



# **FIVE-COUNTRY STUDY ON SERVICE AND VOLUNTEERING IN SOUTHERN AFRICA**

## **MALAWI COUNTRY REPORT**

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# Acronyms

ADC	Area Development Committee
CBCC	Community-Based Childcare Centre
CBO	Community-based organisation
CERT	Centre for Educational Research and Training
CSR	Centre for Social Research
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi
CPD	Continuing Professional Development
CSC	Christian Services Committee
CV	Curriculum vitae
DA	District Assembly
DDC	District Development Committee
DEC	District Executive Committee
DID	Department of International Development
DHRMD	Department of Human Resource Management and Development
DPP	Democratic People's Party
ECD	Early Childhood Development
FBO	Faith-based Organisations
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FPE	Free Primary Education
GoM	Government of Malawi
HBC	Home-based Care
JOCV	Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers
MASSAJ	Malawi Safety, Security and Access to Justice
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MoE	Ministry of Education
MoGCWCS	Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services
MYP	Malawi Young Pioneers
NAC	National AIDS Commission
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NICE	National Initiative for Civic Education
NSO	National Statistics Office
OPC	Office of the President and Cabinet
OVC	Orphans and Vulnerable Children
PCV	Peace Corps Volunteer
PLWA	People Living with AIDS
PTA	Parent Teacher Association
PWP	Public Works Programmes
PMTCT	Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission
RCB	Religious Co-ordinating Bodies
SMC	School Management Committee
SRH	Sexual and Reproductive Health
TA	Traditional Authority
TWG	Technical Working Group
UDF	United Democratic Front
UNVA	United Nations Volunteer Agency

UNIMA	University of Malawi
VAC	Village AIDS Committee
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSA	Volunteer Sending Agency
VSO	Volunteer Services Overseas
VOLSA	Volunteer South Africa
WUSC	World University Services of Canada
YONECO	Youth Network and Counselling

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# Executive Summary

This study on the nature and form of civic service and volunteering in Malawi followed a qualitative, descriptive research approach, drawing on information from an extensive document search, interviews with key informants responsible for supporting and/or implementing service and volunteering programmes and a focus group discussion with representatives of national and international organisations running structured service programmes, as well as those involved in district and community-based activities. Participants in this study were purposively sampled, making use of snowball sampling to identify further organisations and individuals. Key sectors represented in this study included: community development; social welfare; health (inc. HIV/AIDS); education; environmental protection and rural livelihoods; human rights, democracy and governance and youth work. Participants were drawn from government ministries and projects (at national and district level), development agencies, local non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and Community-based Organisations (CBOs), national membership-based NGOs and Faith-based organisations (FBOs) and an international Volunteer Sending Agency (VSA).

The main findings of the study indicate that, whilst there is limited recognition and understanding of the term civic service, most service in Malawi is conceptualised as relatively unstructured volunteering: defined by a desire to assist others and to support social development, with no expectation of financial gain. Participants noted however, that, historically and politically, the landscape of volunteerism is changing, with a shift from obligatory community participation in development activities to expectations of incentives for providing service.

All service in Malawi is non-compulsory and the only national civic service programme is the recently established Community Service Programme working with a small number of minor offenders. Most service is organised at the local level, through CBOs and local NGOs. Government strategies and programmes to provide social services also rely on CBOs; or mobilise communities through government- created committees. In addition to local volunteering, there are approximately 400 international volunteers in Malawi providing technical support, predominantly in sectors such as health and education.

Whilst volunteering activities are prevalent in both rural and urban areas, some regions experience higher levels of activity, related to need, population density and donor presence. Many programmes have been active for at least 10 years, reflecting a proliferation of NGOs and CBOs following the advent of multi-partyism in 1994. Service in Malawi has a strong humanitarian aspect, with increased involvement in response to HIV/AIDS; providing care for People Living with AIDS (PLWAs) and orphans and awareness-raising amongst target groups, such as the youth.

The turnover of local volunteers is high and long-term commitment rarely enforced. Time allocated for volunteering is often flexible, with volunteers structuring their activities to fit around their own daily lives. Service often reflects traditional gender norms: women are more likely to be carers, whilst men are generally involved in skilled or manual labour and in leadership positions. Servers volunteer their time for a variety of reasons, including humanitarian concern or a perceived or actual impact of an issue on their lives. Poverty also drives servers to offer their services; in exchange for monetary benefits that accrue to the programme. Positive aspects of volunteering include an acceptance of volunteers by communities, and subsequent increased status, and access to training, resources and incentives. Negative aspects include:

delays in receiving incentives, insufficient training and poverty. Amongst international volunteers, negative aspects relate to cultural and language differences and poor communication between the host organisation and the VSA.

Apart from VSAs, few institutions in Malawi have clearly defined criteria for servers, although there is an implicit assumption on many community-based programmes that volunteers would be selected from target communities. Most programmes also require some degree of literacy amongst volunteers, although this is dependent on the nature of the expected service. Local volunteers general benefit from incentives, but these are dependent on the funding and ethos of the organisation: honoraria/allowances; training or skills development; resources (bicycles, umbrellas) or gifts (food, fertiliser). Increased status and greater opportunities for future employment also act as incentives. In terms of support, programmes offer monitoring and supervision, as often as every month, although this is highly dependent on resources and funding: frequently lacking in government departments.

As key providers of social services to vulnerable groups in Malawi, NGOs' and CBOs' are required to collaborate with government to allow for coordination of activities. Funding is generally provided by donors or international NGOs, with the government's role as one of monitoring and providing limited technical support. However current collaboration is poor and consensus is that government lacks the capacity to play a coordinating role in developing the voluntary sector. Furthermore, despite a strong emphasis on community participation in government's pro-poor development strategies, policy guidelines for service and volunteering in Malawi are minimal, depending on passing mention in a few policy documents for key sectors, often without explicit reference to volunteers.

Apart from a weak policy environment, other factors hindering service and volunteering in Malawi include: illiteracy and low standards of education; high burnout and turnover amongst volunteers, often related to poverty; a lack of sustainability of programmes; lack of capacity; corruption and political interference; donor dependency and discrepancies between benefits for local volunteers on different programmes and between local and international volunteers. The over-arching factor supporting volunteering in Malawi is, according to participants, the use of volunteers from within target communities, building on a tradition of community development. This was said to lead to increased capacity and awareness amongst the wider community, greater ownership and sustainability and cost-effectiveness.

In terms of the future development of service and volunteering in Malawi, many participants supported increased national and regional dialogue and collaboration, although some felt Malawi had insufficient capacity to engage effectively at the regional level. Others recommended promoting volunteering amongst professional Malawians and supporting South-South exchanges. The majority of participants also suggested that future research focus on the experiences and needs of volunteers, to gain insights into what motivates individuals to volunteer, to improve volunteer performance and to promote the development of national policy guidelines for working with volunteers.



# Section One: Introduction

## 1. Summary

Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA), a registered non-profit organisation based in South Africa, was awarded funding by the Global Service Institute (GSI) at the Center for Social Development at the Washington University in St Louis, USA to support a study into the form and extent of civic service programmes in five Southern African Development Community (SADC) countries: Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe. The findings presented in this report document and analyse civic service and volunteering in Malawi, as part of this wider five-country study into prevalence and form of national, international and local community-based civic service programmes in the SADC region.

The study focuses on both governmental and non-governmental civic service programmes from a social development perspective. The study follows a qualitative descriptive research design in order to gather in-depth, rich information on the nature and form of civic service and volunteerism in Malawi. Interviews with key informants and a focus group with service providers at the national, district and community level has enabled the study to gather a range of perspectives on the field of civic service in Malawi. The study is particularly interested in learning more about locally-based forms of service that have been developed within the African context. In addition, as decentralisation is currently being operationalised in Malawi, an emphasis is also placed on finding out more about civic service and volunteering programmes at the district level. Research activities are framed by several research questions developed from those used in the GSI global assessment of civic service and volunteerism and adapted to fit the Southern African context. Research activities took place between May 2005 and June 2006.

## 2. Selection of Service Programmes

According to the generic, overall research proposal for the five-country study, two main types of programmes have been identified:

- Structured civic service programmes which the GSI defines as “an organised period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national, or world community, recognised and valued by society, with minimal monetary compensation to the participant” (Sherraden, 2001: 2b).
- Informal community- based service programmes which are organised by people at local level, and involve consistent volunteer activity over a period of six months or more.

The five-country study seeks to explore and document the nature and scope of both types of programmes in Botswana, Malawi, South Africa, Zambia and Zimbabwe in order to map the prevalence and form of national, international and local community-based programmes in the five countries cited.

### **3. Aims and Objectives of the Study**

The overall aim of this study is to deepen the work started by the GSI through its assessment of the nature and form of civic service around the world (McBride et al., 2003a). Furthermore, it aims to document and analyze civic service and volunteering in five Southern African countries with the view to examining their implications for social development policy and practice in a regional context.

Supporting this, the objectives of the five-country study are:

- (a) To identify formal and informal civic service programmes in five countries in the Southern African region;
- (b) To conduct country profile studies of civic service initiatives with reference to the nature and scope of civic service and the meaning of civic service for the servers and beneficiaries in the respective countries;
- (c) To determine what policies and incentives exist to promote civic service;
- (d) To examine the implications of civic service for social development policy and practice in the region.

By fulfilling these objectives, it is intended that this study will contribute to building civic service as a field of knowledge and practice at a regional level in the SADC countries and assist in building networks that could advance the service agenda in the region.

### **4. Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework that will inform the study is the social development approach. This approach is increasingly being adopted and implemented regionally through the SADC Human Development Strategy and will be used to inform this study. Social development attempts to enhance social welfare through harmonizing economic and social development policies and programmes. It is a pro-poor approach that promotes people-centred development, human capabilities and partnerships between government, civil society and the private sector. The study will focus on both governmental and non-governmental civic service programmes from a social development perspective.

### **5. Research Team**

Research was co-ordinated by a senior research team based in South Africa and headed by Professor Leila Patel, Professor and Chairperson of the Department of Social Work at Rand Afrikaans University in South Africa and Dr. Helene Perold, Director of Volunteer and Service Enquiry Southern Africa (VOSESA).

The principal in-country researcher for the Malawi component of the study was Ms. Catherine Moleni, a Research Fellow with the Centre for Educational Research and Training (CERT) at the University of Malawi, who has been involved in all stages of implementation of the country study and was responsible for the timely production of deliverables. She has been supported throughout the research by a second researcher, Dr. Brenda Gallagher, an independent consultant with extensive research experience in Malawi, and previously a Research Fellow with the Centre for Social Research (CSR), University of Malawi. The in-country research team also included two locally based research assistants; Mr. Hastings Honde and Mr. Kidney Mbeko.

## **6. Deliverables**

According to the Terms of Reference provided, the in-country research team was expected to deliver the following deliverables:

- (a) A research plan
- (b) Quarterly progress reports indicating progress at various stages of the study (data collection, data analysis, draft report, final report) as per the agreed time frame.
- (c) A draft of initial findings.
- (d) On completion of the study the researchers will deliver:
  - i. A list of interviewees.
  - ii. A list of participants in the focus groups.
  - iii. Transcripts of interviews and focus group proceedings.
  - iv. A literature review and full bibliography of sources consulted during the literature search.
  - v. An analysis of the nature and scope of service and volunteering programmes

## **7. Report Structure**

Chapter one of this report presents a brief summary and background to the study. Chapter Two presents a review of international and national literature relevant to the study and which informed the collection and analysis of the data. The methodology used in the study, including discussion of adaptations to research questions and research instruments made in the light of the Malawian context and the research process, is presented in Chapter Three. Chapter Three also presents details of the participants who contributed to the study. Chapter Four presents a detailed analysis of the context of the study, including the current policy environment and an overview of the history of service in Malawi. Chapter Five presents and discusses the main findings of the research, framed by the research questions and the reviewed literature. Finally, Chapter Six offers conclusions and recommendations for the way forward. Appendices include a full bibliography and copies of the adapted research instruments. Full transcripts of interviews and the focus group discussion (FGD) have been made available separately to the senior research team.

## **8. Literature Review**

### **8.1 Introduction**

This chapter outlines current thinking in terms of civic service and volunteerism at the international level and then, where possible, compares this to the situation in Malawi, drawing from existing literature and documentation gathered during the course of the research. In the case of Malawi, the majority of the literature on civic service and volunteerism has been produced by non-governmental organisations (NGOs) and international volunteer organisations; there is little academic research available. Furthermore, most is the result of a small number of small scale research studies carried out at local level. Hence, it is difficult to make generalisations for the country as a whole. Regardless, this literature review does provide a basic picture of current thinking in civic service and volunteerism in Malawi, although the level of detail is low.

## 8.2 Meaning of Civic Service and Volunteerism

According to Menon, Moore McBride and Sherraden (2002). “service has historically referred to actions of individuals in relation to others, be it other individuals in the community or the government”. While volunteerism and civic service are both considered to be forms of service, civic service is regarded as the umbrella concept under which various forms of service such as volunteerism or compulsory youth service co-exist.

Different authors have used different criteria upon which to base their definitions of volunteerism. According to Tang, Moore McBride and Sherraden (2003:2) “there is extensive debate about what volunteerism is and is not, and there is no clear consensus among scholars or citizens”. Furthermore, VOLSA (2004) suggested that there is no global definition of volunteerism due to global variations in culture, history, politics and religion and what is deemed volunteerism in one region may not be considered so in another region. Salmon and Sololowski (2001, cited in Moore McBride et al. 2003c: 5) indicated that volunteerism as a societal norm can take many forms, from informal support networks in a village, to intensive commitments of time, through formal programmes. On the other hand, Rochester (1999) suggested that volunteering activity is seen to be essentially the same thing regardless of where it happens. Moreover, the IAVE (cited in Thupayagale and Rampa, 2005: 6) defined volunteering as “organised support that involves individuals freely giving of their time and expertise in order to benefit others” and Gillette (2003: 64) suggested that “the basic aim of a volunteer should not be material gain”.

Debate also exists over the definition of the term civic service. Patel (2003: 88) indicated that “there is no shared or common vision and purpose of civic service. It is more than likely that there are different and competing visions of civic service, depending on the beliefs, assumptions and interests of those who promote service”. However, a number of authors have suggested that in order for an activity to be termed civic service it must: be formal, intensive, structured and organised; be carried out over a substantial period of time, outside of the family sphere and be in the interest of the public good; have a political, social and economic element; benefit both the servers and the served and; be carried out by an organisation or government (see among others Moore McBride et al., 2003b; Patel, 2003; Tang et al., 2003; Sherraden, 2001b). Hence, Sherraden (2001b: 2) defined civic service as “an organized period of substantial engagement and contribution to the local, national, or world community, recognized and valued by society, with minimal monetary compensation to the participant”. Examples of civic service programs include European Voluntary Service, the United States Peace Corps, the Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers, and national service programs in Ghana and Nigeria (Tang et al. 2003: 2).

What is clear is that, while civic service is the overarching concept, volunteering and civic service share common elements. Recognized key aspects of both volunteerism and civic service include: organization, structure and intensity; compulsory or voluntary aspect; level of compensation or remuneration and; the benefits incurred by society. What differentiates volunteerism from civic service is predominately programme format and organization, and level of commitment required from the server (Moore McBride et al., 2003c: 5). For example, Tang et al. (2003: 3) have suggested that “civic service is a structured, intensive form of long-term volunteering”.

Drawing from the literature, for the purpose of this study, the research design was framed by an understanding that service refers to an action that *is in the public sphere; yields positive benefits*

*to individuals, communities, a nation or the world; and occurs in an organisational framework and involves formal programmatic interventions.* It further assumes that *there is a continuum of volunteering with informal and occasional forms of volunteering at the one end of the spectrum and more formal, long-term, intensive volunteering or civic service conducted especially, cross-nationally and comparatively, at the other end of the spectrum* (Moore McBride et al., 2003b; Patel and Wilson, 2004a)

### **8.3 Form, Scope and Age of Service Programmes**

Service programmes vary in format defined by key criteria including: location; political social and economic issues; sector; availability, quantity and quality of resources; server and beneficiary criteria; administrative structure and; compulsory or voluntary nature (see among others Brav et al., 2002; Patel, 2003). According to Patel (2003: 92) “political, ideological, economic, social and cultural beliefs have a direct bearing on how civic service is conceptualized”. This perspective is also held by Moore McBride A, Benítez C and Sherraden M (2003b; iv) who suggested that “the presence of different forms of service programs may be attributable to different political regimes and the status of democracy as well as cultural norms and more”.

Politics has a major impact upon volunteerism and civic service. Patel (2003: 87) argued that “civic service is not a politically neutral activity but rather draws on wider ideological, social, economic and political ideas”. Ellis and Noyes (©1990) suggested that volunteering challenges the status quo by creating or urging others to create programmes. In particular the democratic process appears to impact upon volunteerism and civic service. Patel (2003: 91) suggested that “the political space created by democratic systems of governance tends to favour the growth and sustainability of civic service efforts”. Similarly, Sherraden (2001a: 19) suggested that “there is a worldwide understanding that civil society and civic engagement are crucial for democratic governance”. The impact of democratic process is evident in the changing face of volunteerism and civic service in Africa in recent years. For example, the advent of democracy in Malawi saw the disbandment of its national youth service programme (i.e. Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP)), which was operational under the regime of the late former president Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda.

Service, civic service and volunteerism can be regarded as basic components of many societies. According to Patel and Wilson (2004b: 22S) “the idea of giving of oneself for the benefit of others has its origins in early African associational life, which has a strong normative and moral basis”. For example, in Botswana volunteerism is not a new concept but is embedded in the nation’s cultural tradition (Thupayagale and Rampa, 2005) and in Malawi there is a long history of community participation in development activities (GOM, 2003a). While volunteerism is not new in the African context, what is new is the gradual introduction of a more formalized, organized and institutionalized approach to volunteerism, similar to that witnessed in more developed parts of the world. Regardless, most volunteering in the African context is still characterised by its traditional format, informality and low levels of organisation. For example, in Malawi traditional forms of volunteering still exist, especially in the form of community self-help projects, such as community involvement in the building of schools, with the community primarily involved via the provision of labour and/or resources (Rose, 2003).

Volunteerism has evolved over time and has assumed many different forms (VOLSA, 2004). Evidence suggests that in Africa the form of service has changed over time from an expression of mutual aid and self-help efforts in the pre-colonial era, to more formalized social provision fashioned on colonial modalities in the colonial era. The focus changed to political engagement and social development during the struggle for independence and later to the reconstruction of

societies, national development, nation building, and character building of youth in the post-independent era and later still to the provision of humanitarian support, human development, peace and the better representation of people in the developing democracies (Patel and Wilson, 2004b). Thupayagale and Rampa (2005) suggested that in Botswana there is now more community involvement in poverty alleviation schemes organised by government and local authorities, which have a system of paid labour. There is also evidence of this in Malawi, where community involvement in development projects, such as the building of roads and schools has increased since the introduction of democracy and projects using the paid labour schemes, such as the Public Works Programmes (PWP) initiated by the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) (Chilowa et al., 2004; Rose, 2003; Kutengule, 1997).

Scant research in Malawi indicates that, prior to the transition to democracy there was some disparity over the perceived levels of involvement in voluntary activities as presented in government publications, and the reality at the grass-roots. For example, (Gaynor, 1993:66) suggested that whilst there was a strong belief in community cooperation and collective action within Malawian communities, actual levels of community participation were relatively low and that “participation [was] seen as a means rather than an end in itself”. However, more recently, Pelsler et al. (2004) and CSR (2005) indicate that there is fairly widespread engagement with community-based activities in Malawi, both locally-initiated community-based groups built around voluntary involvement and externally-funded community-based organizations.

“Worldwide, the number and diversity of civic service programs has increased steadily in recent decades” (Brav et al., 2002: 1) and, according to Moore McBride et al. (2003c), whilst civic service programmes are found in every major region of the world, the bulk are found in North America, Europe and Sub-Saharan Africa. According to Patel and Wilson (2004b: 23S) “the idea of civic service continues to be relevant to the poorest and less-developed region in the world as it attempts to renew its economies and societies to build peace and security, democratic governance, and improve human development in a more integrated and fragmented global world”. They further suggest that civic service could make a significant contribution to future social development in Sub-Saharan Africa. For example, much of the current, past and future development taking place in developing countries has been and continues to be facilitated by volunteers working through voluntary organizations and international NGOs. According to VOLSA (2004), volunteers are most likely to work through NGOs, especially those that work at grassroots level and, in the African context, volunteering remains the bedrock of almost all NGO activities. They further suggest that volunteering by ordinary Africans could represent a strategic social capital that could be tapped in the drive towards socioeconomic development and that Africans themselves have a capacity to solve their own problems.

In recent years there appears to be an increase in the number of people willing to give their time and resources to service which may be related to an increase in the number (International and local) civil service organisations operating worldwide (Patel, 2003). Many of these NGOs are funded by foreign aid and are prominent in emerging democracies where “civic service and volunteering is becoming more prominent as people search for new forms of participation, representation, collective action and self-expression” (Patel, 2003: 90). However, in the long term, high-level involvement by volunteers in NGOs may also pose a threat to volunteerism, especially in those regions (including sub-Saharan Africa) where dependency on donor organisations in the formation and financing of NGOs is high. This has been the case in Botswana, where the donor community’s gradual withdrawal over the past ten years, has negatively impacted on NGOs (Thupayagale and Rampa, 2005). In addition, Patel and Wilson (2004b) pointed out that deepening poverty and increasing marginalization of countries and regions in the African context, could limit the positive impact of volunteerism and civic service

and that there may be need for some concern over the appropriateness of the perspective of these donors with regard to the kind of civic service needed in the African context.

