

DEVELOPING INNOVATIVE SOLUTIONS WITH COMMUNITIES TO OVERCOME VULNERABILITY THROUGH ENHANCED RESILIENCE



START- UP PHASE REPORT

For the period 1st January - 31st March 2012

Submitted to:

DFID/Irish Aid/Norwegian Embassy
Joint Resilience Unit

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Acronyms

CA	Christian Aid
CEPA	Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy
COOPI	Cooperazione Internazionale
CPC	Civil Protection Committee
CU	Concern Universal
DEC	District Executive Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DISCOVER	Developing Innovative Solutions with Communities to Overcome Vulnerability through Enhanced Resilience
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
ECHO	European Commission Humanitarian Aid Department
GIS	Geographic Information Systems
GoM	Government of Malawi
GVH	Group Village Headman
M&E	Monitoring & Evaluation
MoU	Memorandum of Understanding
NTCCC	National Technical Committee on Climate Change
PMU	Project Management Unit
PMER	Participatory Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting
PVCA	Participatory Vulnerability and Capacity Assessment
SHA	Self Help Africa
SMC	Senior Management Committee
SSLPP	Small Scale Livestock Promotion Programme
TA	Traditional Authority
ToR	Terms of Reference
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
VSL	Village Savings and Loans

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1.0 SUMMARY OF PROJECT ACHIEVEMENTS

Major achievements of DISCOVER during the start-up phase period include the following:

1. INTERNAL AUDIT OF CONSORTIUM AND PARTNER SYSTEMS

The Internal Audit Team has completed an audit of all DISCOVER partner financial systems. A report has been produced and specific recommendations have been made to each partner based on identified gaps. A clear plan has been developed to address the gaps and the Internal Audit Team will meet periodically to review progress.

2. PARTICIPATORY VULNERABILITY AND CAPACITY ASSESSMENT (PVCA) AND PROJECT FAMILIARISATION FOR COMMUNITIES

After conducting the PVCA in the inception phase as one way of learning the vulnerability and capacities that communities have consortium partners used the start-up phase period to go back to the districts and communities to provide feedback and at the same time introduce the DISCOVER project. This process provided an opportunity for stakeholders to provide additional feedback on the findings and begin to suggest strategies to address the vulnerabilities. Sharing the findings with communities is part of a transparent project design and start-up process and this approach was appreciated by stakeholders. At the district level meetings government partners have aligned DISCOVER with other similar interventions in the district to enhance coordination of activities and efforts are being made to fully incorporate DISCOVER activities into District Implementation Plans (DIP).

The project proposal documents including the logical framework have also been revised based on the findings from the PVCA. A summary version of the PVCA report has been produced and this will be made public and be disseminated through Concern Universal's website.

3. DEVELOPMENT OF MONITORING AND EVALUATION SYSTEMS

During the reporting period the DISCOVER log frame has been reviewed with the guidance of the M & E Technical Agency (LTS). The idea was to align the log frame to the project outputs and the ECRP log frame. A timeline for the baseline process was developed and DISCOVER produced its project monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework. Several discussions were held between DISCOVER and the M & E Technical Agency on the progress of the project M & E system and the baseline. A draft questionnaire for the baseline has been produced. The baseline study has been scheduled for June 2012.

4. DEVELOPING STANDARD APPROACHES (QUALITY ASSURANCE), TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT PLANS

4.1 DISCOVER has compiled and agreed on standard approaches for 11 key interventions: 1. Stove Production and Marketing, 2. Livestock Production and Promotion, 3. Nutrition Promotion and PD Hearth, 4. Sustainable Community Forest Management, 5. Community Based Extension Services, 6. Village Savings and Loans, 7. Micro-Solar Entrepreneurship, 8. Promotion of Crop Diversification and Drought and Flood Resistant Crops, 9. Establishments and Capacity Building of Marketing Associations, 10. Development of Community Seed Banks and 11. Promotion of Conservation Agriculture. These standards have been agreed by all partners (and are going through a process of formal sign-off by the consortium) and their adherence and usage will be monitored and enforced by the PMU's Technical Quality Assurance Specialist.

4.2 DISCOVER conducted training needs assessment amongst its implementing partners with a focus on planned DISCOVER interventions. The process led to the identification of a number of staff to be trained in a specific area for each organisation. In addition the project also identified trainers and the source of training materials to be used for the identified training within the consortium. This approach will strengthen standard implementation of activities and sharing of specific knowledge within the consortium. Lead agencies have been identified. Each lead agency is responsible for providing technical guidance on implementation of specific interventions.

5. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

The process of developing the Knowledge Management and Policy Engagement Strategy for ECRP (incorporating DISCOVER) was initiated during the period. This work was led by CEPA and was assisted by an independent consultant. A final Policy Engagement Strategy has been produced and a plan for implementation of the strategy has been drawn. The strategy is currently being shared amongst all consortium partners.

2.0 Summary table of obtained results compared to planned start-up phase activities (as per detailed start-up phase workplan)

Ref. No	Planned activity heading	Cumulative results since beginning of the project	Comments on progress, major challenges	Key steps undertaken to address challenges
I. INTERNAL AUDIT OF CONSORTIUM AND PARTNER SYSTEMS				
a	Produce report based on Internal audit findings	An internal audit report has been produced. The report identifies minor gaps in the current consortium partner financial and accounting systems. A plan has been drawn to address the gaps identified for each partner.	There were no significant challenges to this work although this task was initially supposed to have been completed in the Inception Phase.	
b.	Action plan put in place to address gaps identified in internal audit report	The Internal Audit process has led to drawing up of a plan to address gaps identified in the audit report. The report contains findings from each Individual partner's financial systems and a relevant plan has been drawn for each agency setting out actions to be undertaken to ensure compliance.		
c.	Internal Audit Team reassesses organisations where gaps identified and reports back to Senior Management Committee of the project	Findings of the internal audit exercise will be discussed at the May 2012 Senior Management Committee. This will be done in order to get commitment from the high level management team of the consortium to ensure implementation of the actions.		
II. STAFF RECRUITMENT				
a	Finalise recruitment of project staff (both PMU and consortium partners)	The DISCOVER consortium concluded the recruitment process of positions tenable for the project. Concern Universal has succeeded in recruiting all members of the DISCOVER central consortium team.		
III. FINALISING PARTICIPATORY ASSESSMENT PLANS & METHODS TO SUPPORT PROGRAMME DESIGN & TARGETING				

a.	Meetings and workshops with M&E Technical agency (LTS) to review ECRP log frame, critically analyse the Theory of Change, refine programme indicators, develop baseline tools, sampling frame.	A workshop was organised by the M&E Technical agency (LTS) to review the log frame indicators, prepare the Project Monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting framework in January 2012. A draft baseline tool was also prepared. In addition, project quarterly and annual reporting formats were also discussed. DISCOVER submitted final project documents to DFID in March 2012; and a contract for the implementation phase was signed.	The workshop produced a revised ECRP log frame and M & E matrix. During the workshop it was not possible to finalise the baseline methodology as there were differences in opinion on methodology and size of sample to use.	Follow-up meetings have been conducted to clarify the baseline method and a detailed plan has been developed.
b.	Produce a results framework including: performance monitoring indicators, annual milestones and end of project targets which captures: progress towards outcomes; progress towards and effectiveness of outputs; efficiency of transferring inputs to outputs and to service delivery; effectiveness and efficiency of management and procurement of inputs	A DISCOVER project monitoring evaluation and reporting framework was prepared based on the revised log frame. In addition the project M & E matrix was also developed. The framework outlines the performance questions, information needs and indicators, the reporting flows and formats and knowledge sharing events		
c.	Develop a reporting framework and time-line for ECRP	The DISCOVER reporting framework was designed and included in the PMER framework		
d.	Conduct baseline surveys in all five districts of DISCOVER.	The M & E Technical Agency advised DISCOVER and the other consortium to conduct the baseline survey in June 2012. The plan is to have one baseline for all the consortia.	There has been limited progress on the baseline process over the past three months.	DISCOVER has discussed the delay with both DFID and LTS and a clear plan of implementation has been developed.
e	Submit year Two work plan to DFID	DISCOVER submitted the Year Two work plan to DFID. The plan was submitted together with the revised proposal in January 2012.		The process of reviewing the work plan will continue.
f	Analysis of findings from PVCAs, revision of original project logframe, milestones, budget in order to develop revised action plans reflecting community needs	The Proposal, budget and action plans were revised based on the findings from the PVCA report. Revisions included scope of activities, some geographical locations and		

