

MALAWI CHURCHES PARTNERSHIP PROGRAM (MCPP)

MID-TERM REVIEW REPORT

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Final draft

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Table of contents

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY	4
1. BACKGROUND	11
1.1 Introduction	11
1.2 Contextual analysis	11
2. METHODOLOGY	14
2.1 Review of documents	14
2.2 Semi-structured interviews	14
2.3 Workshops	14
3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION	15
3.1 Achievement of MCPP and sector goals and activities	15
3.2 Performance of sectors	19
4. THE MCPP MODEL	26
4.1 Steering committee	26
4.2 Secretariat	28
4.3 Lead agencies and their members	30
4.4 Summary	30
5. LESSONS LEARNT AND EMERGING BEST OR PROMISING PRACTICES	33
5.1 Lessons learnt	33
5.2 Best or promising practices	34
5.3 Conclusions or lessons and best or promising practices ...	35
6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS	36
6.1 Conclusion	36
6.2 Recommendations	36
6.3 Implications of the mid term review findings on Tear fund re-launch in Malawi	39
Appendix 1: Checklist for semi-structured interviews	40
Appendix 2: List of stakeholders interviewed	41
Appendix 3: Assessment of MCPP added value	42

AGREDS – Assemblies of God Relief and Development Services

CADECO – Capacity Development Consultants

DfiD – Department for International Development

DRR – Disaster Risk Reduction

EAM – Evangelical Association of Malawi

EI – Emmanuel International

EU – European Union

GDP – Gross Domestic Product

HBC – Home Based Care

ICT – Information Communication and Technology

MIM – Malawi Institute of Management

MSCE – Malawi School Certificate of Education

OD – Organization Development

OVCs – Orphans and Vulnerable Children

PLWHAs – People Living with HIV and AIDS

RBA – Rights Based Approaches

RBM – Results Based Management

TORs – Terms of Reference

TOT – Training of Trainers

VCT – Voluntary Counseling and Testing

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Introduction

The Malawi Churches Partnership Program (MCPP) is a consortium that comprises 10 Evangelical Churches in Malawi. It was formed in 2005 with the aim of contributing to poverty reduction efforts in the country. Specifically, MCPP was formed with the aim of mobilizing evangelical churches to making a contribution towards poverty reduction in the country. The consortium comprises five sectors namely: Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); HIV/AIDS; Children at Risk; Water and Sanitation; and Advocacy. MCPP is a pilot model that Tear and members of the MCPP are experimenting with.

In September 2007, MCPP contracted CADECO (Capacity Development Consultants) to facilitate their mid term evaluation. The assignment included summarizing the findings of the sector specific mid term evaluation reports and analyzing the relevance, ownership and sustainability of the MCPP model. The aim was to assess what in general the model has managed to deliver in terms of performance results: outputs, outcomes and impact, potential for better performance and to provide guidance on whether the model is viable and therefore whether it can be replicated elsewhere.

Contextual analysis

A contextual analysis to help design MCPP was done in 2005. The analysis focused on the following issues: HIV and AIDS, chronic and acute food insecurity, limited education, children in difficult circumstances, inadequate access to health, clean water and hygienic sanitation, poor economic performance; and poor governance.

In comparison to the contextual analysis done in 2005 at the beginning of MCPP, the HIV and AIDS situation has basically remained the same though there is 'more acceptance of the reality of the HIV and AIDS pandemic'. There has been a positive change in the food security situation especially due to the government's fertilizer subsidy program and the generally good weather over the past two years. This makes initiatives like MCPP to rethink their roles in food security contribution to the country.

The education system is still a major source of concern. There are increasing reports on abuse of children. Inadequate access to health, clean water and hygienic sanitation remains a big challenge but there are some initiatives by DfiD, World Bank, WaterAid and the government to address this.

The economy has improved. The GDP growth has moved from an average of 2% growth per annum to an average of 8% per annum. Performance in governance has been mixed. On one hand there is a feeling that the country is being generally better governed than in the previous regime. On the other hand there are issues of constitutionalism and local government elections still to be resolved.

Methodology

CADECO employed a participatory approach to the study. The study was mostly qualitative in nature. Key techniques employed were semi-structured interviews, direct observation and key informant interviews. A workshop with monitoring and evaluation personnel from the different member organizations was conducted with the aim of discussing the monitoring and evaluation issues identified in the sector specific reports.

Findings and discussion

Performance of sectors

A number of positive achievements were noted in all the sectors. These included:

In Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR) targeted people are beginning to diversify the crops they grow and the livestock they keep. In Children at Risk, some progress has been made in the areas of: helping the children at risk gain self esteem, live in dignity, develop to their full potential and escape dependence; promote justice, strengthening their families, resolving root problems that brought them to the streets and generating enough food/income to meet basic needs.

In the HIV and AIDS sector, there have been observed reduction in teenage pregnancies, stigma towards PLWHAs and orphans, increased skills among HBC; and improved interdenominational cooperation. The Water and sanitation sector has managed to sink 8 boreholes and repair 14 boreholes. The advocacy sector has worked closely with DRR to link them to appropriate government ministries and departments.

A number of cross cutting performance issues were identified from all the sectors. These included:

- The quality of funding – in most the sectors the funding was less than expected and it came late. This constrained effective implementation of the project activities.
- Ineffective monitoring and evaluation systems – at the time of the mid term evaluation, the sectors did not have monitoring and evaluation systems. It was therefore difficult to assess the results of sectors at output, outcome and impact levels.
- The geographical areas covered generally did not match with the capacity of the sectors and their members.
- Need for more investment in program and project design.

Improving the overall performance of the sectors therefore will require improving the quality of the funding, establishing effective monitoring and evaluation systems, balancing geographical area covered with the capacity of the sectors and members. It

will also require more investment in project design through improving selection criteria of target groups and beneficiaries; and promoting ownership of projects in the hands of the communities.

So far, in relative terms, the DRR sector is the most successful among the sectors. A number of factors have contributed towards this success. These include:

- Having a designated officer working on DRR on full time basis in the lead agency. The other sectors do not have an officer working on a full time basis. A key lesson to the other sectors is that when they are writing their proposals, it is important to include a budget line for recruiting a full time officer.
- In addition to having a full time officer in the lead agency, Tear fund, the donor has officers providing technical support to the DRR sector. This facilitated the sourcing of resources, opportunities for trainings and exposure visits among others. The key lesson is that it works better for a sector if the area they are working are also a priority of the donor and that the donor has technical expertise to offer to the sector in addition to the money.
- DRR, as compared to the other sectors, managed to get more resources for their project implementation and they got their funding in time.
- Lastly, DRR members have a history of working together before the MCPP consortium. The lesson for the other sectors is that it takes time to develop team spirit.

It can be concluded that the first two years were for getting organized and established. The challenge for the remaining period is to begin demonstrating impact both at MCPP and sector levels.

The MCPP model

Among the key achievements of MCPP have been:

Members have been able to raise their profiles especially the lead agencies. This has increased their recognition among MCPP members, to Tear fund and other stakeholders.

Members have participated in various capacity building initiatives that are translating to increased and improved staff skills and competencies. The skills and competences are being used in their respective organizations as well as in MCPP activities. Accounts personnel were trained for new skills and competences. They were also trained in Sage accounting packages which most of them are now using. Lead agencies were provided with desk top computers.

Greater interaction with other sector and MCPP members and beyond. This done through the meetings, exposure visits, placements and other activities. This has led to greater understanding of the national context in which the individual organizations are operating.

Some members expressed that this has potential to extend and strengthen individual organizations visions, activities and potentially impact.

Members have managed to access funding that otherwise could not come to individual organizations; the DfiD funding is an example. Lastly, most of the members appreciated the fellowship and social connections with others, especially the prayer meetings with like minded Christians. One participant called MCPP a 'prayer network'. Sitting through some of MCPP's sessions, the consultant feels the spiritual dimension is truly one of MCPP's strong points of uniqueness and that it needs more conscious appreciation among the members.

In summary MCPP's added value has been in greater sharing and collaboration, greater advocacy, better targeted capacity building and greater institutional funding. There is still more work to ensure MCPP's added value in terms of widening the variety of causes of poverty to be addressed, increasing opportunities to expand ministries and ensure reduction of transaction costs.

Recommendations

The study concludes that the first two years of MCPP were mostly for getting established and organized and that the next two year ought to focus on beginning to demonstrate results, especially impact. The following recommendations would help MCPP to shift from the organizing or establishing phase to the performing phase:

Sectors

- a. It is important for the sectors to start with a clear baseline or bench mark data to act as a basis for tracking progress. The baseline data must be *consciously* used as a basis for tracking the progress. In addition to the baseline data, it is also important to put in place an effective monitoring and evaluation system that can enable the sectors and the MCPP as a whole to track progress at the output, outcome and impact levels. In consolidating the work that the sectors have already done and their effort to harmonize the monitoring and evaluation systems of the different sectors into one MCPP monitoring and evaluation system, the sectors would greatly benefit if they went through training in results based management (RBM). Such training would help MCPP to clearly articulate and consolidate its inputs and activities. It would also help them to articulate realistic expected results at the output, outcome and impact levels. Most importantly the RBM training would enable MCPP to develop a performance monitoring framework that clearly spells out the role and responsibilities of the different levels (steering committee, secretariat, lead agencies and members) in coordinated monitoring and evaluation of MCPP and its activities. The performance monitoring framework is a critical component in finalizing the strategy document that is being reviewed because it is key to ensuring that the strategy plan will actually be implemented.

