**Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy**

# Civil Society Engagement in Environmental Policy Processes Project

# *Baseline Report*

**April, 2013**

**Acknowledgements**

# Contents

**ACRONYMS**

| | |
|---|---|
| ASWAp | Agriculture Sector Wide Approach |
| CEPA | Center for Environmental Policy and Advocacy |
| CISONECC | Civil Society Network on Climate Change |
| CISANET | Civil Society Agriculture Network |
| CURE | Coordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment |
| CSO | Civil Society Organization |
| LandNet | Land Network of Malawi |

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

A baseline study was conducted during the commencement of the Project on *'Civil Society Engagement in Environmental Policy Processes'* to establish the benchmarks that will be useful in tracking progress and achievements of the project. The baseline results will also be used to identify the basic training needs of Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) that will be involved in the project. The survey was conducted on CSOs that belong to 4 major environmental networks namely, Civil Society Network on Climate Change CISONECC, Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET), Coordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE) and Land Network of Malawi (Landnet) which provides a visible platform for policy input especially among CSOs.

Findings from the study show that 50% of the targeted CSOs have ever received training in policy development processes and advocacy but this was long time ago such that they needed refresher courses. It also came out from the study that 80% of the CSOs that were interviewed have participated in at least one policy process (mostly at the formulation stage). It was further noted that CSO involvement in policy formulation was largely through participation in networks. This demonstrates the need for more proactive participation of CSOs in policy processes. The study also revealed that only 35% of CSOs understand implementation of their work at local level as part of policy implementation, implying the rest hardly relate their work to policy irrespective of whether such work contributes to policy implementation.

On the other hand, only 20% of the CSOs also participate in policy monitoring. This is because most CSOs do not clearly understand how to monitor policy implementation and that they have a mandate to monitor policy implementation. Furthermore, the study asked respondents to state whether the government listens to CSOs when formulating policies. Only 25% think that government genuinely listens to CSOs. The other 75% think that government takes on board inputs from CSOs merely for the sake of satisfying donor requirements because of the perception that CSOs are more of 'noise makers' than sources of constructive policy input.

The study also revealed that CSOs produce cases that can influence policy development but only 20% have ever produced cases that have contributed to policy development. In terms of budget monitoring, only 45% of the CSOs have participated in budget monitoring but they did not master the exercise. As such, they need more guidance for them to effectively participate in the exercise. These findings enabled CEPA to design appropriate training for the targeted CSOs for them to participate in policy processes more effectively.

# 1.0   BACKGROUND AND INTRODUCTION

Environment and natural resources are the bedrock of Malawi's agro based economy. It is in this regard that Malawi adopted policies and enacted legislation which provides mechanisms for regulating use and management of the environment and natural resources. Despite these efforts, unsustainable use of natural resources has continued steadily resulting in massive losses of national income estimated at MK26.6 billion (US$191 million) each year in 2007 prices. Such a negative trend in natural resource use is largely a result of ineffective formulation and implementation of environmental policies. Amongst the key underlying causes is low engagement of civil society in policy processes and lack of specific linkages between approved policy and national budgetary allocations. Compounding these challenges is the limited institutional, legal and administrative capacity to implement environmental policies and to ensure that there is enforcement and compliance with environmental laws and regulations.

It is in this regard that Centre for Environmental Policy and Advocacy (CEPA) with funding from Tilitonse is implementing a 3 year project titled 'Civil Society Engagement in Environmental Policy Processes'. The project commenced in October 2012 and is expected to phase out in September, 2015. The project's goal is to ensure that *Environmental governance in Malawi is more inclusive and accountable.* The main purpose of the project *is that Civil Society Organisations (CSO's) should be able to influence national environmental policy formulation and implementation.* To achieve this goal, the project has four major outputs, namely: i) Enhanced knowledge in advocacy including policy formulation, implementation and monitoring processes among CSOs; ii) Enhanced capacity of civil society to utilize generated evidence in influencing environmental policy; iii) Increased level of CSO consultation by policy makers in policy formulation, implementation and monitoring; and iv) Improved efforts by CSO's towards environmental budget monitoring.

**Objectives**

The following were the objectives of the study:
- To identify the training needs of the project's key stakeholders; and
- To establish the benchmarks that will be useful in monitoring progress and to establish achievements of the project.

