

Tilitonse Stories of Change



YOUTH IN BALAKA GRANTED TWO PERMANENT SEATS IN ADC & VDCS



RADIO EMPOWERS COMMUNITY TO VOICE THEIR CONCERNS, HALTED BRIDGE CONSTRUCTION RESUMES



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to over

6000000

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Fuko

Tilitonse.



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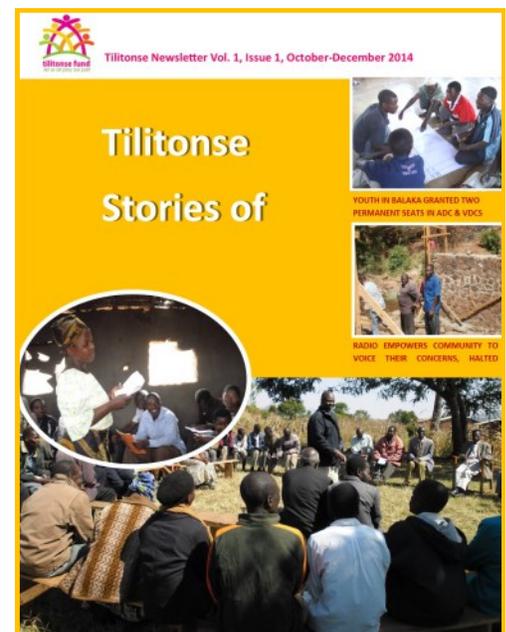
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From the Editor's Desk



I have the honor of presenting to you the first edition of the Tilitonse quarterly Newsletter. This newsletter is available on our website (www.tilitonsefund.org), which has been launched again with new features and design. The newly-revamped website now offers a wide range of information to assist you with the grant application process and also highlights the contribution our partners are making towards the promotion of inclusive, accountable and responsive governance in Malawi through our funded projects.

As a multi-donor pooled grant making facility, Tilitonse supports more inclusive, accountable, and responsive governance in Malawi through grants to projects led by civil society and other local organisations.

In this day and age, when information is everything, this newsletter is being launched to fill a long-felt void of a platform which brings together civil society organizations, community based organizations, government agencies, media organizations and other stakeholders to share ideas, best practices and to showcase their contribution towards the promotion of good governance in Malawi.

We believe that through this newsletter, the message on good governance will reach far and wide. We are hopeful therefore that through Tilitonse's contribution, the capacity of civil society organizations to empower citizens especially poor and excluded groups to claim their rights will increase especially through the provision of information on rights, entitlements and responsibilities. This coupled with the monitoring of policy and budget commitments, service delivery and public resource management and the engagement of these organizations in influencing policies, strategies and resource allocations at local and national levels will assist in promoting good governance in Malawi.

This newsletter will be published every three months. Each issue of the newsletter will be packed with information to assist you to participate and learning best practices in the promotion of inclusive, accountable and responsive governance in Malawi.

We welcome your comments, ideas and suggestions. This feedback will go along way in helping us to improve on the delivery of information for the promotion of good governance in Malawi. Please feel free to write us on info@tilitonsemw.org

We wish you a happy reading!

Alice Kaunda

Editor.

A Message from the Programme Manager

Welcome to the first edition of the Tilitonse Newsletter. This issue aims at introducing Tilitonse as a programme, our Theory of Change, our grant making approaches and a snapshot of some of the achievements that have been made in the area of governance since the programme started its operations three years ago.

Tilitonse is working with civil society and other local organizations to promote inclusive, accountable and responsive governance in Malawi through funding diverse projects ranging from education, HIV/AIDS, land rights, economic and democratic governance, local governance, and mining among others. The programme has been positioned to build the capacity of the organizations to ensure that they effectively implement their different programmes and projects in order to improve the governance situation in Malawi. We believe that capacity development is a means to an end hence our shift to the mentoring approach as a point of departure.

Our Theory of Change states that increased levels of citizen voice, action, and interaction with government, private sector and like-minded interest groups, can create increased responsiveness in duty bearers and power holders, leading to greater social inclusion, increased accountability and improved delivery of basic services. Therefore, we strive to provide a platform for improving inclusivity, accountability and responsiveness in governance in Malawi through strengthened citizen voice.

The programme has so far committed over £ 8.2 million (MK 6.4 Billion at the current exchange rate) to 73 organizations of which £ 7.4 million (MK 5.5 Billion at the current exchange rate) has been paid out under its Accelerated Grant, First and Second General Open and Thematic calls over a period of three years. Seven projects under the Accelerated grants window have since phased out. We have recently approved projects under the community based organization window in consideration of the role these play in bringing change at the local level to the magnitude of £ 381,538 (MK 283 Million at the current exchange rate).

I therefore invite you to join us and be part of us as we share some of the stories of change that are impacting the lives of the majority of Malawians at the local level. We hope that you will enjoy this latest update on the progress being made by the Fund in collaboration with our respective grantee partners in the area of good governance.