- b. It is important to be realistic about the indicators and targets, some of the targets that the indicators set out for themselves were too ambitious. It is important to balance the capacity of MCPP and the sectors and their members with what they can realistically achieve with the available and expected resources of time, money and personnel.
- c. The sectors generally need to rethink their relevance and therefore what they should focus their activities on. Government has made strides in improving the food security at national level. The DRR sector needs to rethink how it can add more value in the changed context. It is the consultant's considered judgment that in their food security efforts, they may add more value by concentrating more on irrigation as there is more progress in rain fed agriculture. They can also add more value by concentrating more on disaster preparedness with food security as a means towards disaster risk reduction rather than an end in itself. Water and sanitation needs to invest more in water harvesting. HIV and AIDS, children at risk and advocacy sectors, whose interventions are primarily aimed at behavior change, need to think through how their activities can bring about the required behavior changes more effectively. There is need for a deep reflection on how MCPP, a Christian consortium, can use its spiritual and technical foundations as levers for genuine transformation among the people it is working with.
- d. There is need to improve the design of the sector projects. There is need to improve on community involvement, selection criteria of the target groups and beneficiaries; and entry and exit strategies. In addition, there is need to balance capacity with intended impacts. There is need to improve capacity in terms of increasing numbers of members in the sectors, especially those with only one or two members. There is also need to do more work in improving the skills and competencies of the members and sectors so that they can match the magnitude of their intended and its impact. Since it has been observed that those sectors that had a full time coordinator outperformed those that did not, it is strongly advised that all the sectors should include a budget line for a full time coordinator in their next proposals.

MCPP model

Steering committee

- e. There is need to separate the learning and governance functions of the steering committee. The six monthly meetings can remain as its happening now. The meetings' main purpose would be to act as reflection and learning sessions with the aim of improving the practice of MCPP as a whole. But there is need to have a steering committee that plays the governance function. The governance function involves: performance monitoring of the whole consortium, financial oversight, fundraising and capacity building for improved performance. This steering committee can meet more frequently, e.g. on a quarterly basis and should have less members may be 5 or 7.

- f. The revised strategy that will be done after this review will need to be budgeted again with the aim of agreeing on how much money will be required for its full implementation. If the agreed figure goes above what Tear fund can commit to support, it will be important to diversify the funding base for MCPP to fill the gap. But, even though Tear fund may be able to support MCPP fully, in the remaining period, it will still be important for MCPP, especially the steering committee to start thinking seriously about the long term financial sustainability of MCPP. Having more than one donor reduces the risk of failure in the event that the one donor has to pull out for one reason or another. There is need therefore to begin to market the MCPP model to other donors. There is also need for the individual members to consciously align their strategic plans to the MCPP strategic plan. Without this conscious link, as it is now, ownership of the MCPP strategic plan and MCPP as a whole will remain a challenge. Individual members may not find the time, money, personnel and other resources to commit to MCPP as these are outside their strategic plans and therefore outside their priorities. The least the members can do is to have a 'networking' budget (supported by their other donors) line flowing from their strategic plans that they can use for MCPP activities like meeting cost.

- g. As part of its financial oversight function, the proposed steering committee needs to take responsibility of the overall budget coming from the strategic plan budgeting process. This is the collective budget of all the sectors and operations functions of the steering committee and the secretariat. This would strengthen the credibility, transparency and accountability in MCPP's financial management. It was surprising to note that some sectors had already had their proposals approved by donors without the full knowledge of the steering committee. The steering committee would also be responsible for overseeing the allocation criteria of the money within the sectors.

Secretariat

- h. The development and growth that MCPP has undergone in the last two years are indicating that MCPP has reached a stage they need to move away from total informality to some degree of formality while at the same time being careful not to 'institutionalize' in a way that would stifle the current flexibility that all the members value so much. They need to be careful not to form a 'separate or independent organization' as is a common experience when consortiums and networks try to institutionalize. This leads to the need for a 'hub' that coordinates day to day activities. This needs to take the form of a very lean secretariat that is responsible for coordinating the activities of the sectors and members, and implementing decisions made by the steering committee.

Lead agencies and sector members

- i. The arrangement of members in a sector being mentored and coached by lead agencies is working well. But there is a need to fine tune the arrangement and expectations. Currently, the lead agencies are responsible for both technical and organizational capacity building of the members. It is more realistic to give the lead agencies the mandate to be responsible for the technical aspects of capacity building. The lead agencies, as many of them confessed, may not have the capacity to facilitate the organizational capacity building aspects of the members as a whole. The secretariat can take responsibility of the organizational capacity building aspects while leaving the technical aspects to the lead agencies. This would 'free up' the time and resources of the lead agencies to concentrate in their capacity building efforts on what they know best: the technical aspects. It is to have a shared understanding among all the members of the consortium of what an ideal MCPP would look like in terms of organization, performance and relationships and where the members are now in relation to that ideal and then what capacity gaps need to be filled especially at members' level. This would lead to a more comprehensive and systematic capacity building plans and efforts by the steering committee and the secretariat. Effective coordination within sectors, among the sectors and collaboration in general is only possible when the individual members are well capacitated.

The mid term review concludes that the MCPP model is highly relevant. It is potentially sustainable especially if there is more ownership by the members. The first half of the program was mostly for getting organized and established. A few lessons have been learnt on this. The challenge for MCPP in the last half of the program period is to begin to demonstrate more tangible and concrete results at the output, outcome and impact levels.

1. BACKGROUND

1.1 Introduction

The Malawi Churches Partnership Program (MCP) is a consortium that comprises 10 Evangelical Churches in Malawi. It was formed in 2005 with the aim of contributing to poverty reduction efforts in Malawi. The consortium comprises five sectors namely: Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR); HIV/AIDS; Children at Risk; Water and Sanitation; and Advocacy. MCP is a pilot model that Tear and members of the MCP are experimenting with.

Beginning June through September, 2007, the different sectors underwent mid term reviews with aim of ascertaining their progress since inception. In September, 2007; MCP contracted CADECO (Capacity Development Consultants) to summarize the findings of the different sector reports and to analyse the relevance, ownership and sustainability of the MCP model. The aim was to assess what in general the model has managed to deliver so far in terms of performance results: outputs, outcomes and impact, potential for better performance and whether the model is viable and whether it has potential to be replicated in other countries where Tear fund is working.

This report therefore presents the summaries of the sector reports including issues emerging from them and an analysis and interpretation of the MCP model. It then presents the key lessons learnt and the emerging best and promising practices. Lastly, the report concludes by presenting the recommendations on how to improve the performance of the sectors, the MCP model and critical considerations in thinking about replicating the MCP model in other countries that Tear fund is working. The report begins with the contextual analysis of MCP's task environment.

1.2 Contextual analysis

This section provides the contextual analysis as observed over the past two years.

Economy

Over the past two years the economy has grown at an average of 8% per annum. The improvements in the economy have mostly been in the macro rather than micro-economic indicators. As such there are visible improvements in the GDP, exchange rates and interest rates. There are also visible changes in infrastructural developments, especially roads. Improvements in micro-economic indicators like disposable income, income per annum, income per capita and general livelihood improvements are yet to be experienced. With improvements in macro economic indicators, increasing donor confidence and a shift in the mindset from a hand out to a work culture the prospects for improvements in the micro economic indicators are high.

Key helping factors to the improvement in the economy have been the government's fertilizer subsidy program and the generally good weather over the last two years. Key threats to the economy are the increasing prices of fuel world wide and the generally slowing down of the world economy. These have potential to wipe out the economic gains made so far.

Politics

The political situation has generally been tense over the last two years. The government, which is in minority, has found it difficult to pursue its agenda in the opposition dominated parliament. The national budget for 2007/2008 was delayed by four months due to political wrangles between government and opposition in parliament.

Because of their perceived performance as government, the minority ruling party has increasingly been getting the sympathy and support of the people. In 2006, the ruling party won all the six contested seats in parliamentary by elections.

Though in majority, the two main opposition parties are reeling under internal conflicts. In 2008 alone, four opposition MPs have defected to the ruling party. As the country moves towards the presidential and parliamentary elections in 2009, some political commentators are warning of the possibility of returning to the one party era due to the weaknesses of opposition parties.

