURALISTIC AGRICULTURAL EXTENSION SYSTEM IN MALAWI

## Introduction

As with other countries, agricultural extension and advisory services (EAS) in Malawi are provided by public, private, and non-profit organizations.<sup>1</sup> While it has become commonplace to refer to this collection of actors as a system, this claim is only valid in the loosest of terms, as many of the component parts do not functionally interact with others in an operational sense, tending rather to function as independent information sub-networks within larger national, and international spheres of exchange. The potential for interaction and exchange between these component parts defines the potential for positive synergism, the disconnect defines sources of inefficiencies, redundancies and conflict.

The history and current provisioning of EAS in Malawi is particularly rich (e.g., Kabuye and Mhango, 2006). The current extension strategy, outlined in the 2000 extension policy (MAI, 2000) – sub-titled “Towards Pluralistic and Demand and-driven Services in Malawi -- is one of the most progressive public sector planning documents drafted, incorporating as the title suggests a recognition of the importance of engaging multiple actors and a focus on responsiveness to farmers needs. For a relatively small country the high concentration of donor efforts has led to a burgeoning of separate projects, implemented by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) and private contractors, many of which have EAS components. Using own resources, domestic and international NGOs also mount their own development efforts, some of which include EAS activities. The investments of the private sector, including farmer organizations, in traditional export commodities and emerging new markets, and the general trend towards agricultural intensification involving greater input usage, stimulated in part by the major subsidy programs, as led to growth in an additional source of EAS provisioning. The universities and training centers play a particularly important role in responding to the human resource needs of all organizations providing EASs to farmers. The country’s radio broadcasters supplement traditional sources of information with a steady stream listener demanded programming. Separately and together these key groups of actors provide farmers with their core of formal information and support services in improving local livelihoods.

In the sections that follow, an overview description of each of the principal actor groups is provided, followed by a summary of findings and conclusions, and recommendations in ways that heir collective efforts can be strengthened.

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<sup>1</sup> Through remainder of the report non-profit organizations are referred to as non-governmental organizations (NGOs) following convention, even though in definitional terms NGOs include all organizations outside of government, which is not the intension.

# DESCRIPTION OF CURRENT EXTENSION AND ADVISORY SERVICE PROVIDERS, THEIR ORGANIZATION AND CAPACITY

## Governmental Extension System

The Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MAIWD) Department of Agricultural Extension (DAES) is by far the largest extension provider in the country. DAES technical branch heads reported a total of 2,415 field and office staff members, compared with a combined 968 technical staff members reported by Masangano and Mthinda (2011) for the 36 extension and advisory service providers included in their study. Furthermore, DAES is the only nationwide extension provider and the only organization working across all agricultural value chains and other services areas (e.g., health and nutrition).

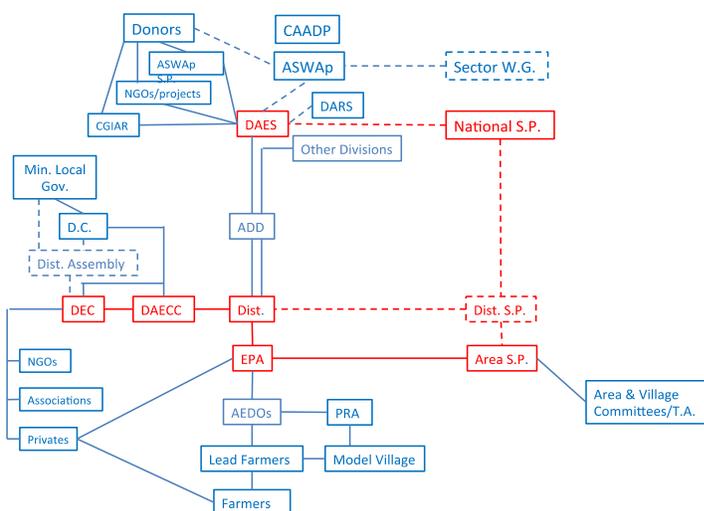
Structurally, the governmental extension system is organized around a four-tier administrative hierarchy: national, agricultural development divisions (ADDs)(eight), districts (28) and extension planning areas (EPAs)(187). At the national level, the DAES is led by a director, who is assisted by the heads of the five technical branches. Three of the branches are led by deputy directors – Extension Methodology and Training Services (EMS), Agricultural Gender Roles Extension Support Services (AGRESS), and Food and Nutrition (FN). The Agricultural Communications and Agribusiness branches are led by a chief agricultural extension officer and an assistant chief agricultural extension officer respectively. At the second hierarchical level, the ADD offices are led by program managers, chief and assistant chief agricultural extension officers, and principal subject matter specialists (SMS) representing each of the DAES technical branches, in addition to SMS from other MAIWD departments (Animal Health, Crop Development, Fisheries, Irrigation and Water Development, Land Resource Conservation and Management, Planning). DAES activities at the district level are led by district agricultural development officers (DADO), their assistants, and SMS for each of the DAES branches and other MAIWD departments. At the extension planning area (EPA) level, agricultural extension development coordinators (AEDCs) supervise and coordinate the activities of the agricultural extension development officers (AEDOs), the frontline extension staff members who operate at sectional levels comprising five to 15 villages each.

Staffing levels within DAES, across all levels, were reported to be approximately 70 percent of the established positions, or a 30 percent vacancy rate. The Extension Methodologies Branch, the largest, reported 875 vacant positions, most at the AEDO field level, but 30 to 60 percent of the more senior-level posts were also vacant. Other branches reported higher vacancy levels: the Food and Nutrition Branch reported 31 of 60 positions as being vacant (52 percent); the Agribusiness Branch reported 18 of 41 (44 percent) of its positions vacant, and of those filled, 16 were newly hired; the Communications Branch reported 13 of 44 (30 percent) of its positions vacant; the Gender Roles Branch had seven of 42 (17 percent) of its positions vacant, and 11 of those filled were by newly hired staff members.

In addition to implementing its own programs, the DAES staff also provides support services for other units within the MAIWD. The DAES Communications branch is tasked with responding to demands (radio, film, printed materials) of the entire ministry; the AGRESS Branch coordinates and undertakes gender- and HIV-related activities across the ministry and contributes to the HIV coordination office in the office of the president. As noted, SMS of other divisions of the MAIWD are present at the ADD and district levels. The DAES AEDO frontline staff supports technical programming of these other divisions, as well as all internal DAES programs. No additional resources are reportedly given to the DAES to

support it in serving these additional roles except through special projects (e.g., Farm Input Subsidy Program, Farm Income Diversification Program), which include additional project-specific tasks.

Functionally, in addition to its internal programmatic and reporting lines, DAES field operations are linked with and supported by several important governmental and civil society structures. As part of the overall decentralization process, at the district level two key structures are the district executive committee (DEC) and the district agricultural extension coordination committee (DAECC). In addition to its other responsibilities, the DEC serves extension as the venue for allocating decentralized financial resources from the Ministry of Local Government,<sup>2</sup> and reviews proposals for local development initiatives from NGOs and other development efforts. It was reported that, though the DEC has not allocated resources in support of extension efforts such as the district stakeholder panels, the potential does exist for such support. Although the team was unable to document examples, the DEC was reported to regularly intervene and redirect NGO assistance efforts from EPAs that are already being served by other projects to those EPAs that are not covered or that could benefit from additional assistance. In contrast, the DAECC is a voluntary consultative body convened by the district commissioner or, more often, his representative, typically the DADO, and is focused on efforts to bring coordination and coherency to the extension efforts within the district. The committee is said to be made up of representatives of NGOs and projects implementing field activities within the district, as well as potentially other service providers, including private companies and farmer organizations. The DAECC was said to address and attempt to resolve contentious issues such as the use of payments for farmer participation in field efforts, although this was not documented by the team during the mission. In many districts, the DAECCs are not yet operational.



Source: MEAS Debriefing, 2012.

<sup>2</sup> Funding for extension services at the district a level and below comes through the Ministry of Local Government and needs to be approved by the district commissioner. The district development committee is currently filling in to carry out the roles and responsibilities of the district assemblies, which are not yet functional.

The team did have the opportunity to meet with members of several area stakeholder panels. These panels, made up of farmer representatives from communities within the EPA, are intended to provide input into EPA-level planning concerning priority needs. It was apparent that most of these stakeholder panels had been recently revived in 2011 and had been meeting at varying levels of regularity determined by the individual panels. Farmers represented on the area stakeholder panels are identified through an additional constellation of village/community-level committees. These include the village and area development committees and, as subcommittees, the village agricultural advisory committees. These committees are further aligned with levels of the traditional authority structure of village, group village and senior chiefs. The team did not have the time to investigate any of these organizational structures. Farmers are mandated to make up over 50 percent of the membership of the area and district panels. Representatives from the area stakeholder panels are intended to represent farmers' interests on the district-level stakeholder panels. Although district panels are reported to be erratically active, the team did not find any panels operational within the districts visited. Nationally, the number of functional district stakeholder panels is likely very small; the primary reason given is the lack of operational funds within the DAES, or funds allocated through the DEC to support convening the panel meetings, principally the transportation and support costs for EPA farmer representative participation. The national stakeholder panel had reportedly met twice since its establishment in 2010 but had not yet established an agenda with the DAES, although the panel did reportedly have a constitution, interim steering committee and secretariat within DAES.

Operationally, the DAES uses the District Agricultural Extension Services System (DAESS) model. Conceptually, the DAESS is responsible for organizing farmers' demands, facilitating service providers' responses, coordinating agricultural strategy development, and mobilizing funding from the Ministry of Local Government or donor programs. To achieve these objectives, the DAESS model is intended to work through the DAES structure and the area and district stake-holders panels and DA ECC. The DAESS is ultimately intended to be integrated within the decentralization plans centered around the district assemblies, of which the DEC is part, and would include a district agricultural committee to which the stakeholder panels would report. Like the district stakeholder panels and many of the DA ECCs, the district assemblies are not operational, and the district agricultural committees have not yet been constituted.

