The political economy of community scorecards in Malawi

Leni Wild and Daniel Harris

The political economy of
community scorecards in Malawi
November 2011

Leni Wild and Daniel Harris

Contents

Acknowledgements

Acronyms

AYISE	Active Youth Initiative for Social Enhancement
CBMP	Community Based Monitoring Programme
CEYCA	Centre for Youth and Children Affairs
CICOD	Circle for Integrated Community Development
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi
CSCD	Centre for Sustainable Community Development
DEC	District Executive Committee
DFID	Department for International Development
DPP	Democratic Progressive's Party
FISP	Farm Input Subsidies Programme
GDP	Gross domestic product
HDI	Human Development Index
LINK	Link Community Development
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
MEJN	Malawi Economic Justice Network
MoAFS	Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
NICE	National Institute for Civic Education
ODI	Overseas Development Institute
PIU	Programme Implementation Unit
SMC	School Management Committee
UDF	United Democratic Front
VDC	Village Development Committee

Executive summary

Citizen-driven accountability measures, such as community scorecards, are increasingly being implemented to complement and reinforce conventional mechanisms of accountability such as political checks and balances or accounting and auditing systems (Joshi 2010). While they have been supported and promoted by the international community (including the World Bank and, more recently, bilateral donors such as DFID), there is still a limited evidence base for how scorecards have worked in practice and regarding what sorts of pre-conditions need to be in place for them to be effective (Joshi 2010).

This research, supported by Plan, seeks to contribute to this evidence base, using political economy methods to understand how community scorecards have worked in Malawi and what some of the wider lessons might be. We find that the scorecards programme is realising changes in service delivery in a number of ways. In particular, they have helped to facilitate forms of collective problem solving by actors across the supply and demand side and reignited communities' own capacity for self help. This helps to shed new light on an initiative more commonly associated with citizens' demand and empowerment, and suggests they refocus these tools on the extent to which they can help build links between state and society actors.

Malawi faces a worrying combination of significant economic stress and on-going political tensions. Despite a recent history of year on year economic growth, in 2011 the forex crisis, combined with food and fuel crises, and a large drop in donor support, means that the future economic climate looks extremely challenging. This is contributing to on-going political tensions, reinforced by a President set on consolidating and centralising his power and increasingly vocal elements of civil society seeking to challenge his ruling style. Moreover, Malawi remains shaped by historical legacies including successive regimes and strong Presidents, from post-independence President Hastings Kamuzu Banda to the present day President, Bingu wa Mutharika. These regimes have established patterns of patronage and centralisation of power around the President which significantly shape realities of the allocation of public resources and distribution of services.

In this context, service delivery remains highly constrained. Limited and patchy decentralisation means key functions are still overseen centrally, and citizen demands are as focused on accessing private goods as public ones. The district level has had some room for manoeuvre, but is itself an increasingly politicised space, as traditional chiefs are paid by and increasingly aligned to the current President and district officials find their positions increasingly monitored from the centre too.

In light of these challenges, the achievements of the community scorecards should be lauded. They combine a hybrid of citizen report cards, community monitoring and social audits to assess service user satisfaction and to hold community meetings (known as interface meetings) to discuss the performance of public services. In Malawi, they have been piloted within the Community Based Monitoring Programme (CBMP), a four-year pilot project funded by the Department for International Development (DFID/UKaid) and Plan UK, initially implemented in four sectors (education, agriculture, health, and water and sanitation).

The current theory of change, as set out in programme documents, makes a strong link between accountability, citizens' empowerment and improved service delivery. It reveals a series of assumptions including a belief that citizens want to participate in decision making and hold public officials to account for the delivery of public services; that, when provided with information on entitlements, citizens will make evidence-based demands of supply-side duty bearers; and that public officials will seek to respond to citizens needs where they have adequate information on those needs.

The findings from this study, however, suggest that the current theory of change being used within the CBMP at times does not reflect some of the realities of the context in Malawi. In particular, the assumed link between citizen empowerment and improved service delivery does not seem to reflect well the realities of incentives and power dynamics at the local level, where service delivery remains significantly shaped by a range of patronage relationships and by the

centrality of the Presidency. In this context, the incentives of service providers can be much more strongly focused on responding to demands from the centre than from citizens, even where information on service gaps is available.

Despite this, the scorecards programme does appear to be supporting a wide range of changes – in large part because the explicit theory of change has been moderated in politically feasible ways when it comes to implementation. Much of these changes have been located at the local level and they include the construction of new school buildings to address identified shortages, the introduction of new systems and approaches to managing the distribution of agricultural coupons, reducing corruption and illicit behaviour, and the creation of new taskforces bringing together a range of relevant stakeholders to address local problems. Some of the most powerful examples involved communities making change happen for themselves – producing mud bricks for school construction and finding ways to sanction those free riding on public resources.

What emerges, therefore, are two key strengths of the scorecards approach adopted by the CBMP:

- Firstly, **scorecards appear to work best where they facilitate collaborative spaces** or forms of collective problem solving by actors across the supply and demand side. The provision of information is one part of this, but more important is the *process* for identifying who the key stakeholders are and bringing them together to devise joint action plans to tackle service delivery problems (and to follow up on these plans).

- Secondly, **scorecards have worked particularly well where they have reignited communities' own capacity for self help** alongside encouraging greater state responsiveness. While the current theory of change emphasises citizens' empowerment vis-à-vis the state, what is interesting is the extent to which in practice the implementation of the scorecards has served as an important reminder of the roles and responsibilities of citizens themselves.

What this perhaps suggests is that while the scorecards programme in Malawi is presented as a tool which will empower citizens and change their perceptions of decision makers, in reality this misses out on some important intermediate improvements, both in terms of realising concrete improvements in service delivery (even if this is within existing patronage networks) and shifting communities' own perceptions of what they can contribute to service delivery. It highlights the importance of looking for incremental changes, for example in perceptions of community groupings (such as School Management Committees or Market Committees) rather than more ambitious objectives across communities as a whole.

Much of the focus of the scorecards programme in its pilot phase has focused on the local level. This has been important for establishing the core implementation of the programme. However, there are significant challenges for the CBMP – and for all scorecard initiatives – in terms of how to go to scale with this approach. One aspect of this involves the recognition of the need to consider some core pre-conditions likely to be necessary for expansion to new areas. In the Malawian context, these pre-conditions include whether there are forms of local leadership supportive of the programme (either from district officials and/or traditional communities), as well as communities' own capacity for self help and the capacity of local implementing partners to work in politically savvy ways.

But going to scale will also require working more at systemic and national levels. Issues generated by the scorecards already reveal a number of problems which cannot be addressed solely at local levels and which need greater attention from systemic and/or national levels, including issues of procurement or staff discipline and performance management.

Addressing these will require greater aggregation of data but also mapping of key entry points for reform processes that the CBMP can influence – these are likely to be more limited, particularly at the national level, so attention should be focused on targeted areas where the scorecards can add value. One potential area is to feed into the development of public service charters (which is currently underway). There may also be opportunities to think creatively

around how to engage with champions of scorecards at local and national levels, including encouraging peer networks to publicise issues raised through the scorecards and potentially developing systems of rewards and incentives to encourage participation.

All of this will require ongoing investment in political skills and analysis to get right. This will be particularly important in light of the current constrained climate in Malawi and growing tensions with the President, where political sensitivities are likely to be heightened and resources even more constrained. At present, the individual skills of particular staff working on the CBMP mean that the programme has been able to work in relatively politically nuanced ways; the challenge for the future will be finding ways of systematically incorporating this into the 'DNA' of the programme so that it can identify both political opportunities and risks in the next phase.

Introduction

This study examines a community scorecard initiative in Malawi, known as the Community Based Monitoring Programme (CBMP). The study was commissioned by Plan UK in response to a recent governance evaluation of the organisation's work which recognised that Plan's programmes had been more effective where they had worked with local political realities and supported local reform processes. As such, it does not attempt to provide a formal evaluation, but rather seeks to understand the political economy dynamics which have shaped this initiative and which can explain areas of success and challenge. We define political economy analysis as follows:

> Political economy analysis is concerned with the interaction of political and economic processes in a society: the distribution of power and wealth between different groups and individuals, and the processes that create, sustain and transform these relationships over time (Collinson, 2003; DFID, 2009; Duncan and Williams).

In order to look at these underling power dynamics and incentives, we use a 'theory of change' approach which seeks to highlight the underlying programme assumptions and choices and to understand how these interact with the realities on the ground for a given project (see also Foresti et al 2007). The study was structured around three main research questions:

1. Does the CBM programme respond well to the Malawi context?

2. What explains any variation in the effectiveness of the CBM programme?

3. What might be the barriers/opportunities for sustainability?

However, due to the necessarily limited field visits (to two out of eight districts in which the CBMP is piloted), in practice, assessing the evidence for the third of these questions (sustainability) was more limited.

The study uses a three layered approach to political economy analysis (adapting Booth and Golooba-Mutebi, 2009) which looks at:

- Layer 1: The key institutions and structural features (formal and informal). These include the nature of the political system, as well as budget and service delivery processes in Malawi. Moreover, it seeks to highlight those issues which have shaped citizen-state relations, including historical and structural legacies of socio-political development as it has occurred under different regimes.

- Layer 2: The interests and influence of key accountability actors, as well as their decision logics e.g. how actions are shaped by existing institutions and the incentives generated by those institutional arrangements.

- Layer 3: The potential for reform or change. This seeks to identify the areas where reform is possible or has been possible, in spite or in light of the wider constraints identified and the interests of key actors, in this case in relation to citizen scorecards.

In order to conduct this study, we drew significantly on the tacit knowledge of Plan Malawi staff and, in particular, those in the Programme Implementation Unit (PIU) of the CBMP. This was critical in assessing the fit of the theory of change (particularly in light of rapidly evolving current events in country) to the Malawian context. Moreover, we drew on a range of academic and grey literature on Malawi, with specific attention to broader political economy analyses and other publications on the institutional and governance arrangements that shape the behaviour of actors at the national and local levels, as well as a review of CBMP documents. Fieldwork research involving qualitative research methods in the form of one to one and group interviews was carried out over a two week period in Lilongwe, Kasungu and Mulanje. Over 30 interviews

were conducted with key actors and stakeholders during this period.[1] The selection of fieldwork sites was carried out in collaboration with Plan Malawi, and in both sites (Kasungu and Mulanje) two sectors were examined (agriculture and education).

Background: key features of the Malawi context

Malawi in historical context

Malawi remains a low income country, with a Human Development Index (HDI) ranking of 153 out of 169 countries and a population of 13 million. A relatively small but densely populated country, it is landlocked and remains a large net food and oil importer, which has historically left it open to exogenous shocks, particularly from food and fuel crises (Booth et al 2006). Agriculture remains the mainstay of Malawi's economy, accounting for 32% of GDP (with 60% of the total exports from tobacco alone) (AEO 2011). Moreover, Malawi has experienced ongoing land pressures from a combination of population growth and elite land capture, resulting in a person-land ratio seen as highly unfavourable and cultivation methods which have remained largely untransformed, reducing productivity (Booth et al 2006). While the national poverty rate in 2009 was 39%, there is notable urban-rural variation; around 14% of the population in urban areas is living in poverty, compared with 43% of the rural population (and 88% of Malawians live in rural areas) (ODI 2011).

