

## Chapter 1: Introduction

The purpose of the exercise was to establish the level of citizen satisfaction (or dissatisfaction) with the quality of the “public” services provided. This type of outcome monitoring is a new departure in Malawi, as previous efforts have focused on poverty indicators or on tracking inputs (and occasionally outputs). The exercise does not ask the respondents to comment on technical matters, which they may not be competent to do, rather it asks them which services are satisfactory and whether the staff working in the service providing institutions meet their satisfaction.

This is part of the response to the needs identified in the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) for monitoring of budget inputs and outputs by Civil Society Organisations (CSO) (pages 110 – 114) through community empowerment and involvement in public expenditure tracking. This exercise is also the first in what is hoped to be a regular series of exercises, and as such should also be considered as something of a pilot exercise, difficulties identified in this first round of the exercise will be ironed out in future rounds.

The exercise is similar in nature to other exercises carried out in developing countries, such as Kenya, the Philippines and India, as well as regular service delivery surveys carried out in the developed world, principally in Europe, (where they are implemented as ***Eurobarometer Surveys*** or general opinion polls) and in Asia.

The results of the exercise can help the providers of the service, in this instance the government, to become more responsive to the needs and wishes of their clients. This is very important in light of the prevailing poverty situation in the country, and efforts towards really improving the situation in Malawi.

### 1.1 Background and Objectives

Since the year 2000, the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN) has been involved in budget issues, including analysis and interpretation, literacy and training, and output monitoring. Over the years, it has been observed that nearly all stakeholders in Malawi agree on the importance of streamlining priority areas to reduce poverty. This is made evident in the way national budget allocations are segregated. One element has however been sidelined, and this is that of the inclusion of the perceptions or the feelings of the local communities themselves about the delivery of these priorities. We believe that the perceptions gathered during this exercise are what matter most in this environment of mass poverty, where allocations are challenged in the face of scarce resources.

Deciding *'what we wanted to know'* and what areas should be covered by the exercise was addressed by reviewing the discussions and deliberations of the MEJN monitoring chapters on what should be included as Priority Poverty Expenditures (PPEs)<sup>1</sup>. From these discussions it was apparent that services delivered in a number of areas were of major concern for those at district and community level. These included:

- (i) Health Care – particularly, availability of drugs and staffing levels, as well as reported incidence of corruption
- (ii) Education – particularly, numbers of classrooms, availability and qualifications of teachers and teaching and learning materials
- (iii) Agriculture – particularly, the availability of extension workers and the messages they deliver, the distances travelled to ADMARC and the accessibility of the Targeted Inputs Programme (TIP or Starter Pack), as well as reported instances of corruption in the receipt and delivery of these packs.

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<sup>1</sup> Discussions on this particular subject were held during the month of February 2003.

- (iv) Infrastructure – specifically the quality of rural and peri-urban roads and the impact this has on the ability of people living in rural areas to access markets, and the availability of boreholes in the respondents village.
- (v) Security – particularly respondents’ contact with the police service and their perception on the value and contribution of community policing initiatives to their security. Again, issues of concern surrounding corruption were to be investigated.

From this, a questionnaire was developed that would allow the capture of people’s perceptions on the qualifications of staff (an important point to remember here is that enumerators were not requested to investigate the actual qualifications of the staff) and their satisfaction with the services being offered by the institutions in question.

To further inform the selection of the various areas, work carried out by existing active civil society networks, in the area of health (Malawi Health Equity Network – MHEN), agriculture (Civil Society Agriculture Network – CISANET) and education (Civil Society Coalition for Quality Basic Education – CSCQBE) was also reviewed. In this regard, the following report should be considered as complimentary to these network’s on-going monitoring of inputs and outputs, and makes frequent references to their findings.

It is intended, amongst other things, that the results of the study will be available in time to feed into and influence Parliamentary deliberations on the budget, and to provide suggestions on improving the focus of allocations towards the PPEs. In addition to the production of the report a detailed advocacy and dissemination phase for the results is planned by MEJN to ensure the relevant stakeholders are kept abreast of the findings as well as establishing the most effective way forward in the successful implementation of the MPRS budget.