For fieldwork, the DAES uses gendered participatory rural appraisals (PRAs), a model village concept, village clusters and lead farmers in carrying out its work. Gendered PRAs are conducted by seven- to eight-person teams made up of both DAES SMS and those from other MAIWD departments (e.g., crops, livestock, land resources, etc.), as well as the local AEDOs. The PRAs are the first step in establishing a model village. The weeklong PRAs result in the identification of prioritized activities that constitute the model village development plans and the community management structures needed to sustain them. The model village concept is said to be under revision by the DAES. Village clusters (M'ndandandas), as the name implies, are communities in close physical proximity that receive concerted effort by field agents on consistent extension themes. This is another conceptual tool used by the DAES in organizing its fieldwork. The use of lead farmers is found across all communities – model villages, village clusters and independent villages – served by DAES field agents. Lead farmers, as in contact farmers under the Training and Visit system, are local farmers that receive additional training by and attention from the field staff on targeted extension themes. They are sometimes provided with some basic extension aids and/or materials to establish demonstration plots in their fields and essentially help broaden the reach of the regular field staff. Lead farmers and the participants in the associated contact groups are generally different for each technology being disseminated by the AEDOs.

The AEDOs are all provided with bicycles and receive a monthly allowance for use of their personal cell phones. They reported having access to sufficient extension field materials; they have been promised boots and raingear, but these have not been supplied. At the district and ADD levels, SMS and administrative staff members have office computers, printed extension resources, a larger monthly communication allowance than the AEDOs have, and shared use of a four-wheel-drive vehicle to carry out their field activities.

The DAES physical infrastructure at the ADD and, to a lesser extent, the district-level offices are in reasonable condition; the offices and buildings at the EPA level are severely degraded. The EPA offices that the review team visited were in considerable disrepair. The AEDOs interviewed indicated that the government-provided housing for many posts is uninhabitable. Computers are available down to the district level, although Internet access is not always available and electricity cuts are a growing problem.

### **The Policy Environment: Extension policy, ASWAp and CAADP**

The MAIWD revised its extension policy in 2000, introducing a number of highly progressive reforms, including the introduction of decentralized coordination and the principles of stakeholder accountability, gender equality, and demand-driven and pluralistic service delivery, among others (MAI, 2000). Since the introduction of these reforms, the importance of greater market integration, currently articulated through the value chain development concept, and the key challenges of climate change mitigation and adaptation have moved to the fore and are being built into the revised the DAES strategy under preparation.

Considering national agricultural development more broadly, the GoM in 2010 signed its CAADP Compact and developed the new Agriculture Sector Wide Approach program (ASWAp), “Malawi’s prioritized and harmonized agriculture development agenda.” The ASWAp is essentially Malawi’s program for actualizing the CAADP Compact. It represents an investment roadmap for external donors in the spirit of the Paris Declaration. The ASWAp is the primary strategic framework for agriculture development in the country and has benefited from significant input from non-state actors – the private sector, farmers’ organization and civil society -- in the development of the ASWAp document per the CAADP process.

The ASWAp has three focus areas: food security and risk management; commercial agriculture, agro-processing and market development; and sustainable agricultural land and water management. It also includes specific discussion of agricultural research and extension services (section 3.4.4.), both of which are included under “Key Support Services,” specifically in the “Technology Generation and Dissemination” services chapter (Chapter 4).

Of particular relevance to the DAES, the ASWAp indicates that a core function analysis should be undertaken to clearly define the roles and responsibilities of various state and non-state actors in providing a pluralistic and integrated extension and advisory service for farmers. Though there was some indication during the scoping mission that this core function analysis had in fact been initiated, none of the organizations visited understood which entities should take on what roles. This suggests that more work needs to be done on discussing and communicating the results of the analysis. *This is an extremely important activity* -- buy-in is necessary if the various actors are going to work harmoniously in a concerted fashion and minimize duplication of effort and expenditure of resources while maximizing effective delivery of services in response to farmers’ needs.

The ASWAp document recognizes that research and extension systems need to be pluralistic in nature but does not elaborate on how such multi-actor collaborations are to be strengthened or coordinated. The DAES is currently developing a strategy and detailed proposal for its role and consequent resource needs in implementing the ASWAp. The extent to which DAES will involve non-state actors in the planning process is not clear, but it is important that such input be obtained. The core functions analysis, combined with subsequent input from important state and non-state actors in the detailed design of the research and extension framework under ASWAp, has the potential of establishing a more pluralistic and robust EAS system.

## **NGOs and Project Extension Efforts**

**Participants:** More than 10 international NGOs and a larger number of domestic NGOs are providing extension and advisory services (EAS) to smallholder farmers in Malawi. Major international NGOs include ACDI/VOCA, CARE International, Catholic Relief Services, Emmanuel International, Land O'Lakes, Project Concern International, Salvation Army, Save the Children, Total Land Care and World Vision International. Working independently and under subcontracts with these international NGOs are a larger number of domestic NGOs, some of which also provide limited EAS. Many of these organizations providing EAS to smallholder producers are members of the Civil Society Agricultural Network (CISANET).

All NGOs operating in the country are supposed register with the Council for Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA), but membership in CISANET is voluntary and addresses issues specific to the agricultural sector. Headquartered in Lilongwe, CISANET was formed in 2001 and has a staff of 11 and membership of 104 (75 are international and domestic NGOs; the remainder are farmer organizations and individuals). Its core purpose is policy advocacy, in support of which it conducts research and disseminates information, provides policy advocacy training for its members and carries out lobbying on behalf of its members. CISANET has established five programmatic areas: climate-smart agriculture, markets and international trade (including fair trade), livestock and dairy development, governmental budget accountability, and nutrition and social protection. CISANET was instrumental in aggregating civil society inputs to the development of the ASWAp and may continue to serve this coordination function if/when the national "Sector Working Group" of ASWAp becomes functional.<sup>3</sup> It was reported that CISANET has a comprehensive list of member organizations that are engaged in agricultural EAS with smallholder farmers, but the scoping team was unable to obtain this list during the fieldwork.

**Organization:** Most NGOs have their headquarters offices in Lilongwe. They also often have sub-offices at the district level and may employ a limited number of frontline extension workers (FLWs). As with the DAES AEDOs, NGO FLWs commonly work with "lead farmers" and groups of farmers that are formed around the lead farmers, usually with the aim of promoting adoption of one or more improved technologies or farming methods. In most cases, district-level NGO staff members will work directly with and through the government AEDOs to implement sponsored programs. The AEDOs located within the geographic areas targeted by NGO-led projects often receive additional training related to the technologies being promoted and/or some additional material and logistical support as well.

Staffing numbers of NGOs with active EAS efforts tend to be low. The NGO with the largest reported network of agriculture-related staff members in the country is World Vision International (WV), with

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<sup>3</sup> It was reported that the ASWAp working group was scheduled to convene its first meeting in February 2012.

approximately 120 FLWs working in 26 of Malawi's 28 districts.<sup>4</sup> Though it is the largest, the WV staffing level averages four to five FLWs per district to serve more than 20,000 farm households per district; and on average there are 76 DAES AEDOs per district. The implication is that World Vision, and most of the other NGOs that are operating in the agricultural sector, depend extensively upon the support and services of the DAES AEDOs to implement the programs that they are promoting.

The relatively small size and the external donor funding model that most NGOs operate under further influence their activities. In contrast to the DAESS system -- which embodies the potential that, through the area and district stakeholder panels, EAS programming can truly respond to local needs and opportunities -- most NGO activities are funded by external donors through implementation contracts with predetermined targets and centralized control. The relatively small size of NGO efforts and the drive to differentiate themselves technically and operationally from other EAS service providers competing for the same contracts lead to an operational context characterized by a large number of actors employing variations of the same approaches and technical themes, all attempting to work with the DAES to achieve impact. The team did not have the opportunity to quantify the various factors involved, but it seems reasonable to assume that these efforts may be distracting the DAES from implementing plans that have been locally generated through participatory processes. Put differently, and contrary to popular belief, it is possible that, when fully operational, the DAESS will result in more participatory and locally responsive EAS planning than centrally planned NGO projects.

**Capacity:** As noted above, NGOs typically have some staff members leading implementation of their programs, but most depend on engaging the DAES AEDOs to implement the work at the local level and achieve scale. When the objectives of the NGO, interests identified through the local area stakeholder panel and capacities of the DAES converge, this relationship can be beneficial for all involved. Some NGO programs provide both technical training and financial and/or logistical support, which enables the AEDOs and lead farmers to work more effectively and efficiently. When the objectives of the NGO and DAES are not well-aligned, however, this approach to project implementation may distract the AEDOs and lead farmers from implementing their locally established priorities and, in the worse cases, lead to confusion and conflict.

To staff their initiatives, NGOs tend to recruit the best DAES staff members into their agricultural programs by offering better terms of service than the government does. Observing NGO behavior in practice, some within the DAES have noted that NGOs tend to let AEDOs gain a year or two of experience within the DAES before they are hired away, essentially allowing the governmental service to train the field staff members before they are recruited. NGOs tend to provide their staff members with more resources than the equivalent positions in the government service receive. For example, whereas the DAES AEDOs have push-bikes for transport and some cell phone airtime for communication (for use with their personal cell phones), the average WV FLW has a motorcycle for transport, a cell phone, a laptop computer and connection to e-mail via a "dongle" that connects to the Internet through the cell phone network. Such additional benefits, in addition to generally higher salaries, make it relatively easy for NGOs to fill their programs with the best and brightest from the DAES ranks, even if they are often not able to offer long-term contracts.

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<sup>4</sup> Personal communication, Esau Mwendo, food security manager, World Vision, Malawi, 14 January 2012.

## Private Sector

**Participants:** For the purposes of this report, both for-profit companies and farmers' organizations are considered private sector entities, though they will be discussed separately.

### For-profit Companies

**Participants:** Malawi has a wide range of for-profit companies operating in the agriculture sector. Some of these companies provide extension and/or advisory services to farmers, although the services provided vary widely in breadth, depth and quality. The key for-profit companies that provide EAS include tobacco production and purchasing companies (recently tobacco has accounted for as much as 70 percent of Malawi's foreign currency income); cotton companies (organized around ginning facilities); milk, tea, coffee, sugar and grain buyers/processors; input supply companies such as the seed and fertilizer supply companies; and large and small agricultural input retailers (referred to here as "agro-dealers").

The various types of companies can be grouped according to their underlying characteristics as *pull* or *push* business models, which influence the types of advisory services that each provides its clients. The relationships that evolve under the *pull* of commodity production, exhibited through outgrower schemes and contract farming (e.g., tobacco, cotton, chilies) where advisory services are offered to farmers to ensure the maintenance of a constant supply of a primary commodity, are significantly different from those that evolve under client-product sales contacts. *Pull*-based business models often include some concern for producer welfare and economic viability because they recognize the need to maintain farmer productivity and sustainability to ensure returns from significant fixed-asset investments (e.g., ginning and other processing facilities). In practice, as the field team noted, this can include offering advisory and material services beyond the target commodity, such as tobacco companies offering inputs for maize as well as tobacco to ensure that those inputs provided for tobacco production are used for that crop and not diverted to maize, the principal food crop. The advisory services offered to farmers tend to include the full range of techniques related to production of the target crop, not just those related to use of a single product (e.g., fertilizer). Data provided to the assessment team indicated that, in the previous season, independent tobacco producers did not profit from their tobacco crop, but those who received advisory service assistance from at least one tobacco company did profit, presumably because of the higher quality EAS that the farmers received.