		implementation approaches.		
IV. CLARIFYING THE CONSORTIUM MODEL				
a	Workshop with all partner agencies to develop approaches and best practices to implementation	A workshop was conducted in January 2012 to share and discuss on the best practices to implement the DISCOVER interventions and the standards to be employed.		Standard guidelines for each intervention have been and are being developed by the DISCOVER identified technical leads.
b.	Learn lessons from others' experience of consortium working to inform our own ways of working. Initiate discussions with the WALA consortium and study CRS's CAFE work. Also seek to learn from other examples of consortium working identified by DFID and others	Meetings with WALA Chief of Party have been scheduled for the first week of May 2012.		
c.	Work with the Christian Aid consortium to develop further details about ways of joint working- operationalising the areas of cooperation set out in our joint letter of intent produced on 8th July 2011	CU and CA have produced a joint document that sets out details of areas of collaboration and information sharing. The two consortia already hold monthly meetings to discuss ECRP implementation issues and identify areas where a common approach is required.		
d.	Hold regular (every 6 weeks) Senior Management Committee meetings	SMC meetings have taken place as scheduled. So far SMC has conducted 5 meetings- 3 in Lilongwe, 1 in Dedza and 1 in Salima.		
V. SETTING UP STRUCTURES, SYSTEMS AND POLICIES AMONG CONSORTIUM MEMBERS				
e.	Setting up structures, systems and policies among consortium members.	The consortium clarified its community implementation model. The structure ensures that DISCOVER staff members have a community level presence and are able to link up with community members on all project		

		activities. The structure eases the level of technical support that consortium partners get from technical lead agencies. Communication within the consortium has been clarified.		
VI. COLLATION OF EVIDENCE OF IMPACT & SUSTAINABLE RESULTS OF PROPOSED INTERVENTIONS				
a.	Self Help Africa to collect additional data for Small livestock programmes based on the agreed format,	Self Help Africa collected and submitted additional information on the livestock management and the pass on concept for the implementation of livestock activities. A small-scale livestock development model has been developed based on the evidence provided by Self Help Africa.		
b.	Each agency to gather primary and secondary data on each programme area	All consortium partners have collected primary data on number of villages and number of household from each village. This information strengthens that project planning process at both district and village level.		
c.	Develop implementation standards based on evidence gathered for Quality Assurance purposes and decide on those programme areas where evidence is insufficient to take them to scale without further piloting	Draft implementation standards have been prepared but are yet to be reviewed and signed off by the consortium. The PMU prepared TORs to guide the DISCOVER technical leads in preparation of the implementation standards. To date 11 draft standards have been developed. Four (4) standards have been discussed among consortium partners and implementation of these will be rolled out during the first quarter of the project.		
VII. DEVELOPING STANDARD APPROACHES (QUALITY ASSURANCE), TRAINING & DEVELOPMENT PLANS				
a	Identify training needs and approaches to key activities & develop standardized training materials- prioritising those activities which will require the most training and support to deliver successfully	DISCOVER conducted training needs assessment amongst its implementing partners with a focus on planned DISCOVER interventions. The process led to the identification of a number of staff to be trained in a specific area for		

		each organisation. In addition the project also identified trainers and source of training materials to be used for the identified training within the consortium. This approach will strengthen standard implementation of activities and sharing of specific knowledge within the consortium. Lead agencies have been identified. Each lead agency is responsible for providing technical guidance on implementation of specific interventions.		
b.	Develop a consortium / partner staff training plan based on identified needs and gaps- utilising developed training materials	A training plan for DISCOVER partners has been produced and is in place.		
VIII. DEVELOP THE PARTICIPATORY MONITORING, EVALUATION AND REPORTING (PMER) PLAN				
a.	Review DISCOVER programme log frame and indicators	The DISCOVER log frame and indicators were reviewed and revised.		
b.	Produce a results framework including: performance monitoring indicators, annual milestones and end of project targets which captures: progress towards outcomes; progress towards and effectiveness of outputs; efficiency of transferring inputs to outputs and to service delivery; effectiveness and efficiency of management and procurement of inputs	A PMER framework was produced which includes revised defined performance monitoring indicators, milestones, methods and frequency of assessments.		
c.	Develop a programme-wide PMER Plan based on the results framework which includes: approach to ensuring robust baseline and progress information for results framework; description of data sources required for report progress-including data collection methods; approach to ensuring data quality.	A DISCOVER PMER Plan was produced		
d.	Train relevant staff in order to operationalise the PMER plan	The development process of PMER has taken sometime due to delays in		