Because of its geographic position, Malawi remains prone to natural disasters, from drought to heavy rainfall, which has significantly impacted on food security. It has also been significantly affected by HIV/AIDS prevalence (Ibid.).

In part, current challenges for socio-economic progress reflect these structural features, but it is also useful to assess the nature of the political system and of political processes which have significantly shaped the response to these features. Drawing on the analysis of others, we can point to four significant phases[2]:

- 1964-79: Period of rapid but unsustainable economic growth and authoritarian rule

- 1980-98: Uneven economic liberalisation and the introduction of multi-party democracy

- 1998-2004: Frequent crisis and decline in development outcomes

- 2004-present: President Bingu wa Mutharika – from economic stability to political crisis

Turning to the <u>first phase</u>, President Hastings Kamuzu Banda maintained power for almost thirty years following independence (1966-1994) and he played a crucial role in the break-up of the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland (now Zimbabwe, Zambia and Malawi). The Malawi Congress Party (MCP) was declared to be the only legal party and in 1970, an MCP congress declared Banda its President for life. Banda went on to preside over an authoritarian government, in which all Malawian citizens had to be MCP members and where political opposition was banned. Within this period of one party rule, however, there are a number of distinct phases.

According to Booth et al's characterisation (2006), the first phase under Banda (1964-1979) produced fairly rapid economic growth (with an average rate of increase in GDP over 5% and, in total, GDP more than doubling during this period) alongside the promotion of an agricultural development strategy. The agriculture sector was divided into a small 'estate' sector and a larger smallholder sector, which resulted in a small number of Malawians joining the largely expatriate estate sector (including in tea, tobacco, coffee) (Cammack and Kelsall 2010).

At the same time, his regime used the resources of the state and the MCP to control various aspects of people's lives, as particular institutions became instruments of state oppression

---

[1] Please contact the authors for more information on interviews conducted.

[2] See Booth et al 2006; authors have added the fourth phase based on their own analysis.

(including the police, Malawi Young Pioneers, the MCP's Youth League, the so-called 'Traditional Courts', the Censorship Board, paramilitaries, and the army) (Cammack and Kelsall 2010: 14). Within the ruling party, the President dominated the selection of MPs and officials and all other state institutions were subordinate to the Executive, including parliament, the courts, and local government (Ibid.).

This combination of state intervention in the economy and the growing consolidation of political power around the President and ruling party have since been labelled a form of 'developmental patrimonialism', in that while in some areas it was highly repressive, at the same time:

> "…rents and rent-earning opportunities were directed largely to the productive sectors, with consequent improvements in infrastructure, fixed capital formation and worker productivity. On the whole, rent-creation was centralized and geared to the long term, and a substantial proportion of those rents were productive rather than purely parasitic, with the expected effects on development performance" (Ibid: 38).

However, from 1980 onwards, this model seems to break down, contributing to the second phase of uneven economic liberalisation and growing political instability. In agriculture, for example, reliance on the exploitation of smallholders over time undermined sustainable growth, as it further impoverished rural households whose land base had been eroded by population growth (Booth et al 2006). The 1980s therefore saw a slower pace of growth, increasing inequality and further weakened by a severe HIV/AIDS outbreak. This reflected a combination of external shocks and structural constraints but also flaws within Banda's approach. As Cammack and Kelsall note, "the continuing climate of political repression made it difficult to challenge the vision or performance of the leadership, making reform extremely challenging" (Ibid: 39). This meant that structural challenges ranging from population growth to soil erosion and unequal land distribution were not addressed (Booth et al 2006).

This combination of political repression and economic volatility resulted, by the early 1990s, in substantial pressures for political transition. In 1994, a referendum and then multi-party elections were held, and Bakili Muluzi was elected President. A new Constitution mandated a maximum of two five year Presidential terms, with provisions for a more independent judiciary and a National Assembly. As Muluzi's party, the United Democratic Front (UDF), did not have a majority in the Assembly, shifting coalitions emerged, comprised of the UDF and opposition parties (Englund 2001). In practice, however, this meant that rather than the centralised forms of corruption common under Banda, forms of patronage, corruption and rent seeking themselves became 'democratised' as a growing number of stakeholders sought to access state resources for their own means, allegedly contributing to an "economic free-for-all" from 1994 to 2004 (Cammack 2009).

Thus the third phase, from 1998-2004, corresponds to Muluzi's second term and was characterised by frequent economic crisis and significant declines in development outcomes (Booth et al 2006). This was reflected in the widespread misappropriation of public resources and essential collapse of state service provision (Ibid.). Economic growth was prone to significant fluctuations and key development indicators stagnated. Towards the end of his second term, Muluzi went on to seek a constitutional change allowing him to stand for a third term. This ignited significant opposition, leading to critics leaving the UDF, the formation of new opposition parties and civil society demonstrations. Muluzi was unsuccessful, and instead put forward a successor, Bingu wa Mutharika, (which also further angered critics of his approach).

Nonetheless, Bingu wa Mutharika was elected President in 2004, opening up the fourth phase in our chronology. However, he was elected with only 36% of the vote, which meant he did not have an overall majority within parliament, although he was initially able to broker a coalition with several parties in parliament and the UDF which provided a form of working majority (Chinsinga 2009).

Despite his role as Muluzi's successor, and in light of the 'crisis of legitimacy' he faced, Mutharika sought to distance himself from his predecessor soon after he was elected, leaving

the UDF and forming his own party, the Democratic Progressive's Party (DPP) (Ibid.). He was initially seen as having a more growth oriented vision than Muluzi, and in his first term, stabilised government finances, sought to address some forms of corruption and appointed senior officials seen as more credible and independent, particularly in the Ministry of Finance. In some ways, he sought to emulate aspects of Banda's approach, presenting himself as a strong man leader with a coherent development vision (Cammack and Kelsall 2010).

This, at first, was reflected in some signs of improved economic conditions. For example, between 2004 and 2009, Malawi averaged 7% GDP growth rates, performing above the sub-Saharan average of 5% per year and nationally reported figures on poverty levels showed a reduction from 52% to 39% between 2004 and 2009 (ODI 2011). At the same time, there were early signs of political tensions, with parliament characterised as the site of ongoing 'turf wars' between parties and a defeated impeachment plot – and with the national budget reportedly used as a "bargaining chip" by different sides (Chinsinga 2009: 130).

Progress since 2009, however, appears to have stalled. Mutharika and the DPP won a landslide victory in 2009 and in his second term, the President's style of governing is perceived to have shifted significantly (Cammack and Kelsall 2010). This has been reflected in a lack of tolerance for opposition and dissent, and the promotion of supporters and allies to positions of power and influence.

This has gone hand in hand with growing economic uncertainty. While the growth forecasts for Malawi have been largely on a positive trajectory in recent years, by 2011 a number of external and internal factors combined to seriously undermine this trajectory.

This includes a number of exogenous factors which impacted on the export sector, as fluctuating international prices (tea, coffee, and tobacco) resulted in worsened terms of trade (AEO 2011). A particular threat has been posed by a global campaign against the use of additives to burley tobacco (the main type of tobacco grown in Malawi) in cigarette manufacturing, as tobacco has been a primary source of foreign exchange, contributing to critical shortages in foreign exchange, further limiting the extent of imports into the economy (Ibid.). This has combined with a large import bill for a fertiliser subsidy programme and populist economic policies (such as maintaining an artificially high exchange rate), placing significant pressure on Malawi's currency (the Kwacha).

Moreover, Malawi has remained an aid dependent country, receiving around 40% of its annual budget from donors. The economic and political uncertainty under President Murathika (combined with changing politics in donor countries too) has led to donor threats to withhold or withdraw aid. In 2010, DFID suspended all budget support to the Malawi government, in response to the President's purchase of a private airplane and resulting diplomatic row when a critical UK cable was leaked. UK aid commitments worth $550 million over the next four years are currently under review and this has had a real time impact on the government's budget for 2011/12.[3]

This growing economic crisis has converged with rising political tensions, particularly between civil society elites (with representatives from national level, urban-based civil society organisations [CSO]) and the President. In July 2011, protests marked the culmination of reaction to the treatment of a number of university lecturers under pressure for 'inciting revolution' and the growing organisation of civil society groups in urban centres to campaign for the President and the government to be more accountable. The Human Rights Consultative Committee provided an umbrella under which various groupings such as the faith communities, the Malawi Congress of Trade Unions, the Institute for Policy Interaction and others loosely coordinated to produce a 20 point petition highlighting key concerns and recommendations. A planned demonstration in July 2011 was ruled to be illegal by the High Court at the last minute. Although it was vacated the following day, allowing demonstrations to continue, tensions between government and key civil society groups were further heightened.

---

[3] http://af.reuters.com/article/investingNews/idAFJOE7500DS20110601?pageNumber=2&virtualBrandChannel=0;

Rioting in urban areas ensued, leading to the deaths of 20 people amid accusations of police brutality.

A dialogue process has subsequently been under way under UN auspices (bringing together civil society representatives and government) but has been marked by a lack of substantive progress. Planned protests in September 2011 were cancelled by civil society themselves, citing a lack of assurances of their own safety amid the burning of houses and offices of some of those associated with the protests. Thus there is a potential 'perfect storm' of economic discontent and political tensions which threaten to undermine Malawi's reputation as a peaceful nation.

Features of Malawi's political economy

The brief historical review above charts some of the prominent regimes within Malawi and how they have shaped the wider socio-economic context. Looking across these, a number of key structural features can be discerned which continue to shape Malawi's political economy today.

These include:

- Patterns of 'big man' rule and patronage: The nature of President Banda's dictatorship offers a strong example of 'big man' rule in which the key levers of patronage were concentrated in the hands of a single dominant patron (Banda himself). As the analysis above suggests, the introduction of the multi-party system did not eradicate these dynamics, as power has remained centralised around the office of the President and patterns of patronage and corruption have continued, in which there have been few divisions between state resources and those of the ruling party and elite. Political parties remain highly personalised, acting as vehicles for the election of their leaders rather than offering a programmatic role (Chinsinga 2009). This has significantly shaped policy making: "the ability of public officials to formulate and carry out policies in accordance with the public interest is heavily constrained by the requirement to service patronage networks of one kind or another" (Booth et al 2006: 9).

  However there are also important differences in terms of how patterns of patronage have been distributed. Under Banda, for example, there is some evidence of a more 'developmental' vision which drove patronage, whereas under Muluzi, patronage itself was seen as driving policy (Ibid.). As Cammack notes, "Where before 1994 politicians had to demonstrate loyalty to one man and his vision and they in turn were granted benefits" but since the introduction of multi party democracy "they must decide which party/leader is going to help them the most and be prepared to change sides if other options seem preferable" (Cammack 2009: 161). While Mutharika's first term was characterised as sharing some of the same developmental characteristics as Banda, much of the current political crisis reflects criticism of his maintenance of patronage networks where they work against developmental objectives and have undermined economic growth.