**Methodology**

The survey was conducted on CSOs that belong to 4 environmental networks, Civil Society Network on Climate Change CISONECC, Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET), Coordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (CURE) and Land Network of Malawi (Landnet) which provides a visible platform for policy input especially among CSOs. The CSOs were chosen based on the scope of their work in relation to policy and advocacy in agro-biodiversity, environment and land related issues. A total of 25 CSOs were sampled from these four networks randomly. An opened ended questionnaire was administered to elicit information about the organization, the organization's experience in policy formulation

processes, advocacy and budget monitoring (see attached questionnaire).. The data was analyzed using Excel where percentages and means were derived and used in the discussion.

## 2.0    RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

**Membership to networks**

Limited coordination among CSOs in influencing environmental policies is one of the limitations that was identified during project design. The study therefore sought to understand the extent to which CSOs work together. The results reveal that CSOs belong to one or more networks. Out of 20 CSOs that were interviewed, 100% indicated that they are members of CISONECC; 55% indicated that they are also members of CISANET; 27% belong to CURE; and only 18% are members of Landnet. CISONECC was formed in 2008 to coordinate civil society response to climate change. One of the main objectives of CISONECC is to enhance the capacity of civil society organizations to lobby and advocate for the management of climate change and its impacts in Malawi and at regional and international levels. The membership for the network is open to any organization working in climate change, disaster risk reduction and related activities in Malawi.

CURE on the other hand is a membership based union that was established to provide technical support and improve networking amongst NGOs, the Government of Malawi, Donors and other organizations or individuals working in environment. Its Mission is to assist NGOs to enhance the impact, gender equity and sustainability of community based natural resource management interventions through capacity building, coordination, information exchange and advocacy. Land Net is a Network of civil society organizations working in land related issues. Landnet seeks to advocate for the adoption and implementation of pro-poor and equitable land and natural resources policies, legislation and decision-making processes that enhance sustainable livelihoods and utilization of land and natural resources. Membership of Landnet is open to all CSOs working in land related issues.

CISANET is a policy advocacy organisation, working in agriculture and food security policy issues affecting not only the smallholder farmers but generally the poor people and their livelihoods. CISANET's mision is to promote agricultural development and sustainable livelihoods for the poor by influencing desired change in policies, practices and attitudes of Government, Donors, Civil Society and Private Sector through effective advocacy and networking. Membership of CISANET is also open to all those interested in Agriculture.

It is evident from the network profiles that advocacy is one of their core functions. The fact that most CSOs belong to one or more networks is therefore indicative of the willingness of CSOs to partciupate in policy advicacy even though they may not have advocacy elements. At the same time, it is clear that the networks themeselves are not designed to implemnet activities and yet experiennces of local environmental inititiatives is critical to evidence based advocacy as it enables appreciationa nd consideration of local realities in policy development. Membership of

CSOs to these networks therefore serves to stregthen the advocacy capacity of the networks while providing a platform for shared learning. Success lies in the extent to which these synergies are harrnessed by the respective CSOs and networks.

**Knowledge in advocacy and policy processes**

Advocacy is a political process by an individual or group which aims to influence public-policy and resource allocation decisions within political, economic, and social systems and institutions. Advocacy may be motivated from moral, ethical or faith principles or simply a desire to protect an asset of interest. Advocacy can include many activities that a person or organization undertakes including media campaigns, public speaking, commissioning and publishing research or polls or the filing of an amicus brief. Lobbying is a form of advocacy where a direct approach is made to policy and decision makers on an issue.

Advocacy is a very important tool in policy development process. CSOs need to have advocacy skills for them to lobby for inclusive policy development and implementation. The study tried to find out how many of these CSOs have staff members that were trained in advocacy. It was found that 50% of the respondents have received training on policy formulation processes and advocacy. The ones that indicated that they have received training before admitted that they were trained by CEPA, CURE, Landnet and CISONECC. However they disclosed that they do not have all the required skills including knowledge and experience skills that would enable them advocate effectively. As such they need more training to master advocacy.

In terms of involvement in policy process at any of the stages such as formulation, implementation and monitoring, 80% admitted that they have been involved in at least one of the policy development processes. Findings show that much of this involvement has taken place at the policy formulation stage. Fifty five percent of the respondents participated in policy formulation through problem identification, reviewing issues papers and reviewing draft policies. Some of the policy instruments that CSOs have participated in formulation include: draft National Disaster Risk Management Policy, draft National Climate Change Policy, Malawi National Land Policy, draft revised Environment Management Bill, draft Fisheries Bill and Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp). The study has also shown that involvement of CSOs in policy formulation took place through interviews and meetings/workshops. At the same time, most of these CSOs were involved through the networks they belong to such as CISONECC and CISANET. This demonstrates the need for more proactive participation of CSOs in policy processes.