In addition to the influence of donor agendas (Fairley, 2006), an additional concern in Malawi is the degree to which volunteers' participation in development activities can be considered genuine. For example, in the area of education, much of the volunteer involvement at community level is considered pseudo-participation rather than genuine, because community members contribute only resources and labour and are excluded from the decision making processes in project implementation (Rose, 2003). However, according to Kutengule (1997: 78), the self-help approach is picking up in Malawi "as a result of current efforts to revive the self-help spirit in community-based development activities such as under MASAF<sup>1</sup>". Taking the same example, Chilowa et al. (2004: 93) suggest that "the objectives of MASAF I were consistent with a bottom\_up approach and included promotion of a participatory and community empowering development paradigm and strengthening the capacity of local stakeholders. Communities were expected to ensure that everyone participated fully in all aspects of project identification and implementation". Given the likelihood that genuine involvement increases cost efficiency, ownership, project effectiveness and sustainability (Chilowa et al. 2004; Chapota, 2004; Gaynor, 1993; Kandawire, 1992) the importance of ensuring the existence and promotion of genuine participation cannot be over-emphasised.

#### **8.4 Service Role: Time Commitment and Compulsory Nature**

According to Moore McBride et al. (2003c: 6), an organization that uses volunteers has the same expectations (related directly to the organization's needs) of a volunteer in terms of commitment and eligibility, as for a paid employee. In Malawi however, this would appear to be the case only in relation to international volunteers (DHRMD, 1999).

Cnaan and Arnroffell (1994, cited in Tang et al. 2003: 3) identified frequency and amount of time devoted to each volunteer episode, as the defining attributes of volunteerism/civic service. In addition, these factors have also been identified as some of the primary issues that differentiate civic service from volunteering. There is general agreement that when compared to volunteering, involvement in civic service is likely to be more intense and of longer duration. For example, external volunteer programmes (e.g. European Voluntary Service, the United States Peace Corps, the Japanese Overseas Cooperation Volunteers) that would be regarded as civic service, usually place volunteers for a minimum of 2 years (Tang et al., 2003: 2). Involvement on such programmes is voluntary. Similarly, national service programmes (operational in many countries including Ghana and Nigeria) usually run for a minimum of 2 years and involvement in some is compulsory (usually for youth). In Malawi, in comparison, whilst NGOs and government departments that use volunteers often have a desired service period (normally 2 years), they frequently do not enforce this and involvement is almost always voluntary<sup>2</sup>.

#### **8.5 Servers, Service Areas and Goals**

Volunteerism is evident in almost all sectors of society. In recent years, however, volunteerism has been particularly evident in the health sector as a response to the HIV/AIDS pandemic, predominantly through community based organizations (CBO) involved in caring for people living with AIDS, caring for orphans of AIDS victims and educating the general public about

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<sup>1</sup> Malawi Social Action Fund (see footnote 6). MASAF I denotes the first phase of this project, which was later extended to MASAF II and III.

<sup>2</sup> Mkandawire, Department of Human Resources and Management Development, 2005, pers.comm.

HIV/AIDS. According to Omoto (2005), AIDS volunteerism has great significance in terms of economic, public policy and public health and in terms of instigating societal change related to HIV. The need for volunteers in this area is likely to increase in the future. Other areas where volunteerism/civic service are seen to be important include personal, organizational, community, social and economic development; environmental protection and improvement; training and employment; peace and understanding; advocacy; physical infrastructure; citizenship; experiential learning; skill development; nation building; arts and culture; public safety; emergency services, and emergency and disaster relief efforts (Moore McBride et al., 2003a; Moore McBride et al., 2003c; Patel, 2003; Sherraden, 2001b; Sherraden, 2001c; Tang et al., 2003). "The focus in developing countries tends to be on basic needs, humanitarian development issues, peace and human rights, participation and human development (in areas such as poverty and inequality), effecting improvements in health and education and responding to the HIV/AIDS pandemic. Some of the development programmes incorporate citizen participation as a principle, and a means to promote institutional development and a democratic culture" (Patel, 2003: 91). Malawi illustrates Patel's observations with volunteer involvement taking place in a variety of areas, most especially HIV/AIDS, youth, education, food security, environment and justice. Involvement is particularly prevalent in HIV/AIDS and orphan care, especially among youth (Fairley, 2006) and faith-based organizations (PAC, 2003).

Traditionally, in terms of volunteering 'those who had' or 'the included' were most likely to act as servers and 'those who had not' or 'the excluded' were most likely to act as the beneficiaries (Gillette, 2003). According to Brav et al. (2002: 4) "there may not be an equal opportunity to serve for all persons who would like to do so. Disadvantaged individuals often find it difficult to engage in intensive and long-term uncompensated service programs". However, according to Gillette (2003: 63), recent years have seen the rise of a new and unusual phenomenon whereby "excluded people are increasingly forging their own futures, and those of their societies at large. In this way the very people who have been excluded are breaking new ground in voluntary service". This is evident in some sectors in Malawi where, for example, the youth are increasingly involved in voluntary activities aimed at their peers. Similarly, those volunteering in the HIV/AIDS sector are often those who feel at greatest risk of the pandemic and frequently people volunteer as a means of ensuring that they too will benefit from the programme when they succumb to the disease.

Omoto (2005) suggested that volunteerism is initiated and maintained for different and sometimes changing reasons. He further suggested that AIDS volunteers are motivated by: values (expression of personal values or to satisfy felt humanitarian obligations); community concern; a need for greater understanding of HIV/AIDS; personal development; and esteem enhancement. Patel (2003) suggested that for many servers dual benefits to the individual (personal growth and development) and society are important motivators. Team Consultants (2001, cited in Hoodless, 2003: 81) suggested that "there are nearly as many motivations and reasons for volunteering as there are individual volunteers". Heartbeat Trends (2001, cited in Hoodless, 2003) described categories of volunteers and their fulfillment needs in terms of: nurturers (emotional connection and self-worth through nurturing); socialisers (a sense of belonging through social interaction); and workers (self-worth through being useful and productive).

While it is suggested that service programmes are characterized by a dual focus on both the servers and beneficiaries, with both to benefit from the experience (Moore McBride et al., 2003b; Tang et al., 2003), indications are that "in general, programmes based in developing countries tend to emphasize the impact of service on beneficiaries versus the impact on servers. In contrast, service programmes in developed nations tend to emphasize the impacts of



the service experience on the servers” (Moore McBride et al., 2003c: 14). While, as suggested by Menon et al. (2002: 9), “acts of service produced outcomes for both the server and the served”, predominantly in terms of volunteer training, few organizations in Malawi indicate that server benefits were a primary aim of their programmes. For most programmes their aims and objectives centered on the beneficiaries. One major challenge in the area of volunteerism in Malawi, as highlighted by several service providers, is that there is a need to find motivating incentives for volunteers and to include such incentives in service programme design and implementation (Nthara, 2004; Bacon, 2002).

## **8.6 Nature of the Service Experience**

As noted above, volunteering and civic service can benefit both the server and the beneficiary, however, little information is actually available on the benefits to servers and little attention is paid to volunteers themselves (Patel, 2003; Ellis, 1985). One study in Africa (specifically Nigeria and Botswana) that looked at volunteering from the server’s position was commissioned by The Secretariat of the International Association for Volunteer Effort. This study had the aim of developing a better understanding of volunteering in order to identify appropriate and effective ways of promoting and supporting further development. The study found that volunteers have both positive and negative experiences related to volunteering. However, most volunteers found volunteering to be a very positive experience especially in terms of personal gain (e.g. a learning experience, personal therapy through assistance to others, feelings of acceptance and a sense of confidence and assertiveness) (Thupayagale and Rampa, 2005). Another study that considered the perspective of the server was one conducted by Omoto (2005) in the USA, which looked specifically at AIDS volunteers. This study aimed to understand the social and psychological aspects of volunteering. It concluded that: AIDS volunteerism is initiated for varying and sometimes changing reasons; some volunteers experience feelings of stigmatization and discomfort directly related to their volunteer activities; volunteers are affected and changed by the experience of volunteering; and volunteers have psychological needs of their own which need to be addressed, given that the need for AIDS volunteers to provide education, care and advocacy is likely to increase in the future. In relation to stigmatization, the suggestion is that if beneficiaries (e.g. people living with AIDS (PLWAs)) are stigmatized by society, this effect may ‘spill over’ onto the volunteers who work with them. In terms of Malawi, while “people who are infected and affected by HIV/AIDS are stigmatized and discriminated by members of religious as well as the wider community” (PAC, 2003: vii), there is little evidence that this effect spills over onto volunteers working in the sector. However, Omoto’s opinion that volunteers need assistance reflects that of delegations attending two conferences in Malawi. For example, Sisy (2002) summarising at the National Aids Conference 2002, suggested that volunteers experience serious stress and it is necessary to offer counseling, incentives or other ways of ‘caring for the care givers’ in order to avoid high burnout rates. Similarly, Nthara (2004) at a Voluntary Service Overseas (VSO) Regional Conference in Malawi in 2004 suggested that more attention needs to be paid to supporting volunteers in their work.

While few studies have concentrated on the needs and benefits to servers, there is a suggestion that the benefits to servers on programmes may be greater than to the beneficiaries (Brav et al., 2002). Eberly & Sherraden (1990, cited in Brav et al., 2002: 5) and Armin (1999, cited in Brav et al., 2002: 5) suggested that studies of former United States Peace Corps volunteers confirmed that these volunteers gained and learned more from the experience than they gave or served. Similarly Gillette (2003) suggested that by involvement in volunteer activities, ‘excluded’ or ‘marginalized’ members of society can achieve a degree of empowerment, involvement and self-worth.

## **8.7 Institutional Dimensions: Access, Incentives, Information and Facilitation**

Servers and beneficiaries vary greatly in terms of key characteristics including age, sex, background, qualifications and experience. In general, server criteria are determined by the organisation with which they are volunteering and by the aims and objectives of the service programme in which they are involved. Beneficiary criteria are determined by the aims and objectives of the service programme in which they are involved. Indications are that the youth volunteer more than any other group (Moore McBride et al., 2003c; Patel 2003) and hence “the most common eligibility criterion is age” (Moore McBride et al., 2003c: 10). This would appear to be the case in Malawi where youth are highly involved in volunteering activities both as servers and beneficiaries (Fairley, 2006). In Malawi, while both males and females volunteer, there is some debate over their relative levels of involvement, with some literature reporting equal involvement by males and females (Gaynor, 1993) and others, reporting higher levels of female involvement (Nthara, 2004; Bacon, 2002). Again, in a recent national survey, Pelsler et al. (2004: 86) noted that “women were less likely than men to say that they participated in community activities.” What there is agreement upon, however, is the fact that men play a greater role in decision making activities and that females are more likely to do volunteer activities based on the traditional role of the care giver. This has resulted in a suggestion that, in terms of volunteerism, there is a need to counter cultural views of care-giving as feminine and to find initiatives that will increase male participation, particularly in volunteer activities (Nthara, 2004; Bacon 2002). Educational attainment would also appear to be of importance in terms of server criteria. Indications are that service programmes choose to maximize their efficiency by selecting qualified participants (Brave et al., 2002). This would appear in particular to be the case in relation to international programmes and those run by governments.

The issue of compensation or stipend attracts a lot of debate. According to some writers, compensation or required service is not volunteerism (Brown, 1999, cited in VOLSA 2004; Carson, 1999, cited in VOLSA 2004; Handy & Wadsworth, 1996, cited in VOLSA 2004), and some writers define volunteerism based on this criterion (Carson, 1999, cited in Tang et al. 2003). According to Gillette (2003: 63) “the basic aim of a volunteer should not be material gain”. Regardless, many service programmes do offer financial rewards to servers but never at the market rate (Tang et al., 2003). Although not all programmes provide financial rewards, most do provide some incentive to volunteers. According to a number of authors (Moore McBride et al., 2003c; Tang et al., 2003), incentives can include development of skills, educational credits or scholarships, community recognition, provision of information and facilitation, support via training, supervision, reflection sessions and mentoring, and development of social connections. The rewarding of servers either financially or by some other incentive may reflect, as discussed above, the desire by some programmes to impact positively on both the beneficiaries and the servers. It may also be seen as a way of increasing the number of volunteers, the intensity of participation and the longevity of the commitment to the programme.

Current literature in Malawi (Nthara, 2004; PAC, 2003; Mwale, 2002) suggests that, while few service programmes in Malawi offer financial compensation to the volunteers, most offer some incentive most commonly in the form of training or skills acquisition (which is generally regarded as a good motivator). The situation however, may be programme specific to some extent. For example, several faith-based organisations (FBOs) working with orphans and vulnerable children (OVC) indicate that their volunteers do not get any ‘perks’ and complain that few volunteers working in the sector have received training in carrying out OVC support, both of which impacted negatively upon the possible success of programmes (PAC, 2003). On the

other hand, reports from a Prevention of Mother to Child Transmission (PMTCT) programme indicated that volunteers were trained as councillors and that they received incentives (Mwale, 2002). In general, indications are that in recent years in Malawi there has been an increase in the establishment of international NGOs who provide allowances and other incentives to community members for development work (Fairley, 2006). For many, the provision of incentives is seen as an essential element to the successful provision of service programmes (Nthara, 2004; PAC, 2003; Gaynor, 1993). Furthermore, Hauya (2002), in summarizing discussions at the Malawi National Aids Conference 2002, suggested that greater sustainability of programmes based on volunteer labour could be achieved by supplementing incentives with social rewards. However, Nthara (2004) summing up at the VSO Regional Conference of 2004, questioned the sustainability of programmes that offered volunteers financial incentives.

## **8.8 Programme Administration**

There is general agreement that organisational context impacts upon the management, structure and character of civic service/volunteering programmes (Rochester, 1999; Silver, 1989). However, according to Rochester (1999), little research has been conducted in this field, and hence best practice writing often gives little advice about how management of volunteers can vary from organisation to organisation.

As indicated above (in Section 2.3.), most volunteering takes place through NGOs. According to Moore et al. (2003c: 14) “the voluntary sector (third or non-governmental sector) is clearly driving the development of civic service, but the state often plays an important role in funding”. The relationship between these key players is important. This was highlighted by Patel (2003) when she suggested that relations between the state, the voluntary sector and the market, shape the way that civic service is institutionally organized, and by Brav et al. (2002) who indicated that the political agenda of governments may influence government-sponsored and government-mandated service programmes and undermine the server’s and the served’s individual rights. In the African context, VOLSA (2004) highlighted the importance of collaboration and inclusion (between and among stakeholders, governments, private sector and the civil society) for the sustainable development and betterment of Africa.

This study found that in Malawi, where there is no policy that directly governs volunteers, management of volunteers is predominantly at an organizational level, although in some sectors (i.e. youth and community services) there is limited instruction or advice available from government. Some collaboration also takes place between the major stakeholders such as the donors, government and NGOs, but indications are that collaboration and networking between organizations that use volunteers is limited. For example, according to PAC (2003: 28) “partnership within the RCB [religious co-coordinating bodies] community as well as with other stakeholders was not strong”.

Some strong collaboration links do exist. For example, the PAC report states that “UNICEF has collaborated with Government, NGOs, CBOs and FBOs in a number of programmes and projects” (PAC, 2003: 19). Again, according to PAC (2003: 21), “the UNICEF and FBO partnership has made a major contribution to the country’s achievements in the area of child health and HIV/AIDS impact mitigation”. Increasingly donors and development agencies are implementing programmes through direct collaboration with government ministries. In the education sector, the UK government’s Department for International Development (DFID) “has been the most active donor in the primary education sector” and USAID has funded the Social Mobilisation Campaign for Education Quality Project (SMC-EQ) (GOMa, 2003: 7). In terms of civic service programmes, the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), which promotes

democratic values, attitudes and behaviour at the grass-root level is an example of a joint project between the Government of Malawi and the European Union (EU), with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) providing project management services (NICE, undated). In general, therefore, NGOs, CBOs and FBOs working in a variety of sectors (for example HIV/AIDS, OVC, youth, justice and democracy, education, and environment) are the recipients of advice and limited policy guidance from government and technical, material and financial support from donors.

## **8.9 Policy and Legislation**

Brav et al. (2003) suggested that in any country or culture, service policies and programmes are created for different and varied reasons and can produce multiple and varied effects. This is clearly the case, given the variation in form and purpose of volunteer programmes (e.g. US Peace Corps, Europeans Voluntary Service, Japanese Overseas Co-operation Volunteer) developed worldwide. Brav et al. (2002) further indicated that programme models should reflect the intended outcomes for both the server and the served. The “thoughtful, informed programme development is crucial to ensure the achievement of benefits, and amelioration of negative effects” and “local, national, international, and transnational policies, especially those mandating service participation, should be open to public scrutiny and input” (Brav et al., 2002: 9). Similarly, Simbota (2002), in relation to policy in the workplace, suggested that partnership is critical to policy development and that consultation with the beneficiaries enhances acceptance of the policy.

It would appear therefore, that in order to allow for the development of service programmes, it is necessary to have appropriate policy and legislation in place. However, according to Moore McBride et al. (2003b), policy and legislation in the field service programmes have received little attention (especially in academic terms). Hence information about appropriate policy/legislation formulation and implementation in the field is limited. A further unfortunate reality is that in many countries, especially developing nations where, as indicated above, much of the volunteering lacks organization and structure, there is little if any policy in place to support volunteering/civic service activities.

The importance of policy and legislation has been further highlighted by Patel and Wilson (2004b: 36S) who propose that governments need to “develop enabling policy and legislation to support voluntarism and civic service efforts”. They also indicate that “a major challenge for civic service in Africa will be how to create effective complementary partnerships with local, informal community-based organizations engaged in civic service without compromising their efficacy”. These challenges can perhaps be met to some degree by drawing upon lessons learnt by existing service programmes. For example, VOLSA (2004) suggested that Africa could learn lessons from those countries (predominantly developed nations) in the world that have already developed volunteering models.

In the Malawian context there is little policy and legislation pertinent to volunteering, civic service or associated sectors. According to GOM (2003:4) “Government has yet to develop guidelines or demonstrate its full commitment to community participation”. Although a number of policies do make reference to the work of volunteers (see Section 4.6.), government has yet to produce over-arching policies or legislation directly related to volunteer activities. Even at individual organisational level, there is little policy available on service and volunteerism. For example, most FBOs “rely on government policy formulation” and very few Religious Coordinating Bodies (RCBs) “reported having HIV/AIDS or OVC policies and guidelines. Instead many RCBs rely on the policy formulation of other organizations” (PAC, 2003: 27 and vi).

## 8.10 Factors Promoting or Hindering Service

In general there is a shortage of research and knowledge on civic service and volunteerism and hence worldwide there is limited knowledge in relation to the factors that hinder or promote volunteerism and/or civic service (see among others Moore McBride et al., 2003a; Patel and Wilson, 2004b; VOLSA, 2004). Where research has taken place however, a number of key factors have been identified as hindering volunteerism and service. In the African context and beyond, these key factors include a lack of partnership between the key stakeholders and the question of the appropriateness of donor driven initiatives (Patel and Wilson, 2004b). In Malawi, as elsewhere, research in the field is limited. Regardless, a number of similar key factors hindering volunteerism/civic service have been identified. These factors include: a lack of partnership and collaboration between stakeholders (Nthara, 2004; PAC, 2003); the fact that donor organizations, through their programmes and funding, determine the way forward such that participation at community level is limited to pseudo participation (Rose, 2003); a lack of resources (PAC, 2003); long distances and lack of transportation systems (Hoodless, 2003); a lack of training and incentives for volunteers (PAC, 2003); high personal workloads of volunteers, resulting in them leaving the programmes or suffering burnout (Gaynor, 1993; Munthali, 2002); illiteracy and poor levels of education generally (Munthali, 2002), and high levels of national poverty (Nthara, 2004). According to PAC (2003: 29) "in order to implement their HIV/AIDS and OVC programmes effectively, RCBs need to work in close partnership with donors and government bodies such as the Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services".

In terms of the factors that promote volunteerism and service in Malawi, only one key factor has been identified i.e. the provision of training and/or incentives to volunteers (Bacon, 2002; Mwale, 2002). However, indications are that, as suggested by Omoto (2005), those volunteers who get something out of their efforts are more likely to serve for longer periods as compared to those whose actual or perceived benefits are low.

According to some writers (Brav et al., 2002; Moore McBride et al., 2003c), some of the key aspects of volunteerism and civic service that remain unexplored include the negative impacts of such activities. Where research has been undertaken, the predominant criticisms of service programmes are: that they are unsustainable, they create or increase dependency, and they displace existing support systems (Ehrichs, 2002, cited in Brav et al., 2002). There is some evidence of this in Malawi since the advent of democracy, with communities increasingly depending upon the government or NGOs to initiate and provide support previously initiated and provided at community level. According to Fairley (2006), following the advent of democracy, the newly elected Malawian government, through castigating the previous regime's emphasis on self-help and assuring communities that they would take care of their needs, caused communal civic service to flounder, resulting in an increase in individualism as communities waited for government to solve their problems. In addition, she indicated that international NGOs, who provide allowances and other incentives to community members for development work, have instilled a dependency culture, further undermining participation in, and the sustainability of, grass-roots development.