Allan Chintedza

Tilitonse Programme Manager



Tilitonse: a grant making facility with a difference



Tilitonse is a multi-donor pooled grant making facility supporting more inclusive, accountable, and responsive governance in Malawi. The facility provides grants to civil society and community based organizations that implement governance projects in Malawi. Our support is in-line with the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy and the programme works in partnership with the Malawi Government's Democratic Governance Sector Working

Group. Total funding available for grants under Tilitonse is £12.4 million over a period of four years.

Key contributors to the Fund include the UK's Department for International Development (DFID), Irish Aid and the Royal Norwegian Embassy.



The Programme Outputs :

- * Capacity of Civil Society Organizations to enable citizens, particularly poor and excluded groups to claim their rights increased;
- * Access to information on rights, entitlements and responsibilities increased particularly of poor and excluded citizens;
- * Monitoring by Malawian organizations of policy and budget commitments, service delivery and public resource management is strengthened;
- * The engagement of Malawian organizations in influencing policies, strategies and resource allocations at local and national levels improved.

The Programme Approach:

Our approach is informed by Political Economy Analysis (PEA) and Theory of Change. Our Theory of Change seeks to present an understanding of how the low levels of Inclusiveness, Responsiveness and Accountability in Malawi may be improved, and specifically how citizen voice may be enhanced in such a way as to contribute to such a result.

Tilitonse believes that increased levels of citizen action, citizen-state interaction and participatory governance, can create increased responsiveness in duty bearers and power holders in and outside government that will lead to improved delivery of basic services, greater social inclusion, and increased accountability.

Tilitonse encourages projects that are informed by Political Economy Analysis (PEA) to clearly identify the root cause of the problems identified. The approach that Tilitonse is advocating is one of collaboration, not confrontation. PEA suggests that bringing groups in society together to advocate for (and demonstrate) change, including government, the private sector, faith groups, the media and others, is the most effective way to deliver the programme's goals ■

Female Sex Workers and the Police Join Hands to Promote Human Rights



Top & Middle: Actors portraying different ills sex workers experience in the hands of the police during an open day

Below: Actors interacting with members of the general public during an advocacy rally

Although commercial sex work is considered illegal in Malawi, some women are indulging in the trade as acute poverty has forced them to engage in this unconventional method of survival. Female sex workers don't necessarily choose to enter the industry but many do this in order to support their families and make a better life for themselves. However, due to the societal stigma that comes with the trade, female sex workers are often denied crucial information on their rights hence, they do not report abuse or open up about their identity when they come to the Police, which further exposes them to the risk of gender based violence and contracting HIV. The women also suffer from complex challenges ranging from gender based violence, contracting HIV and other sexually transmitted diseases, rape and even death. Currently, female sex workers (FSW) have the highest prevalence of HIV in Malawi at 70.7%, compared to the national average of 12%.

On daily basis, female sex workers across the country find themselves on the wrong side of the law. The police in their bid to tighten security implement the law of rogue and vagabond through carrying out night raids and arresting anyone found loitering in entertainment joints and other public places. Female sex workers constitute the majority of those arrested. Due to the knowledge gap among both sex workers and the police officers about the legal framework on sex work in Malawi, some law enforcers take advantage of the situation to molest the sex workers who in turn exchange sex, money and other items for their freedom.

"It is quiet unfortunate that the people who are supposed to be protecting us are the ones in the forefront abusing our human rights," said Jane, one of the commercial sex workers in Lilongwe. "Imagine we struggle in the hands of our clients, who beat us, steal our money and in other cases even kill us. We expect the police as the respecter of human rights to be on our side but on the contrary we are treated like animals. All men are the same," lamented Jane.

In trying to deal with the plight of female sex workers in Malawi, Theatre for a Change engaged the Malawi Police Service to implement a Tilitonse-funded project on 'Promoting and upholding the rights of female sex workers to safely report abuse and advocate for their rights', targeting female sex workers and the Police officers. The project has raised awareness on the rights and responsibilities of female sex workers to the police, the general public and the sex workers themselves which has resulted into change of attitude towards this marginalized group. Jointly, the police and the sex workers use interactive radio and theatre performances to share true life experiences of the sex workers in the hands of the police. This coupled with the establishment of the Sex Workers Network has created a safe environment for sex workers to comfortably report different human rights abuses to the authorities.

'I now feel confident to conduct my business without being afraid because there is a good working relationship with the police. You know, the police are our friends! I am so glad that they have stopped harassing us. Thanks to the project, I can confidently cite Section 147 of the Constitution which shows that I have not committed any offense by standing on the road doing my business during instances where I have been arrested during the rogue and vagabond sweeping exercise.' explained Aness. Section 147 of the Penal Code stipulates that any person who keeps a house, room, set of rooms or place of any kind whatsoever for purposes of prostitution shall be guilty of misdemeanor.

The police have also changed their attitude towards the sex workers as they are now aware that female sex workers have human rights and they deserve to be protected like all citizens of Malawi. 'The coming in of the project has greatly reminded us of our responsibility towards respecting human rights of all people in Malawi. From our interaction with the female sex workers, we have learnt that the unsafe behavior of molesting these women especially during the rogue and vagabond sweeping exercises is what has exposed many of our police men to HIV,' commented the Commissioner of Police, Mr. Chatsalira.