Socio-cultural factors

The previous regime emphasized that Malawi is a poor country and therefore justified the culture of begging and entitlement. The current regime emphasizes that it is not the country which is poor but the people and therefore poverty is not the country's responsibility but the people's responsibility to resolve. In other words, people need to work rather than depending on begging or handouts. There are some perceptible shifts happening in the national mindset (though there is still some way to go before we can say a complete shift has happened in this regard) in response to the latter.

In addition to the shift in mindset, there is an increasing 'acceptance of the reality of HIV and AIDS'. People living with HIV and AIDS are facing less discrimination in the communities and in society as a whole. There is also more acceptance of gender especially in granting equal opportunities to women and men and boys and girls. There are however increasing incidents of gender based violence and abuse of children especially girls.

Education standards continue to be a source of concern. The 2006/2007 MSCE exams had to be rewritten due to massive leakages. The government is intending to reintroduce the quota system for selection into the University of Malawi. Some human rights NGOs and activists feel that 'compromising on merit and using appeasement' will only further reduce the quality of education.

Technology

There has been an increase in uptake of ICT technologies especially the cellphone making instant communication possible. Uptake of computers and the Internet especially among the rural people still remains a big challenge. This is hampered by lack of access to these facilities and low literacy levels among the rural people.

The national TV and radio stations continue to be perceived as being biased towards the government.

Conclusion

A contextual analysis to help design MCPP was done in 2005. The analysis focused on the following issues: HIV and AIDS, chronic and acute food insecurity, limited education, children in difficult circumstances, inadequate access to health, clean water and hygienic sanitation, poor economic performance; and poor governance.

In comparison to the contextual analysis done in 2005 at the beginning of MCPP, the HIV and AIDS situation has basically remained the same though there is 'more acceptance of the reality of the HIV and AIDS pandemic'. There has been a positive change in the food security situation especially due to the government's fertilizer subsidy program and the generally good weather over the past two years. This makes initiatives like MCPP to rethink their roles in food security contribution to the country.

The education system is still a major source of concern. There are increasing reports on abuse of children. Inadequate access to health, clean water and hygienic sanitation remains a big challenge but there are some initiatives by DfiD, World Bank, WaterAid and the government to address this.

The economy has improved. The GDP growth has moved from an average of 2% growth per annum to an average of 8% per annum. Performance in governance has been mixed. On one hand there is a feeling that the country is being generally better governed than in the previous regime. On the other hand there are issues of constitutionalism and local government elections still to be resolved.

2. METHODOLOGY

The overall approach was participatory. An attempt was made to meet as many stakeholders to MCPP as possible. Some participatory rural appraisal (PRA) techniques were employed. Particularly these were: semi-structure interviews, direct observation and key informant interviews. Three sets of methods were used in combination and throughout the review process. These were:

2.1 Review of documents

Key documents studied with the aim of gaining a general understanding of the background, organization and functioning of MCPP. The key documents studied were: were:

- MCPP Strategy document
- MCPP code of conduct
- Steering Committee minutes of meetings
- Mid-term Evaluation reports for Children at Risk Joint Project, HIV/AIDS and the Community based disaster mitigation and preparedness project

2.2 Semi-structured interviews

The aim of these interviews was to validate the findings of the reviews, give feedback to respondents of the reviews and to extract further insights to consolidate the findings. The interviews were also aimed at getting the members' feelings, experiences, observations and aspirations of MCPP. Interviews and discussions were carried out with:

- Partner beneficiaries in focus group discussions
- Members of staff of the partner organizations
- Various Stakeholders to the project and partner organization
- Steering Committee members
- Key staff from Lead agencies
- The MCPP chair person

2.3 Workshop

The aim of the workshop was to introduce some models and frameworks for understanding development practice and development organizations. The workshop helped the organizations to begin to reflect on the monitoring and evaluation practices in MCPP.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings and discussion on the mid –term review. The findings and the discussions are arranged in the order of the summarized TORs which are: to assess achievement of MCPP goals, assess performance of the sectors, analyze the MCPP model and viability, draw lessons and identify best practices so far; and make recommendations for improvement and replication of the MCPP model.

3.1 Achievement of MCPP and sector goals and activities

Findings

MCPP was set out to achieve the following goals:

1. To improve the quality of life of at least 250, 000 poor families by strengthening the responses of at least 400 local Evangelical Churches and communities in 28 selected districts of Malawi
2. To reduce the spread of new HIV infections to below 7 % and mitigate the impact of AIDS on at least 100 000 orphans and PLWA in the identified districts by the end of 3 years.
3. To ensure that over the next 3 years at least 150, 000 vulnerable families in six districts are food secure and can cope with disasters
4. To ensure that at least 10, 000 children orphaned by HIV and AIDS and those forced to live on the streets are adequately provided for in a family setting, able to go back to school and protected from sexual, mental and physical abuse
5. To improve the health of 50, 000 poor people by helping them access enough clean water and sanitation, and practice appropriate hygiene by the end of 3 years
6. To achieve policy change in the areas of democracy, economic justice, food security and HIV and AIDS
7. To mobilize and support at least 30 Evangelical churches to social action and support partners working with local Churches in the areas of HIV and AIDS and Advocacy

The people interviewed were not able to say what has been achieved on each of the goals and targets because they ‘did not have the figures’. In addition, the consultant was not able to identify a ‘knowledge management system that brings all monitoring and evaluation information to one central place’ or ‘a performance monitoring framework that specifies the monitoring and evaluation responsibilities of the steering committee, lead agencies and partners to enable MCPP make informed decisions on its performance. There was however, a general feeling that most of the targets were overambitious and need to be reviewed. Specific comments on this were made in the sector specific mid term review reports.

Effectiveness of the sectors

Sector	Planned	Achieved	Outstanding
Water and Sanitation	Baseline survey	Done	None
	One ecological sanitation training of trainers for Watsan field officers	Done	None
	4 consortium meetings	2 done so far	2
	60 bore boreholes constructed over 3 years	10 bore holes constructed	50
	Rehabilitate 36 non functional water points	6 bore holes rehabilitated	30
	6,000 ecosan latrines constructed	Not yet done	6,000
	20 schools with improved latrines 6 ideal home competitions held	Not yet done Not yet done	20 6
HIV and AIDS	Prevention and behavior change		
	Train 80 peer educators	54 trained	34
	At least 1 trend setter training session	1 session done with 57 participants	None
	Train 200 pupil peer educators	660 trained	n/a
	Train 240 adult educators	413 trained	n/a
	Train 240 community leaders	110 trained	130
Conduct 8 advocacy campaigns	?	?	
Mitigation of impact	Mitigation of impact		
	Train 120 volunteers	476 trained	N/a
	Distribute 113 HBC kits	88 distributed	23
	Train 160 individuals from PLWA support groups	352 trained	n/a
	Train 140 care givers in CBCC	295 trained	n/a
	Distribute farm inputs for community gardens to 45 groups	23 groups supported	22

	Psychological support training		
	Train 100 individuals in psychological support	60 trained	40
	Secondary school student sponsorship		
	Sponsor 60 secondary school students	113 students sponsored	n/a

Given the short period of implementation of the activities by the sectors, the assessment of effectiveness focused on outputs and not outcomes and impacts. The outcomes and impacts (actual changes happening in people’s lives as a result of the outputs) would be more appropriately assessed through the MCPP final evaluation.

Three sectors provided information on the effectiveness but the DRR information was qualitative in nature and therefore not possible to capture in the table above. But it can be said that so far DRR was the most ‘effective’ in implementing their activities (refer to the DRR evaluation report).

The HIV and AIDS data show that though the implementation period was short the sector has managed on average to implement more than planned. This may mean two things: underestimation of targets or compromise of quality of the activities implemented especially or follow up mechanisms to the trainings to ensure that knowledge gained is actually being used. This and not the former seem to be the case especially as far as the trainings are concerned. There is need therefore to pay as much attention to follow ups as the trainings themselves.

Not much can be said on Water and Sanitation as they have just started implementing their activities. Further findings for specific sectors and issues to be addressed are presented in the next section.

Issues

It is understood that the sectors developed baseline data through baseline surveys prior to full commencement of the implementation phase. HIV and AIDS, Water and Sanitation and DRR sectors were able to indicate what progress they have made against the baseline data though DRR measurements were mostly qualitative. Monitoring and evaluation officers and the other participants at the MIM workshop were not able to articulate what was planned for their sectors and MCPP as a whole, what has been achieved so far and what is still outstanding. This observation was also made in Mangochi at the strategic planning workshop during the sector and MCPP presentations. The issue coming out of this is that the benchmark or baseline data are not being consciously used as a tool for tracking progress.

At the time of the evaluation, MCPP did not have a functional monitoring and evaluation system at both the steering committee and sector levels. For example on the goal 'to ensure that 10,000 children orphaned by HIV and AIDS and those forced to live on the streets are adequately provided for in family setting, able to go back to school and protected from sexual, mental and physical abuse', MCPP was not able to say of the stated figure what has been achieved so far. This was generally the same for all the strategic objectives which are the responsibility of the steering committee.