On the other hand, some positive impacts of volunteerism and civic service have been identified and include: increased sense of community ownership of programmes and facilities (increasing programme sustainability) (GOMa, 2003); increased levels of acceptance and awareness among volunteers and the general public on a variety of issues such as HIV/AIDS (Kazisonga and Black, 2002); acquisition of new knowledge and skills among volunteers (Gaynor, 1993);

and more specifically, a reduction in hospitalizations and an improvement in the quality of life for those suffering from AIDS and/or TB (Buhendwa, 2002).

### **8.11 Regional Collaboration and Research**

As indicated above, there is little research in the fields of service and volunteerism and what has been conducted has been limited to a number of key areas (e.g. benefits and beneficiaries) (Moore McBride et al., 2003a). According to Brav et al. (2002: 1), research in the field of service “is still in its infancy, however, and much of the existing research is descriptive in nature, and is not comparative or global in its representation”. As a result, little is known about collaboration (local, national, regional or international) among stakeholders in the volunteerism/civic service sector (Moore McBride et al., 2003c). It can be assumed however, that levels of collaboration are low, given that delegates at a SADC Volunteer Vision Conference held in South Africa in 2002 indicated that there was a need to strengthen the exchange and cooperation among volunteers from different countries and to encourage South-South volunteer exchange programmes (VOLSA 2004).

In the African context, until now, this has been difficult, given the lack of structured service operating. However, with the possible development of the African Volunteers Corps (AVC), which it has been suggested should be people-centered and driven, and established alongside the programmes of the African Union; South-South volunteering exchange programmes may become a reality (VOLSA, 2004). Given that it is envisaged that the AVC would operate on three levels (local, regional and continental), it should also enhance regional collaboration between organizations and governments that utilize volunteers.

In addition to increasing collaboration, there is also general agreement that worldwide there is a need to intensify the level of research being carried out on volunteerism and service. Brav et al. (2002: 10) suggested that “a research agenda that is rigorous, cross-cultural, and critical can help build a balanced knowledge base for more informed decision-making regarding civic service”. Given the specific lack of research on the impacts of civic service and volunteerism, key areas that have been identified as needing further research include: service and servers (Ellis, 1985; Moore McBride et al., 2003c) and monetary rewards and incentives (Ellis 1985). A lack of research and research capacity is a particular problem for poorer countries, including countries in Africa (Patel and Wilson, 2004b). Consequently, Patel and Wilson (2004b) have indicated that more research is needed in the African context to strengthen the understanding of service and the role it could play. They further identified two additional areas for future research: the study of the civic service initiatives of community-based non-profit organizations, in particular their potential role in human development and democracy and; research on civic service that attempts to deepen knowledge and understanding of the role of civic service in the ongoing economic, social, political, and technological transition in Sub-Saharan Africa as an important areas for future research (Patel and Wilson, 2004a; Patel and Wilson, 2004b). Moreover they recommended the strengthening and expansion of research capacity in civic service and related institutions.

## **9. Methodology**

### **9.1 Research Design**

#### **9.1.1 Research Approach**

This study follows a qualitative, descriptive research approach in order to gather in-depth, rich information on the nature and form of civic service and volunteerism in Malawi. Interviews with key informants and a FGD with service providers from a variety of sectors at the national, district and community level have enabled the study to gather a range of perspectives on the field of civic service in Malawi. As such, this study involves the essential elements of a national case-study - fitting into a wider five-country study - rather than an extensive survey. Adaptions to the research design presented in a generic five-country research proposal were made to fit the national context and address some of the challenges faced in implementing the research. These changes are discussed in the appropriate sections below.

#### **9.1.2. Research Questions**

In order to achieve the aims and objectives of the study, the research is framed by several guiding research questions developed from those used in the GSI global assessment of civic service and volunteerism and, subsequently, condensed and adapted to fit the Southern African context. Specifically, for the Malawi case study, the research questions are as follows:

- How is the meaning of civic service and volunteerism perceived in the Malawi context?
- What is the nature and extent of civic service and volunteering programmes in Malawi?
- What are the main goals, strategies and target groups of these programmes?
- How do those serving in service programmes view the nature of their service experience?
- What support is provided for those serving in service programmes, particularly in terms of access, incentives, information, facilitation and training?
- What policies exist to promote and support civic service and volunteerism in Malawi?
- What are the main factors that either promote or hinder the development of civic service and volunteering in Malawi?
- To what extent do stakeholders in the field of civic service collaborate with each other?
- How do stakeholders view the way forward in terms of research into, and institutionalisation of, civic service and volunteering activities in Malawi?

#### **9.1.3. Sampling**

According to the terms of reference for this study, a minimum of five key informants were to be identified: two from government, two from NGOs and one from a donor agency. The key informants ideally were to be people who are currently shaping or influencing civic service policies and programmes in Malawi. This target population thus included individuals who are knowledgeable about civic service and volunteering policies and programmes in Malawi, and those directly involved in implementing, facilitating or supporting civic service initiatives. Participants for inclusion in FGDs were drawn from national and international organisations running structured service programmes, as well as district-level and community-based self-help programmes. In addition, as decentralisation is currently being operationalised in Malawi, with increasing responsibility for key services being given to district assemblies, a decision was made to include representatives from relevant government departments at the district level.

Based on a brief, initial review of the literature and discussions with personal contacts in various sectors in Malawi, key sectors from which organisations and government departments were identified for possible participation in the study included: health (including HIV and AIDS), youth, human rights governance and democracy, social welfare, community development, education, sustainable livelihoods and the environment. Key informants, service providers and district and community organisations implementing service programmes were selected using a non-random, **purposive sampling method**, based on the criteria outlined above. Possible key informants were initially contacted by telephone and asked permission to be interviewed, or to recommend someone else with sufficient knowledge of the issues relating to civic service and volunteerism. Once several individuals had been thus identified and initial interviews had taken place, a **snowball sampling technique** – asking each respondent to nominate other possible participants -was also used to identify additional individuals for further interviews. Similarly, potential key informants and contacts within sectors were also used to identify service providers and other organisations, particularly CBOs, for possible inclusion in FGDs. This technique not only allowed the researchers to ‘widen the net’ when attempting to identify possible participants, but also the nominator provided a useful ‘reference’ or recommendation by which to establish the researchers’ credentials and build rapport when approaching nominated individuals.

#### **9.1.4. Research Instruments<sup>3</sup>**

In order to standardise data collection methods across the five countries involved in this study, the senior, co-ordinating research team supplied the initial research instruments. Key informant interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide, which was adapted by the Malawi research team following piloting to take into account both issues of language and the context of the study, and supply additional probes where deemed necessary.

Similarly, a discussion guide provided by the senior research team to facilitate focus groups was adapted following initial key informant interviews, which highlighted particular knowledge gaps - such as volunteers’ perspectives on the nature of service and the defining of servers and beneficiaries- and emerging themes that could be explored in-depth in FGDs. Where necessary, additional probes were included to draw out participants’ perspectives on these and other issues. As much as possible, interview schedules and FGD guides followed the overall framework of the main research questions.

In addition to the instruments supplied by the senior team, the Malawi research team used a short checklist - a registration form for participants - to collect additional information on the characteristics of the organisations represented at the FGDs. A one- page introduction to the study, detailing its aims and objectives, was also included in a pack distributed to FGD participants. All participants in the study were required to read and sign a consent form.

## **9.2 Participants in the Study**

### **9.2.1 Identification of Key Informants<sup>4</sup>**

At national level, directors of the relevant government departments of Social Welfare, Community Development and Youth were approached and expressed a willingness to participate in the study. UNICEF was identified as a key donor agency in co-ordinating and

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<sup>3</sup> Copies of the adapted research instruments are included in the appendices to this report.

<sup>4</sup> For further details of key informants, see Table 1 below.



funding programmes reliant on grass-roots volunteerism amongst communities, particularly with respect to youth work and child protection. UNICEF's Youth Officer, who agreed to be a key informant for this study, also has several years' experience working for the National Youth Council, thus able to provide valuable insights into the working of youth work structures and programmes in Malawi.

Identifying key informants from NGOs that are currently central to shaping or influencing civic service or volunteer programmes at the national level proved to be somewhat problematic, since relatively few NGOs in key sectors have national coverage, and those that do, appear to have little direct influence in shaping policy or running structured civic service and volunteering initiatives.

Special consideration was given to identifying and interviewing key informants working with, or having extensive knowledge of, a Volunteer Sending Agency (VSA) (Malawi's Community Service programme – a newly established initiative under the Judiciary system and the country's only national civic service programme) and the recently launched Orphans and Vulnerable Children (OVC) Programme (implemented by the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services).

A total of nine key informants were interviewed: three from government departments; two from donor-funded, collaborative government projects; two donor/development agencies -including one VSA -, one religious NGO and one national, membership-based NGO. Three of the key informants were female, six were male, and represented organisations working with programmes being implemented in both rural and urban areas (see Table 1 below).

### **9.2.2. Identification of FGD participants<sup>5</sup>**

It was originally intended that one focus group involving national and international organisations running structured service programmes would be held in Lilongwe, the capital - where government ministries, donor agencies and the majority of national and international offices are located - whilst a second focus group involving providers of district -level and community-based volunteer programmes be held in Zomba and Blantyre districts in the south. A decision was made to focus on just two districts for the second FGD – one rural, one urban – to minimise travel for those participants from relatively small-scale local initiatives, particularly those involved in rural community-based volunteer programmes, which were less easily accessible.

Unfortunately, as with key informants, it proved difficult to identify sufficient numbers of individuals running structured service programmes, particularly with a national or international perspective, to warrant this first FGD. Thus, in line with a suggestion in the original, generic research proposal, a decision was taken to hold one FGD that combined individuals from national and international organisations running structured service programmes, as well as district and community-based self-help programmes.

To further compensate for this, a 'second round' of 3 additional key informant interviews were carried out by the researchers with those few individuals that had been identified thus far for the first FGD. These included key informants working with a government collaborative project on civic education, Malawi's community service programme and the Malawi Red Cross Society – all of which have national coverage.

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<sup>5</sup> For further details of FGD participants, see Table 2 below.

**Table 1: Details of Key Informants and Their Organisations**

<b>Key informant</b>	<b>Organisation</b>	<b>Geographic Spread</b>
Youth Officer (previously with National Youth Council)	UNICEF	National, urban and rural
Director of Social Welfare	Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services	National, predominantly rural
Director of Community Development	Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services	National, urban and rural
Department of Youth	Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture	National, urban and rural
Justice Advisor	Malawi Safety, Security and Access to Justice (MASSAJ)	National, urban and rural
Programme Officer	National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE)	National, predominantly rural
Programme Officer	Voluntary Services Overseas (VSO)	Targeted districts, urban and rural
Senior Lecturer, UNIMA. (Ex- Executive Board Member)	Malawi Red Cross Society	National, predominantly rural
Programme Officer	CAFOD HIV/AIDS and Home-based Care project	Targeted districts, urban and rural

Decisions about which district and community-level organisations and departments to approach for inclusion in the FGD were taken following initial key informant interviews. As well as providing opportunities to gather nominations for possible participants, initial analysis of these key informant interviews also highlighted specific areas of the research that were not being adequately addressed. For example, it soon became clear that key informants were unable to provide detailed information regarding the nature of service from the perspectives of volunteers, and the motivation and personal benefits behind their volunteering. Hence, a decision was taken to include individuals working directly with volunteers, as well as both current and ex-volunteers. The choice of participants was also guided by a desire to include individuals from sectors felt to be under-represented amongst the key informants: notably education, the environment and rural livelihoods.

A total of twelve participants were contacted and agreed to attend, although only ten came on the day. The final group was fairly eclectic, representing a range of types of local organisations and programmes – governmental, non-governmental and faith-based – differing in scope, size and geographical spread (see Table 2 below). Participants also represented a relatively wide range of different types of service, although activities addressing HIV/AIDS were cross-cutting and mainstreamed into several programmes.

**Table 2: Details of FGD Participants and Their Organisations**

FGD Participant	Type of Organisation	Name of Organisation	Main Type(s) of Service	Estimated /olunteers	Geographic Spread
Project Officer (ex-volunteer)	Local NGO	Centre for Victimization of Women and Children (CAVWOC)	- Child Welfare and Protection - Human Rights - Health (HIV/AIDS) - Youth work	1,000	Targeted Districts
District Education Manager	Government	District Education Office (Zomba Rural)	- Education - Infrastructure Development	100 (volunteer teachers)	District-wide, Rural
District Social Welfare Officer	Government	Social Welfare Department (Zomba)	- Child Welfare and Protection - Education - Community Development	10,000 (community-based)	District-wide, Urban and Rural
Project Manager	Religious NGO	Domasi Micro-Nutrition Project (MICAH)	- Rural Livelihoods - Community Development - Health (HIV/AIDS)	63	Targeted communities, Rural
Youth Coordinator (volunteer)	Local NGO	Joyce Banda Foundation	- Education - Health (HIV/AIDS) - Youth work	6	Targeted communities, Rural
District Officer	Government/Donor project	National Initiative for Civic Education	- Democracy and Governance - Human Rights - Rural Livelihoods - Education - Community Development - Environmental Protection - Health (HIV/AIDS) - Gender	700 (in district)	National, Urban and Rural

<b>FGD Participant</b>	<b>Type of Organisation</b>	<b>Name of Organisation</b>	<b>Main Type(s) of Service</b>	<b>Estimated /olunteers</b>	<b>Geographic Spread</b>
Environmental Clubs Coordinator (ex-volunteer)	Membership Association (NGO)	Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Environmental Protection</li> <li>- Rural Livelihoods</li> <li>- Education</li> </ul>	900	Targeted schools and communities, predominantly rural
Parish Priest	Catholic Church (FBO)	St. Charles Lwanga Parish, Zomba Diocese	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health (HIV/AIDS)</li> <li>- Education</li> <li>-Community Development.</li> <li>-Personal Development</li> </ul>	80	Targeted communities, urban and rural
HIV/AIDs Coordinator (VSO volunteer)	VSA/development agency	VSO, working with Malawi Prisons	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health (HIV/AIDS)</li> <li>- Education</li> <li>- Human Rights</li> <li>- Sport and Recreation</li> <li>- Child Welfare and Protection</li> </ul>	92 (VSO volunteers)	Urban
Human Rights Officer	Local NGO	Youth Network and Counselling (YONECO)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Health (HIV/AIDS)</li> <li>- Human Rights</li> <li>-Child Welfare and Protection</li> <li>- Sport and Recreation</li> <li>- Governance</li> </ul>	420	Targeted districts, urban and rural

### **9.3 Research Activities**

In-country data collection took place over a period of six months, between May and October 2005, and involved the following activities: an extensive document search, orientation of research assistants, primary data collection (including FGD and key informant interviews) and analysis.

#### **9.3.1 Document Search**

Researchers conducted an on-going document search to aid initially in the identification of possible participants in the study and latterly, to produce a review of relevant international, regional and national literature to frame the study. Information gathered from the document search informed both the context and findings of the study. The document search involved library and internet searches for published studies, and in-country reports on service and volunteering. It also included the collection of 'grey literature' from organisations undertaking service and volunteering programmes, such as conference reports, evaluations of programmes or projects involved in service and volunteering, newsletters and other, limited documentation made available by some of the organisations contacted. The library search included: the UN Resource Centre and British Council in Lilongwe and the National Statistics Office (NSO), University of Malawi libraries (including the Malawi Collection held at Chancellor College) and the documentation centres of the Centre for Social Research (CSR) and the Centre of Educational Research and Training (CERT) in Zomba.

#### **9.3.2 Orientation of Research Assistants**

The Malawi in-country team temporarily employed two locally based graduates as research assistants. These research assistants were selected according to their previous experience of social research projects and their competency in focus group facilitation and accuracy in note-taking. During a one-day orientation, the research assistants were introduced to the purpose of the study and familiarised with the FGD guides and key informant interview schedules.

#### **9.3.3 Key Informant Interviews**

The key informant interviews were conducted using a structured interview guide supplied by the senior research team and adapted by the in-country team. Lead researchers carried out all interviews, taking detailed field notes and, where permission was given, taping the interviews. Taped material was transcribed by the research assistants. A few participants were uncomfortable with the use of tape recorders and researchers thus relied on their notes alone.

#### **9.3.4 Focus Group Discussion**

The FGD with representatives from district and community-level organisations took place over one morning, with an initial introduction by the in-country team to describe the background and purpose of the study and a break for refreshments. Each participant was given a small stipend to encourage their attendance and where they had to travel from out of town, their travel costs were covered. The team leader facilitated the FGD, with the other lead researcher and one research assistant both taking detailed notes. A

second research assistant was responsible for various administrative tasks. The discussion was also taped and typed material later transcribed by the research assistants. These transcriptions were verified against the field notes.

### **9.3.5 Additional Data Collection**

In addition to the above research methods stipulated in the original, generic research proposal, some further data collection was carried out to supplement and corroborate the information gathered. During the period of data collection in Lilongwe, staff in relevant government ministries and parastatals were approached and requested for information on current policies and guidelines pertaining to civic service and volunteering in Malawi. Similarly, VSAs present in Malawi (e.g. UN Volunteers, Peace Corps, JICA etc.), and key personnel within these organisations, were identified via informed knowledge and the snowballing technique. These key personnel, whilst not subjected to in-depth interviewing, were approached, either person-to-person or through email, and asked for information on the number of volunteers they have placed in Malawi and the range of sectors and activities they were involved in.

### **9.3.6 Data Analysis**

Analysis of the data was largely descriptive and interpretative. Matrices were used to categorise responses in key informant transcripts and focus group reports according to research questions and sub-questions used to structure the interview schedules and discussion guides. From these matrices emerging patterns and common themes were identified, summarised and synthesised, whilst allowing for the comparison and contrasting of different perspectives. Analysis of selected service programmes (highlighted and discussed by key informants) is presented in matrix form<sup>6</sup>.

Information obtained from the document search was used to triangulate arising issues and provide limited quantitative information on the nature and extent of civic service activities of organisations and government departments that participated in the study.

## **9.4. Limitations, Challenges and Lessons Learnt**

### **9.4.1 Scope of the study**

In line with the original, generic research proposal guiding this study, the research was not designed as a survey and, as such, this limited the breadth of coverage of the study and, to some extent, the representativeness of the findings. Thus, since primary data was gathered from only nine key informant interviews and one focus group, the findings should be treated with a degree of caution. In an attempt to address this issue, where possible, findings were verified via results from other surveys and studies carried out in Malawi and elsewhere. In addition, it should be noted that despite carrying out a detailed document search, quantifying the full extent of civic and volunteering programmes in Malawi remains beyond the scope of this study.

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<sup>6</sup> See Appendix 1

#### **9.4.2. Identification and Selection of Participants**

Since the full extent of civic service programmes operating in Malawi is currently largely undocumented, initially the lead researchers relied on personal contacts to identify key informants and FGD participants. To help address the possibility of selection bias towards their specific knowledge area and experience, snowball sampling was used to identify further participants, although, with such subjective sampling, the possibility of bias towards some sectors remains. Also, despite numerous attempts to secure interviews, key sectors of rural livelihoods and health, at national level, are under-represented in this study.

As noted earlier, insufficient numbers of possible participants fitting the required criteria led to a decision to combine the planned FGDs as one. However, the resulting mix of government officials, NGO staff, representatives of FBOs, as well as current and ex-volunteers, was successful in producing a lively and thought-provoking discussion. Participants expressed their eagerness to hold further forums for such discussions and noted the importance of opening up dialogue on volunteerism in Malawi.

One further area of concern is that, both amongst key informants and FGD participants, women were under-represented. This, to some extent, reflects the absence of women from decision-making and leadership positions in Malawi.

#### **9.4.3 Length of Interviews**

The scope and length of the key informant interview meant that several interviews lasted well over an hour. Lead researchers noted fatigue amongst some participants and a desire to 'hurry the interview along', so that the last few questions generally elicited only brief responses. In addition, in busy government offices, interviews were subjected to frequent interruptions, as participants were required to attend to other urgent tasks.

#### **9.4.4 Availability of Literature**

The ongoing document search, despite the assistance of the main libraries and documentation centres in the country, revealed relatively little published work on volunteerism or civic service in Malawi, and what literature that has been found relates more to elucidating the context of the study (e.g. the history of service), rather than providing insights into theoretical frameworks and current understanding or analyses of civic service and volunteerism. Whilst this appears to indicate clear knowledge gaps in the literature, and thus, provides an important rationale for pursuing this study, it should also be noted that many of the libraries and documentation centres visited do lack current journals and resources in general, thus hindering any in-country review of literature.

Furthermore, despite a genuine interest by many of the organisations contacted to participate in the study, several were unable or unwilling to furnish the team with any additional documentation, such as background papers, evaluation reports or policy guidelines. One VSA expressed reluctance to provide even the minimum of information on volunteers currently serving in the country. No national databases are available that provide estimates of total numbers of local volunteers serving in Malawi, and, indeed, few organisations contacted could give accurate or up-to-date figures for their own programmes.

## 10. Context of the Study

### 10.1 Introduction

Malawi is a small, densely populated, landlocked country in sub-Saharan Africa. Tanzania borders it to the north, Mozambique to the east and south and Zambia to the west. Malawi is approximately 900 kilometres long, ranging in width from 80 to 160 kilometres. Lake Malawi, which covers about a fifth of the total area of the country, is 475 kilometres long and runs along Malawi's eastern border with Mozambique. Malawi is situated at the tail end of the Rift Valley, which runs the length of the country, passing through Lake Malawi to the low-lying Shire Valley in the south. Flanking the lake are central plains, where maize and tobacco are largely grown, highland areas, where tea and coffee are cultivated and scattered mountain ranges with peaks ranging from 1,700 to 3,000 metres above sea-level. Malawi has limited natural resources and is highly dependent on agriculture. It has a tropical, continental climate - although the country is often subject to periodic drought.