## 1.2 Methodology

The data was obtained using a simple closed ended questionnaire with ordered choices to capture the opinions and perceptions of the respondents. The questionnaire asked straightforward questions on people’s access to services, their satisfaction with the qualifications of the staff at the facilities and the services offered.

To rank *satisfaction* and *qualification*, five distinct options were given as follows

<i>Very Satisfied</i>	<i>Somewhat Satisfied</i>	<i>No Strong opinion</i>	<i>Somewhat Unsatisfied</i>	<i>Very Unsatisfied</i>
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The enumerators marked the pre-coded response given on the questionnaire.

The questionnaire was pre-tested (in Lilongwe Rural East) before the training of enumerators commenced, and was translated into *Chichewa*, *Chitonga* and *Chitumbuka* to ensure that there was no confusion or distortions caused by enumerators translating the questions into the local languages.

Analysis was carried out in conjunction with the Agricultural Policy Research Unit (APRU) at Bunda College, University of Malawi, using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) data analysis package.

In order to establish the district where respondents were most satisfied with the provision of services or the qualification of staff, it proved necessary to convert the various responses received into a single score. To achieve this a simple weighting was applied to the responses given to each question for each district as follows:

- ★ Percentage of respondents claiming to be *very satisfied* with the service or that the service provider was *very qualified* was given a weight of 2,
- ★ Percentage of respondents claiming to be *slightly satisfied* with the service or that the service provider was *slightly qualified* was given a weight of 1,

- ★ Percentage of respondents voicing *no strong opinion* was given a weight of 0,
- ★ Percentage of respondents claiming to be *slightly unsatisfied* with the service or that the service provider was *slightly unqualified* was given a weight of -1,
- ★ Percentage of respondents claiming to be *very unsatisfied* with the service or that the service provider was *very unqualified* was given a weight of -2.

The weighted scores for each response were then summed and divided by 100 to give a single figure. The single figure responses for each of the questions in the relevant sections, and overall for each district, were then combined and the mean calculated. This gave a single figure to represent satisfaction with the service in question at district level. The highest figure represented the district where the respondents were most happy, the lowest (including negative), showed the district where the respondents were least happy.

### **1.3 Selection and Training of Enumerators**

The enumerators were selected from existing MEJN chapters, operating in Mzuzu and Nkhata Bay (in the North), Mchinji (in the Centre) and Phalombe, Mulanje and Blantyre City (in the South). Seven enumerators were chosen per district, one of which was to act as supervisor.

A two-day training session for all the enumerators was held at the Malawi Entrepreneurs Development Institute (MEDI) in Mponela, Dowa. During this session, each question was explained in detail and role-plays were used to ensure the full understanding of the questionnaire by enumerators. There was also an opportunity to carry out a field practical in one of the villages around MEDI (Kalindang'oma village), with a comprehensive feedback session afterwards.

Enumerators were also provided with a training manual to ensure that they could easily access answers to any questions they may have during the field phase, and that there would be uniformity in the way the questionnaire was administered across districts.

It was initially intended that the enumerators would work in their home district, however, due to some slight imbalances in the numbers attending from each district it proved necessary to carry out some reallocation of enumerators. This predominantly meant that some enumerators from outside Phalombe and Salima were sent to those districts to supplement the teams collecting information. In Salima, the entire team came from outside the district, as no MEJN chapter is active there yet.

### **1.4 Sample**

A sample size of between 1,000 and 1,200 households is generally accepted as satisfactory for this type of exercise<sup>2</sup>. This is considerably smaller than the samples for Integrated Household Survey, or Demographic and Health Survey style exercises – but then again, the two exercises are looking at entirely different issues, and the level of disaggregation necessary is different.

From the start, it was made clear that the exercise was not a nationwide survey – neither time nor resources allowed for that. Rather it is from a sample of districts, which cover all the regions of the country – the results shall be generalisable to district level, but not to national level. Having said that, however, the results should be able to give a reasonably good indication of the situation prevailing in the country, as will become apparent from the sample distribution outlined in the remainder of this section.

The survey covered the three regions of the country. The six participating districts are divided across the three regions proportionate to the regional distribution of the population as illustrated in the following table.