The EAS relationships that evolve with clients of *pull*-based business models differ markedly from those that emerge out of product *push* businesses, typified by over-the-counter sales (e.g., seeds, fertilizer). In the latter, the success or failure of the individual farmer/client has less bearing on the success of the supply business because the nature of the products on offer (and the profit margin) and the associated advice are much more limited and there are fewer fixed-asset investments at stake. In cases where the *push*-based business is a retail outlet of a larger chain or carries products of a single supplier, there is greater concern over brand loyalty and customer satisfaction, and potentially greater prospects for the provision of additional value-added advisory services as a means of attracting and retaining clients. Because of the nature of the *push*-based business model, which links retail profits with product sales and the influential role that information may play in purchasing decisions, the source and veracity of the information supplied are critical. The assessment team did not have time to explore in depth the range and accuracy of EAS provided by agro-dealers. Discussions with RUMARK, a network of input supply dealers, indicated that, as in other countries, efforts have been mounted in Malawi through donor projects to train and use agro-dealerships as a means of imparting extension advice to farmers. To be successful, such efforts need a way to keep dealers up to date as new products and knowledge become

available. A source of non-biased information is also needed to ensure that customers are able to objectively evaluate the options on offer.

**Organization:** Most *pull*-based companies -- those purchasing products such as tobacco and cotton -- follow a similar structure for EAS delivery as the DAES and NGOs. That is, there is a national headquarters and either regional or district offices managed by area supervisors. These in turn are linked to field technicians who work with groups of farmers through either lead farmers or local commodity clubs. In most cases, the field technicians have motorcycles for transport, they may be provided with cell phone air time, and in at least one case, they have PDAs on which they enter data, linked to a near real-time monitoring system.

The major commodity purchasing companies operate what are effectively outgrower schemes. For example, one tobacco company provides the growers in its farmer clubs with all of the necessary inputs for both tobacco and for maize (the latter is to ensure that the inputs for tobacco are not used instead on the maize crop). All inputs are provided on either a cash or credit basis and are physically delivered to the farms. Credit is arranged through a partnering bank, and payment is deducted from the value of the crop once it has been harvested and sold to the tobacco company. The company provides five field trainings for its supervisors during the year, and these are disseminated in cascade fashion down through the field technicians to the farmers' clubs. The trainings include technical advice on both maize and tobacco production, as well as planting of trees for fuel and establishment of "live barns" for the tobacco curing. It also includes advice on the production of legumes. The field technicians collect data on the activities of each farmer during the year (five times, with 20 questions per time). This data is entered on a PDA in the field and sent to the headquarters office, where it is automatically analyzed and incorporated in the national database of the company so that it can monitor progress of the farmers, their field agents and the development of the crops in near real-time. Use of the same basic model was reported by the cotton companies visited, though with more limited services offered to farmers and a technical focus limited to cotton production that did not include non-cotton input supply; nor were the FLWs as well-equipped.

The operating model for input producers and agro-dealers is significantly different. For example, though seed companies may conduct demonstrations of their varieties in strategic areas of the country – and usually organize one or more field days to create more direct farmer exposure to the varieties in each locale – the companies do not employ extension agents or provide EAS on production issues beyond varietal performance. Rather, the companies tend to engage local AEDOs to help organize field days and mobilize farmer participation. Some agro-dealers have received training through past projects in subjects such as seed selection and storage, safe handling and storage of herbicides and pesticides, and various types of fertilizer and how to apply them. The support they provide to farmers, however, is generally limited to guidance on what to purchase and how to use various products, and is provided while the farmers are actually in the store. Input providers do not provide EAS in the field. Nor did the team hear of any independent agro-dealer (outside the retail chains) establishing product demonstrations as a means of attracting and educating clients.

**Capacity:** As noted above, the capacity to provide extension and advisory services to farmers varies widely among companies. The tobacco company presented above currently has six staff members at the supervisory level – one with a master's degree and five with bachelor's degrees. It also has 36 field technicians and recently hired an additional 69 trainees, all of whom have diplomas in agriculture. The company provides an additional 18 months of training to new field staff members so that they understand all of the regulations related to the production and processing of tobacco that will be

imported into the United States. Only three of this company's current 36 field technicians are women, but 28 percent of the new trainees are women. One of the cotton-buying companies interviewed stated that it has approximately 120 field staff members that provide farmers with EAS on cotton production. These staff members are well-trained and have motorbikes and cell phones. The other cotton company interviewed appears to work through a loose network of buyers in the field, who operate essentially as independent contractors and provide only limited production advice to the farmers and receive only push-bikes from the parent company. Until this year, most cotton companies were providing farmers with seed and limited access to other inputs; with the launching of the governmental cotton initiative, the government has taken over cotton seed and pesticide supply to farmers. Given the change in the functional relationships between the cotton companies, farmers and the government, it can be expected that there will be commensurate changes in the supply of EAS by the private sector as well.

### **Farmers' Organizations**

**Participants:** The main umbrella body representing the interests of farmer organizations in Malawi is the Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM). The FUM was established in 2003 through the assistance of DAES in an effort to consolidate and establish a representative voice for independent smallholder farmer associations and cooperatives. The union currently has 93 member organizations representing a reported 350,000 smallholder farmers (the largest is TOBACCO with 87,000 members; the average union member size is 1,000 to 4,000). The FUM is recognized by the GOM as the official representative of smallholder farmers' organizations in the country.

By far the largest farmer association in Malawi is the National Smallholder Farmers' Association of Malawi (NASFAM), a self-described "independent smallholder-owned membership organization." The NASFAM evolved out of a USAID-funded tobacco project in 1994 and reportedly includes about 108,000 smallholder members organized into 43 membership associations. The NASFAM works nationwide to assist development of diversified crop marketing opportunities for its members. In many ways it operates as a *pull*-based private business, identifying profitable commodity markets, bulking members' production and commercializing various products under its own label.

Depending on their orientation and how involved they are in marketing and commercialization of their members' output, other farmer associations tend to emulate the features of *pull*-based businesses. This certainly is true of the dairy associations, where, depending on membership size, extension and basic veterinary services are provided to members.

**Organization:** As primarily an umbrella advocacy organization, the **FUM** serves to convene its members to address national policy issues. It also provides some services to member organizations to strengthen their internal management and advocacy capacities, and develop increased market access. The FUM, however, does not appear to provide any direct technical extension or advisory services to farmers. To date, FUM has been largely donor-funded -- it is currently implementing eight donor-funded projects, totaling around \$8 million US in annual expenditures. The organization hopes to become less project-driven through implementation of a new strategic plan for 2012-2016 and adjustments to the member/dues structure.

Structurally, the **NASFAM** is actually three subsidiary organizations: a corporate entity responsible for the overall governance of the NASFAM system, a commercial entity managing all commercial activities, and a development entity, a registered trust and NGO undertaking social and community development activities (NASFAM, n.d.). The core of the NASFAM operations is its association membership structure, starting with clubs made up of 10 to 20 farmers. The clubs are grouped into group action committees

and further aggregated into associations (currently 42) that are managed collectively under 14 geographically based association management centers. The division of tasks and services between the commercial and development branches is unclear, especially the extent to which the provision of development services serves as the inducement for farmer participation in the commercial activities.

**Capacity:** The FUM employs a core team of five full-time staff members (four men and one woman). In addition, its donor projects employ 33, including 12 women.

The NASFAM employs 135 (18 percent are women), including five SMS -- two located at headquarters and one in each of the three regional offices. Most of the SMS have bachelor's degrees in agriculture one has a master's degree, and one a diploma. The SMS are responsible for technical programming and providing training and technical backstopping for field officers. NASFAM employs more than 70 field officers, all of whom are attached to one of the 42 associations. All of the field officers reportedly have certificates in agriculture from Natural Resources College (less than 2 percent are reportedly hired from DAES). The field officers in turn work with 1,458 volunteer farmer trainers, who provide the actual farmer training on best practices to the NASFAM club members. The regional SMS train the field officers, who in turn train the farmer trainers, each of whom works with up to 100 farmers at the club level. The farmer trainers manage demonstration plots on their land or another member's land, and make individual farm visits. They are equipped with push-bikes, rain gear, and NASFAM-produced extension crop bulletins, crop calendars and other materials. In addition, NASFAM produces a twice-weekly 30-minute radio program and a quarterly newsletter, and has produced one documentary on conservation agriculture. At the DAES EPA level, NASFAM field officers reportedly participate in the area stakeholder panels and work with the DAES district staff to coordinate placement of demonstration plots so as to avoid duplication of efforts. Nationally, NASFAM receives financing through at least eight donor-financed projects.

## Others

There are several other key actors in Malawi's pluralistic EAS system. The most notable of these are the University of Malawi, Bunda College, and Natural Resources College, which provide basic training for EAS FLW and advanced degrees for SMS and EAS managers, and the farm radio service providers – Farm Radio Malawi and Farmer Voice Radio – that together and separately serve the message delivery needs of individual EAS programs.

### **University of Malawi, Bunda College.**

Established in 1965, Bunda College moved to its present campus in 1967. Construction of the campus was financed by USAID, with an expansion made in the 1980s co-financed by USAID and the World Bank. Bunda College is in the process of merging with other institutions to form the University of Agriculture and Natural Resources. The timing and implications for curricula and resources of this transition are currently being worked out. The current student population is around 2,000, with nearly a 50/50 gender balance. The college has been under pressure from the GoM in recent years to significantly increase enrollment. Over the past four years, enrollment levels have increased from 150 in 2009 to 600 in 2012, with an enrollment target of 3,400 by 2016. These increases have not been accompanied by any proportional increases in facilities (classroom, dormitories, cafeteria, computer labs, toilets, etc.) or number of faculty and staff members. To cope with the resource limitations, the campus currently operates on a two-shift cycle between 0730 and 2030 each day, and the college has had to erect a large, semi-permanent tent to provide additional classroom space.