- Divergence of formal and informal rules: These patterns of rule have meant a proliferation of policy documents but limited substantive or implemented policies. Booth et al (2006: ix) argue that politicians have "progressively corrupted" the civil service, undermining its ability to make technically grounded, informed policies. Whereas civil service was seen as motivated under Banda's early regime, there has been a perceived reduction in professionalism (and incentives for improved performance) since then (Ibid.). Interestingly, interviews in Malawi for this project suggest a growing disjuncture between a political class focused on patronage and parts of the technical class who remain committed to public service and able to engage on substantive policy issues. But they also reaffirm the realities of significant divergence between much of the formal rules – for example, around the budget processes or service delivery, and informal realities of resources allocated according to political support and patronage.

- Patterns of traditional governance: Multiple forms of traditional governance remain prevalent in Malawi, reflecting ongoing loyalties of the ethnic, regional and religious identities. This shapes patterns of community mobilisation and voting – and mean that politicians often promise goods or focus their appeals on forms of ethnic, religious and regional identity (Cammack 2009: 164-165).

  Moreover, chiefs[4] remain a core part of the social fabric of Malawi, with each village having a Village Headman, and with tiered levels of traditional authority above this. Thus Group Village Headman presides over a cluster of villages; traditional authorities bring together groupings of Group Village Headmen.

  These traditional authorities have been instrumentalised at various points, dating back to the colonial period where chiefs were co-opted or coerced into colonial state structures (Cammack et al 2009). Under Banda, many of the chiefs' powers were removed and transferred to local councils (under the direct control of the Executive). But at the same time, Banda continued the chief's statutory status and continued to work through the development committees they chaired at local level, further entrenching the roles of chiefs (Ibid.). President Mutharika has further instrumentalised these traditional authorities, both through the provision of honorariums or funds to chiefs, effectively bringing them onto the public payroll, and through using chiefs to publicly promote and support government policies – for example, Mutharika's promotion of his brother as his future successor. Chiefs are therefore, to some extent, used as de facto local structures by the ruling party to link to the grassroots.

  Interviews suggest that this may have adverse effects on the legitimacy of chiefs in the long run, where they are seen as increasingly politicised and aligned with the President's agenda. Moreover, significant differences are thought to exist across chiefs and their communities. This reflects, for example, how closed a particular cultural system is (which is more likely in rural and isolated areas) and which can facilitate a more powerful role for chiefs. It can also reflect the perceived strength of chiefs' political connections, in terms of whether they are seen as politically strong or influential. Across this variance, local chiefs – as well as MPs – reportedly remain key to 'unlocking' development projects and securing access to resources for their communities.

- Historical capacity for community 'self help': In more rural and isolated areas, traditional authorities are seen as having greater influence over their communities. In relation to the Farm Input Subsidies Programme (FISP), for example, this can mean that it is much harder to challenge chiefs for their roles in the selection of beneficiaries. But it can also mean that there are stronger bonds between communities and their chiefs, with chiefs being held to account where they are not seen as fulfilling the expectations of the community.

  One key role played by chiefs has been to ensure that communities collectively contribute to address local gaps. In this way, they have helped maintain the capacity for 'self help' or localised, community action. This has included performing forms of community labour as well making demands of others (Cammack 2011). This has long historical roots where community traditions have included collective action, for example for the construction of bridges or housing. Under President Banda this was further institutionalised for example through national initiatives such as 'Youth Week'. A number of interviewees felt that the introduction of multi-party politics had weakened some of the capacity of communities for 'self help', where it was perceived that the state would step in to fulfil the roles and responsibilities of communities. This is felt to

---

[4] It is important to note that there can be different types of chiefs: hereditary chiefs formally recognised by the government (and paid an honorarium); those who claim to be hereditary chiefs but are not recognised as such by the government; and those who are appointed by a Traditional Authority or through informal selection processes within the community (Cammack et al 2009).

have taken away from the recognition of the need for community action alongside state action.

The factors discussed above have a number of implications for citizen-state relations in Malawi. In general, there is limited evidence of citizens' 'empowerment' – in terms of an awareness of rights and the ability to hold decision makers to account. Instead, decisions commonly flow from the centre outwards, reflecting historical patterns dating from colonialism, reinforced by the role of chiefs and successive strong man Presidents. This is reinforced by a majority of the population with low levels of education, and which remain isolated and largely removed from centres of power (with the majority in rural areas). In practice, there is therefore little shared understanding of what is in the 'public interest'. Instead, what remains prevalent are a range of cultural or social norms, for example which emphasise notions of consensus and collectivism (putting the group or community first and a lack of sanctions for individual poor performance) as well as hierarchy (with concentrated power and authority in one figure, and the resulting subordination of others) (Booth et al 2006). In addition, patterns of patronage remain pervasive. This often results not in a lack of citizens' demand per se, but in a predominance of demand for private (rather than) public goods, as groups and communities seek to access state resources for their own benefit. But it also means that there is latent capacity for collective action and for 'self help' which has not been fully exploited in the multi-party era.

In addition, a number of structural features have particular relevance for service delivery at local levels:

- <u>Uneven and limited decentralisation</u>: Dating from the colonial period, local councils have been seen, in part, as avenues for opposition groups to contest and gain power. During Banda's regime, local councils became de facto arms of the ruling party (as councillors had to seek nomination within the party) and in practice had few substantive powers. When multi-party democracy was introduced in 1994, these councils were initially dissolved, as they were seen as representing the interests of the former ruling party. In 2000, competitive local elections were resumed but these were dissolved again soon after President Mutharika was elected in 2004.

  This means that while Malawi has experienced some forms of decentralisation, with Local Councils gaining limited political and technical influence, there has not been significant political or fiscal decentralisation, as successive regimes have continued to view the local level as a threat. Under Mutharika, the ongoing suspension of local elections has meant makeshift or ad hoc decision making forums exist at district level, in the form of the District Consultative Council (with representation from MPs, chiefs and district commissioners), with the District Executive Committee as its technical arm. These are not legally constituted as decision making forums but de facto have emerged as forums for information sharing and decision making on limited urgent issues (but reportedly with limited attention to strategic matters or financial oversight) (Chiweza 2010). This is not to suggest that Local Councils and DCCs/DECs have no influence – they still maintain considerable discretion on issues that are largely technical (for example, on the allocation of staff within a district) that can impact considerably on service delivery. But without substantive political decentralisation, a number of weaknesses and tensions remain.

  The dominance of the ruling party in Mutharika's second term has given greater influence to MPs at local levels, where ruling party MPs are able to use resource allocations to reward political supporters – this, according to interviews, is reportedly evident in the use of the Local Development Funds and Constituency Development Funds. Recent changes, for instance to the appointments of District Commissioners (the most senior official at district level) which is now directly under the control of the Minister for Local Government, rather than the Public Services Department, has also reportedly opened them up to greater political influence. They are seen as more vulnerable to discipline measures (such as removal to another district) where they are not seen as politically supportive of the regime. This has increased the direction of accountability of district level actors towards the centre.

There are various sub-district structures, with Village Development Committees at village level and Area Executive Committees at Traditional Authority level, which coordinate across VDCs. These should be main forums for community participation in planning processes. But in practice, recent studies have found that in many locations, these Committees are not consistent with the planning guidelines and/or not functioning (with some exceptions where non-governmental organisations [NGOs] are active and supporting their functioning) (Chiweza 2010).

- Weak structures of local service delivery: The limitations of decentralisation have a direct impact on service delivery at local levels. In practice, Malawi has a deconcentrated system, in which sectors operate on the ground but full devolution is not realised and not all service delivery functions are devolved (the health sector is the most advanced in this respect). Sector development budgets are generally centralised and many development projects are budgeted and managed from the centre (Chiweza 2010). Issues of recruitment, discipline and performance management are also still controlled from the centre within key services (Ibid.). Moreover, there are significant challenges where sector boundaries are not coordinated – for example, with a given district there are different boundaries for healthcare, education and water/sanitation, which undermines the potential for coordination across them (Cammack 2010). This has been further undermined by weak monitoring and evaluation practices, with poor record keeping and non-functioning data banks undermining oversight and prioritisation at local levels (Chiweza 2010).

These structural features have particular relevance when examining the nature of sector governance in the education and agriculture sectors. They have resulted in ad hoc forums for decision making, in which MPs, chiefs and some district officials (such as DCs) can have significant control over how resources are allocated and services delivered. A number of studies point to a critical vacuum in effective decision making at local levels as a result of these ad hoc strategies and centralised power (Booth et al 2006; Cammack 2011).

Thus, Cammack argues that poor public goods delivery reflects, in part, challenges of priority setting and poor decision making rather than resource scarcity in Malawi per se. This means that "…scarcity of funding, the slow uptake of good ideas, insufficient capacity and the rest are a function of poor planning and policy incoherence, the prioritization of alternative agendas – such as winning elections and appointing big cabinets – rent-seeking that diverts funds out of productive use, and waste" (Cammack 2011: 28).

Resource allocation therefore remains prone to patronage, and this is sought by a range of actors (MPs, chiefs, district officials). Those areas of investment which provide visible forms of investment – such as the construction of school buildings or the distribution of fertiliser – can hence be sites which multiple actors seek to use for their own agendas and benefit. This can mean that there are limited sanctions or oversight for the below optimum allocation of public goods and services in these areas, except where this also threatens the patronage opportunities of an influential actor. Here, interviews reported some potential 'room for manoeuvre' however, for example where tensions between the short term, electoral imperatives of MPs clash with the longer term motivations of chiefs.

As the above analysis suggests, these features present a series of constraints to improving service delivery outcomes and to attempts to engage citizens themselves in oversight and accountability for service delivery. In part, they help to explain why, despite continued investment in core sectors (health, education, agriculture) there are still ongoing sub-optimal outcomes and persistent blockages in the delivery of services. They also significantly shape the context for the community scorecard initiative, and they have particular relevance in terms of the current and potential relationships between citizens and the state (at local and national levels) and in terms of the types of change to service delivery which can be achieved.

The community scorecards initiative

This report is concerned with understanding the way in which the Community-Based Monitoring Programme (CBMP) has worked within and been affected by the context described in the previous section. We begin here with a brief description of the CBMP before moving on to a discussion of the programme's theory of change and the types of change it appears to be delivering.

Programme structure

The CBMP is a four-year pilot project funded by DFID/UKaid and Plan UK, which started in 2008.[5] It is led by a consortium of three civil society organisations at the national level, Plan Malawi, Action Aid Malawi and the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA), alongside the Ministry of Development Planning.

Implementation of CBMP activities at the local level is largely carried out by a network of twenty locally based partner organisations. These implementing partners tend to take the form of local community-based organisations (CBOs). This structure allows the CBMP to benefit from CBOs existing links within the local community, although implementing partners can vary substantially in organisational capacity and (sector) specialisation.

For 2008 – 2011, the project is being piloted in eight districts[6] and four sectors: education, agriculture, health, and water and sanitation. Not all sectors are addressed in all locations, with the selection of sector being substantially dependent on the characteristics of the implementing partner (including their capacity, areas of specialisation, and existing relationships).

For this study, two study sites were selected in collaboration with CBMP staff – see Box 1 for an overview of these sites; in each site, we examined the CBMP in agriculture and in education only.