Malawi is divided into three administrative regions – the northern, central and southern regions – that reflect historical, socio-cultural and political differences. According to the 1998 Malawi Population and Housing Census Report, the population of Malawi as of 1998 was 9.9 million people. Current estimates put it as high as 11.6 million. Despite a slight decline in fertility rates (from 7.4 in 1987 to 6.2 in 2000), the population structure is characterised by a high proportion of people below 15 years of age (approximately 45% of the population), resulting in a high dependency ratio. Population density has increased dramatically, leading to land shortages, and at the time of the 1998 census population density was 105 persons per square kilometre. Urbanisation is also increasing, although over 85 percent of the population is still found in rural areas.

**Table 3: Selected Development Indicators for Malawi**

Indicator	
Population*	11,627,000
Total area (sq km)	118,484
Land area (sq km)	94,276
Density (population per sq km)**	105
Urban population (%)**	14
Total fertility rate*	6.1
Under-five mortality rate (per 1,000 live births)*	133
Life Expectancy at birth (years)*	37.5
Literacy rate (%)*	66
- male	79
- female	52
HIV adult prevalence (%)*	12
GNP per capita***	\$160

\* 2004 Malawi Demographic Health Survey (NSO, 2005)

\*\* 1997/98 Integrated Household Survey (cited in NSO, 2005)

\*\*\* 2005 EFA Global Monitoring Report (UNSECO, 2005)



## 10.2 Socio-cultural Background

Malawi's population is predominantly Christian. The 1997/98 population census reported that approximately 80 percent of the population stated they were Christian, whilst nearly 13 percent said Muslim. The majority of the Muslim population is found in districts in the south of the country and along the lakeshore. The south and central areas of Malawi are predominantly populated by matrilineal ethnic groups (the Chewa, Mang'anja, Yao and Lomwe), whilst tribes in the North (mainly Tumbuka, Tonga and Nkhonde) are patrilineal, although patrilineal marriage systems are also found in districts in the far south of the country, in the Lower Shire valley.

In the patrilineal social system, where the husband's village is the matrimonial home, the husband has overall authority over the family and land is passed down the male line. Bride wealth (*lobola*) is paid to the wife's parents to formalise the marriage and children then 'belong' to the paternal side, with custody traditionally given to the father in case of divorce (Saur et al., 2005). In several districts in the North polygamy is highly practised, with men marrying as many as three wives, as long as they are able pay *lobola*.

Within villages following the matrilineal system, familial groupings of brothers and sisters, and children of the sisters, collectively known as the *mbumba*, are under the patronage of the *mwini mbumba* – the eldest maternal uncle who has authority over land and the welfare of the children. Male members of the village marry outside their villages, settling at the wife's village after marriage. These married men, *akamwini*, who join from different lineages, do not become a real part of the village and are often regarded as relative strangers: in the event of divorce or death of a wife, the husband is expected to return to his own village (Kishindo, 1994). In some cases a man is permitted to take his wife to his home villages (*chitengwa*) provided he has stayed at the wife's village for an agreed period of time.

Clear gender disparities exist in Malawi. Women's participation in development activities and decision-making at all levels is limited, and gender stereotyping of workloads and household responsibilities reinforces their subordinate position. Despite the fact that women are the main producers and processors of food and make a substantial contribution to the agricultural sector, socio-cultural beliefs and practices restrict their control over household incomes and land, even amongst matrilineal groups (UNIMA/CSR & SARDC-WIDSAA, 1997). Women's participation in power-sharing is also limited: the vast majority of traditional authorities are male and there remains low representation of women in decision-making at district and national levels. In 1999, only 17 of the 193 Members of Parliament and 4 of the 28 Cabinet Ministers were female (GOM, 2000). Adult illiteracy is significantly higher amongst women and, despite gender parity in enrolments on entry to primary school, girls still dropout in greater numbers than boys and fewer girls access secondary and tertiary education (EMIS<sup>7</sup>, 2005). Although the Constitution provides for the protection of the rights of both men and women, the legal machinery is slow to tackle issues such as 'property-grabbing' - where widows are stripped of all assets by the male relatives of the deceased - and recent years have shown an alarming increase in reports of gender violence (GOM, 2000).

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<sup>7</sup> Educational Management Information Systems (EMIS), 2005 data, Ministry of Education, Lilongwe.

### 10.3 Socio-economic Background

The Malawi economy is primarily agriculturally based: almost 80 percent of the population is dependent on agriculture, the majority of which involves subsistence smallholdings, farming less than one hectare (Owens, 1997). A recent Demographic and Health Survey, indicated that 57 percent of economically active men and 70 percent of economically active women are subsistence farmers (NSO, 2005).

Following independence in 1964, up until 1979, Malawi was relatively politically stable and the economy grew at an estimated average of 6 percent per annum as Malawi pursued a growth-orientated, export-led strategy of development. However, the benefits of much of this growth did not trickle down to the wider population, due to policies that relied on private enterprise in agriculture and industry and favoured the minority of the population involved in the estate sector's production of, predominantly, tea and tobacco (Owens, 1997).

As elsewhere in Africa, the early 1980s saw the economy fall into a dramatic decline, a situation blamed on escalating fuel prices, falling prices of export crops, a war in neighbouring Mozambique - which cut off transport links to seaports and saw the influx of around a million refugees - as well as a series of extended droughts. Despite considerable financial support from the World Bank and other international donors during this period, the economy continued to falter. In the early nineties, when all non-humanitarian aid was frozen in response to concerns about human rights abuses, and there was increased public spending during the transition from one-party state to a democratically elected government, the budget deficit reached over 15% of the GDP and inflation rocketed to 83% (Lucas, 2004). To tackle this, the new government was forced to adopt severe financial austerity measures and liberalisation reforms as part of the latest in a series of strict structural adjustment programmes (SAPs). Social services were cut in a bid to service external debt and some 20,000 civil servants were retrenched. In conjunction with this, good harvests supported by a scheme to supply targeted 'starter packs' of free seeds and fertiliser contributed to increased GDP growth; inflation fell and the budget deficit was reduced.

By the late 1990s, however, despite these temporary improvements in macro-economic performance, the growing problems of widespread poverty, disparity of wealth distribution<sup>8</sup> and lack of food security at both national and household level had not been addressed. Further economic shocks, mainly due to poor prices for tobacco on world markets, resulted in two major currency devaluations and spiralling costs of living.

In response to this, the government embarked on a Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP) and, later in 2002, launched the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP), making poverty alleviation central to the government's development strategy. This strategy included: the introduction of free primary education (FPE); the setting up of the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) to financially support and deliver social infrastructure and provide a safety net for the poorest sectors of society<sup>9</sup>; and the

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<sup>8</sup> Malawi has one of the most unequal distributions of income in the world, with a Gini co-efficient of above 0.6. (Lucas, 2004).

<sup>9</sup> MASAF was launched in 1996 to distribute \$56 million over a 5 year period to fund community sub-projects, such as school buildings and boreholes, and a public works programme (PWP), which aimed to

initiation of policy debate on decentralisation, seen as a means to support local development. The broad multi-sectoral approach of the MPRSP aims to achieve sustainable, pro-poor economic growth, enhance human capital development, improve the quality of life for the most vulnerable and ensure good governance. Government is being supported in this effort by donor partners and through the use of funds from programmes such as the Highly Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Initiative. However, the economy in Malawi remains sluggish and poverty deeply entrenched: the growth rate in 2005 was estimated at just under 3 percent, attributed to a recent drought, which devastated agricultural production. Inflation was at 17 percent, mainly due to pressure from scarcity of food items, and the country was struggling under massive domestic debt (GOM, 2005).

### **10.3.1 Development Indicators**

Currently, with a gross national income per capita (GNI-PPP) of \$560, Malawi remains one of the poorest countries in the world (UNESCO, 2005). Due to the country's economic problems, coupled with the recent rapid increase in the population, Malawi's per capita income has declined from US\$230 in 1994 to about US\$160 in 2001 (ibid). Poor health and social indicators such as malnutrition, high morbidity and mortality rates, and food insecurity, characterise poverty in the country which is reflected in a life expectancy at birth of just 37.5 years; a high under-five mortality rate of 133 deaths per 1,000 live births; and malnutrition (indicated by the high stunting incidence of 48 percent among children aged less than five years) (NSO, 2005).

According to the 1997/98 Integrated Household Survey – it was estimated that 65 percent of Malawi's population were living in households with incomes below the poverty line<sup>10</sup> (National Economic Council, 2000). Furthermore, 85 percent of Malawi's population live in rural areas without access to modern sanitation facilities, electricity, and all-weather roads. Just 64 percent of the Malawian households have access to clean water sources, although this does represent a substantial increase since earlier surveys, reflecting a doubling in the percentage of rural households that now have access to protected wells or boreholes. (NSO, 2005).

### **10.3.2 Impact of HIV/AIDS**

Malawi, like its neighbours in sub-Saharan Africa, has been severely affected by HIV and AIDS. The first confirmed HIV/AIDS case in Malawi was reported in 1985 and since then epidemiological data shows an escalating epidemic. For example, in a sample of pregnant women attending antenatal clinics in the urban centre of Blantyre, which currently has one of the highest HIV seroprevalence rates in the country, HIV seroprevalence rose from 2.6 percent in 1986 to over 30 percent in 1998 (GOM, 2003b). Annually, deaths due to HIV/AIDS are estimated at over 80,000 - amounting cumulatively to approximately half a million deaths to date – and another 110,000 are infected. The majority of new infections are amongst young people (15 –24 years), with females far more likely to be infected than males (ibid).

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provide a safety net to the poorest of communities by providing temporary employment on projects such as road building (commonly know as "food-for-work"). Within 2 years the credit had been fully committed and MASAF II was launched in 1998 (Bloom et al, 2004). MASAF III currently is being implemented.

<sup>10</sup> Estimated at per capita consumption expenditure below \$0.4 per day in rural areas and \$1 per day in urban areas (adjusted for September 2000 prices).

Nationally, the current HIV prevalence rate amongst adults (15 to 49 years) is estimated at 12 percent (NSO, 2005), and appears to be stabilising in some areas of the country, although it remains one of the highest prevalence rates in the world. Urban adult prevalence is estimated at 17.1 percent, in contrast to a rural prevalence rate of 10.8 percent, although the gap between urban and rural prevalence is narrowing<sup>11</sup>- and the absolute number of people living in rural areas who are HIV+ outnumber urban dwellers by roughly three to one (Bryceson et al. 2004).

The epidemic has affected all sectors of Malawian society, especially social services who are struggling to cope with the numbers infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. The economic viability of most households has deteriorated due to loss of breadwinners and the consequent support of orphans by the elderly and older siblings. The number of orphans in Malawi continues to rise, with current estimates suggesting that 14 percent of children aged 0 to 17 years (approximately 1 million children) are orphans, having lost one or both parents, with 45 percent of these estimated to be due to HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS/UNICEF/USAID, 2004).

## **10.4 Political and Administrative Background**

### **10.4.1 Political Transition**

Malawi, a former British colony, gained its independence in 1964. In 1966, Malawi became a republic and an official one-party state for the next thirty years governed by the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) under the leadership of Dr. Hastings Kamuzu Banda, who was made life president in 1971. The early nineties saw the start of political changes in Malawi, with calls for improved development and an end to human rights abuses. Whilst the international community were mostly concerned with issues of human rights – suspending aid in 1992 – many local pressure groups were also protesting at the country's lack of development. The Catholic Bishops' pastoral letter, which is credited with triggering open resistance to the single party system was heavily concerned with the level of poverty in the country and the lack of access for the majority of the population to basic education, health care and food security (Samute, undated).

The country's first multiparty elections were held in 1994 and the United Democratic Front (UDF) was democratically elected to form the new government under the presidency of Bakili Muluzi. The adoption of a liberal constitution in 1995 provided for a bill of rights and rule of law, supported greater, democratic participation in governance and social and economic development and recognised local government as an essential building block for a viable democracy (Chinsinga, 2003).

Since the transition to democracy, support for political parties has been, and continues to be, heavily influenced by regional and tribal allegiances, with the main opposition parties finding support in the centre and north of the country, whilst UDF holds sway in the south. Despite advocating pro-poor development, Muluzi's regime has, in recent years, been increasingly criticised for fiscal mismanagement and corruption. A third set of elections in early 2005 saw Muluzi stepping down in favour of Bingu wa Mthlika, who, although successfully elected on a UDF ticket, promptly formed his own party – the

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<sup>11</sup> In the 2000 Malawi Demographic and Health Survey, HIV prevalence rates for urban and rural areas were estimated at 23% and 12%, respectively.

Democratic People's Party (DPP) – and brought to book many of his former UDF colleagues on alleged corruption charges.

#### **10.4.2 Administrative Structures**

Currently there are 33 districts across the country. Districts are subdivided into Traditional Authorities (TAs), presided over by chiefs. Traditional Authorities are composed of villages – the smallest administrative units – and, in turn, are presided over by village headmen (VH), often with several villages joining administered by one village headman (GVH). Chiefs and village headmen still retain powers to adjudicate local disputes, including land issues, and try petty crimes in traditional courts. They also play a key role in local development - particularly in terms of mobilising their people - and they still hold considerable influence at the grassroots level in many rural districts.

Malawi is currently undergoing the process of decentralisation, following the adoption of a National Decentralisation Policy and Local Government Act in 1999 and the setting up of a Decentralisation Secretariat, thus fulfilling manifesto promises made by UDF and Bakili Muluzi during the national elections of 1999.

Following Independence, Malawi retained the main features of the colonial administration structure, with a clear hierarchical line linking District Commissioners to Regional Administrators and the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC). However, a major change came in 1967 when District Development Committees (DDCs) were established to coordinate local development activities and channel funds from central government. These committees included membership from line ministries and political and traditional leadership. Lower committees were also established to galvanise support and local contributions at community level. These committees – the Area Development Committees (ADCs) and the Village Development Committees (VDCs) - supported implementation of self-help projects in rural areas and promoted government policies and projects. However, without its own executive the DDC was little more than a conduit for central government (Samute, undated).

Current decentralisation processes have seen the restructuring of district authorities to form the District Assembly (DA), which is composed of elected ward councillors and non-voting members, the latter from amongst MPs, the traditional leadership and, on occasion, special interest groups. The DA is mandated to pass by-laws and raise funds to carry out its activities in local government and development (MoLG, 2000, cited in Kusakari & Midori, 2001). District Executive Committees (DEC), headed by a Chief Executive (CEO) provide technical support to the DA. These committees are comprised of all heads of government departments at the district level, as well as local NGO partners. Similar technical committees are in place at TA level, supporting the ADCs, with members drawn from extension workers of government departments, e.g. Community Development Assistants, Primary Education Advisors, Health Surveillance Assistants and Social Welfare Assistants. These government workers carry out training and mobilisation of community members and provide supervision and monitoring of local development projects. Area Development Committees (ADCs), chaired by the TAs, and VDCs, chaired by the VH, still hold some influence in their respective areas and have the potential to provide input to the DA, mobilise communities and support local initiatives. However the capacity of ADCs and VDCs is generally low, with most still awaiting training and many inactive. In addition, a recent survey showed that awareness of district

development structures is low, with only 46 percent of those questioned stating that they were aware of these institutions (MEJN, 2004). Previously, local Ward Councillors sat on the ADCs and reported directly to the DA, but the term of office of the ward councillors is over and new members have not yet been elected, thus losing a valuable link between the communities and the district machinery (Moleni, et. al., 2005). Other government-created committees at community level include the Village AIDS Committee (VAC) and School Management Committees (SMC) for primary schools.

## 10.5 History of Service and Volunteering

In pre-colonial days, a system of reciprocal labour operated in the south of Malawi. This system of mutual help and service, culturally expressed as a moral obligation (Kandawire, 1979), was known as *thangata*, which is derived from the original meaning of the Chichewa word, *kuthangatira*, “to help someone”. However, during the colonial period, the meaning of *thangata* changed to mean forced or bonded labour - as the estate owners turned the existing social system to their own purposes, using it as a cheap mode of economic production, with little reciprocity for tenant workers (ibid). This dreaded *thangata* eventually prompted rebellion against the colonial masters in the 1915 uprising led by Rev. John Chilembwe.

Traditionally, other systems of inter-household co-operation also existed at the village level, such as *kalimalima* or *badira*, practices that involved age-mates and their spouses working together in an individual household’s fields, with the owner of the fields preparing food or sweet beer for everyone involved. However, since independence many of these practices have been reported to be dying out, to be increasingly replaced by systems of paid casual labour (*ganyu*) – for cash or credit – and regular wage labour (Kandawire et.al, 1993).

Following independence, the President, Kamuzu Banda, established a national youth service programme, the Malawi Young Pioneers (MYP). This organisation grew out of an existing parallel body, the Malawi League of Youth that had been active in the country’s struggle for independence. In 1963, with assistance from the Israeli government, a training programme for the MYP was developed, with special bases built across the districts. (GOM, undated i). Youth was seen as the “spear-head of national development” (GOM, undated ii). Entry into the ten-month training programme was said to be on a purely voluntary basis, and was open to both boys and girls. Training focused on modern agricultural and animal husbandry methods, leadership skills, sports and PE, camp craft and first aid, literacy, health and hygiene and home craft (girls only). Emphasis was on development of rural areas and, particularly, resettlement schemes whereby virgin forest was cleared to make way for cash crops such as cotton and rice (ibid).

After training many Young Pioneers joined resettlement schemes or returned to their villages to serve as role models and organise clubs for skills dissemination. Other Young Pioneers were attached to schools and teacher training or technical colleges to carry out a programme of instruction designed to ‘eliminate pupils’ prejudice against manual, particularly agricultural, work; to foster a spirit of voluntary service to the community; and to develop a sense of responsibility with emphasis on discipline” (GOM, undated i).

Unfortunately this vision of self-reliant and development-orientated youth was lost as the movement became increasingly politicised in the later days of Banda’s reign. The movement was armed and, along with the Youth League of the ruling Malawi Congress

Party, became synonymous with violence and terror meted out to all those suspected of disloyalty to the party and the head of state. The MYP movement was eventually disarmed and disbanded in 1993. Following the disbanding of the MYP, no other national volunteer programmes have been put in place by government and suggestions to initiate future national youth programmes are still seen as highly politically sensitive.

Another long-established institution that aimed to promote volunteerism and self-reliance under the Banda regime was the annual Youth Week. Youth Week was a seven-day event in which all youth - and often other community members – took part in a wide range of self-help projects, such as building classroom blocks, teachers' houses and bridges; repairing roads and clearing bush (CSC, 1979). All self-help projects, however, were selected, planned and implemented by DDCs, with assistance from local government-created committees (ibid)<sup>12</sup> and close scrutiny by political leaders and party members.

Since the days of the early missionaries, the church organisations in Malawi have also had a major role in the provision of social services, particularly in the areas of health and education. Following independence – and echoing the rhetoric of government instructions, such as MYP and Youth Week - church organisations saw voluntary self-help as a key strategy in effecting improvements in the lives of communities, promoting self-reliance and ensuring their participation in the wider development of Malawi (CSC, 1979).

By the early 1990s, there were signs that a self-help spirit was declining amongst communities. Committees created by government to push forward local development were insufficiently responsive to the needs of rural communities and state and party interference failed “to promote genuine self-reliant community participation, with people empowered to be responsible for determining their own future” (Kandawire et. al, 1993). During this time, in addition to the church organisations, increasingly, NGOs took up the challenge to tackle poverty and development issues at the community level, including championing the causes of human rights, gender, governance and HIV/AIDS.

There have been a few long-standing, membership-based NGOs in Malawi (most notably the Malawi Red Cross and the Wildlife Society of Malawi) and, by the early 1990s, several international NGOs had established themselves, for example: World Vision and Save the Children Federation, USA (ibid). However, following the transition to democracy in 1994, Malawians enjoyed an increased freedom of association and a subsequent proliferation of civil society and community-based organisations (CBOs) and a tremendous growth in the numbers of NGOs, much of which has been driven by donor interest and donor funding. To date, over 130 NGOs are registered with the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA)<sup>13</sup>, although it is likely many more organisations and clubs exist, particularly at the community level. (CONGOMA, 2006).

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<sup>12</sup> In addition to Youth Week, the DDCs were also involved in organising a large number of local, self-help projects, similar to those carried out during Youth Week, but taking place throughout the year (CSC, 1979).

<sup>13</sup> This list was last up-dated in September 2003. No other national database exists.

## **10.5.1 Community Participation, Service and Volunteering in Malawi**

### ***10.5.1.1. Non-governmental and Faith-based Structures***

Although NGOs operating in Malawi differ greatly in their origins, their size and scope and their degree of collaboration; their provision of service and their engagement with volunteers can generally be described under one of a few broad strategies. One such strategy used by some well-established NGOs sees the provision of services to target groups directly via permanent NGO staff. Many more NGOs, however, rely on community participation and use a strategy that promotes the setting up of local committees, which, in turn, work closely with volunteers. Some, such as the Malawi Red Cross, have large, complex volunteer structures and networks. In such cases local committees and volunteers generally communicate directly with a core NGO staff. Increasingly though, in the spirit of partnership, larger NGOs or development agencies aim to work with government-created committees, such as SMCs or VDCs, so as to build capacity and strengthen these administrative structures, rather than putting in place their own parallel structures. In such cases it is often the responsibility of the government-created committees to mobilise volunteers, whilst supervision and monitoring roles are given to government extension workers. Alternatively, following another strategy, larger NGOs, development agencies or government institutions such as the National Aids Commission (NAC) through the provision of funding, resources and training, make use of one or more smaller NGOs, CBOs or clubs already present in target communities to implement service provision.