In terms of implementation, 35% of the CSOs indicated that delivery of their work is based on specific policies such as the Forestry Policy, the Wildlife Policy, the Biotechnology Policy and HIV and AIDS Policy. This implies that the rest hardly relate their work to policy irrespective of whether such work contributes to policy implementation.

Only 20 % indicated that they conduct monitoring of implementation of policies. However, they could not state exactly how they go about doing so.  This is demonstrates the need for CSOs to

understand that monitoring policy implementation is a key policy process as it serves to highlight the link between policy and practice and provides a basis for advocacy when gaps are identified.

**Capacity of civil society to utilize generated evidence in influencing environmental policy**
Case Studies are one of the best ways of influencing policy development. In this study, it was found out that at least 60% of the CSOs that were interviewed have developed a case before that was used to influence a particular policy. For example one CSO admitted that they used a court case against continuation of development of the Kayerekera Uranium Mine in 2008 which resulted into the revision of the Mines and Minerals Act. Some CSOs developed position papers on issues such as conservation agriculture, deforestation, wildlife degradation, climate change and poor waste management. All these were presented to policy makers including the Parliamentary Committee on Agriculture and Natural Resources. However, some CSOs do not know how to generate case studies for use in policy advocacy, with 40% of the respondent CSOs stating that they had never produced any case study for policy influence.

**CSO consultation by policy makers in policy processes**
In this baseline it was important to find out how many of the CSOs are approached by the policy makers during policy formulation. The study found that 70% of the CSOs have ever been approached by policy makers but all of them had been approached through the 4 networks (CURE, CISONECC, Landnet and CISANET). Some indicated that they took part in stakeholder consultation meetings. The study also tried to find out if government takes on board views of CSOs in policy formulation process after consulting them. Fifty percent of the CSOs said that of late, the government has been keen to take on board the views of the CSOs when formulating policies. However the involvement of the CSOs is still limited because their views are only considered when they are presented through a collective platform of networks such as CISONECC, Landnet and CISANET.

The other 50% of CSOs indicated that government does not listen to CSOs. Seventy five percent of this group said that views of CSOs are taken on board merely to fulfill the donor requirements. Some of the respondents in this group went further to state that government listens to the donor community more than anyone else. The other 25% had a view that the government does listen to communities and CSOs but in a limited sense because there is limited interaction between the government and the CSOs due to limited resources.

Despite the variations in the views advanced by different respondents, one thing is common: government needs to do more to ensure more inclusive policy development. Given that CSOs have been involved in various policy formulation processes as indicated above, it is possible that the different perceptions are influenced by experiences of policy formulation in particular contexts. Either way, CSOs should build on the positive experiences work on generating and packaging quality evidence to enhance uptake of policy input.

Another key thing that the study tried to look at was the extent to which the environmental policy addresses the needs of the local communities. 20% of the CSOs that were interviewed think that the environmental policies support sustainable management of the natural resources base from which most of the rural livelihoods are derived. Therefore the protection of these resources directly considers the communities that are highly dependent on their existence for survival. On the other hand, 60% of respondents think that most of the environment related policies are outdated and they need revision. They also indicated that most of the policies have conflicting messages and they leave communities more vulnerable because they do not know which policy to follow. There is therefore need for harmonization of policies so that they should carry one message. Twenty percent mentioned that for the policies that are up to date and relevant, there is poor or complete lack of implementation. This reinforces the need for CSOs to have more capacity in monitoring policy implementation.

In terms of the mechanisms that are in place that to facilitate the involvement of citizens in policy processes, only mechanism was mentioned i.e. citizen's participation in different development initiatives promoted by either CISONECC members or CISANET members. Members of these networks do provide platforms for civic engagement in policy processes but the key challenge is the scarcity of resources to frequently facilitate such kind of engagements. Others had a view that the development of most policies is done in a hurry. As such the views of the local communities are hardly taken on board. The government is supposed to give ample time to CSOs that have more direct contact with the local communities to collect their views and concerns for policy development. There is also need to use various means of the media such as radio and television programmes to create awareness on the various policies that are formulated for the general public to provide input. This will promote inclusiveness in policy development.

**Budget monitoring**
Finally, the study sought to find out if CSOs have participated in budget monitoring. 45% of the CSOs indicated that they had participated in budget monitoring before the study. Some participated through national budget consultations while others were only involved through budget tracking at district level. 18% said that they had participated but not fully and they need more training so that they can effectively undertake the exercise. 37% of the CSOs said that they have never participated in any budget monitoring exercise but they are willing to be trained so that they can gain skills for monitoring budgetary allocations to environment related sectors.