Box 1: Overview of case study sites

Two case study sites were selected in collaboration with CBMP programme staff for visits as a part of this research project: Kasungu district and Mulanje district. These locations were selected in part because they offered positive illustrations of the CBMP approach, as well as being comparable in terms of the sectors selected. In one of the two sites visited for this project (Kasungu), there was one implementing partner, the Centre for Sustainable Community Development (CSCD). In the other (Mulanje), two implementing partners were active, Active Youth Initiative for Social Enhancement (AYISE) and Link Community Development (LINK), while a third partner has been removed for breach of contract. In Kasungu, CSCD carried out CBMP activities in the education and agriculture sectors. In Mulanje, CBMP assessments were carried out in health (2009 initial assessment, 2011 follow-up) and in agriculture (2011) by AYISE, while assessments in education were carried out by LINK (2009. 2010).

Location	Kasungu	Kasungu	Mulanje	Mulanje	Mulanje
Sector	Education	Agriculture	Health	Education	Agriculture
Implementing Partner	CSCD	CSCD	AYISE	LINK	AYISE
Dates	2009	2010	2009,	2009	2010
				2011	2011

---

[5] Note, activities beginning in 2008 included capacity building activities for participating implementing partners. Contact with communities did not begin until the second half of 2009.

[6] Karonga, Nkhatabay, Mzimba in the Northern Region; Kasungu and Lilongwe in the Central Region; Chikhwawa, Mulanje and Machinga in the Southern Region

Within the agriculture sector, the CBMP is targeted at the FISP. The FISP began in 2005 and has received donor funding as well as significant government investment. It aims to increase resource poor smallholder farmers' access to agricultural inputs, to improve food security and food and cash production (ODI 2011). It grows out of practices in the 1970s and 1980s, when some general price subsidies were distributed as well as targeted inputs from 1998, in the form of 'starter packs' (Ibid.). The programme uses vouchers (known as coupons) for fertiliser to target farmers and in recent years, guidance has prioritised vulnerable groups. Coupons are distributed by district, and then within districts, in consultation with traditional authorities, local government and Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (MoAFS) staff. Distribution within villages is done in consultation with village development committees (VDCs) and other local stakeholders such as traditional authorities to identify recipients. There has been extensive variation, over time and between regions, in the criteria for and approach to targeting (Ibid.). The gains from this programme appear to have been impressive – for four consecutive growing seasons between 2006 and 2010, Malawi enjoyed substantial surplus over and above its annual national requirements (Chinsinga 2011). But as a major political programme, and a centre piece of President Mutharika's agenda, it has also been exploited as a source of political patronage at multiple levels (Ibid.).

The education sector, in contrast, presents a very different policy and funding environment. As discussed in the previous section, in reality limited decentralisation means that while the primary education function has been devolved in theory, a wide number of issues (such as the procurement of teaching and learning materials, decision making on the capital and development budget, and payroll) remain under the control of the central ministry (Chiweza 2010). For funding, this means that district level control only extends to the operational and recurrent budget, rather than to development expenditure (such as regarding school building construction) despite these being key areas of need. The introduction of the Local Development Fund was designed to increase the amount of discretionary funding at local levels, and it now includes a special programme on teacher's houses, but interviews suggest it has also been a source of political patronage. Some education planning is carried out at local levels, through the creation of District Education Plans, but there is reportedly limited inspection and sanctions at local level and district plans are not always taken into consideration at national and sector levels (Ibid.).

Programme approach

A range of programme objectives are cited by CBMP staff, partners and in programme documentation. These can be clustered into three main goals:

- Improving access to and the quality of public services

- Enhancing community participation in the budget process (allocation and expenditure of public funds)

- Capacity building of NGOs and other CSOs so that they are able to reach communities in rural areas to facilitate community monitoring functions

The methodology adopted by the project is principally centred around the use of a facilitated community scorecard process through which communities are able to provide feedback on the quality of services in the sector in question. Crucially, the CBMP envisions the community scorecard itself as part of a wider process of engagement with a range of relevant stakeholders. A number of broad stages can be distinguished (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Generalised stages of a community scorecard process

Preparatory work
- Capacity assessment of local organisations, identification and training of facilitating staff
- Preliminary research on community (e.g. poverty mapping)
- Introductory engagement on the part of the implementing partner with community (including relevant leaders)
- Organisation of community gathering for scorecard process

Implementation of the community scorecard process
- Division of community into focus groups
- Development of performance indicators
- Scoring of indicators by groups
- Explanation of performance scores
- Recording and consolidation of scores across groups

Interface and dissemination of results
- District level interface meetings
- Feedback and dialogue
- Development of Joint Action Plans
- Consolidation of findings across communities and sector/national level engagement

Source: Adapted from World Bank, 2004 in CBMP, 2011

These activities include the following stages:

- Preparatory work, including the identification (and capacity building, if necessary) of a community-based implementing partner and subsequent engagement with local service providers and local authorities:

  The CBMP is delivered by locally based CSOs or NGOs, commonly with a particular sector expertise. They receive training in how to conduct the scorecard process, delivered by the CBMP PIU. For all new development projects, approval is required by district officials through the District Executive Committee (DEC). Interviewees noted that proactive engagement with existing contacts or potentially sympathetic (and influential) members of the DEC prior to an initial presentation of the CBMP was useful in ensuring a good reception for the programme. Gaining approval for activities at the district level prior to beginning work was seen to be critical to maintaining a constructive relationship with supply-side actors. It should be noted that this dynamic of early engagement with local leadership extends beyond formal state structures like the DEC, with the approval of traditional leaders (particularly at the village level at which the community scorecard process was implemented) also deemed by programme staff to be an important prerequisite for successful implementation.

- Implementation of the scorecard process:

  To implement the scorecards, selected communities are divided into focus groups (note some distinctions here were dependent on the sector, such as learners and teachers in the education sector, while others were relevant across sectors, like traditional authorities). For example, in the education sector, the scorecard process was implemented in a given school community. This involved separating the community into groups by type of stakeholder including; learner (pupils); teachers and head teacher; parents; chiefs and so on. Each group would then collectively provide a 'score' against specific categories, such as pupil behaviour, teacher performance, or the quality of school buildings. Importantly, the scorecard process was facilitated in local languages, and used pictures to illustrate the scores. A score from 1 to 5 was allocated per

category – with 1 indicating very poor and 5 indicating very good. The scores provided by the different groups were then used as the basis for the development of an aggregate score for a given site (such as a school or a FISP site), either by a simple averaging of scores, or a deliberative process of consensus building.

- Interface and dissemination of results, including through district level interface meetings:

  The implementing organisation presents these results at a forum which includes relevant district actors (such as the District Commissioner, relevant sector managers, service providers, chiefs) alongside some members of the community. Out of this meeting, Joint Action Plans are developed to address problems identified. Increasingly, the CBMP has also conducted national level events structured around the presentation of the consolidated reports produced annually for each sector.

A range of issues are generated by this scorecard process. In the education sector, for example, common problem areas included poor facilities (such as a lack of adequate toilets, classrooms and teachers' houses) as well as issues of the poor performance of teachers. In the agriculture sector, with attention focused on the FISP, issues were identified both in terms of the allocation of subsidies – where communities felt that selection process itself was not fair – and in terms of their distribution, including problems of fake coupons or criminal activity associated with coupon distribution. The Table below sets out a short summary of some of the common challenges identified.

Table 1: Common challenges identified by the scorecard process[7]

Education sector	Agriculture (FISP)	Health sector
Inadequate classrooms	Lack of fairness in beneficiary selection process	Over subscription of medical facilities
Poor/nonexistent teacher housing	Undue influence of some stakeholders (such as chiefs)	Long distance to facilities
Poor teacher: pupil ratios	Inputs (fertiliser subsidy) not delivered on time	Drug stock outs
Poor teacher performance	Distance to markets	Behaviour of health centre workers
Poor pupil attendance	Poor availability of inputs at markets	Inactive health management committees
Lack of access to water facilities	Market related irregularities and corruption/criminal activity	
Inactive school management committees		

At the interface meetings, the issues highlighted above were presented and then a process facilitated the production of Joint Action Plans to take forward actions to address key problems. This varies significantly by district and sub-district, as well as by sector. Table 2 below sets out some of the strategies or solutions put forward in these plans - for this study, it was not possible to validate their achievement, or whether their achievement was solely due to the CBMP or to other factors, except through some limited site visits, as discussed below. However, these provide an indication of the types of change to which the scorecard process can contribute or seeks to contribute to in the Malawi context.

---

[7] This draws on CBMP annual reports, mid-term review, sector specific reports and the authors own interviews. The water/sanitation sectors were not covered during this study and so are not included in this table.

Table 2: Some common strategies identified by CBMP

Education sector	Agriculture (FISP)	Health sector
Changes to allocation of teachers New construction of school buildings Training or support for school management committees Parental involvement to ensure pupil retention	Improved transparency and sensitisation of selection process Changes to market management for distribution of inputs	Changes in allocation of health centre workers Support for health management committees
Cross cutting strategies: Increased community participation in planning processes Increased willingness to pay community contributions (e.g. production of bricks, provision of sand and quarry stones)) Increased visibility of local NGOs/CSOs in district		

Understanding the impact of community scorecards in Malawi

Developing a theory of change model helps to spell out more explicitly the assumptions, activities, outputs and outcomes of a given project and allows for analysis of how the underlying logic of the project interacts with the wider political economy context. This section begins by providing an overview of the theory of change underpinning the CBMP, as revealed in project documentation and in interviews with programme staff. We suggest that the vision of how change occurs expressed by many of the CBMP programme staff (including implementing partners) and in programme documents does not, at present, capture the full spectrum of change possible through this approach, and can offer too simplistic a model for citizen-state relations. There is clear evidence that the CBMP has been working in politically nuanced ways which work well with key features of the wider context, and that it can already point to some strong examples of improvements in service delivery. Adjusting the theory of change presented by the programme would better help to highlight the key factors which explain why change has been possible in some areas – and this is likely to be particularly important for any future scale up of the initiative.
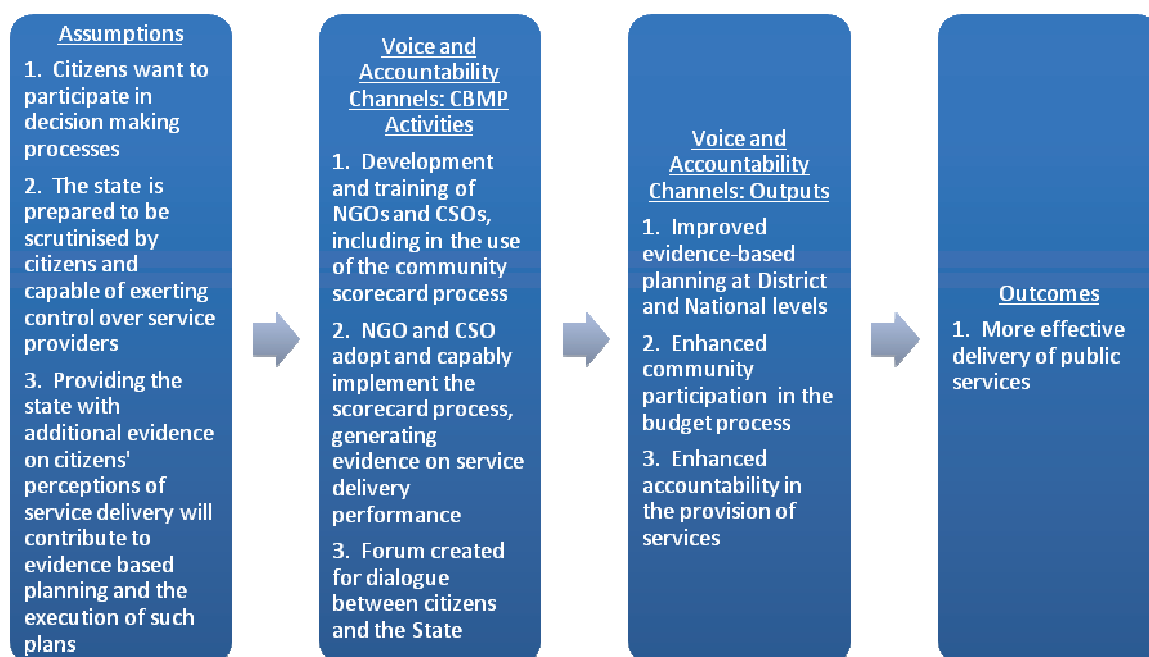
Understanding the theory of change