An observation on the MCPP goals is that there is a mixture of 'consortium and sector goals'. A consortium or more specifically the steering committee is held accountable for ensuring synergy through: coordination of activities, fundraising, capacity building, advocacy on issues that members cannot do individually and linking members to opportunities outside the consortium. These roles would form the goals for MCPP. While it is appreciated that the steering committee takes the ultimate responsibility for the achievement of performance goals through performance monitoring, performance goals are normally given to the members and their sectors. This would help both the steering committee and the sectors to concentrate on what they are suited to do best.

Suggestions for improvement

- There is need to consciously use the baseline data or bench mark in tracking progress towards the intended targets. The monitoring officers must be well acquainted with the benchmarks and targets that they are coming from and what they are aiming for.
- There is a need for an effective consortium wide and sector wide monitoring and evaluation system that can enable MCPP to measure the outputs, outcome and impacts. The system should also enable MCPP to compare the results with inputs. It should also enable MCPP to continually reflect on the relevance of its activities. In addition to harmonizing the monitoring and evaluation system, it is also important to harmonize the baseline surveys or benchmark data to enable objective comparison of performance among the sectors.
- It is important to separate the 'institutional' and 'performance' goals of MCPP in the documents. The steering committee (loosely referred to as MCPP) should take responsibility for the 'institutional goals' while the sectors should take responsibility of the 'performance' goals as they are already doing.

4.1 Performance of sectors

MCPD works through five sectors. These are DRR, HIV and AIDS, Water and Sanitation, Children at Risk; and Advocacy

3.2.1 Disaster Risk Reduction (DRR)

Findings

DRR planned to reach 23 600 house holds and they have so far reached 17 800 households. It is not clear however with what have these 17 800 households been reached as most of the achievements are reported in qualitative and general terms. According the DRR mid term evaluation report the sector has managed to:

Helped the targeted people to begin to diversify the crops they grow and the livestock they keep. The people are also adopting new farming methods. All these together are beginning to contribute towards households' resilience in cases of food shortages and the food security situation of the people. Key interventions that have brought significant changes are given below:

- Introduction of improved crop varieties
- Introduction of new farming methods (sasakawa, conservation farming and forest gardens)
- Energy saving technologies like traditional stoves
- Bee keeping
- Bee keeping
- Desilting and river bank and course rehabilitation
- Community based child based care
- Micro finance and income generating activities
- Small scale irrigation
- Introduction of livestock (poultry, piggery and goats)
- Innovations in preparation of local nutritious foods

According to the report, a combination of these interventions has made important contributions to food security in the impact areas.

Issues

DRR currently is focusing on disaster preparedness and food security activities. On food security, there is a general perception that the government is doing a good job in ensuring food security for households at national level. There are also a number of NGOs working on food security in the areas where the program is being implemented. On the other hand, there is a growing increase in the incidents of disasters in the country and the region as a whole. This is to a great extent being exacerbated by global climate change. These two observations leave the DRR sector with two key strategic questions: Is this a DRR or a food security program? And where can they best invest their resources for more impact?

The program is referred to by different names. In the mid term review report it is referred to as: the Malawi Church Food Security and DRR Consortium. In the same report, it is also referred to as disaster risk reduction project. It further referred to as Community based disaster mitigation and preparedness project in the same report. The different names referring to the same project create confusion on what the project is about and what it is trying to achieve and this creates different and sometimes conflicting expectations from the different stakeholders. The consultant understands it as disaster risk reduction project and that food security is just a means towards achieving the DRR goals.

If the above understanding is right, it would make logical sense if DRR would pay more attention to issues of dealing with disaster as compared to issues of food security. This is not to say they should not work on issues of food security but to consciously focus on the goal of disaster risk reduction and to consciously address issues of food security only as they contribute to this goal. There is an observation that DRR is implementing too many activities and they may need to focus more. Part of the focusing may be to rethink what they may drop in their food security efforts so that they can release more resources for their core business: disaster risk reduction as there is currently more need in DRR as compared to food security.

Suggestions for improvement

There is need to clarify the identity and therefore focus of the DRR project. Focusing would mean thinking through what activities they need to concentrate on and what activities they need to concentrate less on for more impact.

3.2.2 Children at Risk

Findings

Detailed achievements of the Children at Risk sector have been given in the Children at Risk Sector mid term review. In summary however, Chisomo has implemented and achieved more in all the planned areas of: helping children at risk gain self-esteem, live in dignity, develop to their full potential and escape dependency, promote justice; strengthen their families, resolve the root problems that brought the children onto the streets and enabling them to build good relationships and to generate enough food/income to meet their basic.

Livingstonia Youth Department has not made as much progress because they did not have project staff and the then director had just left for further studies. The Youth Department however still managed to reach a large number of secondary school children enabling them to continue with education. However this was a one off assistance without follow through and therefore had far less impact than the holistic approach which is emerging in Chisomo.

Issues

The key issues constraining the effectiveness of the children at risk sector included:

- Inadequate funds and delayed funding – this constrained implementation as the Youth Development Department for example could not recruit an officer. The organizations could also not implement all the planned activities due to insufficient funds and time limitations as the funding came late.
- There are only two members in the sector, and Livingstonia Synod Youth Department is relatively weaker. Collectively, the two organizations are overwhelmed by the magnitude of the children at risk challenge. There are growing and increasing incidents of child abuse including issues of witch craft, sexual abuse, trafficking and physical abuse.
- There are no significant differences between the children at risk who have been attending church services and those that have not implying the perception that church services are not being effective in helping the children change or change their behaviors.
- There is inadequate coordination with other sectors especially HIV and AIDS.

Suggestions for improvement

There is need to incorporate more members into the sector as two members cannot cope with the magnitude of the problem of children at risk

There is need to work closely with the clergy with the aim of finding ways to make church messages more relevant and transformative to the children who are referred to them.

3.2.3 HIV and AIDS

Findings

The HIV and AIDS sector observed changes in reduction of teenage pregnancies, decrease in stigma towards PLWHAs and orphans, increased skills among HBC care givers including the youth care givers. They also observed changes in interdenominational cooperation in addressing HIV and AIDS. There was generally an increase in the number of OVCs accessing care facilities from the local church and communities.

Issues

The key identified issues on the HIV and AIDS sector included:

An observation that there are fewer changes in the sexual behavior among the young people being targeted brings to question the effectiveness of the interventions used. It is important to think deeply about MCPP's uniqueness as a 'spiritual network' and how it can use its 'technical and spiritual levers to bring about transformation in behavior change'. There are also challenges with inadequate involvement of the communities and their leaders in the life of the projects as a whole especially in designing. This has led to the problem of poor entry and exit strategies.

Suggestions for improvement

There is need to reflect on more effective ways to achieve sexual behavior change among the young people. There is need to involve chiefs and traditional leaders more for more ownership. It is also important to improve the entry and exit strategies in the communities the organizations are working. This would enhance the ownership and sustainability of the project benefits after the organization leaves the community.

3.2.4 Water and Sanitation

Findings

The Water and Sanitation sector had just received their funding in the previous month of the mid term evaluation and therefore not much can be commented on the sector. However it is important to mention that despite the short period they managed to sink 8 boreholes, repair 14 boreholes; they also managed to conduct TOT for all partners. The Water and Sanitation sector is concentrating on rehabilitation rather than constructing new structures in the belief that it is more cost effective to do so. 3 486 people of the planned 40 000 have access to safe water. 9000 of the planned 30,000 have been reached with hygiene promotion activities.

Issues

Key issues for the water and sanitation included:

The quality of funding was poor. It was less and late. It was also observed that in Malawi as a whole there are no water harvesting technologies and that these technologies would add a lot of value to the Water and Sanitation situation in the country.

Suggestions for improvement

Focusing on rehabilitating rather than constructing new boreholes seems to be a better option for the water and sanitation sector. The sector needs to explore more on and promote appropriate water harvesting strategies. Proposals were made that some members of the sector may take an exposure visit to places where they can learn more about water harvesting.

3.2.5 Advocacy

Findings

The EAM advocacy department coordinates all the advocacy issues of the other sectors. When a sector, identifies an advocacy issue that it cannot handle, it is supposed that issue to EAM. In the last two years, EAM has handled a number of issues that the sectors brought to them. Among these were:

DRR sector felt the government was not doing enough on irrigation. EAM managed to link the DRR sector with the ministry of Irrigation and Water development. Today they are working together.

EAM has also managed to link the DRR sector to the Ministry of Disaster Preparedness and today they are working well in partnership in Chikwawa.

In Chikwawa Illovo Sugar company wanted to grab some land from people. EAM managed to facilitate a negotiations between the people, Illovo and government. As a result Illovo did not grab the land from the people.