		the process. The process was completed in March, 2012. PMU will train consortium staff on the system during the first quarter of year two.		
IX. KNOWLEDGE MANAGEMENT AND POLICY ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY				
a.	Work with the Christian Aid consortium to develop a harmonised knowledge management and policy engagement strategy involving CEPA	An ECRP advocacy strategy was developed by CEPA whilst DISCOVER took part in the development of the TORs, issues to be considered in the advocacy and reviewing the draft advocacy and gender streamlining the strategy. The advocacy strategy includes issues of coherence and effective implementation of the climate change and DRM policy, increased budget allocation on climate change and DRM by government, climate services, energy, conservation agriculture and mainstreaming gender in climate change and DRM issues.		
X. PROCUREMENT OF CAPITAL ITEMS				
a.	Finalise procurement of vehicles	Procurement of all capital equipment was concluded during the start-up phase. Delivery of vehicles is due May 2012.		
XI. PROJECT START-UP ACTIVITIES				
a	Meeting with ECRP partners in Nsanje (Goal and Action AID)	DISCOVER PMU and Christian Aid have met to discuss operation modalities in Nsanje and key areas that require close collaboration. These areas will be set out in a letter on understanding to be drawn between the two consortia and the District Council. The objective is to strengthen the working relationship		
b	Community mobilisation meetings. District Executive Committee meetings in all five districts to share PVCA findings and project model	All DISCOVER partners in Karonga, Salima, Dedza, Balaka and Nsanje conducted District Executive Committee meetings during the quarter to share PVCA findings, the project		

		concept and activities.		
b2.	ADC meetings in all five districts to share PVCA findings and project model- the team to include district partners.	DISCOVER partners conducted community consultations in all 17 TAS on the PVCA findings. The project was also introduced to member of Area Development Committees		
b3.	GVH meetings in all five districts to share PVCA findings and project model, begin developing targeting criteria with community- the team to include government extension workers	DISCOVER partners and government counterparts conducted meetings in all 104 GVHs to discuss PVCA findings and proposed strategies to address vulnerability.		
b4.	Irrigation assessment and feasibility studies in all five districts	This activity has been delayed due to a delay in agreement on guidelines for implementation of this activity. However, implementation of this activity will commence during the first quarter of year two. Standard guidelines for implementation of irrigation projects are being finalised.		

3.0 Introduction

Developing Innovative Solutions with Communities to Overcome Vulnerability through Enhanced Resilience (DISCOVER) is an £8.7 million, 5 year consortium project funded by the Joint Resilience Unit (DFID, Irish Aid and the Norwegian Government). CU Malawi is the lead agency in a consortium which also includes COOPI, Self Help Africa, GOAL, SolarAid, Clioma and CUMO. DISCOVER seeks to work with communities and local government structures in order to bring about a tangible and significant increase in the resilience of the most vulnerable communities located in disaster prone districts in Malawi, based firmly on (and scaling up) the community level successes which consortium members have achieved in recent years. Specifically the project aims to increase the resilience of 298,500 people within 5 districts (104 GVHs) to climate change vulnerability.

DISCOVER presents a very exciting opportunity, bringing together the varied skills and talents of a number of agencies to develop a comprehensive and lasting set of community-led solutions. It focuses on i.) working to improve coordination and build capacity of District, Sub-District and Community Structures to prepare for, mitigate and respond to disasters whilst at the same time ii.) Supporting practical, locally-owned; and entrepreneurial activities at community level to effectively increase resilience. DISCOVER contains an innovative package of activities (with sufficient room for local ownership, variation and innovation underpinned by a steady community revenue stream from carbon financing and linkages to microfinance) which will help to ensure that the current pockets of food insecurity and vulnerability in Malawi are consigned to history.

The DISCOVER consortium is made up of four consortium partners and four implementing partners. The four consortium partners are COOPI (Salima), Goal (Nsanje), Self Help Africa (Karonga) and Concern Universal (Dedza and Balaka) while the implementing partners are Clioma, CUMO Microfinance Limited, CEPA and Solar Aid.

The project's 'inception phase' ran from 1st August 2011 to 31st December 2011 with the 'start-up phase' running from 1st January to 31st March 2012. Following successful completion of these phases, full implementation will commence in April 2012 through to June 2016.