Two extension degree tracks are offered at the bachelor's degree level, as well as master's degree and doctorate options. All of these programs are convened by the Faculty of Development Studies. In the traditional bachelor's degree program, after two years of studies in general agriculture, students have an option to specialize in extension. Enrollment in the program averaged around 16 students per year but has increased significantly over recent years in line with the general increases in college wide enrollment. This year, 56 new students were admitted into the programs. Typical student ages range from 16 to 25, with a roughly 45/55 female/male gender balance. Most of the graduates are hired by NGOs, with a smaller number hired by the DAES. Nearly a quarter of this year's entrants are financially self-supported; the remainder receives government grants.

Bunda College also participates in the Sasakawa Africa Fund for Extension (SAFE) education program. This program, which targets the training of midcareer professionals who return to college for bachelor's degree training, runs in parallel with the traditional B.Sc. program. Students in the SAFE program average 30 to 50 years of age; the gender balance is 30/70 female/male. Most come from DAES, with 5 to 10 percent from NGOs. The SAFE students are reported to be doing very well, with several going on to the master's degree level.

Overall, there are currently 112 students in the traditional B.Sc. program (including 34 enrolled through the SAFE program), 26 master's degree students, and two Ph.D. students. In addition to courses for those pursuing extension degrees, the faculty also offers general courses on extension and rural development for those in other agricultural specializations. All courses are currently taught by six faculty members (two are women), with one faculty member away pursuing a Ph.D. and one post currently vacant. Of those in place, five have doctorates and one has a master's degree.

### **Natural Resources College**

Natural Resources College (NRC) provides diploma-level training in agricultural extension as one of its six diploma programs. NRC was established in 1986 and moved to its currently location in 1969, where it was run by the GoM until 1996, when it was closed. It reopened in 2001 as a trust reporting to the MAIWD. The initial construction of the campus was financed by the Canadian government. A grant from the Danish government funded its rehabilitation after it was reopened in 2001. The NRC runs as a semi-private institution with accreditation of its programs through the University of Malawi. Although there are conflicting reports, some indicate that NRC will merge with Bunda College and four other institutions to form the University of Agriculture and Natural Resources.

Currently 1,500 students are enrolled in the NRC. About a third are enrolled in the two extension programs that the college runs. The extension diploma program is a three-year program. Students spend the first 2½ years on campus and a half-year in a field-level attachment. There is a 40/60 female/male gender balance in the program. The second program is a special upgrading program run for the Ministry of Agriculture to bring staff members up to diploma level from a certificate in agriculture. The upgrading program is an 18-month program. The majority (75 percent) of the students in this program are male. Most -- and around 60 percent of the NRC graduates -- go into government service, with the remainder hired by NGOs and private sector companies.

NRC has approximately 35 faculty members teaching in its programs -- 12 are permanent (including four women), and the rest are hired on a temporary basis. Most of the faculty members have bachelor's degrees; only a few have master's degrees. There is a wifi system on campus with limited range,

although only 1 percent of the students have their own computers. The computer lab contains 30 computers. The eight computers in the library are all non-functional.

### **Farm Radio**

Most of the major EAS programs (DAES, NASFAM, CISANET, etc.) offer agriculture-oriented radio programming. In addition to DAES, which has its own recording studio and independent programming capacity, the two main radio programming service providers are Farm Radio Malawi and Farmer Voice Radio. There appears to be a very high degree of collaboration among the programming services.

Nationwide, there are one governmental radio station, five major private radio stations, five to six religious stations and a growing number of community-based radio stations. It is estimated that 60 percent of Malawi's smallholder farmers have access to radios.

Farm Radio Malawi (FRM) started out as an outreach effort of Farm Radio International (FRI) and became a fully independent entity in 2009. Staffing at FRM consists of three full-time staff members (one each with bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees) and two part-time staff members. The rest are hired on projects. FRM uses what it terms a participatory radio approach to working with rural listener groups. Programming is developed on the basis of the results of focus group interviews (organized around gender, age and enterprise) that are conducted by the home office staff working with the DAES AEDOs at the EPA level. On the basis of identified information gaps, FRM locates technical experts from Bunda College, DAES, DARS and the NEPAD regional office to develop its content. The programs, which are aired weekly, with at least one repeated broadcast, include live responses to calls and SMS messages from listeners.

FRM's main partners are DAES, DARS, the Bunda College Faculty of Development Studies, FUM, CARE Intl., and Total Land Care. FRM has a five-year agreement with DAES on technical cooperation and joint programming. FRM is developing a business model that will allow it to establish an independent financing base. Currently most of its finances come through donor projects.

Farmer Voice Radio (FVR) is a separate initiative financed by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation through the American Institute of Research. FVR has established a subcontract with Bunda College to serve as its knowledge partner in developing content and the overall programming agenda. The agenda is established through a listener survey carried out in areas served by a community radio station or where a community radio station is to be established, then aggregated to the national level, where it is vetted by a non-governmental expert committee for alignment with governmental policies and developed into programming. The FVR program also develops technical notes that it passes on to the broadcasting radio stations and for use by extension workers.

## **FUNDING OF EXTENSION AND ASWAP**

The share of the national budget received by agriculture rose from 6 percent in 2000-2005 to 16 percent in 2006-2009, with most of this increase accruing to the national Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP). Nonetheless, during this time, government funding specifically for agricultural extension rose by 46 percent.<sup>5</sup> In the 2011-2012 national budget, a total of 38.3 billion Malawi Kwacha (K) was allocated to agriculture and food security, or 12.6 percent of the national budget, down from the high of 16 percent.

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<sup>5</sup> Ref: Aid to Agriculture, Rural Development and Food Security // unpacking aid flows for enhanced transparency, accountability and effectiveness. Working Paper – Malawi. 2011. Global Development Platform for Rural Development. [www.donorplatform.org/load/11361](http://www.donorplatform.org/load/11361).

Using an average conversion rate of K 165 = \$1 US, this amounts to approximately \$232 million. Of this total amount, K 21 billion is allocated to the FISP, and an additional K 1.6 billion is allocated to cotton subsidies, for a total of 59 percent going to these subsidy programs. In the same budget, the amount allocated to the agricultural research, extension, crops, horticulture, livestock and fisheries departments totaled K 5 billion (or approximately \$30.3 million US). It was not clear what percent of that funding would go specifically to the DAES.<sup>6</sup>

Looking forward, funding for the DAES will increasingly flow through the financing of the ASWAp. To coordinate donor contributions to the ASWAp, a multi-donor trust fund (MDTF) was established to support ASWAp financing. It was expected that donors would make general contributions to the MDTF, and that the government would allocate these funds to ASWAp activities according to the priorities laid out in the ASWAp document. Responding to perceived shortcomings in the ASWAp plan, the World Bank established the ASWAp Support Project (ASWAp SP), into which donor money (as well as World Bank loans) contributed to the MDTF currently flows. With the establishment of the ASWAp SP, donors are able to determine which specific components of the ASWAp their funds will support. Though the ASWAp SP is currently popular with donors, it is intended to serve a transitional function, and donors expressed the desire to be able to invest directly in full ASWAp implementation. At present, however, the ASWAp SP effectively defeats the intents of the CAADP process and the ASWAp because it allows a continuation of business as usual in donor targeting. Those programs that will likely be fully implemented are those that align with donor interests and priorities. If this is allowed to continue, there is a high probability that the ASWAp SP will result in a fragmentation in the implementation of the overall ASWAp plan with suboptimal results.

The GoM plan calls for the creation of a multi-stakeholder technical working group to oversee the planning and implementation of ASWAp. The group was reported to be holding its first meeting in late February 2012. If such a group were sufficiently empowered to oversee transparency in the allocation and utilization of ASWAp resources, and to assure both financial and technical accountability among stakeholders, then it seems likely that donors would be more willing to make contributions directly to a central ASWAp fund. This is especially true if the roles and responsibilities of the various state and non-state actors were clarified and agreed on through the core function analysis process and their systems for accountability to one another were clearly established.

At present the main financial contributors for government extension services are the central government, the Flanders International Cooperation Agency (FICA) and Irish Aid. USAID and other bi- and multilateral donors support both private sector and NGO project-based extension and advisory services.

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<sup>6</sup> Ref: Budget statement delivered in the national assembly of the Republic of Malawi by the Minister of Finance, the Hon. K.E. Kandodo, at the new parliament building, Lilongwe, June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2011.

## FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS

Major findings from the RSM are presented below, organized around key cross-cutting issues of EAS provisioning.

### Demand-driven Services

Through the area and district stakeholder panels, the DAES has the potential of becoming a truly demand-driven EAS provider. Actualizing this potential will depend on getting the district stakeholder panels up and running, and utilizing the area and district bodies to set district-level extension programming and to hold area-level DAES performance accountable. Another consideration is the extent to which the panels are able to influence NGO and project implementation through the DAEC. The DAES should be commended for the vision and effort of creating these bodies. The team believes, however, that, for the panels to fully serve their purpose, smallholder participation in these panels needs to be financially separated from government to establish a truly independent voice. Of the existing organizations that might be capable of providing financial, technical and logistical assistance to the panels in organizing and performing their duties, FUM is perhaps the best suited, though it will need some additional strengthening to take on such an expanded role.

In contrast to the emerging capacity of DAES to undertake local-level planning, the NGOs and donor-funded projects visited appear to be led by decisions made in the capital and implemented in top-down fashion along meso-level administrative lines (i.e., districts). The team did not have sufficient time to review in-depth the process by which objectives of donor-financed projects are established, but it is likely that, once the DAES has fully implemented its area- and district-level planning process through the stakeholder panels, the governmental provision of EAS will be more participatory and demand-driven than that used by NGOs and donor projects. This is in contrast to development rhetoric and received wisdom of NGOs being more participatory and responsive to local needs.

The above points notwithstanding, a weakness of locally centric planning is that it tends to be circumscribed by what is known locally, whereas transformative change often comes from outside local spheres of experience. History shows, however, that when decisions on development targets are set exclusively by outsiders, poor choices often result vis-à-vis interests of local groups. Again, though the team did not have a chance to review in detail the content of the DAES and NGO programming, the interviews conducted indicated that specific processes were not in place to identify, discuss and make selections from the best alternative offered by local and endogenous market opportunities. So as not to create yet another layer of committees (the district- to village-level organizational space is already overcharged with committee structures), the area and district stakeholder panels may be the most appropriate platforms where such discussions take place.