Key informant interviews and project documentation suggest that a number of basic assumptions underpin the logic of the CBMP, most clearly with respect to the central role given to the use of available information and the vision of citizen-state relations. These assumptions include a belief that citizens want to participate in decision making and hold public officials to account for the delivery of public services (particularly where they know their entitlements); that, when provided with information on entitlements, citizens will make evidence-based demands of supply-side duty bearers; and that public officials will seek to respond to citizens needs where they have adequate information on those needs.

This set of assumptions then leads to a set of identified activities and predicted outputs and outcomes. As described in the preceding section, activities under the CBMP consist of identifying and building capacity in NGOs and CSOs and training such organisations in the use of the community scorecard process; the implementation of the process by those organisations to generate evidence on service delivery performance; and the creation of a forum for dialogue between citizens and actors who represent the state. These activities are then envisioned to lead to the range of programme objectives outlined in section 3.1, including enhanced community participation in the budget process; improved evidence-based planning at District and National levels; and enhanced accountability in the provision of services – all of which finally result in more effective delivery of public services. As we discuss in the following section, in practice these activities have often been adapted to local conditions and political realities – partly reflecting the political skills and sensitivities of the PIU and some implementing partners. What we describe here, therefore, is based on how the programme has been designed and communicated according to programme documents, before we look at how it has been implemented in practice.

This translates into a theory of change set out in Figure 2 below.

Figure 2: The CBMP theory of change[8]

Framed in this way, the theory of change model is revealing. It suggests that a significant link is made between citizens' empowerment and accountability and improved service delivery outcomes. This is in line with much of the prevalent approaches to development assistance for service delivery and accountability – the World Bank's 2004 World Development Report, for example, called for a strengthening of accountability relationships between service users and providers in order to improve outcomes (WDR 2004).

However, a growing body of evidence demonstrates that achievements in increasing citizens' voice and accountability *will not necessarily* lead to better service delivery outcomes (Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2009; CFS 2010). In some circumstances, greater accountability can be clearly linked to service delivery improvements but in others, improved service delivery outcomes have been achieved by other means, for example where there is strong leadership and top down sanctions combined with developmental vision (Booth 2011). This means that the relationship between these dynamics can be far more complex than is often imagined and

---

[8] See also Foresti et al. (2007) for a fuller description of a theory of change approach

that greater attention needs to be paid to some of the underlying factors that can shape whether or not accountability is a driver of service delivery. This is where political economy thinking and approaches can have particular relevance, as they can help reveal some of the underlying dynamics, including whether and how service delivery blockages reflect a lack of citizen empowerment or a range of other challenges.[9] Moreover, political economy studies to date have increasingly highlighted that a focus exclusively on the demand or the supply side can undermine effectiveness; instead, greater attention needs to be paid to the linkages across the state-society divide.

The findings from this study suggest that the current theory of change being used within the CBMP at times does not reflect the realities of the context in Malawi – and does not capture some of the strengths of the CBMP in terms of how it is implemented in practice.

In particular, the assumed link between citizen empowerment and improved service delivery may not reflect well the realities of incentives and power dynamics at the local level. As discussed in the previous section, local level service delivery remains significantly shaped by a range of patronage relationships and by the centrality of the Presidency. In practice, this means that the incentives of service providers can be much more strongly focused on responding to demands from the centre than from citizens. Attempts to strengthen the demands of citizens – through the provision of information on perceptions of service delivery – are therefore unlikely to have much traction if there are few incentives for the state to respond or where there is little capacity to respond.

Even those actors which have been seen as more rooted within communities – such as traditional authorities and chiefs – are themselves increasingly under pressure to respond to the imperatives of the ruling party. In sectors such as agriculture, in relation to the FISP, they can be major gatekeepers where they determine the selection and allocation of fertiliser coupons. Therefore, where these actors are seen as working to support the interests of the ruling party and focused upwards, their responsiveness downwards to the wider community is likely to be compromised.

Moreover, where pressures from below are present, they do not necessarily take the form most likely to lead to improvements in services. Many Malawians (in part due to historical legacies and structures discussed above) appear to be more motivated to access discrete and tangible goods for themselves or their families (or immediate communities) than to cultivate any wider responsibility for the provision of public goods. This prevalence of patron-client relationships (see Box 2) significantly shapes the nature of accountability relationships in multiple sectors. This was apparent, for example, in relation to visited school communities which have implemented the CBMP, which highlighted some significant improvements in aspects of service delivery (such as the construction of new facilities), and requests for additional funding, but where there was no real sense of changed relationships between citizens and state service providers.[10] In the case of the allocation of FISP coupons, reports suggest that the favouring of kinsmen and close friends is a common practice.

Box 2: What is a patron-client relationship?

Patron-client relationships describe a situation in which a particular actor in a position of power (a patron) allocates particular goods or services to an individual or to a limited subset of the population (a client) in exchange for their support.

---

[9] There is a growing body of sectoral political economy analysis which seeks to respond to these issues. See for example: Booth 2011; CFS 2010; Domingo and Harris 2011; Rocha Menocal and Sharma 2008.

[10] Some programme staff felt there had been changes in some specific areas, for example, in the accountability of school officials for the management of school learning and teaching materials. However, interviews for this study did not reveal evidence of different perceptions of community members of the role of the state and service providers in relation to education as a result of the CBMP.

In this context, a focus on strengthening citizens' demand is not – on its own – likely to achieve much change, as incentives are far stronger for district officials and other actors to respond to strong central pressures and patron-client dynamics.

More than simply 'voice': refocusing on the linkages between actors

The analysis above does not mean that there is no link between citizens, accountability and service delivery outcomes, but rather that the roles of these actors and the form of the relationships between them cannot be taken as a given. Instead, attention must be paid to the way in which the linkages between state-society actors and within each group can contribute to improved development outcomes. Interestingly, analysis of how the CBMP is being implemented in practice reveals that in some districts, a major focus has been on facilitating these linkages and bringing different actors together. This is something which is not clearly articulated in the programme documents and its presentation at present, but which is potentially key to achieving change in the long term and for scale up. Making this more explicit would allow both for greater understanding of the key conditions and factors necessary to achieve change, and for more strategic approaches that can better engage with the multiple types of change possible within this programme.

A key missing element of the current CBMP theory of change is recognition of the need to support and facilitate 'collaborative spaces'[11] – fora which can bring together a range of stakeholders (from across the supply and demand sides, involving service users and providers) to address service delivery problems. Our analysis found that where service delivery improvements were beginning to be realised, it was in large part because communities, service providers, local authorities and others were brought together to collectively solve service delivery problems, with each type of actor contributing to improvements according to their endowments.

This suggests a potentially important shift in focus for the CBMP – what emerges is that what may be most useful is not so much the information produced in the scorecard, or the support solely for 'citizens demand', but rather the extent to which it can bring together coalitions or groups to collectively solve problems of service delivery. In other words, the CBMP will be most effective where it can facilitate better decision making by breaking down the dichotomy between 'supply' and 'demand', as different groups are brought together to collectively address the core problems identified by communities themselves. Here, the role of the implementing partner (i.e. the local CBO) can be particularly crucial, as they effectively become brokers or facilitators who need to be able to effectively bring these actors together and ensure follow up so that actions are not only agreed but also taken forward. This requires strong political skills and networks.

The following section unpacks this further, by reflecting on the types of change possible under the CBMP and the key factors which shape whether and how different types of change are possible.

Identifying dimensions of change

While a comprehensive evaluation of the impact of the CBMP is beyond the scope of this study[12], field visits along with the results of the key informant interviews and a review of the available programme documentation suggests that the programme has been influential in driving change in a number of areas. In particular, this study reveals two key dimensions of change which can result from this scorecard process, namely:

- From localised change that involves only a limited subset of actors or mechanisms (e.g. local level problem solving by communities themselves) to more systemic change (e.g.
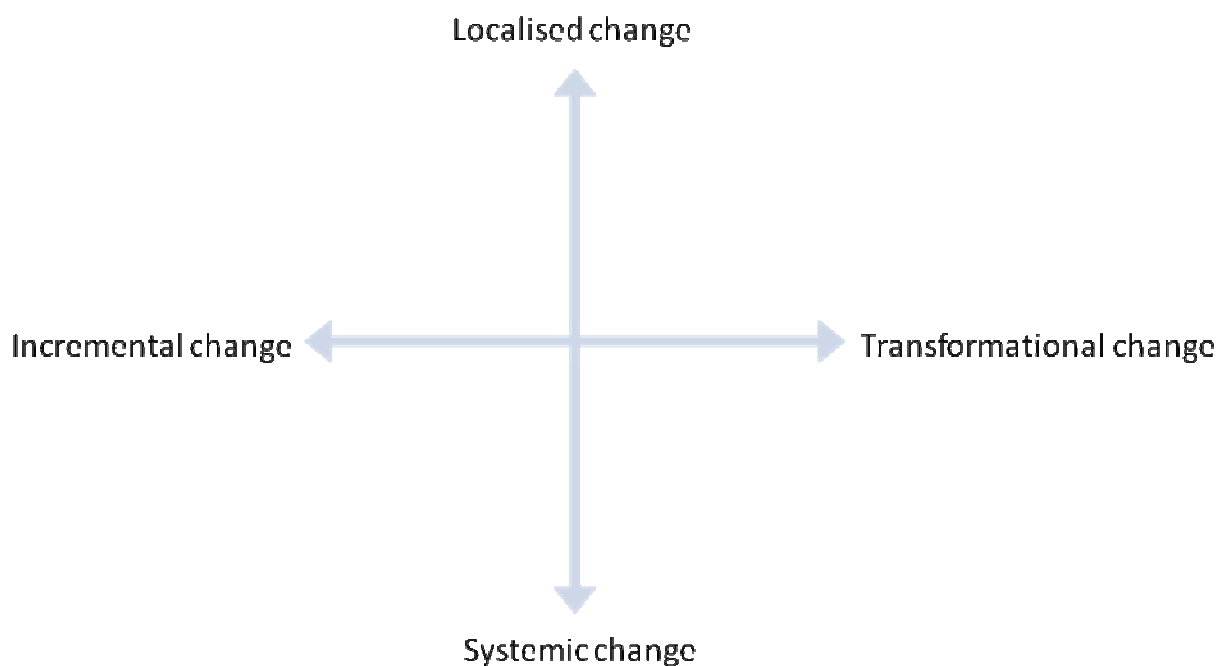
---

[11] See forthcoming Chambers et al (2011)

[12] Note, a recently completed mid-term evaluation of the programme is now available.

involving both local and national level actors or complex budgeting processes involving different levels of public administration);

- From incremental change that takes place within existing governance arrangements to more transformational change that requires fundamental shifts in the existing arrangements (such as a change in mindsets, power relations or accountability relationships).