4.0 Project Goal

The goal of the DISCOVER project is to reduce the occurrence and recurrence of extreme poverty and hunger in Malawi. The project outcome is to achieve increased resilience of 62,500 households (298,500 people) in 104 GVHs (within 5 districts and 17 Traditional Authorities- TAs) to climate change vulnerability. The project has five key outputs and results which are:

1. Strengthened capacity of local authorities, communities and individuals to address and mitigate the impacts of climate change: 104 fully functional Village CPCs, 17 Area CPCs and 5 District CPCs, 59,700 households aware of their impacts on and solutions for enhanced individual and community resilience to climate change.
2. Increased capacity of communities and individuals to adapt their livelihoods to climate variability and the impacts of climate change and to manage disasters: 16,000 households with improved, diversified crops, 4,150 farmers practising Conservation Agriculture and greater dietary diversity in 29,000 households, 50,000 households using efficient stoves, 5.8 million trees raised, 27,000 individuals (with primary focus being on women based on lessons learnt that are less privileged in accessing such services) directly benefitting from VSL and microfinance services
3. Strengthened information sharing between stakeholders on DRM and climate change adaptation: improved information shared which builds on evidence and practical experiences with 300,000 people reached with improved and relevant information.
4. Strengthened early warning systems for climate related disasters (slow and rapid onset disasters): 55 communities covered by a community-based early warning system with trialled evacuation plans.
5. Strengthened disaster risk reduction and climate policy and programmes and delivery structures of key Government Ministries and Departments: existence and use of community-based mechanisms for community engagement in policy and decision making processes, number and type of

DISCOVER innovations that have been built into nationally endorsed adaptation and DRM programmes, and number and type of policies, strategic plans and programmes that have been influenced or contributed to by the programme (precise target number to be confirmed upon completion of CEPA's Policy Advocacy Strategy).

5.0 Progress achieved under each result area (Start-up phase plan)

Note that in future reports we will focus on the five key output areas set out in the previous section but, as the start up phase constituted a different range of activities, we have chosen to structure this report against our approved Start-up-phase Work plan.

5.1 Internal Audit of Consortium and Partner Systems

- a. **Form internal audit team:** The Internal Audit team was formed and comprised of finance and administration officers from Concern Universal, COOPI, GOAL and Self Help Africa. CU in consultation with DFID and Irish Aid drafted the TORs for this team. These TORs were then used to design the DISCOVER Internal Audit Assessment Tool.
- b. **Conduct review of DFID standards across all internal audit areas:** The framework of the Internal audit ToR follows DFID and Irish Aid's requirements. DFID indicated that they do not have existing standards and asked CU to draft one that also incorporates Irish Aid standards. This was completed by CU and led to the production of a synthesised document which has been shared and agreed with DFID and Irish Aid and has also been shared with the Christian Aid consortium.
- c. **Conduct internal assessment of all consortium members and local partners based on ToRs:** The internal audit exercise commenced during the second and third weeks of November 2011. A comprehensive report of audit findings containing relevant recommendations has been produced and is being shared with members of the Senior Management Committee.
- d. **Action plan put in place to address gaps identified in internal audit report.**
A detailed plan of action has been developed following a completion of the audit exercise. Implementation of actions in the plan will be monitored through regular Internal Audit Committee meetings. The plan will also be shared with members of SMC to ensure their commitment to address the issues raised.

5.2 Staff Recruitment

- a. The DISCOVER project is to be implemented by a team of 60 full-time and part-time staff members. At the completion of the start up phase all the positions for the DISCOVER consortium's central Programme Management Unit were filled. These positions include the following :
 - **DISCOVER Programme Manager** (Senard Mwale) who was recruited in August 2011. His main responsibility is to oversee overall implementation of the project. Senard was previously CU's Southern Region Livelihoods Programme Manager.
 - **DISCOVER Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Coordinator** (Memory Tchale) who was recruited in September 2011. She is the champion of all Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning functions of the project. Memory was previously COOPI's M&E Officer.
 - The position of **DISCOVER Senior Accountant** (Fanny Chikuse) was filled in November 2011. Fanny was previously CU's Senior Accountant in Ntcheu and Balaka.
 - **Technical Quality Assurance Specialist** (Mwiriha Kapondamgaga) started work in February 2012. She was previously with Total Land Care.
 - The **DISCOVER Internal Auditor** (Belnado Thinison) reported for duties in March 2012.
- b. Satisfactory progress was also made by partner organisations in filling key positions DISCOVER. DISCOVER partners have filled position for DISCOVER staff ready for implementation in April 2012.
- c. **Draft job descriptions for central consortium staff:**

Job descriptions for all central consortium staff were drafted and are in use. These positions are for Programme Manager, Monitoring, Evaluation and Learning Coordinator, Technical Quality Assurance Specialist, Senior Accountant and the Internal Auditor who has just been recruited. Performance of DSICOVER PMU staff is being appraised on a regular basis.

d. Each individual organization to go through the process of job description drafting, internal and then external recruitment where necessary to fill all the identified positions:

PMU has been in contact with all partner organisations and the indications are that most positions have been filled internally.