Although many organizations could not want to engage in such an initiative, this unusual project has helped in bringing awareness on the rights of female sex workers. Furthermore, in the quest to enhance learning on the importance of respecting human rights, the Malawi Police service has agreed to review the police training school curriculum to incorporate issues of gender based violence, gender and human rights and HIV/AIDS. In addition, Theatre for a Change is working with other partners on the legal framework of sex work in Malawi whose first draft has been finalized. With these efforts on the ground, the rights of female sex workers are being respected! ■

Community members take charge of Water Kiosks management from politicians



Main Picture: Mudi WUS Board Members at the WUA Office

Christina Waisoni, 68, is now a happy resident of Kampala, a high density township in Blantyre City as she no longer has to walk three kilometres to fetch water for her home from an unprotected source. "It was hell. Each morning it meant waking up as early as four for two reasons; one that the shallow water well was far from where we live and two that if you were late, there would be no water available since so many people relied on that single water source. We were literally struggling. "Now we have a piped water source nearby and there is no scrambling. Of course we pay but that is far much better than was the case before. Cases of water borne diseases such as Cholera have almost disappeared. We are thankful to the Mudi Water Users Association," Waisoni says.



Waisoni represents a population of an estimated 50,000 people who are now benefitting from improved management of 48 water kiosks being run by Mudi Water Users Association (WUA). The idea of water kiosks was hatched as a way of helping out residents of Blantyre City squatter townships access clean water but was almost immediately dogged with a string of problems.

Before the establishment of the WUA in 2011, the people of the areas concerned Mudi, Soche-Misesa lived in misery as the public clean water sources were few, mismanaged and unreliable. Before 2011, transparency and accountability in the running of the kiosks were a problem such that the Blantyre Water Board (BWB), which supplies piped water in Blantyre city, was left with no option but to disconnect supply to the kiosks which had

accumulated over MK2m debt in unpaid water bills. However, through a project pioneered by an organization called Water for People Malawi and funded by the Tilitonse Fund, access to water in all the kiosks and more in Mudi, Soche-Manase has drastically improved along with partnerships, transparency and accountability in their management. Waisoni represents a population of an estimated 50,000 people who are now benefitting from improved management of 48 water kiosks being run by Mudi Water Users Association (WUA). The idea of water kiosks was hatched as a way of helping out residents of Blantyre City squatter townships access clean water but was almost immediately dogged with a string of problems.

"It was hell. Each morning it meant waking up as early as four....there would be no water available since many people relied on that single water source."

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Ordinary citizens, Water for People Malawi, the Consumers Association of Malawi (CAMA) and Blantyre Water Board (BWB) have become close partners now in ensuring that there is sustainable access to portable water for people in the catchment area where most residents are poor. Since 2009, Water for People Malawi has facilitated the establishment of nine Water Users Associations which oversee the management of 554 water kiosk across peri-urban Blantyre.

The development necessitated a customer voice survey for the communal water kiosks in 2013 in order to solicit citizens' feedback on, mainly, services rendered by the Water Users Associations.

Through the survey on accountability and transparency of the managing WUA committees to the community members it was found that that this management arrangement has resulted in increased service from 19% in 2010 to 60% in 2013 due to increased coverage of improved water sources. The level of sustainability was also found to have increased from 3% in 2010 to 96% in 2013 due to improved tariff collection, availability of financial records and availability of more spare parts.

“Initially, members of the community were left out. They did not participate in the day to day running of the associations. They did not even know how their WUAs were managed. Now there is a lot of participation, increased understanding of developments and minimized incidents of political interference. Of course complete change requires time since the project involves behavior change.” Water for People Malawi Training and Capacity Building Specialist Joseph Magoya informs.

On commencement of the Tilitonse funded project, members from the nine WUAs formed a WUAs coalition and met once a month to share experiences and chart the way forward in terms of better management of the associations, increased transparency, responsiveness and accountability. Mudi WUA chairperson John Chiutsi observes, for example, that his association had 19 kiosks and 31 members of staff and an unpaid water bill of MK2.4m as of December 1, in 2011 but that at the moment, the WUA has 48 kiosks with a staff of 60 members the majority of whom are women. “...our debt on the unpaid bill now stands at around K400,000,” says Chiutsi insisting that this has been possible because with the Tilitonse funding, they were able to undergo training in governance and understanding of their roles, networking and transparency and accountability.

This, he notes, that also helped stop political interference in WUA operations. The evident impact of the project is in the fact that the kiosks are no longer arbitrarily disconnected, the huge bills previously incurred are now gradually being repaid, new bills paid are now on time, and political influence has now been significantly reduced in the management of all the WUAs. Previously, politics stood in the way of general progress. However, with increased awareness, political interests are increasingly taking less and less active participation in the day to day running of the WUAs to the delight of communities.

“That used to be a big problem in the past. However, we now have increased understanding here. For example, those that are into active politics excuse themselves and voluntarily step down from positions in WUAs to avoid politicizing the whole thing. “Previously, this was a problem as the politicians tended to exert their influence on the groups. We are happy that this is no longer the case and that the politicians understand,” Chiutsi observes.