### Market Orientation Extension

The degree of market orientation varies across the actor groups. Outside of the limited implementation of the model village concept, assisting smallholders in engaging in commodity markets does not stand out as a central theme in the DAES programming. The structural separation of the agribusiness program currently under way from the Methods and Training Services, unless closely coordinated, will likely compartmentalize efforts within the DAES to promote market engagement, when in fact efforts should be made to make smallholder market participation a cross-cutting theme within its programming. NGO and contractor implementation of donor-financed projects reflects the interests of the donor, and not

surprisingly, many current projects include targeted value chain development components. By definition, the commodity-based private enterprises are focused on the development of their targeted crops and often rely on some variant of contract farming or outgrower schemes. Of the producer associations, NASFAM, because of its size and history of benefiting from donor project support, stands out in facilitating smallholder market engagement. From the data collected, NASFAM's unique business model obscures the extent to which smallholders benefit beyond the immediate sales of produce to the commercial arm of the enterprise. There is a significant difference among private sector companies in the level of services they provide to the farmers that they work with. Two companies contacted were able to demonstrate strong technical and financial services to farmers, including data substantiating increased productivity and profits to those involved. Alliance 1 Tobacco Company had a very detailed database on inputs and services provided to the farmers that they worked with, as well as farmers' production and profitability levels. Great Lakes Cotton also collected similar data, though it was not using as high-tech a system. It had, however, recently received a grant from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation to facilitate participation of women farmers in commercial cotton production, and it seems likely that its data collection systems will become more sophisticated. A focus on generating social benefits from the work was also becoming institutionalized in its business processes. The team was not able to collect sufficient information on the programs and functioning of the other producer associations to make any conclusive comments.

## Use of ICTs

Broadly defined, ICTs and their overall use of ICTs in EAS in Malawi is very high. The DAES operates its own printing service (soon to receive a new high-end printer through the Flanders International Cooperation Agency), a recording studio for producing radio programming and a film unit. The DAES also continues to make use of its mobile communication units, which deliver extension materials through use of puppet shows, announcements and distribution of printed materials. As noted above, the DAES services the communication needs of the entire MAIWD. Most other EAS efforts make use of print and radio programming as well. The use of radio in particular is very high, an encouraging development for types of information that do not require visual aids, confirmation, or manual demonstrations and guided practice to communicate.

The use of the Internet as an ICT tool is low, constrained by the need for computers or computer access, Internet services or stipends for use of a remote connection dongle. Some of the DAES district-level SMS reported conducting Internet searches to augment the materials available to them in carrying out their tasks. At the MAIWD level, there is a technology clearing committee led by the DARS, as well as an associated technical team chaired by the DAES, that vet all extension messages before they are extended to farmers. The Internet, however, brings the issue of information access, selection and use down to the individual level, and in instances where new information from centralized sources is not forthcoming, offers an attractive alternative. Currently there is not a process for vetting information and materials accessed through the Internet, which poses a potential problem in maintaining the technical integrity of the programming and may require the evolution of policy guidance to keep up with technological advancements. It should be noted that not all district-level staff members have Internet access, nor do they have access to make hard copy printouts of soft copy materials distributed within the DAES system.

Through the USAID Market Linkage project, there has been some experimentation with the use of "push" messaging using the Esoko SMS system. Message content using the medium is most amenable to static information with farmers who are market-ready -- e.g., market prices at specific locations at a specific point in time -- and not for interactive exchanges in conveying more nuanced or locally specific

information. The farmers involved reportedly appreciate the service, but it is unclear how such a service can be paid for and maintained in a sustainable manner outside of the project environment.

At least one of the private sector EAS providers, Alliance 1 Tobacco Company, is using an advanced information system to monitor its field operations, including performance of its FLWs. Among other things, the system allows near real-time monitoring of the frequency of contacts between FLWs and contract farmers. Through the use of cell-phone-based data transmission and geopositioning system technology, program supervisors can determine the last time a FLW visited any particular farmer and display this information through a mapping function. Though expensive (\$5 US per farmer per annum), such tools are a significant aid to achieving the levels of operational efficiency demanded by certain types of business models.

## **Human Resources, Infrastructure and Operational Support**

The high vacancy rates at the EPA level of DAES result in reporting of skewed staff/farmer ratios -- in some cases, more than 2,700 per frontline worker. Though this may be accurate in an absolute sense (dividing EPA population by AEDO numbers), it is not apparent that in fact individual AEDOs are attempting to work with such large numbers. Rather there are likely large numbers of farmers located within areas with one or more vacant AEDO posts that are simply not being served. That said, the basic staffing numbers on AEDO/farmer ratios mask the fact that the AEDOs are serving multiple technical departments of the MAIWD, in addition to serving as the silent operational arm of most NGO and donor projects and some private companies. The burdens placed on these individuals and the DAES system as a whole are much larger than meets the eye.

The overall concerns are effective saturation and use of the available human resources to achieve desirable staff density levels to meet the goals and objectives of the program. As currently conceived and implemented, the DAES is a service delivery program providing periodic, discrete technical messages to individual farmers and farming communities. To be effective and efficient in this role, such a service delivery model essentially requires nationwide saturation of FLWs at a density level that will allow messages and skills to be imparted to the rural population in a timely manner. Through the expanded use of the model village concept, resulting in communities with increasingly autonomous development capacities, and the yet to be implemented agribusiness program, where group-based self-directed growth will emerge around specific value chains, the DAES is effectively evolving from a service delivery system to a development organization. Taken to the next level, this transition in its key function from service delivery to development capacity building can be used by the department in re-defining its goals, objectives and consequently the strategy used in allocating its human and financial resources.

The countervailing forces here are the governmental maize and cotton subsidy programs, which in effect require the DAES to fill a traditional service delivery role in administering the programs. The relative size of these subsidy programs (\$232 million US versus \$32 million US for all the MAIWD technical departments combined) suggests that until there is a change in subsidy policies, the scope for reform within DAES may be limited.

Most NGOs, given their low staffing levels, are effectively dependent on the DAES system to have appreciable impact at the field level. Over time, a situation has evolved where the NGOs' donor projects have been allowed to make negotiated usage of the governmental EAS resources in implementing their projects without substantively contributing to the maintenance of the DAES system or covering the operating costs of the benefits that they receive. In effect, the government is subsidizing NGOs and donor projects without being able to participate in decisions over the content and design of the

activities, or even claim credit for the impact of the efforts among beneficiary groups. Where effective demand-driven planning is occurring through the area and district stakeholder panels, the diversion of resources in support of NGO projects may in fact be detracting from local development plans. The team was informed that EAS providers present their project plans to the DEC prior to implementation and/or negotiate with individual AEDCs over AEDO involvement at the area level. In the case of decisions made by the DEC, these concern only issues of geographic targeting of donor and NGO projects and are not concerned with technical content or methodological issues. At the DAES EPA level, what is offered the AEDCs is at best a right of refusal to collaborate, without input from local stakeholders. Given the dearth of local operational funds, the asymmetries in financial resources of donor projects channeled through NGOs place DAES administrators at a distinct disadvantage in such negotiations.

On one level, the EAS education situation appears to be headed in the right direction. Between the diploma updating program for FLWs at the NRC, the SAFE program and the growing number of traditional bachelor's degree graduates from Bunda College, it appears that, over the next decade, substantial improvements will be made in the basic knowledge levels of the AEDOs within the DAES, as well as other EAS projects and programs. Overall, the nature of real-world challenges and complexities of EAS programming are evolving and will require an increasingly well-trained cadre of FLWs to attend to the increasing number and complexity of demands. The target should be for specialized bachelor's degree-level training for all FLWs, and this seems to be on track. To make this a reality, the situation at Bunda College in particular needs immediate attention. The college is overwhelmed with rising student numbers and no commensurate increases in staffing levels or basic facilities, and it will simply implode with any further increases. A labor needs assessment and appropriate planning horizon will be necessary to get the balance right and avoid lagging behind or overproducing EAS sector graduates.

The DAES infrastructure and equipment at all levels are badly degraded. Generally, the farther one gets from the capital, the greater the need; the district and EPA facilities in particular need attention. The government housing provided to the AEDOs is in many instances reportedly uninhabitable. This raises the question whether, given funding constraints, the policy of attempting to provide housing for AEDOs should be abandoned and other means sought to meet this need.

The operational support provided by the DAES to AEDOs is minimal and lags far behind that provided to FLWs employed through NGO projects and some private service providers. Through the ASWAp, new Chinese push-bikes were purchased for all AEDOs. Those who have received the bicycles, however, unanimously complain of the poor quality and observe that most have broken over the few months that they have been in use. Promises of rain gear and other field supplies have not been met, and the cell phone allowances are inadequate and paid only periodically. At some of the districts visited, entire eight-person SMS teams must share a single vehicle in attempting to carry out their supervisory, training and support duties across the entire district, a situation that is simply not tenable without significant impacts to the overall productivity of their EAS programs. As would be suspected, the housing, transportation, communication and material support provided to FLWs in the NGO projects and some private sector companies are far superior. That situation and the fact that these organizations have hired away many of the best and brightest from governmental service combine to set in motion a self-fulfilling prophecy of higher personnel productivity based on the higher investments in field staff within these other organizations. The maxim "You get what you pay for" applies equally to EAS provisioning.

## Gender Equality

The gender balance of all the EAS efforts reviewed is skewed in favor of men. The team, however, did not sense any active biases on the part of program administrators leading to discrimination against women. Within the DAES, given the overall female/male ratio, the number of women serving in middle and upper management positions is very positive; in fact, the current and past DAES heads are both women. The future prospects for achieving greater gender parity depend on focusing on the appropriate areas – female entrants into the extension training programs – and accepting certain social realities affecting setting gender targets. Hiring more female staff members into organizations and projects requires an adequate pool to draw from. Both Bunda College and NRC reported improvements in the gender balances of students within their respective programs in recent years, with Bunda College reporting an overall 40 percent female admission rate. Therefore, it may be possible to recruit greater numbers of female staff persons as these students begin to graduate. That said, it will continue to be a struggle to attract women into filling FLW positions in remote rural areas, and programs (and external evaluators) may need to accept the realities of imbalances in these locations.

## Funding

The DAES as it is currently structured and oriented is underfunded and consequently understaffed. The CAADP Compact commits the government to significantly increase investments in the agriculture sector. To date, however, much of the additional funding has gone into the Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP) and the new Cotton Input Supply Program. Though the team did encounter instances of increased resources from ASWAp funding for extension services at the district level (e.g., a 4x4 vehicle at one district office and bicycles for FLWs), the impacts of any increased funding for extension programs at the district level appeared to be very limited.