5.3 Finalising participatory assessment plans & methods to support programme design & targeting

a. Meetings and workshops with M&E Technical agency (LTS)

During the reporting period several meetings were held with the M&E Technical agency (LTS). In these meetings the log frame, quarterly and annual reporting formats and the M & E matrix were discussed and agreed upon. In addition the baseline methodology was also discussed even though no conclusion was reached as there were varying views on the methodology and sample size.

Follow up meetings were conducted between DISCOVER and the M&E Technical agency (LTS) to discuss issues on the baseline process. These meetings facilitated a change in the number of the annual assessments from five to three and increase in the sample size for baseline surveys.

In relation to baseline preparation a two-day workshop was held to develop the baseline tool. This meeting was led by the M&E Technical agency (LTS). At the end, a draft baseline household questionnaire was produced.

b. Produce a results framework including:

A DISCOVER project monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework was produced. The frame work includes the M & E matrix which provides the indicators, definition of indicators, how indicators will be measured, and its frequency and reporting. In addition quarterly and annual reporting formats which were produced by the M&E Technical agency (LTS) were adopted and included in the framework.

c. Develop a reporting framework and time-line for ECRP

A reporting framework for DISCOVER was prepared and included in the DISCOVER PMER.

d. Conduct baseline surveys in all five districts of DISCOVER.

The timeline for conducting the baseline has been moved as advised by the M&E Technical Agency (LTS). The adjusted timeline indicates that the baseline survey will be conducted in June 2012 as opposed to the proposed February 2012. The adjustment was done to let all the consortia (Christian Aid ECRP and MVAC) to have a harmonised baseline survey.

e. Submit Year Two work plan to DFID

A Year Two DISCOVER work plan was submitted to DFID in January 2012 with the revised DISCOVER project proposal.

f. Use of PVCA findings

The project revised its activities based on the findings of the PVCA report. For example in Nsanje district, the river dredging activities were reduced to river stabilisation activities after reviewing the benefits of the river dredging exercise to the communities. The project also increased the livestock component as the PVCA revealed that livestock was considered to be an important and effective means of resilience by

community members. The PVCA also revealed the specific vulnerability of women and children in relation to climate change and hazards. This has led to the project becoming increasingly gender sensitive in the implementation of activities to ensure that gender is mainstreamed across all interventions.

IV. CLARIFYING THE CONSORTIUM MODEL

A workshop was conducted in January 2012 to share and discuss on the best practices to implement the DISCOVER interventions and the standards to be employed.

Meetings with WALA Chief of Party have been scheduled for the first week of May 2012.

CU and CA have produced a joint document that sets out details of areas of collaboration and information sharing. The two consortia already hold monthly meetings to discuss ECRP implementation issues and identify areas where a common approach is required.

Hold regular (every 6 weeks) Senior Management Committee meetings

SMC meetings have taken place as scheduled. So far SMC has conducted five meetings since the project began. Two meetings was conducted during the Start-Up Phase while three meetings were held during the Inception Phase.

5.4 Setting up structures, systems and policies among consortium members

The consortium clarified its community implementation model. The structure ensures that DISCOVER staff members have a community level presence and are able to link up with community members on all project activities. The structure eases the level of technical support that consortium partners get from technical lead agencies. Communication within the consortium has been clarified.

5.5 Collation of evidence of impact & sustainable results of proposed interventions

a. Self Help Africa to collect additional data for Small livestock programmes

Self Help Africa collected and submitted additional information on the livestock management and the pass on concept for the implementation of livestock activities. This information is going to be used in the development of the standards of implementing the livestock pass on approach for DISCOVER.

b. Each agency to gather primary and secondary data on each programme area

All consortium partners have collected primary data on number of villages and number of household from each village. This information strengthens that project planning process at both district and village level.

c. Develop implementation standards based on evidence gathered for Quality Assurance purposes and decide on those programme areas where evidence is insufficient to take them to scale without further piloting

A workshop was organised in January which was used as forum to share the various approaches used to implement the activities that are outlined in the project. In the same workshop agreements were made on how to organise the standards of implementation for the interventions. The PMU has since developed TORs to guide the Consortium Technical Leads on the write up of the standard approaches of implementation.