As a strategy to achieving the promotion of governance issues in WUA, Water for People Malawi facilitated the formation of a WUA coalition. The coalition would promote formal network of WUAs to help them share notes and best practices among a variety of relevant issues. Today, more and more of the WUAs, including Mudi WUA of Chatha area, display monthly financial records as demonstration of increased transparency and accountability to the concerned public. Ironically, a study conducted established that the majority of the citizens that were interviewed were not satisfied with transparency and accountability of the Water Users Associations (WUAs).



Association member recording monthly kiosk collections

“Through the effort we have seen more WUAs becoming more transparent and accountable to the public through the utilization public boards where they display their monthly financial records and among them is Mudi Water Users Association,” Mudi WUA Treasurer Iress Nyirenda says. The extent of the quest for transparency, inclusion and responsiveness was particularly seen in 2013 when three of the nine WUAs opted to advertise in a local newspaper their intention to hire an independent auditor to review their financial records. The WUA coalition has agreed that no WUA shall close its financial year without having its financial records audited. Soche-Misesa WUA demonstrated accountability to its members by auditing its accounts and sharing the results with the community that they serve at an annual general meeting (AGM).

In addition, the coalition upon observing that there was inadequate women representation in water management decision making structures, especially in WUA Boards, the WUA coalition now has three women out of the nine elected members. Rachel Phiri is a Water Seller at Kampala kiosks. She now has a source of income. She is happy that other than make water easily available in her townships, the WUA kiosks is also her workplace. This is empowering the women economically. About 600 people have been employed by the WUAs in peri-urban areas of Blantyre and 90 percent are women ■

A raised voice earns the people of Ndinda a bridge on Chafumbi River



Main Picture: Chafumbi River before the bridge was built

Insert: The bridge under construction



In response to the plea, the Ntchisi District Assembly allocated K3 million for the purchase of construction materials through the Local Development Fund in the 2010/2011 fiscal year and K3.5 million in the 2012/2013 financial year.

The materials for the construction of the bridge were purchased by the project committee that had been set up. Unfortunately, when the construction of the bridge started, Ntchisi Forest Department officials stopped the project expressing fear that the construction of the bridge would expose the forest reserve to different types of abuse including illegal cutting down of trees and other vegetation as people might do as they wish while passing through the reserve.

The issue was then taken to the Forestry Headquarters in Lilongwe by the forestry department officials from Ntchisi for further consultation but there was no response for three years. The answer only came when Maziko Radio Station through its Tilitonse-funded radio program "*Tamva Kantchentche*" investigated the issue and consulted all concerned parties (including community members and Forestry officials in both Ntchisi and Lilongwe) on the issue. The local leaders in the area expressed their displeasure at the delay.

"We have been asking the authorities to define decentralization to us. They need to know that we are not asking for money for the construction of the bridge, we already have K6.5 million for the project. All we need is their permission to resume with the construction, that's all!" lamented Group Village Headman Ndinda. In agreement, Senior Group Village Headman Ndinda wondered why it was difficult for the Forestry Department to give a nod to the community members to resume work

For many years, the people of Ndinda Village, T/A Nthondo in Ntchisi district have been cut off from development due to the absence of a reliable road network. People travel 30 km to Ntchisi town or cross the nearby Chafumbi River within the Ntchisi Forest Reserve into nearby Mwansambo in the neighboring district of Nkhotoakota to engage in trade activities and purchase different commodities. However, travel is very difficult especially during the rainy season when the river floods. People usually get trapped in the forest as they are not able to cross the river.

"We face a lot of problems accessing basic needs here. There is no ADMARC depot or vendors to sell us different items because of the poor road network. Since the nearest trading centre to this place is Mwansambo, we do not have a choice but to cross Chafumbi River to buy or sell our products. We face a lot of difficulties especially during the rainy season when Chafumbi River floods. For instance, we have many times slept in the forest for days with our bags of fertilizer that we buy at Kajaliza because there is no Admarc depot here. One case I vividly remember was when we slept in the forest with a corpse on our way to Mwansambo because we had failed to cross the flooded river. I believe all these problems can end with the construction of a bridge on Chafumbi River." explained Mr. Piasani Sandifolo, a community member of Ndinda.

After realizing that the situation was depriving them of essential services, the community members decided to demand the construction of a bridge on Chafumbi River from the government in 2011.



on the bridge considering that it had been done before.

"In 1986 we constructed a bamboo bridge and the District Commissioner's car crossed to the other side through that bridge, I wonder why at this point they are refusing to grant us permission to continue with our project. Why is it that no one is giving us a conclusive answer on the way forward? Where is decentralization?" questioned the Headman.

Traditional Authority Nthondo dismissed the fears from the Forestry Department that the construction of the bridge would bring about negative effects on the forest. "It seems like we the poor people in the village are not part of the government's priority. Why is it that when we ask something it takes so long for us to get the response? Why are they denying us the opportunity to have a facility that will help us develop?" complained the T/A Nthondo.