Issues

A number of issues were identified for the advocacy sector. First, there was inadequate capacity among the sectors to identify advocacy issues and inadequate understanding of the rights based approach which forms the foundation for effective advocacy work.

Secondly, there is a perception among some members that the advocacy sector, which was supposed to be a sector including all the churches, has been left to the EAM secretariat only. They felt there was a need to incorporate other 'development wings' involved in advocacy so that the advocacy sector is not perceived as belonging to the EAM secretariat. This, they felt, would help to scale up advocacy efforts at national level regarding issues affecting the performance of the sectors negatively.

Thirdly, there was a perception among some members that MICAHA is in competition with the MCPP advocacy sector. MICAHA has its own members and a committee. The MCPP advocacy sector which is housed by the same organization does not have these structures. Because of this, MICAHA is perceived to be independent of the MCPP advocacy sector. The issue is to think about the possibility of merging the two efforts for

more impact. It is understood that efforts to deal with this issue are underway but emphasis must be made on the need to conclude the process of resolving the issue speedily.

Lastly there was an issue about the mandate to speak out on issues of national importance. What and when can the MCPP chairperson speak out on national advocacy issues and how does this relate with EAM as the mother body of all evangelical churches and therefore having a mandate to speak on their behalf?

Suggestions for improvement

There is need to train the sectors in identifying advocacy issues and rights based approaches (RBA). There is need to increase 'active' membership into the MCPP advocacy sector beyond EAM alone. There is also need to discuss the 'merging' of MICAH and MCPP advocacy. Lastly, there is need to ensure that advocacy is bringing tangible and concrete benefits so that it can be relevant to the poor.

3.2.6 Conclusion on performance of sectors

There were a number of cross cutting issues in all the sectors. These included:

- The quality of funding – in most the sectors the funding was less than expected and it came late. This constrained effective implementation of the project activities.
- Ineffective monitoring and evaluation systems – as already stated, the benchmarks were not consciously used in tracking of progress and generally there were no effective monitoring and evaluation systems and tools. As a result, the sectors were not able to report and differentiate progress at output, outcome and impact levels.
- Most of the sectors were constrained by inadequate personnel and capacity of the available personnel to effectively implement the project activities.
- Need for more investment in program and project design.

Improving the overall performance of the sectors therefore will require improving the quality of the funding, establishing effective monitoring and evaluation systems, ensuring adequate personnel and capacity. More investment in project design through improving selection criteria of target groups and beneficiaries; and promoting ownership of projects in the hands of the communities are crucial to success.

So far, in relative terms, the DRR sector is the most successful among the sectors. A number of factors have contributed towards this success. These include:

- Having a designated officer working on DRR on full time basis in the lead agency. The other sectors do not have an officer working on a full time basis. A key lesson to the other sectors is that when they are writing their proposals, it is important to include a budget line for recruiting a full time officer.
- In addition to having a full time officer in the lead agency, Tear fund, the donor has officers providing technical support to the DRR sector. This facilitated the sourcing of resources, opportunities for trainings and exposure visits among others. The key lesson is that it works better for a sector if the area they are working are also a priority of the donor and that the donor has technical expertise to offer to the sector in addition to the money.
- DRR, as compared to the other sectors, managed to get more resources for their project implementation. The funding however, like in the other sectors, came late.
- Lastly, DRR members have a history of working together before the MCPP consortium. The lesson for the other sectors is that it takes time to develop team spirit.

It can be concluded that the first two years were for getting organized and established. The challenge for the remaining period is to begin demonstrating results at the output, outcome and impact levels both at the sectors level.

4. THE MCPP MODEL

In order to achieve its overall goal of mobilizing and empowering the potential of the Church and Christian organizations in Malawi to be more responsive to social problems and enable them to provide appropriate, adequate and sustainable assistance to the poor, MCPP has organized itself as a 'loose network'. The 'loose network or consortium' works through a steering committee and lead agencies working directly with members in their sectors.

4.1 Steering committee

Findings

MCPP has set up a functional steering committee that comprises representatives of all the members of the consortium. The steering committee meets every six months. The roles and responsibilities of the steering committee combine governance and learning functions. In governance, the steering committee is supposed to be responsible for fundraising, financial oversight, performance monitoring and institutional capacity building of MCPP as a whole. In learning, the steering committee is supposed to lead in collective reflection of the performance of the sectors with the aim of improving the practice of the sectors. Currently, in governance, in collaboration with Tear fund, the steering committee has played key roles in initiating and facilitating capacity building initiatives especially for lead agencies. They have however not done much in fundraising, financial oversight and performance monitoring. In learning, the six monthly meetings have acted as a forum for collective inter sector reflection and learning though this practice can be improved through more systematic documentation of lessons and follow through on how the lessons learnt are being consciously incorporated into practice.

Issues

In order to become more effective, there are a few issues that the steering committee needs to resolve. Among these are:

The combination of the governance and learning functions was seen to hamper the efficiency of the steering committee. Governance and learning are both demanding functions and as such each one requires adequate attention. Combining them weakens the attention each of these functions deserves.

While it is generally understood that the steering committee will be responsible for 'institutional capacity building' and the lead agencies will be responsible for 'technical capacity building of the members', this understanding was not expressed in practice. Members expected the lead agencies to be responsible for all or both institutional and technical capacity building aspects which made the lead agencies to feel overstretched in their capacity building obligations.

There are a few issues that the steering committee has not managed to deal with yet. These include the need to harmonize the MCPP advocacy sector and MICAH project. While some efforts have been made towards improving financial accountability and transparency among the members, for example through trainings of accountants, there is still more work to be done, especially in being open with each other on issues needing clarification. There were some perceptions especially from Tear fund for example that Livingstonia Synod Relief and Development are getting 'double funding' for their DRR project: from MCPP/Tear fund and Christian Aid. The consultant was able to establish that the two fundings though being for the same project in the organization are meant for different impact areas. But the fact that Tear fund raised concern and that Livingstonia Synod Relief and Development had declared this 'apparent conflict of interest' to MCPP show that there could be an issue on openness, transparency and expectations (on how such issues should be handled) between MCPP and Tear fund.

Apart from the conflict on perceived duplication of efforts between LISAP and EAM which the steering committee resolved amicably, there are no significant conflicts in MCPP. Potential areas of conflict however are around resources, facts/information, methods to follow in working; policies and procedures for decision making; and on values. There is an observation that there is no clear criteria for allocations of resources among members with sector heads taking the lions share by default. Absence of a full fledged secretariat makes effective and timely communication difficult. Ineffective communication makes separation of facts from perceptions difficult. While the approach is generally agreed, there are different levels and understandings of developmental practice among the members due to differences in capacity levels. While some policies, systems and procedures have been developed, there is still a feeling that more needs to be done especially on issues of financial transparency and prudence. There is a general assumption that, 'since we are all Christians then we have the same values'. This is often more of an assumption than a fact. It was observed for example that the most of the lead agencies could not articulate the values of MCPP as stated in the strategy and code of conduct documents. These are potential conflict areas that the steering committee need to proactively address before they blossom into actual conflicts.

Suggestions for improvement

In order to improve efficiency, there is need to separate the governance and the learning functions of the steering committee. The six monthly meetings can remain as 'the learning forum' with all the current members participating. Their purpose would be to reflect in depth on the performance of the sectors and MCPP as a whole, document the learnings and ensure that the learnings are being incorporated into practice for improved performance. There is a need however, to have a governance structure that plays the roles of fundraising, financial oversight, ensuring credibility of MCPP, performance monitoring and institutional capacity development. This could comprise 5 or 7 people and they could meet more frequently, most likely on quarterly basis. To ensure success the group must be balanced and the members must be committed, available, independent;

and they should be able to bring some valuable skills, competences, experiences and expertise.

There is need to reinforce the demarcation of the capacity building roles and obligations of the steering committee and the lead agencies so that each can concentrate on what they can do best. The steering committee should concentrate on institutional capacity building. The lead agencies should concentrate on the technical capacity building of the members.

The steering committee needs to adopt a culture of openness and ability to 'deal with uncomfortable issues rather than smothering them'. They must be able to deal with the potentially conflictual issues like the issue of MCPP advocacy and MICAH, the perceptions on Livingstonia Synod Relief and Development DRR funding arrangements. Much more importantly, the steering committee must be able to confront non – performing members. It was observed that members who were not meeting obligations were left 'scott free for the sake of peace'. But this is a very expensive type of peace for MCPP both in the short and the long term. There is also a strong need to strengthen the financial management system in order to preserve the integrity of MCPP in particular and the church in general.

A way to pre-empt or proactively deal with the potential conflicts in the areas of resources, facts/information, methods to follow in working; policies, systems and procedures; and values is to make the code of conduct a living document. The code of conduct must be regularly reflected upon especially in the six monthly reflection and learning sessions. Gaps identified in the general adherence to the code of conduct can be used as a basis for joint team building and values clarification sessions. The code of conduct can also be made a living document if it is being used consciously to regulate member behaviors.

