

Status of Policy Implementation for Enhancing Community Resilience in Malawi

Policy Brief

ECRP and DISCOVER



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Few lines about ECRP and DISCOVER

The Governments of United Kingdom, Ireland and Norway have provided MK12 billion to support a five-year (2011 to 2016) Enhancing Community Resilience to Climate Change and Variability Project. The programme is being implemented by two Non Governmental Organization consortia, one led by Christian Aid (ECRP), and another by Concern Universal (DISCOVER). Other consortium members are Action Aid and CARE Malawi and COOPI, GOAL Malawi and Self Help Africa respectively.

The programme aims to increase in the resilience of 400 - 540,000 direct beneficiaries and 1.2 – 1.6 million indirect beneficiaries most vulnerable communities in disaster prone districts in Malawi through climate change adaptation and mitigation interventions and influencing policy change.

The programme is implemented in Nsanje, Chikwawa, Thyolo, Mulanje, Machinga. Mwanza, Balaka, Dedza, Salima, Kasungu and Karonga by various partners in the respective districts. CEPA is a technical partner in knowledge and information management as well as policy and advocacy.

Introduction

Malawi is among the countries most prone to adverse effects of climate change ranked among sixteen countries of 'extreme risks' to climate change impacts in the world. The country experiences erratic weather and while the overall annual rainfall levels are not expected to change significantly, increased temperatures may lead to increasingly erratic rainfall with more incidences of late starts to the rainy season, droughts, torrential rain/storms and floods. These disasters negatively affect agricultural production and people's livelihoods, leading to serious food shortages, hunger and malnutrition. The magnitude, frequency and impact of these calamities have been increasing, in light of climate change, population growth and environmental degradation. To this end, government has been developing policies towards enhancing community resilience which provide a starting point in developing measures necessary for building and enhancing people's resilience. While the development of the policies is the sole mandate of government Ministries and Departments, implementation of such policies is a combined effort by government, civil society, academia, private sector, communities and other stakeholders.

The 2013/14 policy implementation assessment analyzes how well policies that relate to community resilience to climate change are being implemented in country and thus provides basis for engaging relevant stakeholders towards improving implementation of related policies for enhanced community resilience in the 2013/14 financial year. The assessment involved reviewing previous reports to identify and map out policies that contribute to community resilience. Stakeholders were consulted to provide status on the implementation of relevant policies.

What is Community Resilience?

Community resilience is capacity of communities to cope with and bounce back from shocks and stresses. This means that resilient communities do not just survive, they thrive. They do well during good and bad times. Resilience is a cross cutting issue requiring effective collaboration and coordinated package of interventions.

Progress in Policy Implementation

Policy implementation for enhancing community resilience refers to mechanisms, resources and relationships that link community resilience related policies to programme action. The current guidelines for policy development require implementation, monitoring and evaluation plans. Tracking progress in implementation of the policies is best done through tracking implementation of such plans. However, policies once adopted are not always implemented as envisioned and do not necessarily achieve intended results because the environments that policies seek to influence or manipulate are typically complex adaptive systems.

Policies on Resilience

Government of Malawi has made various policy statements towards enhancing resilience to climate change impacts and disasters in a number of existing sectoral policy instruments. These policies and legal frameworks cut across various sectors which is in agreement with the cross cutting nature of climate change and disaster risk management issues. Some of these policies and legal frameworks include: Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS II); National Adaptation Programme of Action (NAPA), Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp); Food Security Policy, Draft National Agricultural Policy, National Livestock Development Policy, National Water Policy, Water Resources Act, National Irrigation Policy and Development Strategy, National Forest Policy, National Energy Policy, National Gender Policy, National Land Resources Management Policy and Strategy, draft National Disaster Risk Management Policy, draft National Climate Change Policy, National Social Support Policy, draft Meteorological Policy, National Environmental Policy, National Environmental Action Plan, Environment Management Act, National Disaster Risk Reduction Framework, and Disaster Preparedness and Relief Act.