Figure 3 below maps out these two dimensions.

Figure 3: Dimensions of change leading to improved service delivery

This matrix highlights that a wide combination of types of change might be possible under the scorecard approach, whereas the initial theory of change is focused solely on the top right hand quadrant. Moreover, greater attention needs to be paid to both how linkages are supported between the demand and supply sides, as well as to how more systemic change might be achieved.

A brief description of these categories, and an illustration of the types of change which appear to be produced by the CBMP, is set out below:

- **Top right hand quadrant (local level/transformational change):** Types of change possible here include changes in the relationship between citizens and the state to a form in which duty-bearers view providing public goods and services as the best mechanism to remaining in power. Some of the key accountability mechanisms to ensure this responsiveness might include elections, petitions, demonstrations and legal recourse. In the Malawi context, this would constitute a fundamental reorientation away from patronage politics in their current form.

  There was less visible evidence of this occurring substantively in relation to the CBMP implementation to date (which has run for two to three years), based on the analysis for this study. This is in itself not surprising – fundamental shifts in citizen-state relations take time and often happen incrementally. Some changes were apparent in relation to specific groupings – such as School Management Committees (SMCs) or Market Management Committees – where there was some greater awareness of the required roles and responsibilities and a greater willingness to fulfil these roles. There

was evidence that these groups can often be largely ill-informed about what their roles and responsibilities entail; the CBMP was able to better explain the functions they should play and support them to realise these functions. For example, according to interviews, an SMC was not aware of its ability to scrutinise some aspects of the headteacher's role – having this awareness, as well as information and skills to play roles in scrutiny, was helpful.

This suggests that incremental change can be possible, but that it is likely only where incentives align to facilitate this (and that intermediary organisations, such as community committees, are a better initial target than wider citizens). Any major changes in terms of greater citizens' voice and empowerment and greater responsiveness are likely to require wider structural changes, beyond what is feasible for this CBMP to achieve alone.

A focus only on the top right hand quadrant, however, risks overlooking a wide range of other – and potentially more intermediate changes – which may contribute to improved service delivery in the short and longer terms:

- **Top left hand quadrant (local level/incremental change):** In some cases, service delivery appears to be constrained by a particular form of collective action problem, in which collective action to address a problem is not undertaken because the costs for each individual are perceived to be too high (Box 3). Thus while no individual household could realistically provide the entirety of a given service delivery input (e.g. a particular infrastructure project), there are a range of tasks (e.g. moulding of bricks, some school construction) that the community as a whole is capable of carrying out based on their endowments (available resources and labour). Yet even if the community as a whole has the capacity to provide these key inputs, in the absence of key leaders who can enforce these tasks and follow up where they have not been carried out, individual households often have little incentive to commit to such a project. In Malawi, these roles are often played by local chiefs or by Village Development Committee members.

> **Box 3: What is a collective action problem?**
>
> Collective action problems occur when the existing rules driving the behaviour of relevant actors create a context in which incentives prevent a group of actors from resolving a 'situation in which two or more individuals associate to produce something of value together, when it would be difficult to produce it alone' (Ostrom et al. 2002). These situations can arise from both motivational problems, in the case of free riding in the provision of public goods (where individuals consume a resource without paying for it) or the management of common-pool resources (which individuals cannot be easily excluded from accessing). They can also reflect information problems (as in the case of moral hazard, where behaviour is affected by how insulated individuals are from risk).
>
> *Source: Ostrom et al., 2002; Gibson et al., 2005*

While the observations informing this study are not necessarily representative of the impact of the CBMP across all pilot sites, interviews suggest that a combination of CBMP structures (interface meetings and joint action plans) and the ability to tap into existing structures for ensuring collective action at the community level (such as leveraging the convening power of village chiefs to ensure participation) have played an important role in facilitating collective action responses at the community level (see Box 4). This has been particularly effective where it has addressed service delivery problems which are located at the local level – for example, school construction – rather than issues which involve more systemic change, for example in terms of issues of procurement of school equipment or performance management of service delivery staff. As the Box below demonstrates, this has involved a combination of communities taking responsibility for

addressing particular gaps alongside greater collaborative working with state officials and service providers. Over time, these types of action may also facilitate a shift to changed mindsets or incentives – the limitations of this study and the fact that the CBMP is still in its pilot phase meant this was difficult to identify.

Crucially, the identity of these potential reformers varies across locations, sectors and issues. As a result, there is a need for the programme to carefully consider whether there are particular actors missing from the process who might act as allies to reform processes. While reports suggest reforms to implementation of the FISP in Kasungu District provide another good example of the potential of bringing together reform-minded actors (Box 5), the issue also provides a good example of the potential to develop additional links to actors currently left out of this process (such as the judiciary).

Box 4: Construction of teacher housing, Mulanje and Kasungu Districts

A school community in Mulanje was facilitated, during the scorecard process, to construct new teacher housing, to address a critical shortage reportedly affecting teacher performance. To do this, the community agreed to provide the physical inputs required for construction of new teacher's housing on the grounds of the school, including the moulding and firing of bricks. Each community member was given a required quantity of bricks to produce and this was monitored by the School Management Committee, with the assistance of village chiefs, who were able to reprimand cases of non-participation by individual community members. In this case, the school community itself then led on the construction of the teacher building.

In Kasungu, a similar process facilitated the construction of a number of classrooms and a house for the head teacher, again addressing areas of real need for the school. In this instance, the community again was able to provide bricks but, through the scorecard process, this was linked to the district authorities and (through them) to additional funds (including donor contributions) leading to the provision of additional building materials and a local contractor to complete the works. This meant that, working collectively with key district stakeholders resulted in the leverage of significant additional resources and a critical improvement in school facilities.

Source: Key informant interviews, Mulanje and Kasungu

> **Box 5: Changes in FISP market management, Kasungu**
>
> While ongoing changes in the policies of the FISP make it difficult to attribute specific reforms directly (or solely) to the CBMP, interviews carried out with CBMP participants and local leaders in Kasungu District suggest that a number of changes to the FISP have taken place in response to the issues raised by community scorecards. These include targeted improvements in operational practices, such as the reorganisation of village attendance at market days in order to reduce the congestion at distribution points that has historically contributed to the potential for corrupt practices on the part of distribution staff. Another reform has meant the creation of a task force comprised of a set of actors that have expressed similar views regarding the necessity of improved oversight (including members of the market committees, a newly appointed Police Officer in Charge, and a District Commissioner widely viewed as progressive) to supervise the selection of beneficiaries and distribution of farm inputs.
>
> Interviews noted, however, that the judiciary played an important role particularly in relation to the prosecution of those using false coupons but that they had been in practice left out of policy discussions on how to combat these corruption issues. Looking ahead, it was suggested that their inclusion might strengthen the taskforce's links to follow up and prosecution of wrong doing.
>
> *Source: Key informant interviews, Kasungu District*

- **Bottom left hand quadrant (systemic levels/incremental change):** Types of change possible might involve no shift in incentives but rather an increase in funds overall, which has the knock on impact of increasing total funds for service delivery. Actions leading to this type of mechanism could include an increase in ring-fenced donor funding that does not displace government funds. However, in light of recent events, including the suspension of budget support by a number of international donors and the budget (and forex) constraints arising due to the current economic crisis, there is little reason to anticipate a substantial increase in resourcing of service delivery will occur in the near term.

  Nonetheless, the impact of current and future resource constraints do appear to be impacting asymmetrically across sectors. Some of the most politically sensitive sectors, for example in relation to the FISP, are already seeing some impact where forex shortages are constraining the import of fertilisers and there is doubt as to whether there will be sufficient fertiliser distributed for this planting season. While this is not a type of change which the CBMP is trying to achieve, it may have significant implications for the sectors in which it works, if additional resources are moved from one sector to another for increasingly politicised reasons.

  Another type of change which might be possible in this quadrant is where an improved flow of information supports technocrats or political leaders who can work within the existing incentives and which may, in the process, contribute to some improvements in service delivery. This may help with the prioritisation of available resources, even where there are no significant changes in wider incentives and accountability relationships for service delivery.

- **Bottom right quadrant (systemic levels/transformational change):** Types of change possible here involve both a sense of greater responsiveness from service providers and state actors to citizen demand but also systemic changes so that sanctions on poor performance are enforced from above. This would require political leadership with a strong developmental vision, as well as bureaucratic incentives to deliver services effectively. There is little sense that a shift towards these types of top down sanctions is occurring systematically in Malawi in recent years. Rather,

professional behaviour in the bureaucracy, as well as among traditional leaders, is seen as limited to particular individuals.

For this study, some examples were highlighted where the support and involvement of particular reform minded individuals (such as a District Commissioner, sector manager or a traditional authority) in the CBMP was thought to have been very influential in achieving wider reforms to respond to issues highlighted by the scorecard, where these local leaders had already shown their developmental vision and commitment. This highlights the need for good local intelligence on those actors within government who might be more amenable to the aims of the programme. In the visited sites, strong CBO partners seemed to be particularly able to facilitate this through the maintenance of good relationships and strong localised knowledge so that they could identify local leaders and build work with them.

Another type of change possible here is where forms of collective action at the local level can interact with more systemic change (for example to tackle issues like procurement and distribution of key resources or issues of service provider staff performance). This may over time lead to changed incentives and mindsets – again in the limitations of this study we were not able to identify examples of this, but an incremental approach may well achieve change in this direction over the longer term.

Looking across this matrix, the CBMP seems to add most value where it is able to build the capacity to work collaboratively, either at the local level, or in more systemic ways which link across various levels of administration (top left hand quadrant and bottom right hand quadrants). This supports the notion that a focus only on citizens' demand is unlikely to be very effective, as the capacity, capability and will to respond by service providers and state actors cannot be overlooked. This is not currently captured by the theory of change set out for the CBMP but in practice, where the programme has been implemented by politically aware individuals and organisations, it has operated in some of this way.

This is particularly significant because of the ongoing vacuum of decision-making at local levels in Malawi, alongside incomplete processes of decentralisation and the absence of effective sanctions to hold actors to account. This means that the scorecard initiative appears to play a key role in reducing some of the transaction costs of actors with a potential interest in reform (such as the costs of locating and coordinating with such actors but also the political risks, which can be shared among a group rather than borne by one actor alone). It also reaffirms the importance of strong intermediary organisations that can help to broker or facilitate these linkages.