The current lean content of the code of conduct is good. There is however need to expound on section 3 subsection on non-discrimination. There is need to clarify what non-discrimination means in the case of MCPP. The code of conduct must also specify the criteria for membership. It is important to agree on minimum quality and capacity of members to ensure that they will add value to MCPP rather than being dependent on MCPP and its resources. MCPP therefore must have a membership development strategy that involves recruiting, inducting and training new and existing members.

4.2 Secretariat

Findings

Currently, the role of secretariat is being played by Tear fund. Tear fund has been responsible for fundraising, managing the communication of MCPP, capacity building, networking and creating linkages. Tear fund has also been responsible for managing logistics for steering committee, sectors and members for activities like meetings. Tear

fund has also been able to play a key role in information and knowledge management for MCPP to ensure institutional memory, this function could be done better.

Tear fund has managed to raise 2.5 million pounds of the MCPP budgeted 4.2 million pounds. Tear fund has linked members to training opportunities with EU, Ministry of agriculture, Ministry of Irrigation and Water Supply and Red Cross in South Africa. They have organized trainings in leadership for executive directors; they have also organized a strategic financial management training for finance officers and managers, training in Sage accounting package. Tear fund has given desk computers to four lead agencies. In addition, Tear fund has facilitated a systems review of the four lead agencies focusing on the structure, staffing; policies, systems and procedures. The assessments have helped the lead agencies to address the identified gaps. EAM for example now has a 'travel control sheet' as a result of their audit results. They also now conduct regular management meetings as a result of the training in leadership. In short most of the supported members are implementing what they learn through the various capacity building efforts.

Some members however, felt that without MCPP managing its own secretariat (rather than Tear fund managing it) that would drive the day to day activities, there was little to show that MCPP is owned by the members. Minus an 'independent' secretariat, currently, the life of MCPP greatly hinges on the energy of the chairperson. This is not sustainable. A steering committee playing the governance role and the secretariat playing the coordination role would contribute greatly to the effectiveness and sustainability of MCPP.

Issues

While Tear fund playing the role of secretariat may have sufficed in the past, as the activities of the consortium are growing, there is need for a more effective 'coordination role' that a more effective secretariat can provide. In order to achieve this there are a few issues that need to be addressed:

Having the secretariat in Tear fund may be perceived to undermine ownership. Having the secretariat managed by MCPP itself can dispel this perception. Secondly, the person playing the coordination role in Tear fund did not have a 'development or networking' background. But the demands of the coordination role requires that the person playing this role should be able to understand both at a strategic and operational level the functioning of the consortium, especially its developmental and networking functions'. This can only happen if the person has the relevant background and experience.

The foregoing two issues have implications on where and how the secretariat should be established. Ownership, efficiency and effectiveness considerations need to guide this decision. Since Tear fund's secretariat role did not have a full time person, members expressed that they experienced delays and inefficiencies in communication and the coordination role generally. They felt that an independent secretariat with a full time person would be more efficient and effective.

Lastly, there was a general observation that MCPP fared better in intra sector rather than inter sector coordination. Effective coordination, especially at inter sector level is difficult to achieve without the presence of a strong secretariat. This is part of the justification for a secretariat that is housed outside Tear fund.

Suggestions for improvement

- MCPP needs to have a more effective secretariat that is not managed by Tear fund. This will enhance the ownership of MCPP among its members.
- In order to provide more value to the steering committee and to the members, the secretariat needs to be managed by a more qualified and experienced coordinator. This will ensure more efficiency and effectiveness of the secretariat and MCPP as a whole. Key qualities required by the coordinator include: being a relational networker, who has the humility to actively listen to others, build consensus, resolve conflict and facilitate joint action. The person must be a good manager and planner. In addition he or she must be an environmental analyst and a persuasive and activist advocate. It is important to a budget that would enable to attract high quality staff for this position.
- The member that will house the secretariat must have functional and effective supporting policies, systems and procedures. Issues of financial accountability and transparency are critical to successful housing of secretariats of networks.
- It must be emphasized that the key function of the secretariat is to coordinate the functions of MCPP through: fundraising, capacity building, advocacy; information and knowledge management for institutional memory; and facilitating the establishment of strategic linkages for members. A secretariat that is in conjunction with the steering committee and able to raise funds for MCPP would be a key indicator of the ownership of MCPP among the members. One of the key challenges in MCPP is ineffective and delayed communication among sectors and between the sectors and the steering committee. A more effective secretariat would add more value to this.
- Currently, coordination, especially inter-sector coordination is weak. There is also no clear strategy on collaboration with stakeholders outside MCPP. The secretariat will need to take a leading role in making improvements in these areas.

4.3 Lead agencies and their members

Findings

The key role of the lead agencies is to coordinate the activities of their sectors for the members. They are also mandated to provide capacity building support to the members. The mid term review team observed that those lead agencies that had a full time

coordinator performed better than those that did not. In this case DRR performed better than the rest both in program performance and in capacity building efforts.

Members valued the sharing of learning and expertise among members of different experiences and expertise, access to capacity building opportunities and resources and greater interaction/networking among the sector members and beyond.

Issues

Three key issues constrained the effective functioning of the sectors: most of the sectors did not have a full time person in the lead agency playing a coordinating role on the sector activities.

Secondly, as stated elsewhere, in playing their capacity building role, the members expected the lead agencies to provide both the technical and institutional capacity building aspects. This overstretched the capacities of the lead agencies as in some cases, they too did not have the capacity to provide, especially, the institutional capacity building support they were being asked to provide by the members. In addition it was generally felt that there is need for a more systematic approach to capacity building. There is need for a comprehensive capacity building needs at the steering committee, secretariat, lead agencies and members levels and a comprehensive and systematic plan on how the identified issues will be addressed. While the capacity building component has generally worked well, it has generally been adhoc in nature and would benefit from a more systematic approach.

Lastly, some members felt sometimes there was too much time spent in meetings reducing time for implementing planned activities. Progress of group initiatives was also hampered by other partners who are slow in submitting required information or meeting deadlines. Having an effective secretariat that facilitates these processes should improve efficiency and reduce the need for too frequent meetings.

Suggestions for improvement

All the sectors need a full time coordinator in the lead agencies. When writing their proposals, the sectors need to include the costs of the full time coordinator.

There is also a need to more consciously demarcate the institutional and technical capacity building roles and responsibilities of the steering committee/secretariat and those of the lead agencies. Lead agencies can not give what they do not have. It is important therefore to do more comprehensive capacity building for them (both technical and institutional) before they start helping the members so that they help them more effectively.

4.4 Summary

All in all generally the MCPP model is working well. The members were able to state the following benefits as a result of belonging to MCPP:

Members have been able to raise their profiles especially the lead agencies. This has increased their recognition among MCPP members, to Tear fund and other stakeholders.

Members have participated in various capacity building initiatives that are translating to increased and improved staff skills and competencies and therefore their practices as well. The skills and competences are being used in their respective organizations as well as in MCPP activities. Accounts personnel were trained for new skills and competences. They were also trained in Sage accounting packages which most of them are now using. Lead agencies were provided with desk top computers.

Greater interaction with other sector and MCPP members and beyond. This is done through the meetings, exposure visits, placements and other activities. This has led to greater understanding of the national context in which the individual organizations are operating. Some members expressed that this has potential to extend and strengthen individual organizations visions, activities and potentially impact.

Members have managed to access funding that otherwise could not come to individual organizations; the DfiD funding is an example. Lastly, most of the members appreciated the fellowship and social connections with others, especially the prayer meetings with like minded Christians. One participant called MCPP a 'prayer network'. Sitting through some of MCPP's sessions, the consultant feels the spiritual dimension is truly one of MCPP's strong points of uniqueness and that it needs more conscious appreciation among the members.

A detailed description and analysis of MCPP's added value is given in appendix 3. In summary MCPP's added value has been in greater sharing and collaboration, greater advocacy, better targeted capacity building and greater institutional funding. There is still more work to ensure MCPP's added value in terms of widening the variety of causes of poverty to be addressed, increasing opportunities to expand ministries and ensure reduction of transaction costs.

5. LESSONS LEARNT AND EMERGING BEST OR PROMISING PRACTICES

This chapter presents some of the identified lessons learnt so far and the emerging best practices that MCPP must build on. It starts with the lessons and then presents the best or promising practices.