Some policies such as the DRM Policy, Climate Change Policy, National Gender Policy and National Agriculture Policy are still in draft form as a result there has been no harmonization of disaster risk reduction and climate change adaptation works across impact areas in most projects and across the country among different stakeholders. Furthermore, there is also no enforcement of policy directions and strategies due to absence of the approval of the above policies. Institutional and coordination structures that some of these policies are proposing are currently functioning without any established mandate.

Many of those formulated between 1990 and 2004 such as the National Forestry Policy, National Environmental Policy as revised in 2004; Food Security Policy 2006; Policy Document on Livestock 2004; National Water Policy as revised in 2005; National Irrigation Policy and Development Strategy 2000; Food and Nutrition Security Policy 2005; and the National Land Resources Management Policy and Strategy 2000 do not have associated planning frameworks in the form of logical or results frameworks that identify linked policy goals, policy objectives, policy priority areas, strategies, responsible institutions and time frames. So far, these policies still remain without implementation plans, possibly when policy reviews are initiated, the implementation plans will be considered.

Role of Civil Society Organizations

The civil society continues to play critical roles in the development and implementation of the community resilience policies. A large proportion of Non Governmental Organizations that are implementing the aspirations of these policies are those working under the DISCOVER and ECRP programmes. While parent ministries normally concentrate on implementing the policy related to their sector, the civil society and Non Governmental Organizations addresses community resilience issues in more than one policy, with some implementing interventions covering 6 to 17 policies. Government should therefore recognize the important role that the civil society and Non Governmental Organizations are making on building community resilience. More importantly, Government should draw lessons from the civil society and Non Governmental Organizations on the policy implementation process which will have to be reflected in the revised and new policies.

Stakeholder Involvement in Policy Implementation

While policy formulation has increasingly been a multi-sectoral endeavor, involving government, nongovernmental organizations and development partners, this engagement has not been sustained during the policy implementation stage of most of the community resilience related policies.

Efforts to move ahead with stakeholder involvement in policy implementation are being made, but with wide spread admission that to date the extent of stakeholder involvement is extremely varied. While there has been significant increase in number of nongovernmental organizations and donor funded programmes within government, during implementation there is still little coordination of activities and approaches among and between them and the government and nongovernmental organizations.

In a number of instances there has been duplication of efforts as large climate change adaptation programmes have been implemented in same communities. This has tended to constrain sharing of information, coordination of the use financial resources and exchange of experiences and lessons. This further limits the potential of attaining community resilience and slows down the process of developing the best community resilience models for Malawi. Moreover, the ineffective stakeholder collaboration in implementation affects the demand for coordinated package of interventions that resilience being a cross cutting issue requires.

Centralized Functions

A number of key ministries and departments responsible for resilience related policies such as agriculture, irrigation and water development, forestry, environment, gender, children and social welfare have devolved some of their functions to the local authority and have presence at local level. In contrast lack of decentralization for Disaster Risk Management and Energy Sectors continue to affect effective response on issues related to community resilience at local level. There is lack of institutional and physical infrastructure for emergency management in most districts affecting coordination, command and control of responses to emergencies. Besides, the integration of early warning into emergency management planning is limited.

However, some key Ministries and Departments are taking steps to decentralize their functions. For instance, the Department of Disaster Management Affairs is currently developing its Devolution Plan that will lead to the devolving of some of its responsibilities to local councils. Meanwhile officers responsible for disaster management were placed in selected local councils. There is also willingness by the Ministry of Energy to devolve in the near future.