The officials of the Department of Forestry admitted that the process had taken long as further consultations had to be made on the issue. "We admit to have taken long to respond to the request, but we promise to develop a Memorandum of Understanding to be signed by ourselves and the community. What we want is the commitment from the community members that this important activity will not affect the forest in anyway, 'explained Mr. Teddie Kamoto, Assistant Director of Forest at the Forestry Headquarters. Following the signing of the MOU, the construction of the bridge resumed on Chafumbi River.

The community however noted that the bags of cement that had been procured before the project was halted

were missing. Following the empowerment through the advocacy done by Maziko on the importance of citizen participation and voice, the community through the Area Development Committee confronted the District Assembly for an explanation on the missing items. This resulted into the recovery of all the 226 bags of cement.

The Assembly agreed with the community that the procurement of construction materials should be done by the ADC who will also be responsible for supervising the work on the bridge but with input from the Assembly. Following this agreement, the ADC presents a requisition for funds for purchasing of construction materials after which funds are released to enable them to make the purchase. All the procurement is done by the ADC and the suppliers for the materials are also identified by the community. Receipts are submitted to the Assembly to ensure accountability and all materials purchased are recorded in the ADC log book. To ensure sustainability of development activities, the ADC is responsible for all logistical arrangements for development initiatives in the area. The total committed for the bridge is K8 million through the Constituency Development Fund.

Maziko radio is implementing a project called 'Promoting development and good governance through radio' in Ntchisi district. Ntchisi district is one of the poorest and less developed districts in Malawi. Through the project, Maziko is providing information to the poor and marginalized on their rights and entitlements and at the same time empowering them to demand services from duty bearers through radio ■

Granny Beaten after Revealing Corrupt Practices in FISP



Main Picture: Granny Ethel narrating her ordeal
Insert: The old woman who revealed it all

Ethel Kungwimba, 84, from Gwembere Village, Group Village Headman Namasoko, in T/A Nkhumba, Phalombe was beaten by the chief and community members when she revealed to District Agricultural officials that the names the chief had registered to receive fertilizer coupons under the Farm Input Subsidy Programme (FISP) were not from the village. This incident happened at GVH Namasoko Headquarters where there was a verification exercise of beneficiaries of the Farm Input Subsidy Programme.

The Agricultural officials were calling names of the people to be registered. After the granny noted that most of the names were not from the village, she took courage to reveal that they were not members of their village. The officials had already received a tip from YONECO Facilitators that out of the 42 beneficiaries identified by the Chief only 22 were from the village. Concerned villagers had notified community facilitators for their action. During the process they kept on noting and later cancelled the process. The village will now have their registration at DC's office.

The development angered the chief who also happen to be a biological son to the granny and when they left the venue to his area, the granny was beaten and chased from the gathering. YONECO Community Facilitators who got the news responded immediately and reported the matter to Police. The chief was arrested and then later released on bail.

At the moment the granny is living in fear as supporters of chief have threaten that they will kill her if she is found in her garden.

The trained community facilitators and animators together with community citizen rights groups have been raising awareness on the right to development in their respective GVHs. The awareness has increased the number of community members that are able to defend their rights.

Since the establishment and training of the CCRG's at community level there has been a change in how marginalized groups of the community such as women, the elderly and child headed families are involved in the government interventions aimed at alleviating poverty.

Meanwhile, the community members present during the score card exercise, expressed satisfaction over how the actual registration of the names of beneficiaries has taken place at village level. Mr Diness Singani, chairperson of the CCRG from Thiya village noted that "the registration of names for the subsidised farm inputs. The picture could have been the best except for Tchilima where the village head was just writing the names of his relations. However, the CCRG was quick to intervene and the deserving needy were registered. The only, worrisome thing is that less number of coupons is being allocated to our area even though the population has increased significantly." ■

PAC advocates for responsive governance

...Malawi votes in Tripartite Elections

It is no longer business as usual in the management of government affairs in Malawi with the citizenry now increasingly demanding their rights on democratic and economic governance, thanks to a Tilitonse Fund financed project run by the Public Affairs Committee (PAC). For the first time in history, for example, the majority of the candidates aspiring for the presidency in the coming Malawi tripartite elections in May have been made to formally commit themselves and discuss how, once in office, they would react to several critical governance issues which the citizenry wants to see addressed as a matter of priority. In all previous elections, candidates did not have to make any commitment to addressing national issues; one reason being that no widely acceptable platform of the reputation of PAC ever brought together key stakeholders for a review of the state of affairs in the country.

The commitments follow interface meetings between 2014 presidential candidates and organizers; PAC on 19 issues of national interest which emerged from an October 2012 all-inclusive national conference that was also financed by the grant from the Tilitonse Fund. The passing of the Tripartite Elections Bill which on May 20, 2014 allowed for Malawi's first ever Presidential, Parliamentary and Local Government elections is another of PAC's high profile outputs besides achieving drastic reduction of incidences of MPs crossing the floor. The issues included the practice of legislators crossing the floor in parliament when governments change against provisions of Section 65 of the Constitution, failure to enforce and affect Section 64 of the Constitution which empowers citizens to recall non-performing MPs and the deep-rooted failure by leaders in Malawi to listen to the wishes of the people.