5.1 Lessons learnt

Key lessons emerging from observations on the performance of the sectors include:

Sectors

- Without baseline data or a benchmark study and an effective monitoring and evaluation system, it is not possible to objectively track progress in implementation of program and project activities.
- Failure to differentiate institutional and performance goals makes allocation and differentiation of responsibilities to the steering committee and the sectors difficult. The steering committee would work better if concentrates on the institutional goals while the sectors concentrated on the performance goals.
- Having full time officers playing a coordinating role is crucial for the success of the sectors. The sectors that have full time coordinators outperform those that do not.
- Intensity is more effective than being extensive. The sectors were not able to make much progress because most of them ‘spread themselves too thin’ Sectors that concentrate their resources of money, personnel and ‘energy’ are likely to be more successful. CSO networks cannot do everything. They need to focus and concentrate.
- The quality of funding – the adequacy and timeliness of the funding affect the success of the sectors and MCPP as a whole. Those sectors that had relatively higher quality funding outperformed those that did not have.
- Holding other things constant, those sectors with more members are likely to be more effective. DRR and HIV and AIDS sectors had more members and were relatively more effective than advocacy and children at risk which had fewer members.
- Poor project designing constraints the effectiveness of the projects. Involvement of the communities, chiefs and traditional leaders; thinking through entry and exit strategies in the communities were often ignored in the project design stage and these negatively affected the performance of the projects.
- When a member joins MCPP, it is important that all its existing programs and projects related to what MCPP is doing be disclosed and discussed openly and transparently to avoid the situation for example in which MICAH is seen to be ‘a conflict of interest’ with the MCPP advocacy program.

The MCPP Model

- It is important to separate the governance and the learning functions of the steering committee right at the beginning. When the two functions are combined, both suffer as they do not get the level of attention that they deserve.
- The capacity building roles and responsibilities of the steering committee/secretariat and the lead agencies must be clarified and mechanisms must be put in place to ensure that the different roles are being adhered to. If this is not done members will expect the lead agencies to provide what the steering committee/secretariat is supposed to provide stretching the capacity of the lead agencies in the process.
- In Christian or religious circles, at least in Malawi, there is a general lack of the culture of accountability, especially on performance and management of resources. This is exacerbated by a culture of not confronting each other. This shadow undermines most Christian development initiatives at least in Malawi.
- A secretariat outside Tear fund is believed to be more appropriate as this could reduce dependence and enhance ownership of the program in the hands of the owners.

5.2 Best or promising practices

Best practices or promising practices are the things are working particularly well or have the potential to work particularly well and the MCPP would be proud to scale up their impact by sharing these with a wider audience. In other words best or promising practices are what others might be interested to learn from MCPP. The best practices or promising practices for the specific sectors are detailed in the individual sector mid term review reports. This section will discuss the best practices or promising practices in regard to the MCPP model. Some of the identified best or learning practices so far are:

- The consortium model has demonstrated that churches can work together. There is a general feeling that churches are in competition with each other but the consortium model is dispelling this belief especially as far as development work is concerned.
- Joint capacity building activities have proved to be more cost effective and richer through knowledge and experience exchange of the participants. Cross fertilization of ideas and experiences through joint trainings, exposure visits, peer leaning, sharing experiences and challenges; reflection and learning sessions has added a lot of value to the members.
- Peer assists and placements. Members of a sector periodically visit a fellow members' project site, make observations on strengths and challenges of the project and at the end give feedback to the particular member on how to build on the strengths and address the

challenges. In placement, a staff member may be housed in another member's office to learn from more experienced colleagues. This learning by doing has proved to be very effective.

- The arrangement of grouping members by sector with lead agencies coordinating activities and capacity building initiatives is potentially a very effective way of improving sector wide performance.
- Funding networks (MCPD and the sectors) rather than individual organizations seems to be increasingly the favored mode of funding among donors. The arrangement provided leverage for accessing funds from big donors like DfID.
- Sector and steering committee meetings offer great times for spiritual reflection on MCPD's and individual organization's work.

5.3 Conclusions on lessons and best/promising practices

MCPD is a highly innovative initiative with a lot potential for generating learning and best practices. A key challenge observed was lack of a culture of documentation of lessons learnt and the best practices. There was also lack of mechanisms to consciously track how the learnings are being incorporated into practice and therefore improving the performance of the members and MCPD as a whole. The members interviewed were also not clear on what to do or how to use the emerging best practices to most advantage in pursuing the goals of MCPD. All in all, MCPD needs to strengthen its reflection and learning systems. This will enable them to benefit more from the lessons learnt and the emerging best practices.

6. CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This chapter presents the general conclusions of the study, recommendation on the way forward and some thoughts on the MCPP model's congruence with Tear fund new corporate strategy.

6.1 Conclusion

The mid term review concludes that the MCPP model is highly relevant. It is potentially sustainable especially if there is more ownership by the members. The first half of the program was mostly for getting organized and established. A few lessons have been learnt on this. The challenge for MCPP in the last half of the program period is to begin to demonstrate more tangible and concrete results at the output, outcome and impact levels.

6.2 Recommendations

The following recommendations would help MCPP to shift from the organizing or establishing phase to the performing phase:

Sectors

a. It is important for the sectors to start with a clear baseline or bench mark data to act as a basis for tracking progress. The baseline data must be *consciously* used as a basis for tracking the progress. In addition to the baseline data, it is also important to put in place an effective monitoring and evaluation system that can enable the sectors and the MCPP as a whole to track progress at the output, outcome and impact levels. In consolidating the work that the sectors have already done and their effort to harmonize the monitoring and evaluation systems of the different sectors into one MCPP monitoring and evaluation system, the sectors would greatly benefit if they went through training in results based management (RBM). Such training would help MCPP to clearly articulate and consolidate its inputs and activities. It would also help them to articulate realistic expected results at the output, outcome and impact levels. Most importantly the RBM training would enable MCPP to develop a performance monitoring framework that clearly spells out the role and responsibilities of the different levels (steering committee, secretariat, lead agencies and members) in coordinated monitoring and evaluation of MCPP and its activities. The performance monitoring framework is a critical component in finalizing the strategy document that is being reviewed because it is key to ensuring that the strategy plan will actually be implemented.

b. It is important to be realistic about the indicators and targets, some of the targets that the indicators set out for themselves were too ambitious. It is

important to balance the capacity of MCPP and the sectors and their members with what they can realistically achieve with the available and expected resources of time, money and personnel.

- c. The sectors generally need to rethink their relevance and therefore what they should focus their activities on. Government has made strides in improving the food security at national level. The DRR sector needs to rethink how in can add more value in the changed context. It is the consultant's considered judgment that in their food security efforts, they may add more value by concentrating more on irrigation as there is more progress in rain fed agriculture. They can also add more value by concentrating more on disaster preparedness with food security as a means towards disaster risk reduction rather than an end in itself. Water and sanitation needs to invest more in water harvesting. HIV and AIDS, children at risk and advocacy sectors, whose interventions are primarily aimed at behavior change, need to think through how their activities can bring about the required behavior changes more effectively. There is need for a deep reflection on how MCPP, a Christian consortium, can use its spiritual and technical foundations as levers for genuine transformation among the people it is working with.
- d. There is need to improve the design of the sector projects. There is need to improve on community involvement, selection criteria of the target groups and beneficiaries; and entry and exit strategies. In addition, there is need to balance capacity with intended impacts. There is need to improve capacity in terms of increasing numbers of members in the sectors, especially those with only one or two members. There is also need to do more work in improving the skills and competencies of the members and sectors so that they can match the magnitude of their intended and its impact. Since it has been observed that those sectors that had a full time coordinator outperformed those that did not, it is strongly advised that all the sectors should include a budget line for a full time coordinator in their next proposals.

MCPP model

Steering committee

- e. There is need to separate the learning and governance functions of the steering committee. The six monthly meetings can remain as its happening now. The meetings' main purpose would be to act as reflection and learning sessions with the aim of improving the practice of MCPP as a whole. But there is need to have a steering committee that plays the governance function. The governance function involves: performance monitoring of the whole consortium, financial oversight, fundraising and capacity building for improved performance. This steering committee can

meet more frequently, e.g. on a quarterly basis and should have less members may be 5 or 7.

- f. The revised strategy that will be done after this review will need to be budgeted again with the aim of agreeing on how much money will be required for its full implementation. If the agreed figure goes above what Tear fund can commit to support, it will be important to diversify the funding base for MCPP to fill the gap. But, even though Tear fund may be able to support MCPP fully, in the remaining period, it will still be important for MCPP, especially the steering committee to start thinking seriously about the long term financial sustainability of MCPP. Having more than one donor reduces the risk of failure in the event that the one donor has to pull out for one reason or another. There is need therefore to begin to market the MCPP model to other donors. There is also need for the individual members to consciously align their strategic plans to the MCPP strategic plan. Without this conscious link, as it is now, ownership of the MCPP strategic plan and MCPP as a whole will remain a challenge. Individual members may not find the time, money, personnel and other resources to commit to MCPP as these are outside their strategic plans and therefore outside their priorities. The least the members can do is to have a 'networking' budget (supported by their other donors) line flowing from their strategic plans that they can use for MCPP activities like meeting cost.
- g. As part of its financial oversight function, the proposed steering committee needs to take responsibility of the overall budget coming from the strategic plan budgeting process. This is the collective budget of all the sectors and operations functions of the steering committee and the secretariat. This would strengthen the credibility, transparency and accountability in MCPP's financial management. It was surprising to note that some sectors had already had their proposals approved by donors without the full knowledge of the steering committee. The steering committee would also be responsible for overseeing the allocation criteria of the money within the sectors.