In terms of coordinating their service provision and development activities, FBOs can be categorised as: intra-denominational religious coordinating bodies (RCB), ecumenical RCBs and religious NGOs (PAC, 2003). An example of an intra-denominational RCB is the Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), which is a Catholic body that represents the seven Dioceses in Malawi and the Catholic Development Commission of Malawi (CADECOM), its development arm. Amongst the Muslim community, the Muslim Association of Malawi (MASM) coordinates many of the activities of Islamic centres.

Several ecumenical RCBs have been established in Malawi, such as the Malawi Council of Churches (MCC), the Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM) – an umbrella body of 54 FBOs whose goal is to improve social and spiritual transformation of society (ibid) – and the Public Affairs Committee (PAC), a non-partisan organisation founded in 1992 by ECM, MCC and MASM committed to civic education, advocacy and conflict mediation.

Religious NGOs are often involved in the provision of social services, such as education, food security, health and HIV/AIDs, and OVC programmes. Religious NGOs operating in Malawi include World Vision, Adventist Development and Relief Agency (ADRA) and Emmanuel International. Such NGOs use modes of delivery as described above. In terms of RCBs, nearly all have salaried staff working on service and development programmes, either permanently or as part of wider pastoral work. Implementation is via committees formed to work with volunteers, the majority of who are drawn from within congregations (ibid).

Recently, alongside MASAF, several NGOs and development agencies have also instigated PWPs, whether ‘cash-for-work’ or ‘food-for-work’ schemes, under the MPRSP framework that deliberately targets the most vulnerable groups through the National Safety Net Programme. Apart from MASAF, these include: the EU, working with the



Government of Malawi, CARE International, World Vision International, Malawi Red Cross, Save the Children UK, Emmanuel International, Catholic Relief Services and Africare (Chirwa et al., 2004).

Aside from community-based service and volunteering, Malawi boasts a few large membership-based organisations, such as Lions International and the Rotary Club, whose members regularly fundraise and – to a more limited extent - volunteer their services to assist the more vulnerable sectors of society. Membership is generally drawn from the wealthier middle classes.

### **10.5.1.2 Government Structures**

The implementation of government strategies and programmes designed to provide services to the more vulnerable in society often rely heavily on community participation and the involvement of CBOs and clubs to deliver services, much of which is carried out on a voluntary basis or with minimal funding in terms of training or lunch allowances. District level government offices, such as the District Youth Office or the Social Welfare Office, are expected to co-ordinate and supervise these activities and provide support to all CBOs and clubs operating in the district. All such organisations, whether working directly with government programmes or independently, are expected to register with the appropriate department. Similarly, government departments, through their extension workers, work directly with the various government-created committees within the districts and at community level, such as VDCs and ADCs. Many of these local committees, in collaboration with traditional leaders, mobilise additional community members to volunteer their services for particular self-help projects in their area.

For example, Malawi's 5159<sup>14</sup> registered government primary schools are expected to operate with a functional SMC and Parent Teacher Association (PTA) drawn from community members in the schools' catchment areas. These committees are expected to mobilise communities to participate in development activities of the schools – traditionally the provision of labour and resources, such as bricks and sand, for construction (Rose, 2003). However, the use of such voluntary assistance is becoming increasingly problematic. Following the introduction of FPE, there is a perception amongst some communities that the upkeep of schools is the responsibility of government, not themselves (GOM, 2003a). In addition, the establishment of PWP and the influence of several development agencies and international NGOs, which offer payment for local construction projects has led to a reluctance amongst some community members to offer their services for free (Plan Malawi, 2004).

## **10.6 Policy Framework**

The current Malawi Constitution promotes human rights, good governance and the full participation of civil society in social and economic development and democratic processes and recognises the crucial role of local government in upholding these goals (GOM, 1995). Taking their cue from the constitution and government's overarching development policy of poverty alleviation – most recently embodied in the MPRSP – many current government policies and programmes' objectives emphasise human rights and poverty alleviation and the role of the citizenry in achieving such objectives (Samute, undated). Following the adoption of the Local Government Act in 1998, the National

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<sup>14</sup> Educational Management Information System (EMIS), Ministry of Education, 2005 data.

Decentralisation Policy (GOM, 1999) was the first policy to outline a comprehensive programme to institutionalise the role of local people in the processes of government and development at the district and local level (ibid) through democratic representation and community participation in development activities. Other government policies, such as the National Gender Policy and the National Policy on Orphans and other Vulnerable Children, acknowledge that they are guided by both the Constitution and various international human-rights based conventions ratified by the Malawi government (GOM, 2000; GOM, 2003b).

However, although the Constitution underlines the need for a vibrant civil society and several government policies and programmes emphasise the importance of community participation in achieving their objectives, either through local committees or in partnership with CBOs and FBOs, there is no one specific, overall policy - or government legislation – that relates directly to local volunteering and civic service. Indeed, apart from an amendment to the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (1978), which guides the implementation of Malawi’s Community Service programme, the policy environment for volunteering and civic service is generally weak, dependent on passing mention in various individual policy documents and strategy papers to provide policy direction in sectors such as Health, HIV/AIDS, Gender, Youth and Education.

### **10.6.1 Gender Policy**

The National Gender Policy was launched in 2000 with the overall goal to “mainstream gender in the national development process to enhance participation of men and women, boys and girls, for sustainable and equitable development for poverty eradication” (GOM, 2000). However, despite the promotion of community-based initiatives in areas of civic service, such as primary health care and orphan care, the policy does not indicate who would be providing such services. In addition, despite a detailed discussion of the role of the informal sector in poverty eradication, empowerment of women and social and economic development, there is no mention of the contribution of the voluntary sector to the country’s development.

### **10.6.2 HIV/AIDS Policy**

More recently, in 2003, NAC, following the development of a strategic plan (2000–2004), a National HIV/AIDS Policy was developed to guide and strengthen a national, multi-sectoral response to the HIV/AIDS epidemic in Malawi, including support for the care of orphans. As such, the policy aims to “ensure that all sectors of society, in particular PLWAs, women and vulnerable groups, participate effectively in designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating the national response” (NAC/OPC, 2003).

However, despite the fact that many organisations working in the field of HIV/AIDS rely on volunteers to deliver valuable services, such as home-based care, orphan-care and advocacy (VSO, 2004), the only specific mention of the involvement of volunteers in the policy’s implementation is where one policy objective states its intention to “*promote* [author’s italic] HIV/AIDS support organisations in their role of providing voluntary services.” (GOM, 2003b:9). No further expansion on this statement is found in the policy document, nor does it clarify who the volunteers are, what their role might be, what support they might expect or the nature of linkages with community structures, such as Village AIDS Committees.

### **10.6.3 Orphans and Vulnerable Children**

In addition to the National HIV/AIDS policy, the government currently provides policy direction to NGOs, FBOs, CBOs or individuals providing care and support to OVCs through the National Policy on Orphans and other Vulnerable Children launched in 2003. This replaces earlier policy document, produced in 1992 by a national taskforce asked to draft policy guidelines for the care of orphans. The underlying aim of that policy was that government - along with NGOs, community and religious organisations and self-help groups - assist extended families to care for orphans. No allusion was made to the likely voluntary nature of much of these activities and in the section that outlines the functions and roles of key players at the grassroots, mention is made only of “communities, village NGOs and line ministries” (GOM,1992:2).

One of the main guiding principles of the current OVC policy is that “community participation, empowerment and ownership shall be emphasised as key elements ...” and the policy states its intent to “increase community participation in developing community-based orphan care initiatives” (GOM, 2003c: 5, 7). Although the policy details various capacity-building strategies by which to provide assistance to care-givers, extended families and organisations involved in the care and support of OVCs, again there is no specific mention of the role of volunteers, although much of the community-based OVC work, particularly through FBOs, is carried out by volunteers (PAC, 2003). However, the National Policy on Early Childhood Development, which supports the setting up of community-based childcare centres (CBCCs), does acknowledge the role of communities in providing volunteers for early childhood development initiatives, although, again, the nature of the service they provide and what support they should receive is not elucidated.

### **10.6.4 Education Policy**

The role of the community in the provision of basic education, mediated by SMCs and, to a lesser extent, PTAs, has received increasing prominence in Malawi’s education policy since the 1990s. The current Policy Investment Framework (PIF) highlights active participation of communities as a key strategy in improving the quality of education in primary schools (MOE, 2000). In support of this, the government has recently drafted a National Strategy for Community Participation in Primary School Management, outlining means by which community involvement can move towards genuine, sustainable participation (GOM, 2003a). However, whilst this strategy details the PTAs’ responsibility to mobilise communities to assist in school development activities, it does not discuss issues relating to the likely voluntary nature of this support. This is particularly disappointing given concerns raised earlier in the strategy document regarding difficulties inherent in the mobilising of communities (see Section 4.4.1. above).

In the wake of the massive expansion of the primary education system following the introduction of FPE and the impact of HIV/AIDS on the teaching service, many government primary schools in Malawi, particularly in rural areas, operate with insufficient numbers of teachers, with schools in some districts having more than half of their posts unfilled (Moleni and Ndalama, 2004). In such situations, it has become fairly common practice in rural areas for SMCs to use volunteer teachers from the surrounding communities to fill gaps created by teacher attrition (ibid). The Ministry of Education has

only just officially acknowledged this coping strategy and, as yet, there are no policy guidelines regarding these volunteer teachers.

#### **10.6.5 International Volunteers**

In terms of policy or guidelines relating to external, international volunteers, such as VSO and Peace Corps, the Department of Human Resource Management and Development is responsible for the guidelines dealing with the recruitment of external volunteers, which form part of wider policy procedures dealing with all groups of expatriate workers, both paid and voluntary (DHRMD, 1999). According to these guidelines, organisations and government ministries, which have identified specific skills gaps, and have a post and job description in place, apply to the department for a volunteer from one or more of the VSAs with which the government has a Memorandum of Understanding. Once the Department has – ideally - ascertained that no Malawian with qualities that the post calls for is available, then the request is forwarded to the appropriate VSA. Once suitable candidates are identified, the VSAs will send their CVs and these are passed on to the relevant Ministry or organisation, whilst the Department seeks clearance from the Office of the President (OPC) and Immigration Services. As well as processing the volunteers' entry into Malawi, the relevant government department or host organisation provides accommodation and, often, a minimal living allowance (ibid). Most VSAs, however, do supplement this allowance and assist with additional costs, e.g. security and transport. Host organisations or departments are also expected to identify a Malawian counterpart to work alongside, and be trained by, the volunteer, although this is not always formalised and occurs with varying degrees of effectiveness (Simukonda, 1988).

# Section Two: Findings and Discussion

## 1. Introduction

This chapter discusses the main findings from the study (both from the key informant interviews and the FGD) framed by the research questions and presented under a number of headings. These are as follows: the meaning of civic service and volunteerism; form, scope and age of service programmes; service role - time commitment and compulsory nature; servers, service areas and goals; the nature of the service experience; institutional dimensions: access, incentives, information and facilitation; programme administration; policy and legislation; factors promoting and hindering service; regional collaboration; and possible future research.

Where appropriate, findings are expressed in terms of the proportion of key informants who highlighted a certain issue and are supplemented by the perspectives of participants who took part in the FGD. Although comparing findings of this study with other relevant research findings in Malawi has been problematic, due to a scarcity of literature, nevertheless, these results show that in most instances there are astounding similarities between: the views of the key informants (even for those working in different sectors); the views of the key informants and members of the FGD; and the findings in this study and the findings of other relevant studies. Hence, the authors are confident that the issues raised below are representative of the current situation regarding civic service and volunteerism in Malawi.

## 2. Meaning of Civic Service and Volunteerism

In Malawi, as elsewhere, civic service and volunteering are seen to be closely interlinked. Both are understood to be activities carried out with no expectation of financial gain for the server with the overall aim of assisting another individual or the community, with emphasis on the development of the nation and promoting skills of self-reliance. For example, two thirds of key informants indicated that civic service and volunteering corresponded to participation in activities aimed at helping others, while a third further specified that the activity must be carried out without the expectation of gain, in particular financial gain. Both factors were also highlighted by participants in the FGD as important defining features of volunteering. One FGD participant noted:

*In our case here in Malawi, you just go, you spend your time, you work then you go home. You have nothing in monetary terms per month, per week that you get...*

In terms of the altruistic aspects of volunteering, another FGD participant stated:

*In volunteerism, you must also consider your personal feeling to address or improve certain situations in the society that you are going to serve....this is the greater part in volunteerism.*

Although there was a degree of recognition and understanding of both terms, indications were that in Malawi there is greater use and understanding of the term volunteering as compared to civic service. While almost half of all participants in the FGD (from both government and NGOs) contributed to a discussion on the meaning of volunteering, less than a quarter (those from NGOs only) indicated some recognition and understanding of the term civic service. Some FGD participants misinterpreted civic service as referring to government structures only, confusing the term with 'civil service'.

Findings from the study suggest that in Malawi civic service and volunteering have social, political, cultural and/or religious connotations. For example one third of key informants (those in the youth/gender/community services sector and one key informant from a religious organisation) identified cultural and/or religious connotations that were primarily linked to the giving of service without payment. In addition, more than half (56%) of all key informants (primarily those in the youth/gender/community services sector) indicated that civic service and volunteering had a social dimension, in particular that such activities are carried out at community level to help maintain or better the community. Moreover, 44 percent of key informants further identified a political aspect and indicated that this aspect has developed in recent years and is linked to the advent of democracy (see below) and subsequent discourse on human rights. It was noted that, whilst in the past communities were expected to provide their services without question, nowadays some individuals or communities might refuse to cooperate, seeing it as their right to do so. This was seen as being further reinforced by the then newly elected president's comments equating the previous regime's civic programmes and community development activities as an abuse of rights and a denial of personal freedom (Fairley, 2006) tantamount to *thangata* (bonded labour). Participants in the FGD also highlighted this political dimension, perceiving it mainly as a negative development, and suggesting that it was linked primarily to financial aspects of volunteering. One FGD participant highlighted how it impacts on attempts to mobilise communities.

*They say "no, not these days....you cannot just call us from our homes and discuss this things...you have got money, we also need money"...in this democratic environment, people are getting knowledgeable on these aspects.*

From a historical perspective, those key informants who felt in a position to comment (all but one), indicated that the meaning of civic service and volunteering has changed over time in Malawi. Indications again were that this was linked to the movement from a dictatorship to a democratic government, and a consequential shift to people being less self-reliant and community orientated and more government and NGO dependent. In particular, it was indicated by most key informants (78%) that an expectation of payment for activities undertaken, including development activities now existed, where previously people were expected to participate without receiving any financial reward (e.g. Youth Week). According to one participant in the FGD:

*In the past people were just volunteering without expecting to get something, I should say no monetary issues, but right now most of them they volunteer with an aim to getting something.*

Key informants suggested that such developments were closely linked to a number of key issues including: an increase in the number of NGOs and donor organisations and the introduction by said organisations of stipends for involvement in development

activities (44%); increased poverty resulting in a lack of life's necessities (food, shelter, clothing) (22%); and an increase in the magnitude and the number of issues requiring attention (e.g. HIV/AIDS, OVC) and resultant programmes (22%). Participants in the FGD also highlighted these issues. For example, one FGD participant suggested:

*[people] may volunteer to address problems which they have identified in the community, but mostly it is because of the coming of several donors who are giving out money.*

### **3. Form, Scope and Age of Service Programmes**

Key informants indicated that in Malawi most service could be conceptualised more as volunteerism as opposed to civic service, because, as elsewhere in Africa, it is often characterised by low levels of structure and organisation (see Section 2.3.). In addition, all service in Malawi is currently non-compulsory in nature, although one key informant from the justice sector indicated that, at the time of the study, steps were being taken to introduce a civic duty element into the private sector (e.g. private doctors offering their services in government hospitals and lawyers expected to work a minimum number of *pro-bono* cases). However, involvement in such programmes is, so far, purely on a voluntary basis.

Community service for offenders (see Text box 1), although it has a compulsory element, as at the time of the study, the option of completing a prison term as opposed to said community service still existed. Hence, the concept of purely compulsory civic service, currently evident in many countries worldwide in the form of national service, does not exist in Malawi. This is in line with findings elsewhere. For example, Moore McBride et al. (2003c) found that of a total of 210 service programmes operating in 57 countries, only 4% were compulsory, all others were voluntary in nature.

#### **Text box1: Community Service Programme**

The only national, government-led civic service programme in Malawi is the recently established Community Service Programme that operates under the Judiciary Service, as laid down in an amendment to the Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (1978). This programme was originally implemented as a DFID-funded pilot between 1997 and 2001, coordinated by the Malawi Safety, Security and Access to Justice (MASSAJ) project. In 2002 it became a nationwide government programme operating in both urban centres and districts giving the option to individuals convicted of minor offences to spend up to 12 months working on civic service projects rather than face a prison sentence. Such activities mainly involve manual labour, working, for example, at government offices, schools and market places, although some placements can be tailored to those with specific skills, such as mechanics or health personnel. Currently, approximately ninety offenders are serving on this programme, the vast majority (98%) of whom are men.

Findings by Gaynor (1993: xvi), based on a study carried out in Malawi that looked at community participation in development activities in a number of selected rural areas, indicated general low levels of activity by both males and females with participation primarily at mobilisation of labour stage and “no evidence of male or female involvement in decision making or managing stages of participative activity”.

Such observations perhaps reflected the political dispensation at the time – a one party state, with a highly centralised government. In contrast, indications from more recent studies are that current individual and community involvement in voluntary activities in Malawi is evident and expanding. A recent report based on data from a survey of 6,861 households throughout Malawi (Pelser et al., 2004) indicated fairly widespread engagement with community-based activities, with more than two-thirds (69%) of key informants reporting that they were actively involved in one or more community-based groups including; VDCs (30%), church groups (25%), MASAF-funded self-help groups (18%), school committees (13%), and various special-interest groups. Similarly, in a smaller study across three districts in Malawi, questions designed to gauge the political and civic awareness and behaviour of the sample, revealed that half of key informants (50%) had regularly attended meetings of area or village development committees. Furthermore, more than a third (35%) had attended community assistance groups (for example CBOs and/or home-based care (HBC) groups) at least once in a year, with 28 percent said to attend regularly (CSR, 2005).

Although voluntary community involvement in development projects in Malawi may be increasing, involvement in related decision-making activities remains low. According to Rose (2003), participation of communities in educational provision in Malawi is traditionally pseudo as opposed to genuine in nature, with communities merely being informed of required inputs (in terms of labour and materials). Findings from a study by Gaynor (1993: 67) support this theory and suggest that “community development activities in which key informants [community members] engage are mainly labour intensive, linked to improved social services such as better roads, schools and water supply”. Similarly, Kutengule (1997) indicated that most community involvement in development projects is in the form of labour and or material provision. This form of approach is seen as a major concern, given that pseudo participation limits the prospects for fostering community ownership, accountability, cost efficiency and project effectiveness, which are deemed important in terms of increasing project sustainability (Chilowa et al., 2004; Chapota, 2004; GOM, 2003a; Rose, 2003; Kutengule, 1997; Gaynor, 1993; Kandawire, 1992). However, participants in the FGD recognised the important role played by volunteers and indicated that while they “use little money”, they enhance sustainability and ownership of projects “especially when you are working with communities who are interested to solve their own problems”. Similarly, 44 percent indicated that volunteer involvement in programmes is cost-effective, whilst a third indicated that volunteer involvement has increased a sense of ownership leading to programme sustainability.

An increase in the level of involvement may be related to an expansion in what key informants termed ‘society ills’ (e.g. HIV/AIDS, increasing numbers of OVCs, poverty, hunger, and environmental degradation). For example, all key informants indicated that volunteering in Malawi had a humanitarian aspect, with the key sectors where volunteers work identified as: health (HIV/AIDS); youth (orphan care, youth clubs); education (basic literacy); emergency services/disaster relief (food); human rights and democracy (information); environment; and development activities (construction). All key informants mentioned HIV/AIDS and OVC as sectors where volunteers are particularly active. Moreover, 56 percent of key informants stated that the programmes they worked with had a health element, specifically HIV/AIDS, whilst 44 percent had an education element, 44 percent a food security element, and 33 percent a gender component. The majority of programmes involving the FGD participants (78%) had a core component but were multi-faceted and most had a main-streamed HIV/AIDS component (see Table 2,



Section 3.2.2.). Others (PAC 2003, Munthali 2002) have also identified HIV/AIDS and OVC as important sectors for voluntary activities. According to Munthali (2002), volunteerism is the most feasible way to meet the needs of OVCs in the communities, while PAC (2003) suggested that volunteer activities fall into two broad categories; responsive (aimed at addressing the spiritual, emotional, material and medical needs of the sick and OVCs, predominantly via visits to patients and their families) and preventive (geared at stopping or slowing down further transmission of the HIV among members of the congregations and the community at large via awareness raising).

### **Textbox 2: Malawi Red Cross Society**

The national Red Cross Society in Malawi was founded on 13<sup>th</sup> January, 1967 under the Malawi Red Cross Act 51 of the Parliament of 1966 and is guided by the fundamental principles of the International Red Cross and Red Crescent Movements adopted by the sixth International Conference of the Red Cross. These principles encompass: Humanity, Impartiality, Neutrality, Independence, Voluntary Service, Unity and Universality.