Through the project which Tilitonse Fund granted MK83, 200,000, PAC hopes to be able to promote good governance and democracy throughout the Republic of Malawi. PAC identified two strategies focusing at national and local level: the first being interrogation of presidential candidates on issues that Malawians want to see changed or transformed and the second; being imparting the issues to communities using already existing structures. Unlike before, there is now improved democratic governance, accountability and transparency in Malawi with laws that were considered "bad" reviewed by the Malawi Law Commission and some new constitutional provisions carried out between 2012 and 2014.



Through the Tilitonse funded project, PAC has now emerged as a proven convener on national issues as it is able to raise one voice on topical subjects such as the media frenzy on the views of members of the general public when issues surrounding sections 65 and 64 infiltrated the public domain and also the recent establishment of a planning commission. And again, while the correct position on MPs who cross the floor has remained confusing and sometimes blurred from the public's view since the Supreme Court brought in an expansive interpretation of section 65, there are now lesser incidents of crossing the floor.



"Previously PAC challenged amendment to S65 in 2003 which the Supreme Court reversed. The major gap is that recommendations of the constitutional review of 2007 were not effected into law..." PAC Executive Director Robert Phiri observed adding "Most authorities avoided transparency and accountability principles..." Malawi's political economy is heavily defined by the fact that the state is the largest source of income, the biggest employer and deals with big procurements such that it influences most decisions. This scenario makes it easily susceptible to corrupt practices and corruption. Increasing stakeholder inclusiveness in decision making, therefore, has according to Phiri, increased the eyes on critical national issues which should reduce cases of bad governance. This, he said, has already been seen to be working on the issues that have arisen so far. As Phiri puts it "Good governance, human rights and rule of law are vital for development and poverty reduction. However, continued abuse of power by leaders has undermined the rule of law, accountability, good governance and democracy as a whole. Constitutionalism has also been affected because democracy has not been institutionalized in the country". ■

Access to Information Bill adopted after 10 years of advocacy

Despite that Malawi adopted a new constitution in 1993 which proclaims the significance of openness and access to public information as a human right, the country has, to date, no enabling legislation providing framework on accessing information. The absence of legislation on access to information in Malawi, therefore, means that the citizens cannot easily acquire information held by public institutions and the state such that the existing provisions of Section 37 would not be said to be enjoyed by people the Constitution is meant for.

It is with this in mind that in October 2004, the Media Institute of Southern Africa (MISA) Malawi, leading other civil society organizations, embarked on a campaign aimed at engaging government to enact legislation on Access to Information (ATI) whose draft came out in 2005.

MISA Malawi and other stakeholders successfully deliberated and developed a policy on Access to Information which cabinet adopted on January 27, 2014 thanks to the support from Tilitonse. Through the Tilitonse supported project, MISA Malawi was able to convene a technical review meeting of the Principal Secretaries – this is a meeting that had taken almost a year to organize. Funds “Tilitonse resources were also used to print and prepare all the documentation in readiness for not just the technical review of the draft Policy by Principal Secretaries, but Cabinet as well,” MISA Malawi Executive Director Aubrey Chikungwa said.

Over 60 bound copies of the draft policy were produced for the Principal Secretaries and almost the same amount for the Cabinet Meeting that approved the Policy. “Since that time, we at MISA Malawi and numerous other civil society organizations have engaged a cross section of stakeholders, including Members of Parliament, political parties, various ministries, journalists and the police to input into the draft bill to ensure that it is a product of wider consultations. “After the consultations, the final draft was presented to the Ministry of Information for forwarding to the Ministry of Justice and Cabinet,” Aubrey Chikungwa says expressing optimism that the “journey appears near completion now.”

While Tilitonse Fund provided MK138, 524, 780 to MISA Malawi to aid the Campaign for the Enactment and Popularization of the Access to Information Bill project, the Ministry of Information actually led the process. The ministry formed a taskforce, chaired by Principal Secretary for Information to spearhead the process. The taskforce comprised all key sectors including Policy Unit-Office of the President and Cabinet; security sector-Police and the Malawi Defense Force and other institutions such as the Censorship Board, the media, UNESCO, the National Archives, Ministry of Justice, and the University of Malawi.

“A special team was established to directly work on the policy and update the larger taskforce periodically. The team comprised UNESCO; MISA Malawi, Ministry of Information and OPC and was led by Professor Kanyongolo,” said Chikungwa observing that several times, the team revised the draft policy and consulted stakeholders every inch of the way. To drum up support for the process, there was a lot of behind-the-scenes lobbying with key ministries and sectors besides official consultations with stakeholders such as chiefs, directors in government, civil society Groups, District Commissioners and also the ordinary people.

“Tilitonse resources were used to print and prepare all the documentation in readiness for not just the technical review of the draft Policy by Principal Secretaries, but Cabinet as well”

The campaign for the enactment of the ATI legislation was launched on October 14, 2004 to sensitize Malawians and seek their input on the proposed legislation. From 2009 to date, therefore, NAMISA had been lobbying government to develop a policy on ATI so that the bill could be taken to parliament. Due to exhaustion of initial project financial support, NAMISA sought and successfully secured Tilitonse Fund funding which was crucial to the continued progress of the project.