MGDS II Alignment and Low Budget Allocation to Relevant Sectors

Policies that were formulated before 2005 besides not having implementation frameworks are not well funded and implemented because they are not fully aligned to the MGDS II which is the current national framework from which the national budget is based on. Examples of such policies include the National Development Livestock Policy, the National Land Resources Policy and Strategy, and the National Irrigation Policy. Ministries and Departments are at present (2011 to 2016) required to formulate their budgets based on prioritized activities in the MGDS II. Sectoral policies are thus expected to be aligned to MGDS II in order to effectively implement the national development agenda. Nonetheless previous budget reviews have shown that there exist budget gaps between what is envisaged in MGDS II and actual approved budgets in some relevant sectors for instance in the Ministry of Energy and Department of Disaster Management Affairs. The low allocation to these sectors is affecting the implementation of climate change and disaster risk management initiatives in the country. Moreover previous policy assessment has shown that there is no dedicated system for resource allocation for community resilience in the country. Most climate change and disaster risk management interventions are still being supported by development partners posing sustainability challenges. For example development and/or review of both the national and district contingency plans are still done with support from Non Governmental Organizations or other development partners.

Limited Interventions on Community Resilience

Though stakeholders indicated that they are implementing interventions aimed at enhancing community resilience, in line with a number of policy frameworks under review, most of the interventions being implemented were restricted to a few policies such as those directly dealing with agriculture and food security, disaster risk management and climate change adaptation. The most commonly stated policy related interventions being implemented included: humanitarian response to disasters such as drought, floods; promotion of village saving loans; promotion of micro solar entrepreneurship; promotion of marketing associations and linking farmers to markets; promotion of national resource based enterprises; conservation and management of natural trees; setting-up of river system alliances; river bank stabilization; policy guidelines; small scale irrigation; crop diversification; water shed management; pass on schemes; promoting sustainable economic growth; public health and sanitation; integrated rural development; small scale mitigation works; agribusiness and market development; sustainable land and water management; strengthening of early warning; reducing underlining risk factors; and reducing drivers of global warming.

Recommendations to Policy Makers and Implementers

Successful development and implementation of policies that enhance resilience, requires the involvement of different stakeholders, with the civil society playing a critical role in the process. A number of issues still need to be addressed. The following are some of the recommendations that would take ahead the current status in the development and implementation of resilience related policies in Malawi:

- Government of Malawi together with stakeholders should foster the adoption of the National Disaster Risk Management Policy, National Climate Change Management Policy and the National Gender Policy. This should provide the opportunity to provide input into the process based on experience working on community-based adaptation and disaster risk management programmes over the years. Combining it with the Climate Change Policy would facilitate the implementation of a long-term policy framework that would prevent duplication of efforts.
- Lobby government and relevant ministries to review all old policies related to climate change, disaster risk reduction and community resilience. There is also need for regular review of the relevant policies in light of global, national emerging issues. This remain a major obstacle in implementing resilience building programmes in the country since most of the policies being used were developed as far back as the 1990s and have not undergone any review.
- At the moment stakeholders though aware of the Social Support Policy, programmes which need to be coordinated in implementation are working in isolation and the level of resilience building is minimal. For instance, people affected by floods need to be targeted with social protection programs to stop relying on government when disasters strike but this is not happening. There is a need therefore to improve coordination in the implementation of various policies related community resilience.
- A major challenge that is hampering implementation of the policies is financial hiccups. Rather than relying on external support, or interventions by Non Governmental Organizations, government should ensure that enough resources are allocated to implement the policies aimed at enhancing resilience at various levels.
- There is need to harmonize policies that tend to present competing or conflicting policy aspirations. Policies under review and those still under development, should be considered as an opportunity to harmonize these policies. Achieving this requires a more transparent and consultative process in the review or development of the policies.
- Sectors responsible for resilience policies, such as energy and disaster risk management, should make sure that they devolve their functions together with prerequisite financial

resources to local authorities for effective implementation of community resilience policies.

- There is a need to minimize political interference in implementation of the policies, especially in areas where policy aspirations are in conflict with current government's priorities.
- Government should strive to deliberately minimize the time that it takes to approve policies.
- There is a need to set up M&E framework for monitoring the implementation of the policies with measurable indicators.
- There is need to improve on community involvement in the development and implementation of the policies because communities needs to be consulted from the development process since they are the end users of the policies.

Notes

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