The objectives of the Malawi Red Cross Society are:

- To furnish volunteer aid to the sick and the wounded in time of war and to prisoners of war and civilians suffering from the effects of war.
- In the case of catastrophes or public disasters, to provide victims with relief.
- In time of peace or war, to assist in work for the improvement of health, the prevention of diseases and the mitigation of suffering in Malawi.
- To promote the junior Red Cross movement among the youth of all races
- To propagate the ideals and the humanitarian principles of the Red Cross with a view to developing a feeling of solidarity and mutual understanding among all mankind and all nations.

The Society is officially recognised by government as a voluntary relief organisation, auxiliary to public services. Members of the Society enrol through payment of a small membership fee or are awarded honorary recognition by the Society Council. The Society consists of a centralised structure, the Council, and the Executive Committee with a secretariat staffed and managed by both volunteers and paid staff. At district level, divisions are in place in all districts, with the divisional committee generally based in the district town (*boma*). These divisions are commonly made up of sub-divisions, which are predominantly rural based. Subdivisions are responsible for electing division members to sit on the division committee. Divisions and sub-divisions are run on a voluntary basis. Sub-divisions are often also closely linked with school-based committees and clubs. As well as national, coordinated committees, some districts are targeted for specific projects, based on need, but also related to funding availability and/or programmes of donors' partners.

Main Activities:

- Emergency response.
- Disaster relief and distribution of aid (seed, blankets, clothes).
- First Aid Training.
- Conflict Resolution Training.
- HIV and AIDS programmes, including home-based care.
- Primary Health Care

Currently the bulk of the Society's 40,000 volunteers are the youth – both school-going children and out-of-school youth – and older, rural women in home based care (HBC) programmes, although this is not reflected in administrative structures, whose decision-making posts are mainly held by older, literate men.

Indications therefore are that in Malawi, as elsewhere, volunteers are very important in the fight against the HIV/AIDS pandemic and in mitigating the negative impacts (e.g. orphans, poverty) of the pandemic. Hence, the number of volunteers and beneficiaries in the HIV/AIDS sector in Malawi are high and indications are that the numbers are continuing to expand in response to the pandemic. For example, one key informant from a Christian-based organization indicated that their organization had 1,200 home-based carers serving in the Lilongwe Diocese, with each server serving 5 to 15 HIV/AIDS patients. Similarly, PAC (2003: 34) in a study of FBOs working in the area of OVC indicated that “a total of 347 volunteers from 18 congregations/orphanages were supporting 5,353 OVC, an average of 297 OVC and 19 volunteers per congregation/orphanage”.

Currently, overall figures for volunteer numbers in Malawi are not readily available and estimating these numbers, even within sectors or organisations is problematic (see Section 3.4.) However, an exception is the recently compiled directory of organizations working with OVC, which lists a total of 92 organizations nationally, which, overall, are supported by over 8,000 volunteers (NOVOC of Malawi, 2002). Over 60 percent of these organizations were CBOs; 20 percent local NGOs, 15 percent FBOs and the remainder, international NGOs. The number of volunteers per organization ranged from 1 to 1,500, with an average of 83 volunteers per organization.

Examples given by key informants and FGD participants indicate the range and level of involvement of volunteers across various sectors (see also Table 2, Section 3.2.2.) For example, key informants agreed that there was an estimated 1,000-1,200 peer educators operating nationwide in the National Adult Literacy Programme, under the Ministry of Gender, Social Welfare and Community Services. In contrast, the Malawi Red Cross indicated that it has a massive 40,000 volunteers<sup>15</sup> operating on a variety of projects nationwide (see Textbox 2). Similarly, NICE operates an extensive network of as many as 10,000 volunteers (see Textbox 3), with involvement highest in months preceding general elections. On a smaller scale, the Banja la Mtsogolo (BLM) projects have trained an estimated 219 volunteer youths as community-based distribution agents (CBDA) of contraceptives, including condoms, and, through these volunteers, have reached approximately 570,000 beneficiaries (Nhlane, 2002). And again, one key informant indicated that, at the time of the study, the Community Service Programme had just 60 participants. Evidence suggests that volunteer numbers vary across sector, organisation and government department, although there is debate as to where the greater relative number for volunteers is found. This is evident in the FGD, where participants were clearly divided over the numbers of volunteers working in the private and public sectors. For example, while one participant indicated that NGOs and FBOs “depend on volunteers”, others suggested that, although the number of volunteer programmes managed directly by government is low, the number of volunteers working on such programmes is high (predominantly because government programmes operate nationwide), particularly if, as some FGD participants argued, those serving on government-created committees are included (see Section 4.5.1.2.). She suggested that, as a result, “government actually use more volunteers”.

In addition to local volunteering, several foreign governments and organisations send volunteers to Malawi. These VSAs enter into agreement with the Malawi government to

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<sup>15</sup> These estimates (for 2004) are based on membership figures (Malawi Red Cross Society Headquarters, pers. comm., Sept 05)

provide international volunteers with skills in particular areas of expertise, to lend technical support and share skills with Malawian counterparts, working in both government departments and NGOs. Table 4 lists details of the main VSAs operating in Malawi. Currently, there are approximately 400 international volunteers working in Malawi.

Both key informants and participants in the FGD unanimously indicated that in Malawi voluntary activities are predominantly carried out at local level, such as with CBOs, with the vast majority of volunteers living in the communities where the programme is operational. According to participants in the FGD, while Malawian volunteers work mainly at a local level, many are involved in national programmes, either directly, such as with NICE, or indirectly, through links with government programmes, such as the new OVC national programme. One participant noted:

*‘...they [volunteers] are in two categories; some form part of a larger network (under specific programmes), while some operate as an independent entities within the community’*

Volunteer programmes operational in Malawi have, in general, arisen out of a need identified and/or expressed at community level and have been established by communities/individuals, NGOs, donor organisations or government. For example, PAC (2003) indicated that some FBOs reported that their OVC activities were initiated by members of the congregations who were concerned with the negative effects of the HIV/AIDS on the congregations. Similarly, all key informants in the study indicated that their programmes had developed because of a need that arose at the grassroots level. In addition, 33% further indicated that the programme was initially NGO or government led, 22% indicated that it was community led and 11% that it was donor led.

Volunteers are active in all areas of the country, however some regions experience higher concentrations of volunteer activity. Key informants suggested that this was predominantly related to: the need/demand in the area (44%); population density (33%); and donor presence (33%). Indications are that, in general, volunteers are active in both rural and urban areas and that most programmes have been active for at least 10 years, with the average age of programmes estimated to be in the region of 21.6 years. In particular, international NGO, VSA and FBO programmes have been running for long periods of time (from 15 to 46 years), for example WESM (see Textbox 5), VSO (see Textbox 4) and the Red Cross Society. Hence, the duration of volunteer involvement may vary by sector and activity. For example, Horwood (2002) indicated that the Salvation Army began a programme in Malawi in 1996. Similarly, PAC (2003) indicated that while many religious coordinating bodies (RCB) established HIV/AIDS responses from early to mid-1990s, their OVC work is more recent (usually since 2000), with the longest OVC response established in 1995. An average age of 21.6 years for civic service/volunteering programmes in Malawi however, would appear to be in line with the situation world-wide. Based on the findings of a study of 210 civic service programmes in 57 different countries, Moore McBride et al. (2003b) suggested that average age of such programmes was 20.5 years.

**Table 4: Characteristics of external volunteers present in Malawi, 2005<sup>16</sup>**

<b>Characteristics Sending Agency</b>	<b>No. of Volunteers</b>	<b>Qualifications/ Experience</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Areas of Interest</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Duration of Stay</b>
<b>VSO</b>	92	Experienced professionals/skilled technicians	Europe (58) Philippines (11) Kenya/Uganda (16) Canada/USA (7)	Health professionals and tutors (31), HIV/AIDS (5); Education: - CPD facilitators (13), - Teacher trainers (10); Capacity building and technical support for CSOs (10); OVC programmes (9)	Districts (rural, urban and semi-urban)	1 – 2 years with possibility for renewal
<b>JOCV</b>	60	Graduates	Japan	Community Health; IT support services and training (10); Secondary Education: teachers in govt and community schools (15); TEVET: training of mechanics; Agriculture and Rural development; Animal Health.	Rural and semi-urban; emphasis in North Malawi, but nationwide	1 - 2 years
<b>UNVA</b>	120 (46 international + national volunteers)	Skilled professionals/Specialists	Worldwide	Capacity building and planning for decentralisation; Health; Animal Health; Agriculture, food security and nutrition; Literacy and economic empowerment (IGA); Education.	Districts (rural, urban and semi-urban)	1 year minimum with possibility for renewal

<sup>16</sup> Data obtained from personal communication with VSA representatives in Malawi, 2005.

<b>Characteristics</b> <b>Sending Agency</b>	<b>No. of Volunteers</b>	<b>Qualifications/ Experience</b>	<b>Origin</b>	<b>Areas of Interest</b>	<b>Location</b>	<b>Duration of Stay</b>
<b>PCV</b>	95	College graduates	USA	Secondary Education: – teachers in community-established schools. (34) - teacher training. (3) Community Health and HIV/AIDS (34) Natural Resource management – community capacity building. (24)	Rural	2 years
<b>WUSC</b>	36 (13 short-term; 8 longer term; 15 project-specific)	Graduates	Canada	Environmental protection and conservation; Agriculture and rural development;  HIV/AIDS and gender; IT support services; Human rights and governance; Income generation; Capacity building for CSOs & promotion of voluntary sector.	Rural and urban	Long and short term placements.

## 4. Service Role and Time Commitment

Key informants indicated that volunteers are in general expected to serve for a specific service period (varying from 10 months to 2 years) but that turnover is high, with few people able to commit to long-term to a project, especially in urban areas, where greater opportunities exist for employment. As a result, the expected service period for volunteers is rarely enforced in Malawi, as with other non-compulsory programmes elsewhere in Africa (Tang et. al. 2003), with the exception of international volunteers, although according to key informants, they often leave a position before completing the required service period (normally 2 years). These findings would appear to be in line with findings elsewhere that suggest that while the average amount of time spent volunteering is 7.3 months, actual time ranges from is one week to more than three years (Moore McBride et al., 2003c).

The majority of key informants (89%) indicated that volunteering in Malawi is a part-time activity and the time committed is usually linked to the demand for the service or activity. Indications are that the level of commitment is normally a few hours one or two days per week and rarely extends to three of four days per week. For example, Gaynor (1993) investigating community participation in development activities among rural communities in Malawi found that in general men allocate 13 minutes (just under 1%) and women 6 minutes (just under 0.5%) of their daily work hours to voluntary work, and that males spent on average 3.2 days and females 2.8 days annually on community activities linked to improved social services such as better roads, schools and water supply. Such findings would appear to be in direct contrast to service programmes elsewhere, where, according to Moore McBride et al. (2003c: 11), “eighty-one per cent of the programmes require servers to commit to the service experience on a full-time basis, which is equivalent to about 40 hours per week”

In Malawi, this level of commitment is generally expected from international volunteers only, who work on a full-time basis i.e. the standard 40 hour working week. Over half of the key informants (56%) suggested that there is high flexibility in the time allocated by volunteers and that volunteers can structure their voluntary activities to fit around their daily lives. As indicated by one FGD participant:

*the volunteer will do everything like an employed staff; the only demarcating line is that scheduling with the volunteer its left to him. With an employed staff you actually dictate you will be reporting for duties at 7:30, 1 hour lunch from 12:00 to 1:00pm, but with the volunteer that clause is removed because he has to do other work to sustain himself.*

A possible exception is the local volunteer teacher (see Section 4.6.4) currently found in many primary schools. These teachers are expected to teach a full day alongside their paid counterparts, although absenteeism is often high (Moleni and Ndalama, 2004). Although the amount of time allocated by servers in Malawi to volunteer activity would appear to be low, the amount of time allocated to meetings related to development activities does appear to be quite high. For example, PAC (2003: 32) indicated that while the frequency of volunteer meetings varied from congregation to congregation, the majority reported, “meeting at least twice a month to exchange information, share experience and review work done or share responsibilities”. Similarly, Gaynor (1993)

suggested that most members of clubs were relatively active and met with some regularity.

### **Textbox 3: The National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE)**

In February 1999, NICE was established as a joint project between the Government of Malawi, the European Union, with the German Agency for Technical Cooperation (GTZ) providing project management services.

The objective of NICE is to promote democratic values, attitudes and behaviour at grass-root level in both urban and rural Malawi, through the provision of civic education services.

NICE is a non-partisan organisation that focuses on providing information, training and capacity building amongst communities and other local stakeholders. It is not, in itself, a funding body or implementing agency, but promotes local participation in civic education and development activities.

NICE focuses on five thematic areas as entry points to relay civic education messages:

- Local Democracy
- Environment
- Food Security
- Gender and Development
- HIV/AIDS and Health.

NICE operates an extensive network of as many as 10,000 para-civic educators (PCEs), volunteers who work at community and district level to deliver messages and services to communities. PCEs are supported and monitored by Zonal PCEs who report to full-time district officers. NICE has 29 district offices and resources centres, 3 regional offices and 1 national office, with a team of over 40 professional staff and over 90 support staff.

NICE outreach activities include: production and circulation of leaflets, newsletters, training manuals and other education materials; conducting public rallies, awareness meetings, dramas and dances to disseminate civic education messages; promotes the formation of clubs and adult literacy classes and organises workshops for local stakeholders. NICE also distributes PR materials such as t-shirts posters, audio-tapes and CD-ROMs and facilitates access to other partners and constitutional bodies, including the Electoral Commission, the Anti-Corruption Bureau and the Malawi Human Rights Commission.

NICE has a special focus on Voter Education, playing a key role in mobilising the electorate to register and vote in local and national elections. This includes the distribution of over 14,000 'wind-up' radios to communities across Malawi; production and distribution of election materials, such as sample ballot papers and audio tapes of political manifestos and the training of PCE and election monitors to monitor local and national elections.

## **5. Servers, Service Areas and Goals**

As indicated above, the vast majority of volunteers originate from within the community itself, resulting in high level of acceptance of volunteers at community level. Although, according to PAC (2003), communities often nominate their own volunteers, it worth noting that Gaynor (1993) indicated disappointingly low levels of villager participation

(less than 20%) in selecting village volunteers and suggested a need for increased community awareness of the role of the volunteer to help increase participation in volunteer selection. However, some problems have been noted when communities have nominated their own volunteers. For example, FGD participants have indicated that nominated volunteers show less commitment to programmes and their work, when compared to those who volunteer of their own accord. They also indicated that nepotism and political interference, under influence from chiefs and village heads, can be a problem, especially where programmes offer volunteer incentives.

As a group, youth would appear to be more involved in volunteering than any other. According to a key informant from the Ministry of Youth, Sports and Culture, there are up to 3,500 youth clubs under the government's Youth Participation Programme and, according to another key informant, approximately 2000 youth clubs and organisations are registered with the National Youth Council. In addition, more than half of the key informants (56%) indicated that the primary volunteers on their programmes were youth. Although this might be expected in relation to programmes aimed at youth, indications are that youth are also actively involved in the areas of HIV/AIDS, especially in prevention. This is linked to the fact that most youth clubs and community-based organisations are funded with donor money. According to key informants, youth, being aware of this fact - and having aspirations to get activities funded that accrue additional benefits such as training and allowances - become involved in volunteer activities in areas that fit in with the agendas of these agencies.

The Government of Malawi has recognised the importance of female involvement in voluntary work and in relation to the education sector has recommended that "women should make up at least 50% of the membership, and hold at least 30% of leadership positions in School Management Committees" (GOMa, 2003:14). Regardless, involvement in programmes (for both servers and participants) often differs according to gender and such disparities are an important issue in Malawi. Key informants in the study indicated that, in relation to their programmes, although males and females are involved in all aspects of volunteering, in many cases, traditional gender norms and stereotyping are reflected. For example, it was suggested that females, especially older females, have greatest involvement in caring activities (i.e. home-based care for HIV/AIDS victims and care of OVC), while males have higher involvement on leadership, skilled and manual (e.g. construction) roles. Similarly, one participant in the FGD suggested that females as opposed to males are more frequently involved in caring activities, even where the person being cared for is male, stating "...you will find that those looking after the sick in male wards are women". This finding is verified by findings in a study produced by PAC (2003) (which looked at FBO responses to OVCs in Malawi) that, in terms of committees that dealt with OVCs, most members were female, despite the fact that some congregations had more male than female members. Similarly, Bacon (2002) reporting on males in volunteering in Malawi indicated that home-based care programmes tended to attract a higher proportion of female volunteers. However, intensive efforts to recruit and train men into such programmes in 1999 had increased male participation to about 40 percent of programmes' volunteers.

It can be suggested, therefore, that levels of male/female participation in service programmes in voluntary capacity is closely linked to the type of programme. According to one FGD participant, "in participation the approach style and mode [of the programme] matters". Moreover, some participants in the FGD suggested that the level and type of



incentives offered by a programme determined the level of male and female participation.

For example, FGD participants observed:

*if there is voluntary work with no incentive you will find women at the forefront but if there is something attached to it, even if it's training, T-shirts or anything, you will find men at forefront.*

and

*..when you have something [incentives] you will find men rushing to that...*

Location may also impact upon levels of participation both generally and in terms of male/female participation. For example, one key informant suggested that in rural areas males are more likely to volunteer than females, because most males are unemployed and have free time to allocate to voluntary activities, whilst the females are heavily involved in family, farming and household activities. Conversely, it was noted that in urban areas the opposite is true, with males less likely to volunteer than females, because the majority of males are in fulltime employment, whilst females are less likely to work and hence they have a greater amount of free time. Similarly, some FGD participants suggested that women volunteered because they have more “free time”, although some argued strongly against this, suggesting that females volunteering had less to do with availability of time and more to do with culture, which sees females participating more in community activities and often does not acknowledge the higher workloads of women.

Indications are that in Malawi, as elsewhere, volunteers offer their services for a variety of reasons. According to one FGD participant there “are so many factors why people volunteer”. Findings in this study suggest that one reason might be linked to an actual or perceived impact of an issue upon their lives. For example, one key informant from a faith-based organisation suggested that volunteers on programmes for HIV/AIDS patients and their families volunteered because their family had already been affected by the disease or because they feared that in the future they too might be affected by the disease. PAC (2003: 31), in a study of FBOs response to OVCs, reported similar findings when it suggested that “most volunteers are people who have been affected by AIDS. Many have lost spouses and have fostered orphans in their households”. Participants in the FGD suggested that poverty was also a key factor motivating volunteers. According to one FGD participant “most people who volunteer are the vulnerable, who are very poor”. Indications are that these individuals volunteer to avail of the server incentives attached to the programme. As highlighted in the literature review (see Section 2.5.) These volunteers are part of a new phenomenon worldwide which is seeing the disadvantaged or marginalised increasingly becoming involved, as servers, on service programmes (Gillette, 2003).

Indications are that, in Malawi, those programmes that involve volunteers have goals that are predominantly beneficiary-based, with the exception of VSAs. No key informant in the study indicated that the main goal of their programme(s) was server-based, all those working with local volunteers indicated that the server did benefit indirectly, predominantly via training provided in the programme. The dominance of programmes that have beneficiary-based goals is in direct contrast to the situation elsewhere. For example, Moore McBride (2003c) in a study of 210 civic service programmes operational in 57 different countries, reported that among these programmes, the most frequent

goals were those focusing on the server, in particular those aimed at increasing the server's motivation to volunteer and their skills acquisition.

Although server-based goals do not form part of programme design and implementation in Malawi, there was an awareness of the importance of meeting server needs. For example, high levels of turnover among volunteers was recognised by 56 percent of key informants as a major factor that hinders service in Malawi, while 22 percent suggested empowerment (education, skills and finances) of volunteers/communities as a way forward. In addition, others (Nthara, 2004; PAC, 2003; Hauya, 2002; Mwale, 2002; Gaynor, 1993) have highlighted the need to find motivating incentives for volunteers and to include such incentives in service programme design and implementation.

Civic service and volunteering programmes in Malawi are predominantly aimed at specific beneficiaries. For example, 56 percent of key informants indicated that at least some part of their programme(s) was aimed at those affected by HIV/AIDS (patients and their families), while a further 33 percent indicated that it was aimed at Malawi youth. However, although the programmes target specific sectors, most are designed in such a way as to benefit the community at large. This was the case in relation to all the programmes being implemented by the key informants. For example, while the HIV/AIDS programmes targeted PLWAs and their families, they also contained an element of education and information aimed at the community at large (in an attempt to prevent the further spread of the disease). Similarly, while programmes aimed at youth targeted that sector, they also benefited the community at large via mobilization and information campaigns. In addition, participants in the FGD indicated that, because the group serving is often similar to the beneficiary group (for example youth predominantly serve on programmes aimed at youth and females on programmes aimed at females), at times the line between server and beneficiary is blurred such that "sometimes it's difficult to isolate a volunteer and a beneficiary".

## **6. Nature of the Service Experience**

There was general agreement among the FGD participants that working as a volunteer in Malawi is challenging. For example, participants indicated that "sometimes it has been difficult working as a volunteer", that "it's not easy because of the perceptions that you get, even from your own friends, even from your own family", and that "it's quite challenging". Regardless, all indicated that in general it was a very positive and personal experience. One FGD participant explained:

*I volunteered too, and personally for the four years that I have been working for my organization as a volunteer I have learnt a lot in terms of my personality, it has really changed.*

From the perspective of an international volunteer, another FGD participant observed:

*When I will be going back home, I will have learnt a lot, the culture of the people, new skills and, as someone working for VSO ... we also share the skills we have ... I am changing my life and the lives of the communities are also changing*

Similarly, all key informants in the study perceived volunteering as a positive experience and linked this to motivational issues including: high levels of acceptance of volunteers by community members (89%); the availability of training, resources and incentives (e.g. allowances, agricultural inputs, food) (33%) and increased status achieved by volunteers within their community (22%).