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<sup>2</sup> See for instance World Bank (nd) "Filipino Report Card on Pro-Poor Services" Appendix 1, Page 157.

**Table 1.1: Regional distribution of districts to be sampled, base on population**

	<b>% of Population</b>	<b>No. of Districts to be Sampled</b>	<b>Rounded</b>
North	12.4	.750	1
Centre	40.9	2.436	2
South	46.6	2.796	3
Urban	14.4	.864	1
Rural	85.6	5.136	5

The six districts were purposively selected as follows – Nkhata Bay (Northern Region), Salima and Mchinji (Central Region) and Phalombe, Mulanje and Blantyre City (Southern Region), meeting the requirements as outlined in the above table (one in the north, two in the centre, three in the south, with one urban and five rural). Within the districts a number of wards were randomly sampled, based on the proportion of the population in each of the regions (that is approximately 12 per cent of the wards were in the North, 41 per cent in the centre and 47 per cent in the South).

Upon selection of the wards, three villages were systematically randomly sampled in each of the rural areas, while three enumeration areas, based on the National Statistical Offices' records, were sampled in the urban area of Blantyre. With 12 households within each village / enumeration area to be sampled, the entire sample is broken down as follows (See Table 1.2)

**Table 1.2: Breakdown of sample**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Sample Districts</b>	<b>Sample Wards</b>	<b>Sample Villages (EAs)</b>	<b>Sample Respondents</b>	<b>% of Sample</b>	<b>Region % of Popl.</b>
North	1	4	12	144	13.3	12.4
Centre	2	12	36	432	40	40.9
South	3	14	42	504	46.7	46.6
<b>Total</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>30</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>1080</b>	<b>100</b>	

This means that the number of households, villages and wards have been randomly selected, proportionate to their size. Households were also selected using a systematic random sampling approach, in this instance; the enumerator ascertained the total number of households in the village, calculated the necessary interval size and started counting out houses from a random starting point (most often the Chief's residence).

Authorisation for carrying out the exercise and comments on the sampling procedure were sought from the National Statistics Office (NSO), who reviewed the questionnaires, the sample size and districts selected. Their major concern was that the results of the exercise should not be extrapolated to national level (as highlighted earlier) because of the purposive nature of district selection. The survey was, however, approved, "... under the Statistics Act of 1969..." by the Commissioner of Statistics. In this regard, while the report does not make assertions for the national level, we propose that the results are indicative and require immediate attention.

### **1.5 Field Work**

The fieldwork for the exercise was carried out over a three-week period, starting on Friday 11<sup>th</sup> April and running through until Friday the 30<sup>th</sup> April 2003. All the questionnaires were received back at the MEJN Secretariat by the 2<sup>nd</sup> May 2003, in line with the agreed upon schedule.

For the fieldwork each enumerator was provided with a letter of introduction for the District Commissioner and a letter from the Commissioner of Surveys and Census acknowledging that they had been informed about the exercise alongside the questionnaires and the Training manual.

The enumerators, all of whom were came from different member organisations of MEJN, devoted themselves voluntarily to the task at hand with impressive results, this being the very first exercise of its kind.

### ***1.6 Challenges***

The major challenge faced by the enumerators in the implementation of the questionnaire was ascertaining the actual distances to the nearest facility from the respondents. In particular, they felt that it was more appropriate to ask the amount of time taken to access the facility in question.

When enumerators attempted to access information at facility level some facilities were unwilling to provide them with information, despite having a letter of introduction from MEJN and a letter of authority from the NSO.

Enumerators also complained about the distances involved in reaching the villages and households sampled which in most cases resulted in their spending more time travelling from one place to the other, than administrating the questionnaires. However, in the Enumerator Feedback seminar, held in Lilongwe in June 2003, the enumerators conceded that this whole exercise had accorded them with a much better overview of some of the challenges faced and grappled with by ordinary, poor people everyday. In some instances, they reported delays in carrying out the sampling as instructed because the chiefs did not know the number of households in the village.

On the positive side, the enumerators who largely operated in their home district, said they were made welcome in each of the communities they visited, and found people willing to share their experiences with them. In some instances, they were forced to explain the procedure involved in sampling the households, as some residents could not understand why they were being excluded.