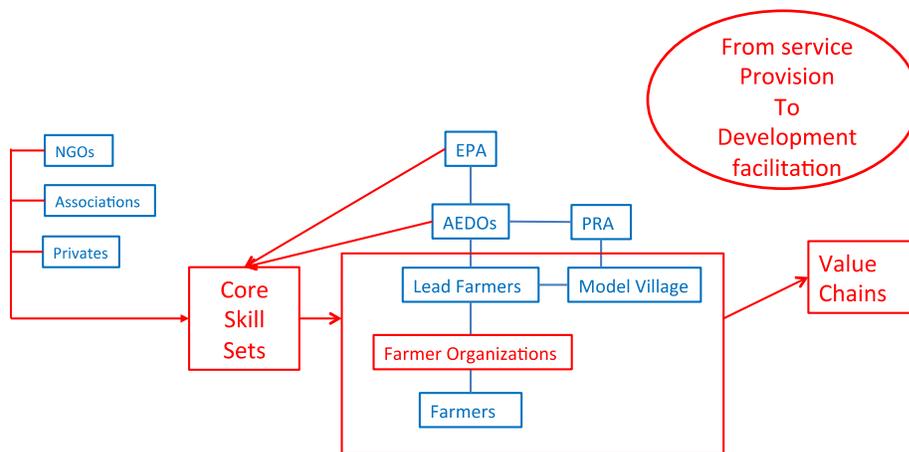
In contrast, NGO and at least some private extension systems seemed to have a much better balance between available resources and duties. Many of the FLWs in these organizations have motorbikes for transport, and some are also equipped with PDAs and even laptop computers for data collection and communications. Most district-level supervisors have access to vehicles, computers and the Internet. It should be noted, however, that none of the extension networks of non-state actors are very large, and as noted above, many of these non-state actors rely on the DAES AEDOs (and the DAES infrastructure) to support and/or actually implement their field programs. One calculation that the team was not able to carry out that would be instructive when considering the benefits and costs of various programing options is the relative cost of fielding a DAES AEDO versus a non-state FLW. Nevertheless, if the EAS resources of the non-state actors were combined and more effectively coordinated with those of the government in a demand-driven targeted manner, the impact on EAS provisioning in the country could only improve.

In conclusion, staffing and funding of the DAES system is not adequate for the responsibilities that staff members are expected to perform. And though there are additional strong EAS providers among the non-state actors in the country, the resources of these organizations are still not sufficient to support the smallholder farm population in Malawi. There are several alternatives to address this issue. One is to seek additional (sustainable) resources to fully staff the DAES and provide sufficient operating funds to allow the DAES to fulfill its mandate. Another is to consider changing the mission and operating approach used by the DAES to fit available resources in addressing the priority issues within the agriculture sector. These issues are discussed further under the recommendations.

## RECOMMENDATIONS

### Governmental EAS

- As currently structured, the DAES program is out of scale with its budget and needs to be reviewed in light of the resources that are and will likely continue to be available. To do this in a rational manner, the DAES needs to know what its base funding level will be for the next three to five years -- only then can it make informed decisions on the type of activities that are appropriate for it to undertake and the scale at which these can be pursued. The ASWAp investment plan appears to be the appropriate platform through which to undertake this review. Key factors to consider are objectives, tasks, human resource requirements (numbers and education levels), material support (EAS materials, communication, transportation) and infrastructure needs at all levels. The need for operational and maintenance costs is typically underappreciated, leading to constraints and decline of services when they are not adequately budgeted for, such oversights must be guarded against. Ideally, organizations should employ only the number of staff members that it can fully support in performing their duties. Given the noted gaps and current vacancy rates, the DAES is attempting to do too much with too few resources and needs to scale its programs appropriately.
- The DAES should review and consider undertaking appropriate actions to transition itself from a service delivery organization to a development facilitation organization. To follow this path, key considerations will need to be given to identifying a core set of practices (e.g., the Five Skill Set modules) that would be introduced at the community and/or association level to enable target groups to organize and increasingly pursue their own development agendas in an independent manner; setting the appropriate sequencing and timeframe for introducing and allowing groups to acquire these skills, with the concept that communities/associations would effectively graduate to a level of higher order but less resource-intensive support; using a rolling staffing plan in which human resources would be concentrated in targeted areas until communities/associations graduated, then would be redeployed in new areas and replaced by a lower density of more highly qualified and equipped “super AEDOs.” Such a strategy would facilitate the organization in operating with fewer but more mobile and better-equipped staff members. To enable DAES to monitor and track achievements of such a plan, it would need a more robust monitoring system. A review of monitoring options should be undertaken, including both traditional hard-copy approaches and new computer-assisted systems. The MAES-developed Farmbook system is one example of a system that may be able to provide the needed support to the DAES in this effort.
- The core functions analysis that is being implemented as part of the ASWAp process should be completed and used in reviewing the DAES structure and functioning, especially for its implications at the district level within the DEC, DAECC and stakeholder panels, as well as at the national level and the relationships between DAES and other departments within government and those outside of government. Recommendations for ensuring strong complementarity and coordination between activities of both civil society and private sector organizations and the DAES should be a priority of the analysis.



Source: MEAS debriefing, 2012.



Phased “rolling” staffing plan:

- Concentration of AEDO (4 – 6 years)
  - Market Oriented
  - Agro-ecologically appropriate
  - Synergism and sequencing of Core Skill Sets and Supporting Technologies
  - Farmer Groups/Model Villages
- “Graduation”
- Follow-on Support
  - Senior “Generalist”
  - Well-Equipped (motorcycle; cell phone; materials)

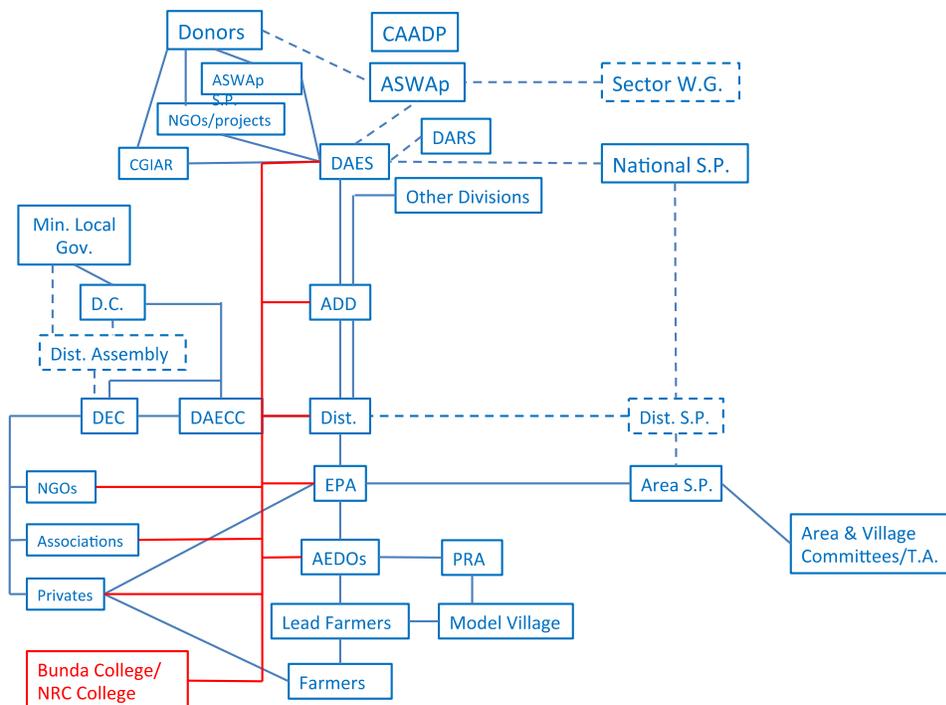
\* Addresses principal challenge of Human Resource/Financial constraints

Source: MEAS debriefing, 2012.

- The agribusiness section should be reintegrated into the DAES operational structure as a core, cross-cutting function of the Extension Methodologies and Training branch, not formed into a separate organizational unit. Moving the Agribusiness section out to function on its own creates unnecessary operational boundaries with the DAES without apparent benefit. Contingent upon decisions made to the issues raised above, staffing lines with skills in organizational development may be required, as well as more investments in staff members with advanced agricultural business development support capabilities.
- A permanent, formal liaison function with the DARS, working through the DARS Technology Transfer point of contact and offering backstopping assistance through the DAES ADD to the DARS technology transfer efforts at the regional level needs to be established.
- The DAES needs to begin providing all newly recruited (transferred or promoted) staff members with the necessary in-service training before they are posted, even if this means a delay in their posting.

### EAS Training Programs

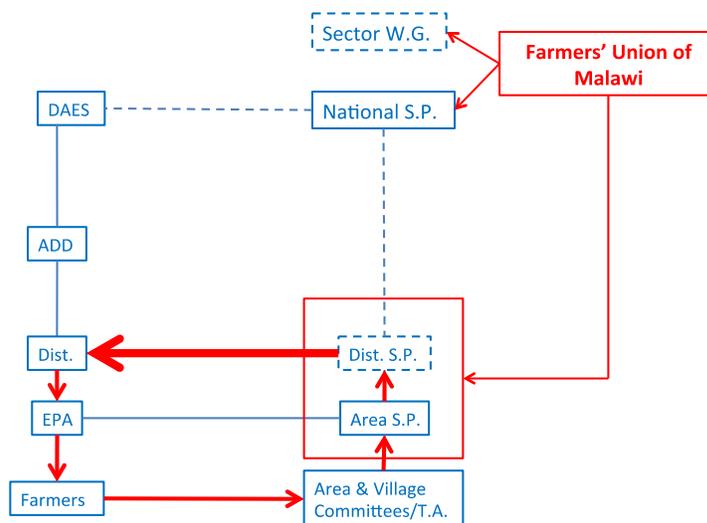
- Commission a labor force needs assessment for EAS professionals in the governmental and private labor markets (including NGOs, producer associations and for-profit companies) so that the programs can appropriately scale their activities.
- Develop an investment plan to bring Bunda College and Natural Resources College facilities up to modern standards and commensurate with projected labor market needs and enrollment levels. This investment plan should reflect results of the commissioned labor study and final decisions, parallel investments in and the timetable for creating the new University of Agriculture and Natural Resources, and the decision about whether NRC will be included in this new university.



Source: MEAS debriefing, 2012.