The Tilitonse Fund support, therefore, helped NAMISA to capitalize on gains that had already been made and also the political will as demonstrated by the Ministry of Information through the spearheading of the formation of the ATI Policy taskforce and the campaign in general. Not surprising, therefore, that when the Principal Secretaries eventually met for the review, they proceeded to recommend the document for adoption by cabinet with some changes.

MISA Malawi in partnership with the Ministry of Information is at the moment working on advocating for the passing of the Bill into a law by the Malawi National Assembly ■

Samaritan Trust champions the right to education of street children

Children get to resort to the streets for a variety of reasons as such, any attempt to respond to the plight of the children needs to try to respond to those reasons which are usually hidden. Without comprehensive data, therefore, responses to their situation could easily be misplaced, misdirected or outright irrelevant hence the need to understand why children resort to streets.

For Chimwemwe then age 14, going to the streets of Blantyre had something to do with parental care. Her aunt in Thyolo was pushing her to get married like had done her twin sister. "I was 14 years old at the time and my aunt was forcing me to get married because my sister had gotten married. But I couldn't because I would like to go to school. So when my aunt kept pushing me, I left home one evening and headed for Blantyre on foot," Chimwemwe explains. For three gruesome days and nights, Chimwemwe was on the streets of Blantyre until she met a social welfare officer for Samaritan Trust, a street child body. The trust is running the two-year project aimed at enhancing educational programs for children on the streets of the cities of Blantyre and Lilongwe alongside Chisomo Children's club through engagement of relevant stakeholders and duty bearers to hike street children's access to education and skills training to enable them realize their rights and secure livelihoods.

Chimwemwe is one of thousands of children from the city streets of Malawi who are now benefitting from this project which is funded by Tilitonse Fund to the tune of K83, 731,300. Today, Chimwemwe is not only in school, she has also been trained skills in tailoring. "After my standard eight examinations, I started tailoring. I can now sew anything. I have acquired a skill that I will always have. I want to live a dignified life. I want to be educated. I am happy. I am in school. I want to be a nurse when I finish school," Chimwemwe, who is now in form one at a private school under the Samaritan Trust education project, says smiling.

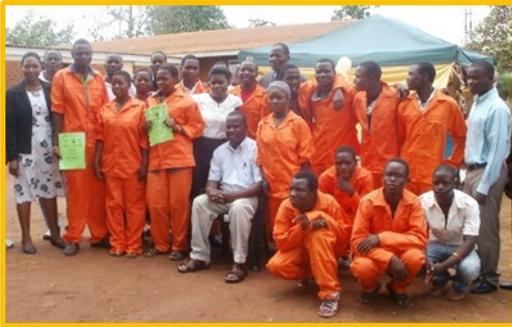
The overarching framework for providing services to vulnerable children is the national plan of action for orphans and vulnerable children in Malawi. However, as earlier observed, the street children are not addressed as a specific group requiring government attention in the framework. The majority of the children at the centre come from broken homes or they have lost one or both of their parents due to HIV related illnesses while in other cases, parents may be alive but are too poor to afford basic necessities for the siblings who run away to the streets where they try to make a living out of begging, menial jobs and in some severe cases petty crime. The dangers of street life include exposure to child labor, child trafficking, sexual abuse, prostitution, poor health and HIV and AIDS and hunger and the absence of availability of food.



Top : Female students in a tailoring class

Below: A boy inspecting a finished product in a carpentry class

With the new project, unlike in the past, more and more schools in Blantyre now have data on children on the streets, children off the streets, detached children and children of street beggars. There is also a rise in the numbers of organisations taking up responsibility about these children Robert Munthali is the Monitoring and Evaluation officer at Samaritan Trust. He is all praises for the Tilitonse funded project which he says has, besides helping street children access education and re-integrate, made stakeholders more responsive than had been the case in the past years.



Top : Vocational skills training graduates under the Samaritan Trust

Below: A graduate receiving a certificate

Munthali says "Through engaging stakeholders, slowly, they now understand. We now have a case of teachers personally sponsoring the education of street children. In the past, enrolling street children into schools was viewed as bringing problems into schools. "However, with meetings with stakeholders, it is now networking that is working wonders. We have also seen some individuals coming to support these children".

Today with the project on the education of street children in Blantyre alone, 138 boys and 76 girls have been enrolled in primary schools, are getting their school fees paid and uniforms supplied. And while only five boys and one girl went to secondary school in 2012, there are now 34 children withdrawn from the streets who have enrolled in various secondary schools. Street outreach programmes that now allow interaction with street children have also exposed the significance of collaboration such that police child protection officers now work together with officers from Samaritan Trust, social welfare government officers and other organisations to enhance protection of the children so that they increasingly access education for a good future.

