

Recommendation 18: Substantially increase the budget for drugs and medical supplies, include adequate funds for proper distribution and increased security for drug stores, and designate the same as a Priority Poverty Expenditure.

9. Infrastructure

9.1 Rural Roads

9.1.1 Linking production, particularly agricultural production in remote areas, to domestic and international markets was a high priority among people who participated in the district consultations on the PRSP. The Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation believes that development of output markets for poor farmers is the most effective approach to reducing poverty for the largest number. It is also a good strategy for replacing handouts with economic opportunities.

9.1.2 Rehabilitating and constructing rural roads and bridges will contribute significantly to making markets accessible to the rural poor. Improving roads, and thereby reducing transport costs, should also reduce the costs of farm inputs and other goods in rural areas. Heavy rains this year caused major damage to rural infrastructure. Roads must therefore be upgraded on an urgent basis, preferably before the beginning of the main marketing season.

9.1.3 The Committee notes the desire among stakeholders for rapid decentralisation of decisions about which roads are to be upgraded. Information is needed on how much authority will devolve to the districts, and when.

9.1.4 The Decision Point Document suggests an indicative use of US\$2.7 million in HIPC resources for upgrading rural roads in 2001/2002.

Recommendation 19: Substantially increase the budget for rehabilitating and constructing rural roads and bridges, and designate the same as a Priority Poverty Expenditure.

9.2 Safe Drinking Water

9.2.1 District consultations on the PRSP also underlined the pressing need for safe drinking water, a fundamental necessity. An ambitious programme for constructing boreholes and other water supply systems must be undertaken, particularly in rural areas. This must be accompanied by community training in maintenance of local water supply facilities.

9.2.2 Increased public spending on safe drinking water supply systems must be accompanied by expanding programmes for environmental protection of water catchment areas, re-forestation, and restoration of soils and streams. Population must also be controlled to avoid increasing pressure on natural resources. Some years ago, boreholes drilled to a depth of 10 meters were expected to yield water for many years. Now a depth of 25 to 40 meters is typically needed. If environmental protection and population control are not pursued vigorously, the cost effectiveness of funds spent for water supply systems will continue to decrease.

9.2.3 The Decision Point Document suggests indicative use of US\$4.2 million in HIPC resources for borehole construction and maintenance in 2001/2002.

Recommendation 20: Substantially increase the budget for constructing safe drinking water systems, include funds for community training in maintenance, and designate the same as a Priority Poverty Expenditure.

10. Security

10.0.1 The security situation in rural and urban areas has deteriorated, causing Malawians to fear for themselves and their property. District consultations on the PRSP made it apparent that security is just as much of a problem in rural areas and among the poor, as in urban areas and among the better off. In fact, theft is more devastating for the poor than for the rich. Many poor rural households no longer keep livestock, even chickens, for fear of theft. The same disincentive applies to accumulating other physical assets, e.g., seeds, tools, etc. Growing perceptions of insecurity also affect foreign investment and tourism.

10.1 Police Service and Community Policing

10.1.1 Relationships between communities and police are strained by distrust and cynicism about the Police Service and the criminal justice system. People