## 3.0 KEY GAPS AND CHALLENGES

The study has revealed a number of key gaps and challenges. One of the gaps is on policy implementation. CSO are not doing much in terms of monitoring of policy implementation as seen in the results. Another gap is on the use of case studies to influence policy development. As much as CSOs indicated that they generate cases which would be used to influence policy

development, only 20% have indeed used the cases to influence policy development. There is also limited engagement of CSOs to participate in budget monitoring exercise.

## 4.0 CONCLUSION

The study has found out that the most of the CSOs participate in policy development process. However their involvement is based on their membership to environmental networks and largely limited to policy formulation. A number of CSOs are also keen to participate more in all policy processes. They would therefore like to gain skills in various processes such as development of policy relevant case studies, monitoring policy implementation and budget monitoring.

## 5.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

From the findings of the baseline study, the following recommendations have been made
- CSOs need to be trained in  in monitoring of policy implementation for them to effectively advocate for inclusive and accountable policy  implementation.
- CSOs need to be trained on  how to case studies that can be used as evidence for policy development
- There is need to equip CSOs with the knowledge and skills in budget monitoring so that they can participate in budget monitoring as a basis for lobbying for reasonable budgetary allocations to the environment related sectors, thereby promoting effective implementation of environmental policies.

## Annex 1: Civil Society Engagement in Environmental Policy Processes Baseline Questionnaire

| Organization Name | | | |
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| Location | | Year of Organization's Establishment | |
| Organization Goal | | | |
| Date of Interview | | Name of Interviewee | |

1. What are the areas of your organization's specialization?

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2. In which Districts are you working?

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3. Does your Organization belong to any network, please name the

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4. Has anyone in your organization ever been trained in policy processes and advocacy? (Yes or No) With an explanation

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5. Has your organization participated in any policy process? If Yes, which process and for which policy?

| | Yes or No Which process and for Which Policy |
|---|---|
| Formulation | |
| Implementation | |
| Monitoring | |

6. Has you organization ever developed a case which was used as evidence in influencing policy development? (Yes or No)

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7. If yes, can you share the case and explain in which policy it was used.

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8. Has your organization ever been approached by the Policy makers to provide input in policy development?

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9. If YES Please explain how you were involved.

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10. To what extent do you think environmental policies address needs of the local communities?

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11. What mechanisms are in place to facilitate involvement of citizens or low represented groups in environmental policy formulation?

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12. Has your organization ever participated in a budget monitoring exercise?

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13. If yes when was this and what was your role?

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14. Any other comments?

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## Annex 2: List of CSOs Interviewed

| Name | Contact Person | Email Address |
|---|---|---|
| Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) | Bryer Mlowoka | bmlowoka@gmail.com |
| CURE | Khumbo Kamanga | cure@sdnp.org.mw |
| LANDNET | Hastings Chamatwa | hchamatwa@yahoo.com |
| Churches Action in Relief Services (CARD) | Melton Luhanga | melton.luhanga@cardmw.org |
| CADECOM | Carsterns Mulume | carsterns@yahoo.com |
| Citizen for Justice (CFJ) | William Nyirenda | wdnyirenda@yahoo.com |
| Development Fund of Norway (DF) | Mahara Nyirenda | maharan@developmentfundmw.org |
| Total Landcare | Phillip Tembo | phillip@tlc.mw |
| Christian Aid | Vitumbiko Chinoko | VChinoko@christian-aid.org |
| Rural Foundation for Afforestation (RUFA) | Chiza | rufa@africa-online.net |
| CISANET | Raymond Mwenitete | raymond@cisanetmw.org |
| NASFAM | John Chipeta | John.chipeta@gmail.com |
| Clinton Development Initiative (CDI) | Commodius Nyirenda | cnyirenda@clintonfoundation.org |
| Self Help Africa (SHA) | Damiano Jere | Damiano.jere@selfhelpafrica.org |
| CICOD | Edward Thole | edwardthole@yahoo.co.uk |
| Greenline Movement | D. Chitedze | greenlinemovement@gmail.com |
| National Youth Network (NFY) | Gift Numeri | gnumeri@nfydmw.org |
| Find Your Feet (FYF) | Chimwemwe Soko | chimwemwes@fyfmalawi.org |
| TAPP | Winfred Chanza | chanzawinfred@gmail.com |
| Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM) | Chikondi Chabvuta | chikonatie@gmail.com |