Despite the generally positive image of the experience of volunteering, all key informants were in a position to identify some negative aspects. These were linked predominantly to: a lack of or delays in receiving incentives (including misappropriation of funds) (22%); high levels of poverty among the volunteers themselves (22%); a lack of training for volunteers (11%); and a lack of resources (11%). According to Gaynor (1993; 32), who looked at community participation in rural Malawi, “men were more likely to report lack of materials as a dissatisfier and women more often mentioned misuse of funds”.

Furthermore, 44 percent of key informants suggested that some problems do arise between volunteers and the communities in which they operate. These can occur where: volunteers are involved in an activity that the community disapproves of (e.g. promotion of condom use); the volunteer was initially chosen by the village head; and where resources are only administered to selected members of the community. A further concern among key informants (33%), which was linked to the issues highlighted above, was high level of volunteer drop-out, with volunteers leaving the programme before it had been completed. In addition, the shame of being involved in the programme (related specifically to the community service programme) (11%) was also highlighted as being a negative issue.

Few FGD participants highlighted negative aspects of volunteering, although one international volunteer offered insight into others' negative perceptions of individuals involved in full-time volunteering, within the African context. He explained:

*[In Kenya] you will not find many people who have gone through college becoming volunteers, because of the perception people have attached to them. People will start asking 'what's wrong with this boy, he has not yet even settled down and he is becoming a volunteer.' They expect that after college he should find a job and start working.*

Furthermore, specifically in relation to international volunteers, some FGD participants noted that international volunteers from the West are attributed more respect than those from neighbouring countries, which the VSO volunteer perceived as based on the assumption that “everything that comes from the West is good”. Others, including key informants who had worked directly with international volunteers, also suggested that specific problems that arise with Western volunteers are predominantly related to cultural differences (both socially and professionally), language barriers and a lack of communication within the host organisation and between the host organisation and the VSA. One key informant went on to note that such problems are generally not met when working with international volunteers from within the same region and fully supported South-to-South service programmes.

#### **Textbox 4: Volunteer Services Overseas (VSO)**

VSO has been sending volunteers to Malawi for over 40 years. Initially it operated from the UK, now as a national office. VSO is currently changing its focus. Since 2000, VSO has increasingly been taking on the role of a development agency, with external volunteers generally recruited to implement development programmes. In this capacity, the aim of the current VSO strategic plan in Malawi is that: *In eight focus districts, VSO Malawi will work towards the inclusion of all people to exercise their right to essential services.*

The eight focus districts are: Chitipa, Rumphi, Ntchisi, Ntcheu, Zomba, Mwanza, Nsanje and Thyolo. These districts were chosen because of their rural settings/remote nature, high poverty levels, high prevalence of HIV and AIDS and low involvement of other NGO's. The intention behind having a district focus is to have partnerships and volunteer placements working together across sectors in the chosen districts. In addition, several volunteers are involved in activities with a national impact. VSO currently has approximately 80 volunteer placements in Malawi, with volunteers from Europe, Canada, Kenya, Uganda and the Philippines.

#### **VSO Malawi's key Programme Areas are:**

- Food Security
- Right to Quality Education
- Health and HIV and AIDs

In addition, HIV and AIDS is mainstreamed or integrated into all partnerships and volunteer placements, and all activities include analysis of cross-cutting themes of gender and disability.

#### **Health Sector Support**

VSO Malawi supports the Ministry of Health in its sixteen year emergency programme aiming to tackle the human resources crisis in the health sector. This is a multi-agency strategy – a Sector Wide Approach (SWAp) for improving health in Malawi – with significant support from DfID. VSO places volunteers as doctors and nurse tutors who, as well as their medical skills, also provide training for health personnel. Under the HIV programme, volunteers are involved in capacity building of CBOs, NGOs, District Assemblies and District AIDS coordinating committees, with activities including: staff training, developing management and financial systems and providing technical support in planning and monitoring and evaluation.

#### **Education Sector Support**

The VSO Education programme focuses on primary teacher training, with volunteers providing pre-service training at training colleges and facilitating continuing professional development activities in target districts. VSO also works with advocacy networks involved in quality education, such as FAWEMA and CSCBQE.

#### **Food Security**

The VSO Food Security programme works through the Rural Development Programmes (RDPs) and the District Agriculture offices. Volunteers work as irrigation engineers working with CBOs and providing capacity building for government extension workers.

VSO focuses on projects targeting people who are usually excluded from decision-making processes and from essential services, particularly: -

- People with disabilities
- Female-headed households with less than 0.5 hectares of land
- Children and young people, particularly orphans and out of school youth

## 7. Institutional Dimensions: Access, Incentives, Information and Support

Indications are that few, if any, institutions in Malawi have clearly defined criteria for selecting volunteers (except in relation to international volunteers). Regardless, most institutions only recruit volunteers from within the communities where the programme is operational; hence, it would appear that the major (written or unwritten) criteria on which local volunteers are selected in Malawi is 'membership of the target community'. In addition, most key informants (78%), stated that their programmes required that the volunteer is literate, in order to facilitate the transfer of information and for reporting purposes. Some (44%) highlighted the use of a minimum qualification criteria, usually that the volunteer is a holder of a least the Junior Certificate Examination (JCE) (e.g. education and civic education sectors) and/or an age or sex criteria (e.g. programmes with a youth and/or gender dimension).

In relation to criteria for selecting international volunteers, these are more specific and are normally drawn up by the host organisation. In general, international volunteers are expected to have high levels of educational qualifications (usually diploma or degree level) and/or experience/skills in a relevant field.

Criteria for selecting beneficiaries are specific and are generally in line with the sector in which the programme is taking place and the aims and objectives of the programme itself. Hence, in Malawi, the criteria for selecting beneficiaries focuses primarily on the beneficiary's health (e.g. HIV/AIDS status) and/or age and vulnerability (e.g. youth, orphan hood), given that these are the main areas in which programmes operate.

All key informants in the study indicated that volunteers on their programmes (including the Community Service Programme) get some form of incentives, although the type and level of incentives varied greatly. One in the FGD stated that his organization provides "training, monetary handouts, (though minimal) some T shirts, bicycles, even food, skills, skill development, capacity building and awareness". Another indicated that "we don't give them money as such, but something like upkeep allowance, maybe some T-shirts, caps, etc". A third said that when she was a volunteer she was given "some training". Key informants indicated four main types of incentives or benefits available to volunteers on their programmes: honoraria/allowances (78%); trainings/skill development (67%), resources for use in the programme (e.g. umbrellas, bicycles, t-shirts) (67%) and gifts (e.g. fertilizer) (33%). They further suggested that increased status in the community (33%) and increased chances of employment (11%), which is linked to training received and work experience gained, also acted as incentives. Interestingly, these findings are in direct contrast to the findings of a study carried out by PAC (2003), which investigated the responses of FBOs in Malawi to OVC. This study suggested that volunteers working with OVC via religious congregations did not get any 'perks'. However the findings of this study are in line with findings from other countries. For example, Moore McBride et al. (2003c) in a review of 210 civic service programmes worldwide found that two thirds of programmes provided training to participants.

Indications, therefore, are that the level and type of incentive made available to volunteers varies from programme to programme and this is linked to: the provision for incentives built into the programme; the source of programme funding; and the level of funding made available for the programme itself. Furthermore, there is recognition of the

need for incentives to increase or sustain volunteer involvement on programmes (Fairley, 2006; Nthara, 2004; PAC, 2003; Hauya, 2002; Mwale, 2002; Gaynor, 1993) and the view that some volunteers may have abandoned their work because of a lack of incentives (PAC, 2003). The provision of training by most service programmes operational in Malawi, and the importance of training as a motivational tool, is most likely linked to two facts: that volunteers in general have low levels of previous education and/or training; and that volunteers have expectations of gaining something via their involvement in a service programme.

Gaynor (1993) viewed training as an essential element for the effective provision of volunteer and community based services. PAC (2003: 44) suggested that “UNICEF, other donors and government should assist FBOs in capacity building by training their staff, volunteers and committee members in all aspects of OVC work”. Similarly, Kutengule (1997) suggested that NGOs have a role to play in the education sector in terms of the provision of skills, technological and business training. In relation to the issue of personal gain, discussions with key informants working with youth suggest that the landscape of volunteerism is changing in Malawi and that the youth who offer their services now have greater expectations of personal gain. Key informants blamed these changes, to at least some extent, upon an increase in donor activity in the country and the establishment of international NGOs who provide allowances and other such incentives to community members for participation in development work.

Evidence suggests that the type of support most frequently available to volunteers is monitoring and supervision of their work. All key informants in the study indicated that volunteers on their programmes were monitored and/or supervised via field visits and meetings with programme managers and/or government extension workers. This finding is in line with findings by Moore McBride et al (2003c), who suggested that 70 percent of the 210 civic service programmes analysed, offered supervision to the servers. Although all programmes offered supervision and monitoring, there was some variation in the frequency of such monitoring and/or supervision. Frequency of field trips/meetings varied from monthly to once or twice yearly, however the majority (83%) of the 6 key informants who were in a position to indicate frequency of monitoring/supervision indicated that it took place at least once a month. In general, the actual frequency of monitoring and evaluation was linked to two main issues: availability and quality of communication systems/information flow systems; and availability of personnel and financial resources - this was particularly the case in government departments, where resources and capacity are often limited.

All key informants further indicated that, in relation to their programmes, there were structures in place to allow for monitoring/supervision at all levels of programme management. More than half of key informants (56%) indicated that there were reporting and feedback systems in place which allowed the volunteers to submit written progress reports (normally on a monthly basis). Interestingly, although in general the level of resources is low in Malawi, participants in the FGD indicated that, for the most part, local volunteers operating at the community level have little difficulty accessing resources and/or materials. This, they indicated, was particularly the case where the activities being undertaken were in line with larger programmes' aims and objectives.

One FGD participant working with a youth NGO that supports community projects noted:

*if you are looking at a volunteer who is at local level and is trying to conduct an activity which is in line with what your organisation is doing, it's easy to support them.*

However, the suggestion was that access to resources by volunteers varied from organisation to organisation and within government departments. One FGD participant observed:

*In my case it is easy to get the information or whatever I need from the organisation but it also depends on which organisation or department you are working for...*

However, this was also seen to be highly dependent upon access to donor funding. One FGD participant working with the Social Welfare department at district level said:

*In my case, for the committees to be trained it's very difficult because we mostly rely on donors, like UNICEF to assist with the funds. So, unless the donors give us money, it becomes difficult to do the training.*

## **8. Programme Administration**

Findings from this study suggest that the majority of service programmes operational in Malawi are managed by NGOs (including CBOs and FBOs). This would appear to be in line with the position worldwide, given that Moore McBride et al (2003c) found that of 210 civic service programmes operational in 57 countries, 75 percent were administered by NGOs with just 22 percent administered by government agencies.

There is general agreement that, in relation to volunteer activities in Malawi, the government provides advice, limited technical support and an enabling environment; it does not have the resources to fund volunteer activities directly. All key informants in the study indicated that, for the most part, funding for programmes (including their own programmes) that use volunteers is provided by donor agencies (predominantly international agencies). This funding (which is used primarily for training, resources and volunteer allowances) is then channelled through government to NGOs, FBOs and CBOs who implement the programmes. For example, Bryceson and et al. (2004) indicated that community-based organisations in Malawi are either community funded (usually built on voluntary involvement and directed at the community's immediate needs in the areas of security, death and recreational pursuits) or externally funded (usually involved in projects in agriculture and health and in the areas of emergency relief and development programmes). Furthermore, secondary data from this study suggest that the majority of youth clubs and community-based organisations are funded with money from NAC, the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) or UNICEF, although, according to key informants, they are expected to register with the appropriate government department. These findings contrast with those of Moore McBride et al. (2003c: 14) who, upon analysis of 210 civic service programmes worldwide, suggested that "the voluntary sector (third or non-governmental sector) is clearly driving the development of civic service, but the state often plays an important role in funding".

The majority of key informants (78%) indicated that some level of collaboration does take place between government, donor agencies and NGOs, FBOs and CBOs. Collaboration generally takes place in relation to: distribution of funding; adherence to standards; and avoidance of duplication of services. According to one FGD participant, “the NGOs work with the communities, who are accomplishing something for the government”. Indications are that government believes that its main role is co-ordination and monitoring, through the use of extension workers and, increasingly, through decentralised, multi-sector development committees (see Section 4.4.1). Although collaboration does take place, it appears that the levels of collaboration are lower than considered acceptable. For example, one third of all key informants (mainly from NGOs) believed that: levels of collaboration were low; that government lacks the capacity to play a co-ordinating role; and that an agency other than government should be responsible for co-ordination. Other authors have previously highlighted the need and advantages of increased collaboration. For example, according to PAC (2003: 29) “in order to implement their HIV/AIDS and OVC programmes effectively, RCBs need to work in close partnership with donors and government bodies such as the Department of Social Welfare in the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services which is the government arm responsible for coordinating OVC activities. By working with such organizations, RCBs can benefit in terms of assistance in the form of technical, financial and in kind”.

#### **Textbox 5: The Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM)**

The Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM) is a membership based non-governmental organization, first created in 1947 as the Nyasaland Preservation Society, which set up protected wildlife areas of which many today are Malawi’s National Parks. The Society’s beginnings were predominantly as advocates for wildlife protection and conservation. When Malawi became independent the name changed to National Fauna Preservation Society. The name was changed again in 1989 to the Wildlife Society of Malawi. During recent years, the Society has broadened its scope to address both wildlife and environmental issues and the dependent relationship of humans on the environment to survive. Reflecting this, in 2001, the name was changed again to the Wildlife and Environmental Society of Malawi (WESM).

WESM’s vision is for all people in Malawi to co-exist in harmony with wildlife and the natural environment and its Mission Statement reflects an aim to be the leading membership organization promoting public participation in the wise management of wildlife, natural resources and the environment in Malawi.

Currently WESM has nine branches throughout Malawi and a secretariat based in Limbe, in the south of the country. The branches carry out various advocacy and fund-raising activities, as well as programmes in environmental education for their network of affiliated school and community wildlife and environmental clubs. WESM is also involved in the publication and distribution of environmental education materials.

Each branch is run by salaried professional staff – including the Branch Manager and a Clubs Co-ordinator – and local volunteers, many of who work closely with clubs and club patrons. Branch officers report to the Branch Committee whose members are drawn from the WESM membership base. Over the years, WUSC, one of the Volunteer Sending Agencies active in Malawi, has supported the work of WESM through the provision of international volunteers to lend technical support to branches and the Secretariat.



## 9. Policy and Legislation

In Malawi, there is a low level of development in terms of policies and legislation relating to volunteerism. Key informants and FGD participants unanimously indicated that they were not aware of any national policy on local volunteerism. However, a few key informants were aware of government guidelines relating to international volunteers and were conversant with these guidelines. Most key informants (67%) indicated that volunteering does feature in a number of other policies including those in the areas of health, youth, gender, child welfare, community services, disabilities and disaster management. Similarly, FGD participants stated that, to the best of their knowledge, guidelines that indicate how volunteers should operate do exist in policy documents of certain sectors. Some key informants (22%) suggested that guidelines relating to volunteering have been developed by a number of organisations, while others (22%), such as NICE and MRC, indicated that they have recently or are currently developing volunteer guidelines of their own<sup>17</sup>. Others (11%) indicated that there is a need for such guidelines to help reduce duplication and wastage of resources.

It would appear that a lack of guidelines or policies is not only limited to the area of volunteering but is widespread in other related areas. For example, according to PAC (2003: 27), few RCBs in Malawi “reported having HIV/AIDS or OVC policies and guidelines”. As a result most rely on government policy formulation; although some RCBs indicated that they were in the process of developing guidelines. Furthermore, the Government of Malawi itself has indicated that “Government has yet to develop guidelines or demonstrate its full commitment to community participation” (GOMa, 2003: 4). One exception might be the in the field of education where, according to Rose (2003: 47), “community participation has become increasingly formalized in international and national educational policy in recent years” (see Section 4.6.4), although she does question the desirability of emphasis on community participation in policy-making. Nevertheless, the overall lack of guidelines and policies in volunteerism and related fields is undoubtedly impacting negatively upon service programme provision in Malawi and causing a number of different problems. For example, FGD participants identified discrepancies between stipends/incentives of local and international volunteers, and between those of local volunteers working for different NGOs and government departments, as a major problem hindering the success of Malawi-based volunteer programmes. According to one FGD participant:

*There are no clear policies about government volunteers, but also for NGO's. It seems like different NGO's treat their volunteers in a different way: this other NGO's in one way, this other NGO in another way. When these come together they are volunteers with different experiences and usually there are problems somewhere at the end of the day. And at the end of the day those that offer their volunteer good incentives will get some quality volunteers.*

While there is no national volunteering policy to implement, indications are that implementation of guidelines at programme level are hindered by a lack of resources and capacity (44%) and poor communication systems (33%), problems similar to those experienced in volunteer monitoring and supervision (see Section 5.8.) However, one

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<sup>17</sup> However, when requested, these documents were not available and it was indicated that these are still in draft form.

key informant was of the opinion that ongoing decentralisation would assist in solving issues of communication.

## 10. Factors Promoting and Hindering Service

The majority of key informants (78%) indicated that in Malawi one of the main factors promoting volunteerism is the fact that the majority of volunteers come from within the communities where the programmes are being implemented. This has a number of positive impacts including: communities and volunteers gain additional capacity via knowledge and skills achieved through volunteer training (56%); programmes are cost-effective (44%); and communities have a sense of ownership of these programmes leading to programme sustainability (33%). Some of the above factors have also been identified by other authors or organizations (Chilowa et al., 2004; Chapota, 2004; GOMa 2003; Rose, 2003; Kutengule, 1997; Gaynor, 1993; Kandawire, 1992). Additional positive factors that have been identified by other authors include: the fact that community care programmes can help reduce hospitalizations and improve the quality of life for those suffering from AIDS and/or TB (Buhendwa, 2002); and awareness raising in relation to a number of HIV/AIDS-related issues (Mwale, 2002).

Some programmes and approaches to service have very specific strengths. For example, the Community Service Programme reduces overcrowding and health concerns in prisons, builds a sense of justice and civic duty, and encourages dialogue between offenders and victims. It can also, according to the key informant from the Justice Sector, provide future job opportunities for offenders. Similarly, recruitment of international volunteers helps to fill knowledge and skills gaps and brings diversity in terms of language and culture. Moreover, another key informant noted that recruitment of volunteers from other African nations, as opposed to the Western world, can provide specialist benefits in terms of skills and experience in short supply among Western volunteers (e.g. working the sectors of HIV/AIDS and OVC, within an African context).

Key informants acknowledged a wide range of weaknesses and factors hindering volunteerism in Malawi (see Table 5 below).

**Table 5: Main Factors Hindering Volunteerism in Malawi, According to Key Informants**

Factor	No. of Key Informants n=9
Illiteracy and low standards of education	6 (67%)
High levels of poverty	5 (56%)
High levels of turnover among volunteers	5 (56%)
A lack of sustainability/continuity of programmes	5 (56%)
A lack of capacity at all levels	4 (45%)
Political interference	3 (33%)
Inadequate monitoring and supervision	3 (33%)

The majority (67%) of key informants mentioned illiteracy and low standards of education generally among volunteers and communities as a major factor hindering

volunteerism/service in Malawi. According to FGD participants, women's effective participation in service in particular is limited by illiteracy. One participant indicated that:

*when we are looking for a volunteer, we look for somebody who can at least read and write. Then in this case you look at people who are school leavers and mostly young men.*

In addition, over half (56%) of key informants identified high levels of turnover and dropout as another major factor. One FGD participant suggested that high volunteer turnover is related to high levels of unemployment:

*somebody ....will do it [volunteer] because he has nothing else to do...but may be once he gets a better job or something permanent he will get out.*

Other factors hindering volunteerism in Malawi highlighted in this study include: the impact of HIV/AIDS; a perceived decrease in social cohesion; a lack of clear guidelines on volunteering; issues relating to international volunteers (incentives and culture); discrepancies between local volunteers (stipend/incentives); a low level of acknowledgement of volunteers and high levels of corruption. Some of the above issues have also been recognised by other authors, namely, illiteracy among volunteers (Munthali, 2002) and a lack of resources (PAC 2003). Additional weaknesses and factors that have been identified by other studies include: the fact that donors, as a condition of their support, prescribe activities instead of responding to the needs of the initiatives (PAC 2003); a lack of training for volunteers on some programmes such as those operated by FBOs in the area of OVC (ibid); a lack of incentives for volunteers (ibid); and the fact that volunteers suffer from burnout (Munthali, 2002).

As highlighted in the literature (see Section 2.3) poverty and increasing marginalisation of countries and regions in Africa, could limit the positive impact of volunteerism and civic service and that there maybe a need to review the appropriateness of the perspective of donors with regard to the kind of civic service required in the African context (Patel and Wilson, 2004b). The findings of this study suggest that the high level of poverty among the population is a limiting factor in civic service and volunteerism in Malawi, because volunteers themselves are also in need of assistance and this gives rise to the issue of compensation for volunteers and disparities therein (see Section 5.9.). Moreover, in Malawi there are high levels of donor involvement in NGOs, CBOS and youth clubs (see Section 5.8.) and consequently in volunteer activity. Such dependency upon donor funding leaves volunteering activity in Malawi subject to outside influences and drives the service agenda.