## Enhanced Private Sector and Civil Society Involvement

- Establish a formal linkage between the DAES and the national stakeholders panel. The panel should have a clear mandate and relationship with the DAES. If the cost of convening the panel is an issue, consider assessing organizational dues.
- Make area- and especially district-level stakeholder panels a more central feature in program planning and oversight of the DAES field programs. USAID should commission a review of entities best positioned to provide democratization training and continued support of the area- and district-level stakeholder panels. The team believes that FUM is best positioned to play this role, but this warrants further investigation and confirmation. A review should be made of how other organizations (e.g., ZNFU and SACCAU) have managed similar roles. Development of a sustainable financing model (through dues or other revenue sources) needs to be a central feature of the planning process. The team feels that it is appropriate for the DAES to continue to serve as the convening body for the stakeholder panels, but independent smallholder involvement needs to be strengthened if these farmers are to play an effective role in the planning process and with holding DAES accountable. Cost has been cited as the major constraint in holding the district stakeholder meetings, especially the costs of supporting participation of smallholder farmers, who are to make up over 50 percent of the panel membership. There appear to be two critical times for convening meetings at the district level -- at the time of annual work plan preparations, so that farmers' interests are built into the program plans for that year, and halfway through the operational year to assess progress against these plans and to make midcourse corrections as needed. Monthly meetings of the area stakeholder panels may be too frequent. Strong bi-monthly meetings, with opportunity to call ad hoc meetings to address critical issues as needed, may be sufficient to address local needs and ensure that the program remains on track without overtaxing farmer involvement or holding meetings without agenda items to discuss.



Source: MEAS debriefing, 2012.



## **ANNEX A: PROGRAM OF VISITS AND KEY CONTACTS**

**6 January** – Simpson departs U.S. for Malawi

**7 January** – Heinrich departs Zambia for Malawi; Simpson arrives Lilongwe

**8 January** – Heinrich arrives Lilongwe; Simpson, Heinrich and Malindi team meeting hotel

**9 January – Lilongwe**

Adam Weimer, Head of Program Quality Catholic Relief Services; car rental;

USAID Mission: John Edgar, Martin Banda, Vincent Landgon-Morris, Emmanuel Ngulube, Melody McNeil;

Tamani Nkhono-Mvula, National Coordinator, Civil Society Agriculture Network;

DAES: Stella Kankwamba, Director, Agricultural Extension Services; Clodina Chowa, Deputy Director, Extension Methodologies and Systems; Peter Nkhoma, Principal Food and Nutrition Officer, Boaz Mandula, Agricultural Gender Roles Extension Support Services, Assistant Chief Agricultural Extension Officer, Pearson Soko, Gilbert Malota, Agricultural Communication Officer;

Erica Maganga, Principal Secretary for Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development; Team meeting with Jeffrey Luhanga, Principal Secretary II.

**10 January – Lilongwe**

Team planning session CRS Offices;

Amy Rumano, CRS Country Representative;

Nikolas Bosscher, Country Representative, Flanders International Cooperation Agency; Program planning CRS Offices;

Rex Chapota, Farm Radio Malawi, Executive Director, and Pauline Kalumikiza-Mbukwa, Radio Programmes Officer;

Mr. Winfred Lilipita, ASWAp, Coordinator (Mr. Musopole and Mr. Mphande).

**11 January – Lilongwe**

Jean Mtethiwa, Vice Principal, Kingsley Mikwamba, Head of Extension Dept., Maxwell M'bweza, Registrar, Natural Resource College;

Department of Agricultural Research Services/Chitedze: Phillimon-Banda, Dep. Dir. Agricultural Research Services; Patrick Mviha, Assistant Director, Technology Dissemination; Dr. G. Kananji Legumes Team Leader and Albert Chamango;

Anne Turner, Extension Specialist, N2Agrica Project and her Assistant, IITA; Dr. E.S. Monyo Groundnut Breeder, Mathinda Soko, Farm liaison officer, Kai Maus, Economist ICRISAT; Tracy Beedy, ICRAF;

Stanley Khaila, Dean, Faculty of Development Studies, Bunda College.

**12 January – Lilongwe**

Prince Kapondamgaga, Executive Director, Farmers' Union of Malawi;

Rob Turner, Chief of Party, Malawi Linkage Initiative, Bridging Activity;

NASFAM: Chief Financial Officer, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer, Head of Programs, and two others;

Zwide Jere, Co-founder/Managing Director; Trent Bunderson, Co-Founder/Executive Director; O. Kachuma, M&E Specialist, Total Land Care;

Derek Mullen, Country Manager-Malawi, Land of Lakes.

**13 January – Lilongwe**

DAES Branch heads (simpson): F. Kayuni, Deputy Director; K. Chaula, Assistant Chief Extension Officer, AGRESS; P. Jasi-Soko, Assistant Chief Extension Officer (acting), Agribusiness Office; H. Msatilomo, Chief Extension Officer; Y. Tegha, SMS, Extension Methodologies & Training; E. Katunga, Chief Agricultural Communications Officer (acting);

Herbert Chagoma, Head, Malawi Milk Producers Association; Ronald Ngwira, Senior Agronomist, Alliance One Tobacco (Malawi) Ltd.; Daisy Kalima, Country Manager, African Institute of Corporate Citizenship (AICC); Noel Sangole, Project Coordinator, Malawi Agricultural Partnership (MAP).

**14 January – Lilongwe**

Essau Mwendu Phiri, Senior Advisor, Agriculture/Livelihoods, World Vision.

**15 January – Simpson/Heinrich travel to Mangochi.****16 January – Mangochi**

National holiday

**17 January – Mangochi District Agricultural Office**

P. Kandoje, District Agricultural Development Officer; L. Mundtali, Asist. DADO; P. Ydidi, Extension Methodologies Officer; A. Kabango, Extension Methodologies Officers; F. Makiyi, Communications Officer; W. Kammendo, Extension Officer; K. K. Nyengo, Agribusiness Officer; H. Msamadya, AGRESSO; M. M'Bobo, Food and Nutrition Officer; L. Botoman, Crops Officer; M. Nangwute, Fisheries Officer;

**Ntiya Extension Planning Area**

L. Kambwiri, Agricultural Extension Development Coordinator; M.B. Chinsamba, AEDO; 19 Area Stakeholder Panel members.

**18 January – Mbwadzulu Extension Planning Area**

R. Mpokonola, (acting) Agricultural Extension Development Coordinator; 9 Agricultural Extension Development Officers; 4 Area Stakeholder Panel members  
3 Students Natural Resources College;

### **Machinga ADD**

Ms Getrude Kalinde Thaulo, ADD Program Manager; Adreck Benati, Deputy Programme Manager; Rex Baluwa;

V. Chemboga, Supervisor; J. Makona, Asst. Regional Manager, Malawi Cotton.

### **19 January – Balaka District**

Warren Ndhlowa, District Agriculture Development Officer; A. Tstisi, Extension Methodologies Officer; D. Alli, Extension; T. Shaba, Food and Nutrition Officer; L. Kapesi, Agriculture Gender Roles and Extension Support Services Officer; J. Chikumbotso, District Animal Health and Livestock Development Officer; B. Chimanya, Senior Land Resource Conservation Officers; C. Nyirenda, Land Resource Conservation Officer; D. Kauwa, Planning and Evaluation Officer; C. Botoman, Ast. Irrigation Officer; M. Nambazo, Planning; F. Kachoma, Livestock Officer; S. Mafnei, Crops Officer – Crop Protection; M. Dupu, Crop Officer – Cereals;

Dickson Mthonyiwa, Association Business Manager, NASFAM;

Mr. Wo, S. Chinkhadze, Malawi Cotton Company.

### **20 January – Malosa Extension Planning Area**

D. Kalembe, Agricultural Extension Development Officer

Kwenje, model village site visit;

### **Zomba District**

O. Chapotoka, DADO; M.K. Mwenechanya, crops officer;

### **Blantyre**

Jonathan Mkumbira, Technical Quality Officer; Gitau Mbure, Agribusiness Technical Quality Coordinator, WALA;

Heinrich Potani, Deputy Crop Production Manager, Great Lakes Cotton.

### **21 January – Blantyre**

S.P. Kawale, Field Coordinator, G. Siyeni, Zone Manager, Total Landcare;

Total Landcare site visit;

Return to Lilongwe.

### **22 January – Lilongwe**

Rest day

### **23 January – Lilongwe**

G. Chapola, Managing Director, Richard Chapola, Director of Programs, RUMARK;

Document collection; Team review and planning meeting.

**24 January – Lilongwe**

C. Mathinda, Lecturer in Extension, Bunda College of Agriculture, University of Malawi  
D. Kambewa, Head, Extension Department Bunda College of Agriculture, Univ. of Malawi;

M.A. Mgomezulu, Deputy Director, Food and Nutrition, DARS Liaison;

**Lilongwe EPA**

G.H. Kaperemera, CAEO; E. Chima, AGRESSO; 4 AEDOs; 3 Lead Farmers; 8 Area Stakeholder Panel members.

**25 January – Lilongwe**

Felix Jumbe, President, Malawi Farmers Union;

Jeffrey Luhanga, Principle Secretary II, Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Malawi Greenbelt Initiative;

Anne Conroy, Irish Aide;

C.M. Masangano, Vice Principal, Bunda College of Agriculture, University of Malawi.

**26 January – Lilongwe**

Debriefing presentation preparation.

**27 January – Lilongwe**

Stakeholder debriefings: DAES; Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development; USAID.

**28 January – Lilongwe**

Team debriefing.

**29 January –** Simpson and Heinrich depart Lilongwe, arrives Lusaka.

**31 January –** Simpson arrives U.S.

## **ANNEX B: TERMS OF REFERENCE AND SCOPE OF WORK**

### **USAID Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS)**

#### **Terms of Reference for the Proposed Scoping Mission of Malawi's Pluralistic Agricultural Extension System for Brent Simpson and Geoffrey Heinrich from January 9 to 27, 2012**

##### **Background**

The economy of the Republic of Malawi is dependent on the productivity of its agriculture sector. Recently the Government of Malawi (GoM) made increasing food security its highest strategic priority in response to severe food security crises of the early 2000s. The GoM has demonstrated strong commitment to agriculturally-led economic growth, food security and nutrition through a series of key initiatives and policies, including the: Farm Input Subsidy Program (FISP); Green Belt Initiative (GBI); and Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp). Signing of the Comprehensive African Agriculture Development Program (CAADP) compact in 2010 and completion of a Post CAADP Roadmap and CAADP Business Meeting puts GoM on track with the CAADP agenda.

A key cross-cutting aspect of the Malawi ASWAp is "Technology Generation and Dissemination". While there might be new and appropriate technologies already available for farmers to use, the capacities to effectively and perhaps efficiently disseminate such technologies remain a major challenge. It is absolutely important to ascertain these capacities so that services providers might determine how to deal with gaps.

In 2010 USAID/Malawi's Feed the Future strategy (FtF) was approved and the Mission is in the process of working out modalities for implementing the strategy. In Malawi the value chain concept is new in agriculture. There will be need to articulate "what" and "how" to do things differently both at "technician" and farmer level.