5.6 Developing standard approaches

The DISCOVER has compiled and agreed standard approaches for 11 key interventions and these include the following: Stove production and marketing, livestock production, nutrition promotion and PD

Hearth, Sustainable Community Forest Management, Community Based Extension Services, Village Savings and Loans, Micro-solar entrepreneurship, promotion of crop diversification and drought and flood resistant crops, establishments and capacity building of marketing associations, development of community seed banks and promotion of Conservation Agriculture. The DISCOVER has also produced a manual to act as a guide for field staff while implementing activities on stove promotion. The manual is being tested by field staff and will be finalized during the second quarter of the project. An annex of the manual is attached.

a. Identify training needs and approaches to key activities & develop standardized training materials- prioritising those activities which will require the most training and support to deliver successfully

During the reporting period the project conducted a training needs assessment amongst its partners in the consortium. The assessment was conducted to identify skills and capacity gaps in DISCOVER implementing partners and to use that information to develop a training strategy and plan for the consortium. The assessment was based on the activities to be implemented in the project. The assessment also identified the capacities within the consortium which could be used to provide training within the consortium. In the end, gaps in terms of how many staff officers will need a specific training and capacities of who has the specialization and training manuals were identified and documented.

b. Develop a consortium / partner staff training plan based on identified needs and gaps- utilising developed training materials

DISCOVER developed a training plan using the training assessments. The training will utilise the training materials from the partners within the consortium.

c. Implement training plan

DISCOVER in conjunction with Partnership for Clean Indoor Air (PCIA) organised a Stove Camp during the reporting period. The objective of the stove camp was to enhance awareness and improve among stakeholders about the importance of biomass energy and improved cook stoves. The last day of the training was an open day which was attended by stakeholders from a wider section including donors, representatives of international development agencies, government representatives and other NGOs in Malawi. All DISCOVER consortium partners signed up as members of the Global Alliance for Clean Cook stoves. A full report on the proceedings of the camp is attached as an Annex.

5.7 Develop the participatory monitoring, evaluation and reporting (PMER) plan

a. Review DISCOVER programme log frame and indicators

The DISCOVER team reviewed its log frame with guidance from the M & E Technical Agency (LTS) during the reporting period. Further review of the log frame was conducted after DISCOVER received comments from DFID. The log frame is now more aligned to the DISCOVER outputs and planned interventions. DISCOVER will keep the log frame as a living tool and further reviews will be conducted after the baseline is concluded. DISCOVER will submit the most recent revised log frame to DFID in May 2012.

b. Produce a results framework including

The project has prepared a project monitoring, evaluation and reporting framework to guide a standardised measurement of the project. The following components are included in framework: the logical framework with indicators and milestones, M & E matrix, reporting structures and lesson sharing mechanisms.

c. Develop a programme-wide PMER Plan based on the results framework

The project M & E matrix provides the definition of the indicators, type and source of data to be collected, the frequency and how the data is going to be used.

d. Train relevant staff in order to operational the PMER plan

The PMER was not finalised during the reporting period. The DISCOVER team is yet to develop data collection tools and an ACCESS based database. The training of staff is planned for the first quarter of the Year Two.

5.8 Knowledge management and policy engagement strategy

a. Work with the Christian Aid consortium to develop a harmonised knowledge management and policy engagement strategy involving CEPA

DISCOVER worked with Christian Aid consortium in supporting CEPA to develop the ECRP Advocacy strategy. The strategy has been produced: There are six main objectives of the strategy as follows:

1. To enhance Government's coherence between climate change and disaster risk management policy instruments and implementation by 2015
2. To increase in Government's budgetary allocations for climate change and disaster risk reduction from 0.9% to at least 2% by 2015¹
3. To lobby for revision of the Energy Policy which includes an integrated approach to rural energy provision, combining renewable, efficient and equitable solutions to provide village energy supply systems to meet both domestic and SME resilience-building needs by 2015.
4. To increase access to functional and effective climate forecasting services that supports resilience-building by 2014
5. To ensure that Government provides significant profile and priority to Conservation Agriculture in the draft National Agricultural Policy (NAP) that provides direction and guidance by 2015.
6. To promote integration of gender perspectives in DRR and CC policies and practices

5.9 Procurement of capital items

Procurement of all DISCOVER equipment was concluded during the start-up phase. A first consignment of Micro-solar units was received during the same period. Vehicles are yet to be delivered during the first quarter of year two.

5.10 Project start-up activities

a. District Executive Committee meetings in all five districts to share PVCA findings and project model

All the DISCOVER partners in the five Districts organised District Executive Committees meetings to share PVCA findings and the project model. Table 1 presents the dates on which DEC meetings happened in the districts.