Secretariat

- h. The development and growth that MCPP has undergone in the last two years are indicating that MCPP has reached a stage they need to move away from total informality to some degree of formality while at the same time being careful not to 'institutionalize' in a way that would stifle the current flexibility that all the members value so much. They need to be careful not to form a 'separate or independent organization' as is a

common experience when consortiums and networks try to institutionalize. This leads to the need for a ‘hub’ that coordinates day to day activities. This needs to take the form of a very lean secretariat that is responsible for coordinating the activities of the sectors and members, and implementing decisions made by the steering committee. Specifically the secretariat would be responsible for:

- j. Organizing and coordinating member, sector and inter-sector activities
- k. Facilitating and coordinating sector and member capacity building activities specifically through capacity assessments, formulation of capacity building plans and overseeing the implementation of the plans
- l. Facilitating nationwide advocacy efforts by MCPP
- m. Networking and connecting sectors and members to relevant opportunities and contacts to add value to their work
- n. Being custodians of MCPP’s documents and information. Without this function, it will be difficult for MCPP to build its organizational memory as steering committee members and key personnel inevitably move in time. A key function for the secretariat therefore is information and knowledge management for MCPP
- o. While the flexibility and autonomy of the sectors in terms of seeking their own funding is highly appreciated, the secretariat will need to play a key role in ‘coordinating’ sector fundraising activities. The secretariat needs to be fully aware about the fundraising activities of the sectors all the time so that they can report with accuracy to the steering committee that will be playing a governance role. This will strengthen transparency and financial oversight role of the steering committee.

Lead agencies and sector members

- a. The arrangement of members in a sector being mentored and coached by lead agencies is working well. But there is a need to fine tune the arrangement and expectations. Currently, the lead agencies are responsible for both technical and organizational capacity building of the members. It is more realistic to give the lead agencies the mandate to be responsible for the technical aspects of capacity building. The lead agencies, as many of them confessed, may not have the capacity to facilitate the organizational capacity building aspects of the members as a whole. The secretariat can take responsibility of the organizational capacity building aspects while leaving the technical aspects to the lead agencies. This would ‘free up’ the time and resources of the lead agencies to concentrate in their capacity building efforts on what they know best: the technical

aspects. It is to have a shared understanding among all the members of the consortium of what an ideal MCPP would look like in terms of organization, performance and relationships and where the members are now in relation to that ideal and then what capacity gaps need to be filled especially at members' level. This would lead to a more comprehensive and systematic capacity building plans and efforts by the steering committee and the secretariat. Effective coordination within sectors, among the sectors and collaboration in general is only possible when the individual members are well capacitated.

6.3 Implications of the mid term review findings on Tear fund re-launch in Malawi

The overall corporate strategy of Tear fund of mobilizing 100, 000 local churches for integral missions is consistent with MCPP whose aim is to see the local church mobilized for spiritual and social transformation in Malawi. In addition, Tear fund has long established relationships with the local churches in Malawi and MCPP is building on this background as it seeks to scale up the impact of the development activities of the individual churches by creating synergy through different churches working together.

It was however observed that the Tear fund corporate strategy does not have Water and Sanitation; and Children at Risk as their priorities. While Tear fund expressed that while these may not appear as priorities in the strategy, they are still areas that Tear fund is interested to support, MCPP needs to pay close attention to how these sectors may be supported by Tear fund or through other donors.

If the lessons learnt and recommendations suggested can be implemented, the consultant strongly recommends MCPP as a viable model that can be replicated elsewhere. Critical factors for replication in summary include:

- Churches willing to work together with a common concern
- A coordinating structure that can bring them together like EAM
- Need to consciously manage the transition of Tear fund working directly with individual organizations directly to working with them through the consortium model.
- Need to listen more to the people to be served – the communities to ensure relevance, ownership and sustainability.

Appendix 1: Checklist for semi-structured interviews

1. Achievement Against Strategy Objectives

What was planned? What was achieved? What is outstanding? What were the helping and hindering factors? Recommendations

2. Progress of the different Sectors

What was planned? What was achieved? What is outstanding? What are the helping and hindering factors? Recommendations?

3. Challenges and Possible Solutions at MCPP and Sector Level

Summarize from above

4. **Lessons** from the MCPP and Sector Consortiums, lead agencies and members
How is the model (Steering committee, secretariat, sector lead agencies and members) working? What is working well? What is not working well? What lessons or insights can we draw from the two preceding questions?

5. Identifying and documenting **best/promising practice** at MCPP sector level

What would you say are some of the best or promising practices that MCPP can be proud of?

6. Recommendations

p. Redefining/ realigning the future of MCPP

What does MCPP need to work on in terms of its: program activities, organizational set up? And Coordination and collaboration?

q. Linking and informing the Tear fund re-launch in Malawi

Any observed congruencies and divergences between the Current MCPP strategy and the new Tear Fund Strategy? What are they?

Annex 2: List of stakeholders interviewed

NAME	POSITION	ORGANIZATION
David Kamchacha	Deputy General Secretary	EAM
Bryer Mlowoka	Head of Programmes	EAM
Mr Maseya	AEDC	Mchinji – Msitu EPA
Ken Mkwinda	P/Manager- Chisomo	BT and Limbe
Grace Tsakama	P/Manager – Chisomo	Lilongwe
Aaron Luwani	M& E Officer – Chisomo	Blantyre
Wales Singini	M&E Officer – SOLDEV	Livingstonia Synod
Mabvuto Lupwayi	P/M – Water & Sanitation	Livingstonia Synod
Lawrence Tembo	Accountant	Livingstonia Synod
Richard Sulu	D/Manager Food Security	Livingstonia Synod
Donald Manda	Deputy Director	Livingstonia Synod
Paul Jones	Country Representative	Emmanuel International
Victor Mughogho	Director	EAGLES
Rev Anderson Mataka		AGREDS
Rev Nelson Mkandawire		Chisomo
Chintheche CCAP Congregation		Nkhata-Bay
Bandawe CCAP Congregation		Nkhata-Bay
Kawiya CCAP Congregation		Nkhata-Bay
Andy Gaston	Executive Director	LISAP
Rev. Francis Mkandawire	General Secretary	EAM
Vincent Moyo		Tear Fund

Annex 3: Assessment of MCPP added value

Sources of added value	Indicators	Score	Evidence
Wider variety of causes of poverty	Additional causes being addressed now as a result of MCPP (e.g. HIV, food insecurity, limited education, children in difficulty, inadequate access to basic services, poor economic performance, poor governance)	3+	CCAP youth department has broadened its support base from just HIV/AIDS to also focusing the general support to OVCs. AGREDS now addressing Water & Sanitation in addition to Food
Greater sharing & collaboration	Examples of sharing & collaboration as a result of MCPP: Within consortia Across MCPP (e.g. HIV and AIDS policies, child protection policies and standards, disaster response methodologies, advocacy & campaign initiatives, training in working with local church)	5	Sharing is happening at sector meetings; during field visits and for joint SWOT analysis; and bi-laterally too now that relationships have developed. Partners have learnt a lot from the collaboration particularly those new organisations that started in 2002 which have learnt a lot from older partners like EI and CCAP Development and LISAP. Opportunities for collaboration across sectors is yet to be fully explored
Greater advocacy	Advocacy activity as a result of MCPP: Research & policy-making Advocating directly Building capacity of local communities in advocacy	4	It has been recognized that there is a big opportunity for the consortium to speak as one voice. Progress has been made at EAM which now sits on the government committee developing social protection policy promoting the importance of DRR. Other issues have been identified and now need to be taken forward
More opportunities to expand ministries	More opportunities to tell people about the gospel Changes in partner policy and practice in working with the local church	3	Very little evidence cited
Better targeted capacity building	Examples of targeted capacity building: Institutional capacities (fin. mgt., implementation mgt. governance / OD) Technical capacities	4	A capacity building strategy was developed based on an assessment. Common finance systems have been installed and training given. DRR training was conducted in India for members of the Food Security consortium
Greater institutional funding	Quantity of institutional funds secured that would not have been available if partners not working in	5	Significant funds have been secured from DFID (£1.4m) and the Executive (£250,000). Some of the larger agencies believe they

	consortia		been able to get a share of this funding if they had gone alone, but the smaller agencies would not have received institutional funding if not been part of a consortium.
Reduced transaction costs	Changes in administration cost and time attributable to MCPP / consortia	3	Reduced transaction costs for Tearfund (only have to process funding consortia instead of 17 payments since some of the partners are in more than 1 sector) Increased transaction costs for partners, due to Steering Group and meetings and the work involved in preparing joint proposals, reporting funding

Key: 1 = significantly worse; 2= worse; 3 = no change; 4 = added value; 5 = significant added value