The USAID supported Modernizing Extension and Advisory Services (MEAS) has been doing assessment of pluralistic demand driven extension systems, principally to make recommendations as to how the systems might work better. USAID/Malawi has requested MEAS to assess the Malawi extension system in its FtF target areas to determine what can realistically be expected in terms of extension delivery and what can be done to make the system more responsive to FtF expectations.

##### **Objective**

The primary objective of the mission will be to assess the pluralistic extension system in Malawi, giving specific attention to the organizational structure, coverage, relationships and major advisory services being carried out for specific groups of farmers and farm households by the public sector, non-governmental organizations, and farmer associations/firms. The team will focus on the primary contributions and constraints of these different advisory service providers, as well as how each of these institutions and organizations might be strengthened.

The assessment will concentrate on the seven FtF districts, namely: Lilongwe, Mchinji, Dedza, Ntcheu, Mangochi, Machinga and Balaka. Note these are also traditional tobacco growing districts in the northern part of the southern region and the south of the central region. It is assumed that although the assessment will focus on these districts, results and recommendations will be applicable to the rest of

the country. It is noted that DAES is interested this study providing insights for the entire country, not just the strategy districts.

### **Methodologies, Approaches and Deliverables**

Specifically, the MEAS team will:

- Meet with the director and key staff members of the Department of Agricultural Extension Service (DAES) at the national, district and sub-district levels. The purpose of these meetings will be to assess the current structure, capacity and expertise of these 2,000+ DAES staff at all levels (e.g. number, sex, educational qualifications and areas of expertise), especially the subject matter specialists and front-line extension staff. Linkages with the district executive committee will be assessed. In addition, the team will determine how these front-line extension workers actually carry out extension/advisory services. In addition, the team will determine what these key leaders and front-line extension workers perceive as their primary achievements to date, as well as their human and financial resource constraints, as well as other structural or management constraints that may be limiting their capacity to provide improved advisory services to small-scale farm households.
  - For example, are the field staff receiving in-service training each year on new or recommended production practices, new market opportunities, how to organize producer groups and to link these farmers to markets, and so forth. What mechanisms exist for dissemination and feedback on new recommended technologies, i.e., how strong are the linkages between extension and research?
  - Do these field extension workers have sufficient financial and other resources (extension/training materials, transportation, etc.) to allow them to access and provide needed services to the different groups of farmers that need to be served (e.g. landless, small and medium size farmers, including both men and women farmers)
  - Are there deliberate efforts to increase women participation in extension activities and how successful are they? What strategy and capacity is in place for the DAES to recruit more female extension workers, especially at the post-secondary diploma or university degree level?
  - Who determines what extension workers should focus on? To what extent are participatory methods used?
  - Are extension workers primarily focusing on increasing the productivity of staple food crops (e.g. maize, sorghum, millet, pulse and root crops) and/or are they also helping men and women farmers learn to diversify/intensify their farming systems so they can increase their farm income and improve household nutrition. How much attention is being given to specific high-value crops, livestock, fish and other products, such as floriculture, within the different parts of Malawi that can help different farm families increase their household incomes and, thereby, improve family nutrition and health care services? Again, the focus will be on the Feed the Future strategy districts, but to the extent possible findings for other regions will be included.
- Meet with non-public extension and advisory service providers, including NGOs, to address similar questions as of the public service and to identify their constraints and performance achievements. Also, what is the level of participation of non-public extension service providers in DAESS (District Agricultural Extension Services System), which is supposed to coordinate extension services providers at district level? To what extent do non-public extension service providers and farmers

know about DAESS and what role are they expected to play? It appears that many/most of these NGOs are operating at the regional or district levels; therefore the team will also assess their capabilities, performance and constraints in providing efficient and widespread advisory services to the farmers being served.

- To meet with the farmer associations that focus on Feed the Future priority products such as legumes and livestock (dairy) as well as, to the extent possible, with associations and export firms that are exporting key commodities, including tobacco, tea and sugar. These associations/companies are very product specific, but again the team will need to address the same issues, including constraints, outputs and achievements being carried out by each farmer association or firm. What extension mechanisms are these stakeholders using? Are they to some extent depending on public systems? Does DAES deliberately also cater for these types of beneficiaries?
- Review Malawi's Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp) document with specific attention on the Technology Generation and Dissemination Support area section. Assess the capabilities of DAES to implement ASWAp and identify any capacity building needs of the Department.

In addition, other issues will be addressed across these three major categories of extension service providers, including a) opportunities and challenges in meeting the non-formal education and advisory service needs of male and female farmers; b) how are these specific challenges being addressed; c) are these teaching-learning materials, which are being provided by these different groups of extension workers, appropriate in terms of the education/literacy levels of men and women farmers within the communities they serve?

Small-scale women farmers represent the majority of rural poor in many Sub-Saharan African (SSA) countries; therefore, is this true in Malawi? What efforts are the different extension/advisory service workers undertaking to target small-scale women farmers? Also, are these women farmers receiving advisory services from these different extension workers about producing more high-value agricultural products (e.g. paprika, macadamia, vegetables and cut flowers), especially to increase household income; or are most of these advisory services focusing only on subsistence crops? In addition, this assessment will look at other activities, such as who is organizing the producer groups for these different high-value crops, livestock and other products, and then in helping link these groups to markets.

USAID/Malawi's value chain work will go beyond the basic agricultural extension service to include Business Development Services (BDS). What's the capacity of the extension service to handle this aspect? What opportunities exist within the extension services for market information service?

To what extent can the current and emerging information and communication technologies (ICT) be enhanced by making both technical and market information more readily available to both the field extension staff and farmers. Also, do men and women farmers have equal access to available ICT technologies? Does the USAID supported Esoko market information system have applicability as an extension tool? What is the effectiveness in DAES investments in radio extension and community radio programs?

Finally, it is expected that nutrition is a very serious problem among the rural poor in Malawi, so an assessment will be made of the DAES, NGO and other service providers about the types of information being shared with these rural households about human nutrition. Are there opportunities for extension workers to partner with community health workers?

**In summary, this study will focus on:**

- 1) identifying the major gaps within the DAES, the NGOs and other extension/advisory service providers, including institutional capacity, human competency, sustainability, and policy limitations;

- 2) Recommending some near- and long-term investments that could substantially increase the effectiveness and sustainability of these different extension and advisory service providers;
- 3) Providing recommendations on how the research and technology dissemination component of the ASWAp can be improved and effectively operationalized; and
- 4) Determining the extent to which USAID/Malawi FTF programs can depend upon the pluralistic extension service to provide services to priority value chains.

A draft scoping report will be shared with the USAID Mission within one month after the team returns home. Then, after the USAID Mission members Martin Banda, Melody McNeil, Cybill Sigler, and John Edgar review these proposed, draft recommendations to strengthen the pluralistic extension system in Malawi, the report will be finalized and submitted to the USAID Mission within two weeks after receiving their comments and feedback.

Prior to the MEAS Team leaving Malawi, the team members will share and discuss their preliminary findings about how to create a more decentralized, farmer-led and market-driven extension system that is being addressed in other countries with USAID staff, as well as representatives from DAES, NGOs and farmer associations. *(USAID/Malawi is asked to identify a suitable date and meeting place so that the stakeholders can plan for this event.)*

## ANNEX C: DOCUMENTS RECEIVED

- Anon. n.d. Institutional Assessment of AAS and Country Forums. (Powerpoint presentation).
- Department of Agricultural Extension Services. n.d. Common Training Methodologies in Agricultural Extension. Ministry of Agriculture: Lilongwe.
- \_\_\_\_\_. n.d. Model Village for Total Transformation in Three Phases. Ministry of Agriculture: Lilongwe.
- \_\_\_\_\_. n.d. HIV/AIDS in the Agricultural Sector: Policy and strategy, 2003-2008. Malawi Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Food Security and Family Health International: Lilongwe.
- \_\_\_\_\_. n.d. Agricultural Radio Programmes Airing Schedule. Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security: Lilongwe.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2000. Agricultural Extension in the New Millennium: Towards pluralistic and demand-driven services in Malawi. Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation: Lilongwe.
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- Farmers Union of Malawi. n.d. The Voice of Malawian Farmers. Lilongwe. (brochure)
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. Programme Plan 2012 – 2016. “Providing an Effective Voice for All Malawian Farmers.” Lilongwe.
- Flanders International Cooperation Agency. n.d. Project Paper of the Flanders International Cooperation Agency for a Grant to the Multi-Donor Trust Fund in Support of the Agricultural Sector Wide Approach Support Project, sub-Component 2.1.3: Agricultural advisory and extension delivery systems.
- Kabuye, E.S. and J.A. Mhango. 2006. A Brief History of Agricultural Extension Services in Malawi from 1948 to 2000: An outline of the organizations, policies, systems and methodologies. Ministry of Agriculture: Lilongwe.
- Malindi, G.M.E. n.d. Handover notes. Lilongwe.
- Masangano, C. and C. Mthinda. n.d. Pluralistic Extension System in Malawi. Draft.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. 2005. *“The District Agriculture Extension Services System Implementation Manual.”* Lilongwe, Malawi.
- Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security. 2010. Agricultural Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp). Malawi’s Prioritized and Harmonized Agricultural Development Strategy.
- NASFAM. n.d. National Smallholders Farmers’ Association of Malawi. Lilongwe. (brochure)
- \_\_\_\_\_. n.d. Organizational History/Background. (one-page photocopy)

- \_\_\_\_\_. n.d. Overview of the NASFAM Extension Model. (one-page photocopy)
- Total Landcare. n.d. Total Landcare Improving the livelihoods of smallholder farming communities in Malawi, Mozambique, Tanzania and Zambia. Lilongwe. (brochure)
- USAID/Malawi. 2011. Strategic Review. Feed the Future. Lilongwe.
- \_\_\_\_\_. 2011. Malawi FY 2011 – 2015 Multi-Year Strategy. Lilongwe.
- USAID. 2010. Designing Scalable and Sustainable Market Information Services for Grain Markets in Malawi. FACET Webinar, June 17, 2010. (Powerpoint presentation)
- WALA Project. n.d. Care Group Model. (one-page photocopy)
- \_\_\_\_\_. n.d. Producer Group/FEF Consortium Member. (one-page photocopy)
- \_\_\_\_\_. n.d. WALA Community-Based Extension Model. (one-page photocopy)
- Ward, D. 2011. VOICE Standards for Farmer Radio. (three-page photocopy)