Table 1 : DISCOVER DEC meetings

Distict	Date of DEC PVCA meeting
Karonga	18 November 2011.
Salima	19 January 2012
Dedza	18 January 2012

¹ The 2011/12 National Budget Analysis revealed the budget trends for various sectors. For example leading sectors like Agriculture showed an annual increase of at least, an average of 2%, hence the extrapolation for Climate Change Budget. The full report is available on www.cepa.org.mw;

Balaka	19 January 2012
Nsanje	19 January 2012

The presentation of the PVCA findings and the project provided opportunities for the district authorities to understand the project model and concept. The meetings also identified other stakeholders in the districts who were implementing some similar activities and DISCOVER partners were encouraged to link up with them. For example in Dedza district, DISCOVER began discussing with CADECOM on how they will implement the CPC capacity building activities.

b. ADC meetings in all five districts to share PVCA findings and project model-the team to include district partners

After presenting the PVCA findings and project model at the district level, the DISCOVER partners also conducted the same exercise in the communities at the TA level. The meetings were supported by government district officers who accompanied project officers on each day of the community meetings. These meetings were conducted to give an opportunity to community representative to suggest on how the project should be implemented. All 17 TAs and 104 GVHs were given feedback on the PVCA findings and sensitized on the project.

Table 2 presents the number of people (community representatives) that were consulted through these meetings.

Table 2 : Number of community leaders consulted

Distict	Total	Male	Female
Karonga	198	138	60
Salima	1039	676	363
Dedza	39	31	80
Balaka	155	80	75
Nsanje	874	352	522

All communities appreciated the inclusion of livestock in the project and advised the project officers to take careful consideration when targeting project beneficiaries.

6.0 Tracking Indicators

The start up phase period activities are not specially designed to track project indicators. However, DISCOVER has made significant progress in implementing activities set out in the start up phase plan.

7.0 Lessons Learnt

Inclusion of design phase was an excellent innovation which should be replicated by other donors

The approach that has been used by DFID, Irish Aid and the Norwegian Government to give 8 months for design of the project is commended. Organising consortium partners to work together and developing common systems for project implementation are very difficult tasks and cannot be rushed. The period has provided a chance for partners to learn from each other and understand the common direction of the programme. However, this approach could be improved still further if it was discounted from the actual implementation period (i.e. making the project 5 years + 8 months in duration). The design phase eats up time for implementation and shortens the implementation period when from our experience considerable time (often the full five years) is needed to bring about lasting behavioural change and practices.

Sensitization meetings conducted with the government officials are crucial in creating a solid working partnership

The project noted that the sensitization meetings which started at the district level and then at the community level were important in bringing cohesion between the project team and district government

officials. The approach ensured that government took some level of responsibility as they took part in jointly facilitating the meeting together with project staff members. The presence and participation of government staff shows that a close relationship is developing between the project and government.

Consortium model and implementation on the ground requires a common mechanism

The project learnt that whilst DISCOVER has got various specialised activities which require specific skills for implementation there is need to develop a common mechanism of implementation, mode on skills support and supervision within the consortium arrangement. There is need to have a basic overarching framework to guide implementation whilst letting the implementers instil the innovative ideas. The standardisation of approaches and the implementation structures at field level will support this approach.

PVCA findings feedback helps communities develop a greater understanding of issues facing them

The project has learnt that by conducting PVCA in advance helps general community and community leaders understand a wider picture of climate change and the hazards that occur in their localities. Communities understand inter-linkages between Climate Change and their livelihoods. The project model addresses their priority needs.

8.0 Main Difficulties Encountered and Actions Taken to Overcome Them

8.1 Fuel shortage:

The fuel shortages continued during the reporting period. At times the situation limited the mobility of project staff to undertake project work. The consortium partners have been able to bulk purchase fuel whenever it was available in order to mitigate this impact. In some cases consortium partners have also shared transport resources in order to accomplish the tasks.

8.2 Forex shortage and fixed exchange rate

DISCOVER is buying some goods from outside the country. The country does not have enough forex to support the project implement its procurement plan. Concern Universal is paying for capital equipment using its UK office directly to off-shore suppliers. The fixed exchange rate for the local currency is will ultimately affect the budget due to increasing prices on the local market CU maintains a Foreign Currency Denominated account in Malawi and sells foreign currency to the banks based on the prevailing rate at that time.

9.0 Conclusion

There has been satisfactory progress made during the start up phase however more progress would have been made in the areas of M & E if the project was using its own timeline rather than relying on the timelines of others. DISCOVER is confident that it has the structure and system in place to implement the project to a high standard.

10.0 Workplan

A Year Two workplan was submitted on 16th January 2012.

11.0 Annexes

- A. Stove Camp report
- B. Chitetezo Mabula Guidelines