## **11. The Way Forward - Regional Collaboration and Research**

Key informants indicated a number of preferred actions in terms of the future development of volunteerism in Malawi. Among these was the issue of local and regional collaboration, about which it would appear there is some disagreement. For example, one FGD participant indicated:

*if we listen to what others are doing we might be struggling with the same issues but our friends they might have gone through that, they may have*

*got solutions. Then we learn from each other, but if we work in isolation then we cannot grow.*

In addition, supporting this, 44 percent of key informants indicated that increased collaboration (at local, national and regional levels) is necessary. However, a few key informants (22%) indicated that volunteerism in Malawi is not yet ready for involvement in regional collaboration, due to current low levels of capacity at the national level.

As highlighted in the literature (see Section 2.11), findings for this study suggest that Malawi mirrors the situation worldwide with a low degree of collaboration at a regional level. Increased collaboration is of interest in Malawi, including situations where volunteers have gained knowledge through exchange visits (Nthara, 2004; PAC, 2003). In addition, a few key informants saw the further promotion of South-South volunteer exchange (which in Malawi is currently being carried out by VSO) as beneficial. As well as supporting the recruitment of professional Malawian and African volunteers, other suggestions for the way forward included: the development of volunteer guidelines (22%) and the empowerment of volunteers and communities, through improved education, skills and finances (22%). One FGD participant suggested that, in relation to the development of volunteer guidelines/policies “government should do their part and then we have this CONGOMA, they can also do their own part”.

Among those key informants (67%) who commented upon possible future research, two thirds suggested research that looked specifically at the volunteers themselves, with the aim of gaining a greater understanding of: the experiences of volunteers; factors that lead to volunteer drop out; contributions and impact of volunteers; and the possibilities of increasing volunteering among Malawian professionals, both within and outside of Malawi. Indications were that further research was considered important because it would: help in the development of volunteer guidelines; help improve volunteer performance; and help explain why, despite large numbers of volunteers in a variety of sectors, social indicators in Malawi continue to fall.

# Section Three: Conclusions and Recommendations

## I. Introduction

Findings from interviews and discussions with key informants and FGD participants, as well as a review of locally available documentation on civic service and volunteering in Malawi, are summarised and presented below. Where appropriate, relevant recommendations have been made, and this chapter concludes with suggestions for the way forward and a possible future research agenda for volunteering and civic service in Malawi.

## 2. Conclusions and Recommendations

This study has shown that in Malawi there is a limited understanding of the term *civic service*. The term *volunteering* is widely recognised and generally understood to be related to carrying out activities and offering ones time and service on a non-payment basis, to the betterment of others. Volunteering is generally regarded as being an integral part of Malawian culture with a strong social dimension, for example assisting the elderly, sick, orphans etc, although there are concerns that societal changes have lessened this in recent years. Furthermore, the format of volunteering has changed in recent years in that those involved now expect some form of payment or incentive e.g. allowances, training, equipment, etc. Training, often with the prospect of allowances implied, is regarded as one of the most popular incentives for volunteers. The importance of training as a motivational tool for Malawian volunteers may be linked to the fact that few volunteers initially have training, in the area in which they are volunteering, and that many lack formal training or education.

All service and volunteering programmes in Malawi are non-compulsory and volunteers usually work at local/community level, although the organisation or administration of programmes may be at a higher level and the organisation with responsibility for the programme may operate nationally. The role and contribution of volunteers in service programmes is not always explicitly acknowledged and the numbers of volunteers involved, either nationally or within programmes, are rarely quantified. Most programmes using volunteers are run by NGOs and FBOs. With the exception of the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) project and some programmes in social welfare, health and adult literacy, government has little direct involvement in using volunteers. Where government involvement exists it is generally in a collaborative, advisory or monitoring role, usually in an attempt to avoid duplication of services in any one area. In most instances international donor organisations provide the funding for programmes using volunteers. Funding is generally channelled through NGOs or the government department that has the responsibility for managing the programme. Where government uses volunteers the numbers are generally large, however, government can experience more difficulty in recruiting volunteers as compared to NGOs because of a lack of resources to provide volunteer incentives.

**Recommend:**

- Ensure that training is an integral part of volunteer programme design, both prior to volunteering and at regular intervals to enhance motivation and self-reflection of volunteers.

**Recommend:**

- Explore possibilities for opening up dialogue – through cross-sector meetings, seminars and workshops – on volunteering, civic service and the development of the voluntary sector in Malawi. Such dialogue should focus initially on developing a consensus amongst stakeholders on the meaning and role of volunteering and civic service and acknowledge the contributions made by volunteers to social development in Malawi. Such forums should be utilised by stakeholders to share lessons learnt and discuss possible best practices for the management of volunteering programmes, where possible drawing on national and regional experiences.
- Assess possible means by which to carry out a detailed stakeholder analysis of volunteering and civic service in Malawi and establish a national database of organisations and government bodies involved in volunteering and civic service programmes, including estimates of the numbers of volunteers involved.

Programmes most likely to use volunteers are in the field of social services (home based care for the sick, orphan care, youth work and education), and human rights and governance (information dissemination). Other areas such as the environment also use volunteers but to a lesser extent. The profiles of beneficiaries of such programmes vary greatly, but the sick, especially those suffering from HIV/AIDS, and the young (e.g. orphans) are frequently the most likely beneficiaries. While this study found that servers on programmes in Malawi often benefit from their time as volunteers the aims and objectives of programmes, are designed in the majority of cases to benefit primarily the beneficiaries, with little explicit emphasis on personal development of volunteers. The possible exception to this is with the international volunteers of VSAs.

**Recommend:**

- Support the review and adaptation of programmes involving volunteers in order to allow for greater benefits to the servers.
- Encourage stakeholders to assess volunteers' needs and identify additional, non-monetary motivating incentive to include in programme design. Such incentives incorporate the needs and expectations of different target groups, e.g. youth, women, professionals etc.

Malawi lacks standardised guidelines related to local volunteers (although guidelines/policies that refer to volunteers do exist within certain sectors e.g. Orphan Policy, HIV/AIDS Policy). International volunteers are expected to comply with guidelines laid out under the Department of Human Resource Management and Development (DHRMD), which focuses on issues of payment and conditions of service. Findings from

this study suggest that most organisations and communities see this lack of policy and legislation as a major drawback in the development and implementation of service programmes and as a result, some organisations and communities are currently in the process of developing volunteer guidelines.

**Recommend:**

- Support the development of national guidelines for organisations and government bodies working with volunteers. Such guidelines should expand on the current policy framework and draw on the expertise of long-standing volunteer organisations within Malawi who currently developing their own policy documents, regional expertise and consultation with stakeholders. The guidelines should look at issues such as criteria and access, conditions of service, incentives, training and support.

There is no standard level of commitment required of a volunteer, and volunteer criteria are determined by the aims and objectives of individual programmes (e.g. the need for a certain level of education on some educational programmes). Findings from this study suggest that while organisations do have some expectations of the period of commitment and the numbers of hours allocated to service by local volunteers, they are less than their expectations for paid staff and international volunteers. This is possibly a reflection of the socio-economic situation and status of local volunteers, and the reality that few people are able to commit long-term to a project

The profile of volunteers varies greatly however, females are often more numerous on programmes in areas where they have traditional involvement e.g. caring for the sick and young. In addition , it is common to find both male and female volunteers in rural areas, while in urban areas female volunteers are more common (due perhaps to the fact that men in urban areas often have paid work outside of the home). It is suggested that women will volunteer even on programmes that offer no incentives, while men are more likely to volunteer only on those programmes that offer some form of incentive.

**Recommend:**

- There is a need to counter cultural views of care-giving as feminine and to find initiatives that will increase participation, of both sexes in volunteer activities related to non-traditional roles. Furthermore, greater emphasis needs to be placed on promoting female participation in decision-making roles within volunteer and civic service programmes.

Volunteers are generally drawn from all age ranges; however younger volunteers are more numerous on programmes that are aimed at the youth (e.g. youth clubs). Volunteers are most likely to come from the lower socio-economic groups with few members of the middle and upper socio-economic groups involved in volunteer activities. This appears related to the fact that volunteers from the lower socio-economic groups have the most to benefit from volunteering in terms of personal development related to the training and other incentives provided by many programmes that use volunteers. In addition, the majority of volunteers live in the programmes' target communities and the issues affecting the beneficiaries are often also seen as actual or perceived issues in

volunteers' own lives. For example, it is possible that lower socio-economic groups volunteer on HIV/AIDS related programmes, especially on programmes aimed at helping PLWAs and their children, because they fear that in the future they too might succumb to HIV/AIDS and they hope that by volunteering while healthy, they can secure similar future assistance for their own children. Furthermore, those who are not in regular, salaried work, such as subsistence farmers, are more likely to be more flexible in the amount of time they can make available for volunteering. Moreover, the bulk of the volunteers are found in the rural areas, where, despite several respondents' perspectives to the contrary, cultural traditions of cooperation in community development are likely to still have significant influence. Acceptance of volunteers by communities is high because volunteers are usually drawn directly from the communities in which they perform their duties. This, along with the cost-effectiveness of using volunteers, is one of the major strengths of the programmes that use volunteers.

A major problem faced by volunteers is a lack of resources, which hinders their ability to perform their duties. This is also the case with organisations running programmes that use volunteers and can impact negatively upon many areas including: capacity to deliver programmes; levels of resources and equipment; levels of training; geographic coverage; and levels of monitoring and evaluation. In addition, for such organisations, the expectation of some form of payment or incentive among volunteers is often problematic. Some of the major weaknesses of programmes that use volunteers include: nepotism, a lack of continuity, and high levels of volunteer drop out. The main national issues that impact in various ways upon programmes that use volunteers include: low levels of education; high levels of poverty; high levels of unemployment; high levels of HIV/AIDS; and the lack of guidelines and policy on volunteering and civic service. Some key informants noted that problems in Malawi involving international volunteers, such as cultural issues and poor communication can be often negated by the use of greater numbers of volunteers from within Southern Africa.

**Recommend:**

- Increase the capacity of organisations to monitor and supervise volunteers through collaboration and partnerships with relevant government departments and development committees at district and community level.
- Examine strategies for increasing the capacity of local, community level organisations to access funds and materials resources, such as supporting training in proposal writing and strengthening links between communities and local government.
- Promote regional South-to-South volunteering and civic service programmes.

### **3. The Way Forward**

Findings from this study show that whilst many are in favour of increased regional collaboration, others do not believe that Malawi currently has the capacity make the most of such collaboration. Whilst the government may not yet be in a position to take the forefront in collaborative efforts, either regionally or nationally, one way forward would be to establish a national secretariat, which would coordinate and promote many of the recommendations above and establish a national research agenda into volunteering and civic service.



Malawi boasts an increasingly vibrant and powerful civil society, with several well established civil society networks which could serve as possible blueprints for developing a network of stakeholders within Malawi's emerging voluntary sector. The Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA) would be one possible candidate for secretariat for the network. Local and international organisations (e.g. VSAs) should be encouraged to join, as well as representatives of government projects and programmes (e.g. NICE and the OVC programme). Alongside supporting and/or coordinating the above recommendations, the network would also: promote collaboration between organisations working with volunteers at local, national and regional level; share and disseminate 'best practices'; discuss key issues affecting volunteers; lobby for policy changes and, longer term, support institutionalisation of volunteerism; provide opportunities, through fundraising, for improving the capacity for organisations working with volunteers (e.g. training in leadership and management skills) and promote the emerging voluntary sector as a viable option for the unemployed (e.g. youth), whilst contributing to social development.

Findings from this study suggest that increased research is urgently required within the Malawian context. A possible research agenda might include:

- Examining the factors contributing towards high levels of dropout amongst volunteers.
- Compare the needs, expectations and motivation of local and international volunteers.
- Explore the possibilities of increasing volunteering among Malawian professionals, both nationally and internationally.
- Examining the effectiveness of strategies of volunteer programmes and the performance of volunteers.
- Assess the impact of volunteering on social development.
- Explore the gender dimensions of volunteering.
- Cost benefit analyses of volunteering within key sectors.

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## Appendix 1: Matrix of Selected Service and Volunteering Programmes in Malawi

Characteristics of programme	Community Service Programme	Youth and Health Programme	Functional Adult Literacy programme	National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE)	WESM (Zomba) Environmental Education programme	Cadecom HIV/AIDS and Home-based Care programme
<b>Form, Scope and Age of programme</b>						
<b>Form and Scope</b>	National government programme	National government programme, implemented by youth clubs & CBOs set up under parallel programme (Youth Participation programme).	National government programme	National government/donor agency project (EU & GTZ-funded)	National, membership-based NGO (local branch)	FBO
<b>No. of years running</b>	4 years (plus 5 years as pilot)	15 + years	25 years	7 years	31 years	13 years
<b>Geographic distribution</b>	National mainly urban, & peri-urban)	National (urban, peri-urban and rural)	National (predominantly rural)	National (urban, peri-urban and rural)	One district (rural and peri-urban).	7districts under one Diocese (30 parishes: urban, peri-urban & rural)
<b>Service Role</b>						
<b>Compulsory nature</b>	Non-compulsory	Non-compulsory	Non-compulsory	Non-compulsory	Non-compulsory	Non-compulsory
<b>Period of commitment</b>	Up to 12 months (F/T or P/T)	One day per week. Length of commitment not enforced.	Teach 2 hours per day, four days per week for 10 months.	Up to 4 days a week Flexible hours	None, Flexible hours	At least 2 days per week. (HBC: visit 5 – 15 patients twice weekly)

Characteristics of programme	Community Service Programme	Youth and Health Programme	Functional Adult Literacy programme	National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE)	WESM (Zomba) Environmental Education programme	Cadecom HIV/AIDS and Home-based Care programme
<b>Servers, Service areas and Goals</b>						
<b>Service Areas</b>	Justice Infrastructure development	Health (HIV/AIDS & SRH) Education (inc. vocational training) Gender	Education Community Development	Democracy & Governance Civic Education & Participation	Environmental protection & Sustainable livelihoods Education	Health (HIV / AIDS) Human & social services.
<b>Activities</b>	Skilled and manual labour, infrastructure construction & maintenance.	Peer education in SRH (HIV/AIDS & family planning) Vocational training Livelihood skills development for servers	Literacy classes	Voter education & election monitoring Production & distribution of IEC materials. Advocacy and sensitisation activities Promotes formation of clubs and literacy classes	Support for school clubs (IEC, school trips, tree planting etc.) Training of club patrons. Resource centre management.	Home-based care HIV/AIDS awareness & prevention (IEC). Voluntary counselling and testing Orphan care
<b>Target groups/ Beneficiaries</b>	Communities, schools, District offices.	Youth (15 -20 years) Communities	Adult community members (15+), predominantly female	Community members	School children & youth, community members.	PLWA, OVC. Communities



<b>Characteristics of programme</b>	<b>Community Service Programme</b>	<b>Youth and Health Programme</b>	<b>Functional Adult Literacy programme</b>	<b>National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE)</b>	<b>WESM (Zomba) Environmental Education programme</b>	<b>Cadecom HIV/AIDS and Home-based Care programme</b>
<b>Goals</b>	Rehabilitation of offenders	Promote health and well being amongst youth. Promote girls' participation in education & training. Improve livelihood skills development for servers (economic development)	Increase basic literacy amongst community members. Promote community development	Promote grassroots participation to support democracy and governance. Facilitates civic education & community development.	Promote environmental protection Promote sustainable land use & livelihoods.	Promote healthy living, specifically preventing of HIV spread by using IEC. Provide support for those infected and affected by HIV/AIDS. Promote community development and sustainable livelihoods.
<b>Approx. no. of servers/ volunteers</b>	100	1,200 Peer educators	1,000	Up to 10,000 para-civic educators (greatest numbers prior to elections, currently 8,000)	12 youth volunteers (school-leavers) & approx. 350 club patrons	1,200
<b>Age range of servers</b>	Not known	16 – 22 years	Mainly school-leavers (20 +)	18 years plus	18 years plus	Youth to elderly (youth mainly in peer-education activities, older in HBC)
<b>Gender</b>	Mostly male (98%)	Both male and female (females encouraged to participate)	Male and female	Male & Female	Youth volunteers & mainly male, club patrons both male and female.	male & female (greater no. of male volunteers in rural)

<b>Characteristics of programme</b>	<b>Community Service Programme</b>	<b>Youth and Health Programme</b>	<b>Functional Adult Literacy programme</b>	<b>National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE)</b>	<b>WESM (Zomba) Environmental Education programme</b>	<b>Cadecom HIV/AIDS and Home-based Care programme</b>
<b><i>Nature of Service</i></b>						
<b>Servers' experiences</b>	Generally positive, although small minority prefer custodial sentence seeing community service as humiliating	Generally positive (recognition & training)	Generally positive, concerns over delays in payment of honoraria	Generally positive	Generally positive	Generally positive... Concern with levels of poverty amongst servers, lack of transport, lack of remuneration.
<b>Perceived by community</b>	Received well by institution where they serve. Chiefs use them as role models, but victims in communities concerned that servers are benefiting.	Accepted, given higher status than other youth. Negative perceptions if involved in condom distribution.	Well accepted by communities because chosen by them.	Nepotism a concern in the past, now traditional leaders excluded from selection of volunteers.	Impact limited to schools	Accepted by communities.

Characteristics of programme	Community Service Programme	Youth and Health Programme	Functional Adult Literacy programme	National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE)	WESM (Zomba) Environmental Education programme	Cadecom HIV/AIDS and Home-based Care programme
<b><i>Institutional Dimensions</i></b>						
<b>Criteria for service</b>	Sentenced for minor offence	Completed primary school (school leaving certificate) Living in target area for 1 year. 16-22 years old Member of youth club.	Community member JCE certificate (2 years secondary schooling) No age limits. Prefer females	Minimum 2 secondary education (JCE holder) Over 18 years	Club patrons are teachers at registered schools.	Community member
<b>Incentives/stipends</b>	Not supposed to benefit financially, although some receive extra hours work, which is paid for.	Training allowances T-shirts Bicycles	Small monthly honoraria	Training & certificates, Travelling allowance as required. Umbrellas, caps, Bicycle for Zonal PCE.	none	Training (inc. small stipend for lunch). Umbrellas & bicycles for CBs' use. Fertiliser at year-end.
<b>Support for Servers</b>	Supervised by institutions where they are working.	Training Monitoring by government extension officers. Monitoring & support from Youth Action Committees in some districts.	2 week initial training Monitoring by government extension officers.	Training provided Monitoring & support provided by Zonal PCEs who report to district officers (salaried staff). All NICE district offices have resources centres.	Monitoring visits per school term. Resource centre available Training provided.	monthly visits to volunteers by programme staff. intermittent monitoring and supervision trips where field staff, volunteers & community leaders collaborate.

<b>Programme Administration</b>						
<b>Implementation of activities</b>	Once assigned service, relevant institutions supervise activities. Programme coordinated by Registrar's office.	By youth clubs & CBOs set up under Youth Participation Programme (up to 3,500 clubs), Overseen by District Youth Offices. All clubs expected to register with National Youth Council.	By Functional Literacy Committees, Overseen by District Community Services offices. Coordinated by National Centre for Literacy and Adult Education	Services provided by PCEs, supported by Zonal PCEs and coordinated by NICE offices in 29 districts. Overseen by regional and national offices.	Services provided by club patrons (schools), monitored & supported by 3 Clubs Coordinators (salaried) and overseen by Branch Manager.	Services provided by CBOs
<b>Collaboration &amp; Linkages</b>	Links with Police Service, Prison Service, Chiefs & Traditional courts.	Funded by UNICEF & UNFPA. Peer educators also used by other stakeholders to implement projects (e.g. condom distribution) Links with national & district Youth Technical Committees & Youth TWG.	Some funding from UNDP Collaboration with international NGOs providing literacy programmes to benefit from training available (ActionAid's REFLECT) & avoid duplication.	Funding by GTZ & EU. Use own network of staff & volunteers separate from government district offices and extension officers. However, attends District Executive Committee cross-sector meetings.	Collaboration with district services: Education, Forestry, Parks & Wildlife.	Linkages with wide range of donors (development agencies, government funding bodies & international NGOs) Limited collaboration with government.

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<b><i>Policy &amp; Legislation</i></b>						
<b>Policy level</b>	Criminal Procedure and Evidence Act (1978)	National Youth Policy (no mention of volunteers)	None	None	none	HIV/AIDS Policy
<b>Programme Guidelines</b>	As above	Operational guidelines, but limited	Operational guidelines, but limited	Developing manual for volunteers	none	Developed basic guidelines
<b><i>Factors promoting/hindering Service</i></b>						
<b>Main Strengths</b>	Cost-effective, reduces prison over-crowding & poor health. Builds sense of civic duty	Use of government structures (district & national) strengthens capacity building	Use of community volunteers (ownership) Use of district structures reduces inefficiency.	Use of community volunteers (ownership)	Dedication of servers	Use of community volunteers (ownership)
<b>Main Constraints</b>	Type & place of service pre-determined by District Commissioner's office, rather than relevant to communities needs.	High turn over of servers (for further education, employment)	High turn over among volunteers (leave to take up employment or when honoraria late) Lack of funds & resources.	High turnover of volunteers	Poor and erratic funding Insufficient human resources	Lack of recognition by government. Lack of funds for overseeing body.