In addition, our analysis suggests that to date there seems to be more evidence of these types of change, as a result of collaborative action, occurring at the local level. This is perhaps to be expected given that this is a pilot programme and given its emphasis on community level engagement, as well as the complexities of the centre-local relationship and the longer-term time horizons required to achieve more systemic change.

However, the CBMP process itself reveals, over time, that a significant number of service delivery shortcomings identified by the scorecards will require some systemic changes to be addressed. For example, issues of service delivery staff, their performance and incentives, remain located at the central level as do the majority of funds for development expenditure. For agriculture, issues to do with the targeting of fertiliser inputs and criteria for the selection of beneficiaries have also been set from the centre, as are potential sanctions (or the lack of them) for poor management of fertiliser allocations and distribution.

This can mean that issues are brought to the attention of local officials but that they themselves remain unable to challenge these national level dynamics and therefore do not have the capacity (or, in some cases, remit) to address the problems raised by communities.

Some efforts have been made to bridge this gap, in the form of national level reporting which aggregates issues raised in the scorecard process, usually by sector. However, the degree to which the CBMP has engaged beyond the community level remains limited in some important

ways. One challenge is that the CBMP's approach to analysis, communication and dissemination of scorecard data has had a tendency to create long lists (for instance of all challenges arising from scorecards) but not to adequately capture or analyse the different types of problems generated. The programme has supported the creation of local level Joint Action Plans but these do not systematically identify who will need to act to address a given problem (for example, the communities themselves, traditional authorities, local officials as well as national Ministries or national level mechanisms). While programme staff feel that there has been an implicit separation of issues in this way, this has not been effectively communicated (for instance, in programme documents or by implementing partners). The lack of systematic focus on categorising who needs to take action may have also undermined follow up, which has reportedly not happened consistently.

This has also meant that the CBMP has struggled to identify the key national level processes and actors to be targeted. For example, a number of issues generated by the scorecard approach relate to the oversight and performance of those in the public sector – in the future, it may be helpful to explore links to the development of the Public Service Charters in Malawi (Box 6) which have not yet been capitalised on. In part, this is also because these Charters are still largely on paper rather than being put into practice; if they are operationalised more widely, this could be a possible avenue for feeding into national level processes.

Box 6: Public Service Charter, Malawi

A Public Service Charter is currently being developed for Malawi. It aims to:
- Make public institutions more transparent by outlining to the public the standards they can expect
- Encourage public institutions and agencies to improve performance where promised standards have not been achieved
- Provide a framework for consultations with service users and assist public institutions to manage the expectations of those users (Malawi Government: 2011).

This Charter is now publicly available and will be rolled out across districts. Systems for the follow up and oversight of its implementation are still being negotiated.

Other potential avenues could include national level audit processes, led by the National Audit Office, or sector specific reforms. A detailed mapping of these opportunities was not possible in the time constraints for this study, however, and we return to these issues in the Recommendations section.

Looking ahead: scale up and sustainability

Understanding variance

The fieldwork for this study was limited to select locations within two districts. This means that generalisations to the other districts in which the CBMP operates are challenging. However, these field visits alongside a review of CBMP documents, interviews with CBMP staff and drawing on the research of others, highlight the likelihood of a relatively high degree of variance across and within districts, in terms of how the CBMP operates and the types of changes it can produce. This variance has significant implications for future scale up and sustainability of the scorecards approach. In particular, it points to a number of factors which are likely to be important in determining whether and how the CBMP will be able to achieve change.

In part, variance reflects the different governance arrangements and constraints within each sector. For example, the FISP is a major Presidential initiative and it is one which all members

of a given community have some knowledge of. This means that most people are able to offer views, which makes the process of carrying out the scorecard somewhat easier. In contrast, health as a sector is seen as more challenging for the process, because many citizens do not feel well informed enough to make value judgements regarding healthcare. At the same time, the politicisation of the FISP has meant that the feedback of results has been highly politically charged and contested (both at district interface meetings and at national level meetings). This has reportedly significantly shaped the reactions and inputs of key actors in the FISP, such as the government but also chiefs and representatives of ADMARC, whereas in education or health, some of these (such as chiefs) have felt able to engage more because their interests are less directly threatened. This is not clear cut however – programme staff highlighted that the high profile nature of the FISP also meant added impetus to address some specific problems in the FISP at the local level. Therefore, these issues of sensitivity play out differently dependent on the problems generated by the CBMP but need to be factored in as dynamics which will affect the workings of the programme.

There are also significant differences across the sectors, such as in terms of the opportunities for rent-seeking behaviour[13], which shape the types of changes possible as a result of the CBMP process. The FISP, for example, offers multiple rent seeking opportunities. At selection process, chiefs, district officials and others may benefit from the allocation of subsidies to their supporters or communities; at distribution, market sellers and managers may benefit in terms of added costs to access subsidies faster, through the use of fake coupons and so on. The research for this study was not able to address these issues in adequate detail, but we note that some aspects of variance can be explained by differences between the sectors chosen.

Alongside sector specific issues, a number of cross cutting issues have particular relevance in explaining how the scorecard process is likely to vary across and within districts. These include:

- Characteristics of implementing CSOs: As the previous section sets out, one of the key strengths of the CBMP – particularly in relation to collaborative problem solving – is that it can bring together a range of stakeholders from within and outside the state. Observations from field visits suggest that the capacity and connections of the locally based CSO can therefore be vital, in that they are crucial 'brokers' who need to be sufficiently aware of who the key decision makers are and how to constructively work with them. The CBMP PIU reportedly conducts rigorous assessments of the capacity and financial systems of implementing partners before they are selected for support – and there have been instances where funding has been cut or stopped altogether where partners are no longer seen as able to deliver. The ability to maintain a detailed understanding of the implementing partners and their ability to deliver is therefore vital.

  This poses questions for sustainability and for scale up. The majority of areas in which the CBMP currently operates are those where there are well established, locally rooted CSOs. Expansion to other districts where this capacity is not in place is likely to substantially undermine the viability of the CBMP to broker or bring together a range of key decision makers.

- Quality or strength of local leadership: Field visits suggested that the existence (or not) of reform minded individuals within service providers or the state also significantly shaped how the CBMP could operate. Where there is a supportive District Commissioner and/or sector manager (such as District Education Manager) or a traditional authority (chief) with influence, it can significantly shape the extent to which action plans to address challenges are developed and followed through.

[13] Rent seeking refers to the generation of income above market value through privileged access or politically created monopolies; it is often confused with corruption but refers more generally to the additional profits derived from a form of privileged access (Khan).

This is in line with the findings of others and the challenges posed by the current decision making vacuum at district and local levels, particularly with the suspension of local elections, as discussed in the Background Section. This means that in practice there is no real institutionalisation of local leadership and decision making and no one with a clear mandate where there are no locally elected councillors; instead, there are ad hoc forums and processes, largely focused on reacting to immediate or pressing issues rather than significant oversight of performance and strategy. Where there are individuals, almost 'against the odds', with an interest and openness to the types of information produced by the scorecard process, they can be very significant in ensuring that the findings are followed up. Where these reformers are not present, or local leadership is significantly comprised, it is likely to be much harder to gain traction. This is particularly the case where and if local elections remain suspended for some time to come.

- Community characteristics: Interviews for this study suggested significant variance in terms of key community characteristics. One key aspect is the extent to which communities have the capacity for 'self help' or for working collectively to address problems. This is discussed further in the Background section but interviews suggest that there is significant variance in the extent to which this norm of 'self help' exists at the local level across different districts in Malawi. It was beyond the scope of this research to determine all the factors which might explain this. One issue commonly referred to in Mulanje was the difference between matrilineal and patrilineal clans. The former are particularly prevalent in Southern Malawi, including Mulanje, and were felt in practice to have weakened some of the potential for community action and self help, because of high instances of family breakdown and the migration of male community members.

Going to scale

Across a number of stakeholders interviewed, there was significant demand for the CBMP to be rolled out more widely. Within districts, officials and others requested that the project cover more areas, and at national level, there were requests for greater coverage in terms of the total number of districts. Moreover, scorecard approaches more broadly have not generally been able to move from pilot phases to broader scale up. This means that while there is seeming appetite for going to scale with this initiative, a number of issues should be borne in mind.

First and foremost, the factors discussed above in reference to variance across and within districts are likely to be very significant in terms of going to scale. Our analysis, and in accordance with the work of others, suggests that the nature of underlying community characteristics, levels of local leadership and the capacity and ability of implementing partners to effectively broker constructive relations between different stakeholders all seem to be key to the CBMP's success (see also Cammack 2011). This means that thorough analysis is likely to be needed of these factors in any new areas or districts. Where these factors are not in place, it will be important to either develop mitigation strategies or to consider whether it is appropriate to extend to a particular area.

In addition, dynamics within the consortium and regarding the roles of the PIU will be significant in shaping the potential for greater scaling up. The PIU appears to be a key component in the ability of the current CBMP to operate effectively. Its close attention, for example, to the qualities and capacity of its implementing partners seems to have been critical in shaping the ability to effectively establish and implement the programme in each district. The PIU Manager stands out for his understanding of dynamics at local levels and the wider political context, which is also likely to have been key in ensuring that the programme is implemented in feasible and politically nuanced ways. However, the size of the PIU remains limited (four staff in total) and any wider roll out of the programme could contribute to significant capacity constraints.

Moreover, the respective roles and responsibilities originally envisaged for members of the consortium do not seem to be sufficiently fulfilled in this first phase of the programme. In its original design, Action Aid, Plan International and CONGOMA were to lead in specific districts, in terms of monitoring and oversight of CBMP activities. CONGOMA was also seen as important in terms of providing links to the national level, through its existing relations with government and its role as an umbrella organisation for Malawian CSOs. This was seen as particularly important, where Action Aid and Plan can be presented as internationally affiliated, whereas CONGOMA is rooted in national organisations.

In practice, Plan has taken on the majority of the support to the CBMP. The PIU has been largely staffed by Plan staff and monitoring and reporting goes through Plan's central office. This seems to reflect realities where other members of the consortium had competing priorities, limited capacity and, for some, were undergoing their own internal restructuring. It is also not clear that all these partners have sufficient incentives or feel sufficiently motivated to play more active roles in relation to this programme.

This has had several strengths. Primarily the PIU itself has been staffed by individuals with strong political skills and networks, who appear to be well informed in local dynamics for service delivery and have been instrumental in adapting approaches to engage with the key points of variance highlighted in the previous section. They have also overseen a rigorous process of monitoring and assessing implementing partners, to ensure that the selected local organisations have the right skills and networks to deliver the programme effectively (and funds have reportedly been stopped where organisations are not seen as performing well). Therefore, maintaining the right skills and capacity of the PIU has been key in this pilot phase to establish the programme.

However, the dominance of one organisation has also had some weaknesses. At local levels, it has implications in that none of the consortium members (including Plan aside from the PIU) have been particularly active in monitoring and supporting implementing CSOs – this has in turn created additional burdens for the PIU who have been called upon to support implementing partners on an ongoing basis.