Through this collaboration, Samaritan Trust now updates government on a quarterly basis on what they are doing with regard to street children in the two cities and available data on the same. For example, 18 public schools have, on their own, now enrolled 140 boys and 94 girls. Although Samaritan Trust endeavors to promote the rights of street children, the average 120 children taken in annually are too few considering that 6,000 children live on the streets of Blantyre alone and that the city of Lilongwe has a yet to be determined number of children. The current policy on destitute children is focusing much on orphans and not street children such that no exact text appears to address street children. However, stakeholders think that "the future looks brighter" with a recent memorandum of understanding (MoU) signed between Samaritan Trust and the Malawi government focusing on interests of street children. "We were actually involved in drafting the policy. We can, now be heard by the government. We are the only street child organization as Samaritan Trust representing the Malawian street child. This has been possible because of the Tilitonse Fund assistance," explains Magret Mukwenha in an interview.

Similarly, Lanford Flackson, 22, is an orphan. He has no father and mother. Until he was identified by the Samaritan Trust, he was without uneducated and unskilled. Today, Landford is a self-reliant, carpentry graduate from the Samaritan Trust Vocational School. "I can make anything. I was given some tools by Samaritan Trust which I am using for my job. I now look forward to owning my own carpentry shop. Of course I need adequate equipment. I want to be able to win big contracts. That should make a huge difference in my life," he says. Since the majority of children withdrawn from the streets do not have primary school education and have gone past the primary school age, the Samaritan Trust has, through the Tilitonse project, introduced vocational training.

We network with Don Bosco Technical School (in Lilongwe), government, social welfare," says Kondwani Banda Social Welfare officer at Samaritan Trust. It is only Samaritan Trust that offers vocational skills training for street children in Lilongwe and Blantyre such that those who cannot make it here grow up with no hope of acceptable and sustainable forms of livelihood and are at greater risk of abuse and usually end up in crime. The project on Enhancement of Educational Programmes for children on the city streets is a social inclusion project that draws together efforts of a number of civil society organizations to partner with government departments in bringing education to children on the streets.

Through the project on Enhancement of Educational Programmes for children on the city streets Samaritan Trust established a vocational skills training centre which offers training in bricklaying, welding and carpentry and has graduated an average of 20 learners per year. It is hoped that this model will be replicated and that older street children will be enrolled in various skills training centres around the country as part of the social inclusion programme ■

Women win the fight for land ownership

Being a second wife and a mother of girls only meant that Wezi Chibisa would remain a land-poor woman forever as her situation culturally implied she was not entitled to owning any land. In the community that Chibisa comes from; Kasongwe area in Village Headman Kachambe in Paramount Chief Chikula-mayembe's jurisdiction, the first male child in a family has the traditional rights to inherit property belonging to the father, including land for the whole family. This, therefore, meant that in the absence of special intervention, Wezi Chibisa and her two daughters would be without land of their own in the unfortunate event that her husband died.

"It would really be difficult for the son to consider my children, as I am the second wife. My two children being girls would have been further disadvantaged because girls cannot inherit land according to our culture," says Chibisa smiling as she is now a beneficiary of a Tilitonse Fund supported project which has helped her access a piece of land. She grew maize on her piece of land this season and now plans to grow tobacco in the next one. In a group where she interacts with fellow women in her situation; Kasongwe circle, she has now been linked to a micro loan financing institution that provides soft farm input loans to members.

"I am thankful to the project. It has averted family conflicts in future, as we already have secure land rights. We have done this in a bid to put our pieces of land to productive use and to maximize production of harvest," she says. Chibisa is but one of hundreds of women in Rumphu and Phalombe districts now enjoying the benefits of increased socio-economic security for land poor women or women smallholder farmers through improved access to and control over land and agricultural support services.

Similarly, today, 15 of the 24 women members of Tiyezge Action Circle in Paramount Chief Chikulamayembe's area got land from chiefs while nine got land from their husbands. A group of over 80 other women will shortly receive land from the traditional leaders that have become responsive. "I will therefore not tolerate the denial of such rights to you on the basis that you are women," Paramount Chief Chikulamayembe of Rumphu said during a meeting he held with members of the Coalition of Women Farmers (COWFA) in the district.

From the 2,250 women targeted with the project in Rumphu, 1,700 now own their own pieces of land courtesy of individual chiefs and husbands in Senior Chief Mwankhunikira and Chikulamayembe's areas.

According to Action Aid Land Access Project Coordinator Chikondi Chabvuta, increasing women's knowledge on their rights and legal entitlements to land strengthens their confidence and capacity to effectively participate and advocate with local traditional institutions and the government for access to land, secure tenure, and enhanced access to agri-support services.



Top and Bottom: Women having discussions in Action Circles

With financial support from Tilitonse Fund of MK63,167 064.34, Action Aid International Malawi through the project named Invigorating Women's Influence in Land Governance and Economic Development, is significantly helping women in Rumphu district (in the Northern region) and Phalombe district (in the Southern region) claim their constitutional rights. Ultimately, the project aims to increase socio-economic security for landless women or women smallholder farmers through improved access to and control over land and other agricultural support services.

The intervention also entailed ensuring that eventually, there was political support from duty bearers with respect to women's land rights and also increased knowledge among stakeholders on valuable approaches and best practices to enhance women land rights. ■



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