At the national level, the lack of engagement of other consortium members seems to have undermined the ability of CBMP to link into national debates and processes. While a wealth of information appears to be produced through the scorecard process, as the previous Section notes, this does not seem to be adequately captured both in terms of type of information produced and the types of change possible. At national level too, there is a sense of a 'missing link', where there is not currently the resourcing or capacity to effectively translate the local level findings into products or approaches which link into national level policy.

The background section discussed the limited decentralisation process, where a wide number of key functions across sectors remain under the responsibility of central government. For example, issues around drug procurement or the performance of teachers also require action from the centre. As the previous Section set out, moving forwards, the CBMP would benefit from reflection on where and how it can feed into national level processes and policies. This will require much greater engagement from consortium members such as CONGOMA (although experience to date suggests that this will be challenging). CBMP staff are already discussing how to address this going forward, including through linking to other networks such as the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN), who have a well established presence at national level and strong track record in this sort of advocacy.

However, networks like MEJN also have their own incentives, in part because they are seeking to promote their own agendas. Moreover, they themselves have limited capacity and their own programmes. This suggests that for the CBMP to start to influence the systemic level in a substantive way, and to feed into national level processes, it needs to be integrating fully within the programme approach rather than being outsourced to others.

One starting point might be reflection on the current government partnership. The consortium currently includes representation from the Ministry of Development Planning; however, their

participation is not seen as being particularly effective for the programme, both in terms of limited attendance at meetings and in terms of offering strategic opportunities to link into government processes. Interviews reported that separate links needed to be established with the Ministry of Local Government, in order to ensure greater top down pressure on District Commissioners to participate in the CBMP. This could suggest that the choice of government departments and interlocutors for the next programme phase is likely to be key. Moreover, greater investment is needed in understanding the key national processes that the scorecard results can feed into. This will include both sector specific processes and cross cutting initiatives, such as the Public Service Charters which seem to have significant overlap with the areas and issues raised by the scorecards.

Finally, despite recent aid cuts, parts of the donor community remain influential within Malawi. This includes the UK – which is likely to maintain its level of spending in Malawi, albeit largely channelled outside the government budget – the Germans, who provide significant support to decentralisation, and the European Commission, one of the largest donors in Malawi through the provision of support to a range of state institutions. While these agencies express considerable interest in the CBMP (and DFID has recently agreed to fund a further phase of the programme), they also report gaps in terms of the provision of information in ways which speak to their interests and in formats which are easily digestible. This will also require more systematic investment from within the CBMP, something we return to in the Recommendations.

Key findings and recommendations

Malawi faces a worrying combination of significant economic stress and on-going political tensions. Despite a recent history of year on year economic growth, in 2011 the forex crisis, combined with food and fuel crises, and a large drop in donor support, means that the future economic climate looks extremely challenging. This is contributing to on-going political tensions, reinforced by a President set on consolidating and centralising his power and increasingly vocal elements of civil society seeking to challenge his ruling style.

In this context, service delivery remains highly constrained. Limited and patchy decentralisation means key functions are still overseen centrally, and citizen demands remain focused on accessing private goods rather than public ones. The district level has had some room for manoeuvre, but is itself an increasingly politicised space, as traditional chiefs are paid by and increasingly aligned to the President and district officials find their performance and positions increasingly monitored from the centre.

In light of these challenges, the achievements of the CBMP should be lauded. This study finds that the use of the scorecard process appears to be contributing to some powerful stories of change. Changes in how communities approach local service blockages, shifts in resources and evidence of greater responsiveness from some public officials (for example, in terms of market management) all suggest that the scorecard process has the potential to contribute to significant change even in this constrained environment.

Crucially, we can identify a number of different types of change which can result from the scorecard process, rather than only one type. These range from greater capacity for local collaborative working and collective action problem solving to more systemic shifts. These can occur within existing incentives and power dynamics or, in some cases, in ways which begin to shift these incentives.

Understanding the types of change which can be achieved reveals the need to revisit the underlying theory of change for the scorecards initiative, and to question some of the assumptions which take the link between greater accountability or empowerment and improved service delivery as a given. While some of this appears to have been happening in practice in terms of the implementation of the CBMP, making it explicit would ensure it is systematically integrated into the programme approach.

This would place the creation of **collaborative spaces** centre stage. Rather than setting up the programme in terms of supporting demand side voice and citizens empowerment, this would add the recognition of the linkages between the supply and demand sides which are necessary to ensure service delivery improvements. This would mean a shift towards emphasising the scorecards themselves as a *process*, which can generate information but crucially, then share that information with others and facilitate collective problem solving to address identified needs – at local levels and, over time, at more systemic levels too. It would highlight the importance of local implementing partners as brokers and facilitators of these relationships and it would allow for the incremental realisation of changed relationships between citizens and the state, over time and in more realistic ways.

It also allows for greater recognition of the roles and responsibilities of communities and citizens themselves, as well as state actors. In Malawi, this can build on historic legacies of community self help and is seen as a more constructive approach than emphasising only what the state can do for citizens.

This will be particularly important for issues of scale up, where it allows for greater recognition of some of the pre-conditions or features of the context needed for this approach to be effective. Understanding where these conditions exist requires strong political analysis to be embedded into any scale up process, so that where these pre-conditions are not in place, this is explicitly addressed or mitigated. At present, much of this analysis appears to come from the skills and knowledge of key individual staff within the PIU. This poses dangers in terms of potential staff turnover where it is not systematically part of the programme design and development process. It emphasises the importance of building up internal capacity within civil society organisations such as Plan to analyse, facilitate and work with political actors and processes.

In the Malawi case, fieldwork and the research of others suggests that the levels and quality of local leadership, the capacities of the implementing partners (particularly in terms of their political skills and networks) and certain community characteristics (such as the capacity for 'self-help') are all likely to significantly shape the extent to which a scorecard process will effectively mobilise a range of stakeholders to take collective action and to address common problems[14].

A key reflection is that not enough attention has been paid to date to how to influence systemic issues. This includes issues which are beyond the control of local actors, from issues of procurement to staff discipline within Ministries to resource allocations from the centre. Much more attention has been focused on addressing problems which can be solved at the local level – and the strength of the implementing partners has been particularly effective in this.

However there are remaining gaps in engagement at national levels or in more systemic ways, for example through work with key Ministries. This relates to how information generated by the CBMP itself has been captured. Where a clear distinction has not been made between issues which need to be addressed at the local level and those which require action from central government (or more systemic change), it may have reinforced the lack of attention to the latter.

Working more effectively at the systemic or national level will, however, also require new ways of working. Just as the quality of the local implementers (as brokers and networkers) is a key part of success at district levels, effective brokers at the national level will be needed too, which are integrated into the core approaches of the CBMP. Working more effectively with existing civil society networks at the national levels seems sensible in light of this, but it will also require much more internal capacity within the PIU and a more effective mapping of the key entry points to achieve reforms.

---

[14] See also Cammack 2011 and wider findings of the Africa Power and Politics Programme (http://www.institutions-africa.org/).

In light of this analysis, the following recommendations may be helpful going forward:

- **Revisit the theory of change, to place the creation of collaborative spaces and collective problem solving (at local and systemic levels) centre stage**: This will help to clarify the aims and objectives of the scorecard process. It would allow for a more nuanced and realistic understanding of how change can happen, which recognises the need to support links between supply and demand sides for service delivery. It would also help highlight the extent to which all actors (including citizens, communities and state officials) have certain roles and responsibilities and can help to address gaps and challenges.

- **Clearly distinguish between the types of issues and problems generated by the scorecards**: This will allow for greater clarity on the expectations and types of change which can be linked to the use of scorecards. For example, it would be very helpful to identify issues which communities themselves (without any involvement of state actors) can address versus issues which need action from state officials/service providers as well (at either the local or at more systemic levels). Here the matrix in Figure 2 may be a helpful guide as a way of categorising what seems to be changing as a result of the CBMP. In particular, it would help to reveal where service delivery gaps can be addressed and where this can also lead to improved accountability relationships (without assuming that this link will always be a given).

- **Invest more in working at the systemic level**:

  o At present, the CBMP has particular weaknesses in terms of how it engages with policy processes at the sector and national levels. As a first step, it will be important to **conduct a thorough mapping of the key entry points for reform**, by sector but also across sectors. This could examine opportunities for feeding into the development of the Public Service Charter; for supporting national audit processes and oversight on the use of resources (for example by relevant Parliamentary Committees); as well as sector specific reforms. This mapping should focus on identifying not only those areas which are relevant for the issues covered by the CBMP but also where change is likely to be achieved (i.e. where there are incentives for genuine reform). Political economy tools can be particularly helpful in identifying what the realistic reform space might be (World Bank 2010; DFID 2009).

  o **Strengthen communication and policy influencing, including through 'brokers' at the national level:** Working more effectively at the systemic level implies the need for much greater communication and policy influencing capacity. This now needs to move to the provision of more targeted information and policy messages, based on the evidence and information gathered by the CBMP. For example these will need different strategies for targeting relevant stakeholders such as different parts of government; for MPs; for donors who will require different forms of information to meet their differing needs.

  Working through networks like MEJN is likely to be useful in this respect, as they can help to broker some of these relationships. But this should not replace integrating strengthened communications as core parts of the CBMP approach in the future, as these networks will also face their own incentives and capacity constraints.

  While this would require additional resourcing, it may be useful to consider an in-house communications or policy specialist (or an adviser who can commit a certain level of support). This role could be important in building relationships at the national level and helping to broker more systemic problem solving. This should be accompanied by the development of a strategy which builds from any mapping of entry points to identify specific policy opportunities (at sector and

national levels) over the next three years and specific activities to influence government (primarily) but also others (MPs, donors) accordingly.

- **Improve the process at both local and systemic levels**:

  - o **Identify key champions of the programme:** Greater attention could be paid to identifying individual reformers at the local and national levels, allowing for identification of the key champions of the programme. Forms of stakeholder mapping can be helpful for this but crucially, this needs to be combined with forms of political analysis to understand who has power and influence and whether they are likely to support the CBMP.

    Where these champions exist, they could be more effectively utilised to encourage others. At the local level, the CBMP could facilitate greater peer networks, for example where a supportive District Commissioner is supported to works with others in nearby districts to encourage their involvement in the CBMP and take up of findings. At the national level, it may be helpful to think creatively about how the results are aggregated and used – one option could be to develop an annual 'prize' for the best performing district or local leader, which could be publicised in the media and used to incentivise the participation of others.

  - o **Identify whether any key stakeholders are currently missing:** For example, in Kasungu there was reflection that the inclusion of the judiciary could strengthen tackling irregularities in the distribution of fertiliser inputs. This will be particularly important for scale up or for developing the programme in new sectors and areas. It will require a mapping of all the relevant stakeholders and engagement with them regarding the CBMP. This should also be built into ongoing monitoring, so that regular reviews allow for reflection on who is being targeted and whether there are other groups who are missing.

- **When scaling up, consider whether prior conditions exist**: Finally, the next phase of the CBMP will require expansion to new districts and areas. In doing so, analysis will be needed as to whether prior conditions exist for this initiative to gain traction, such as the existence of local partners with the appropriate skills and capacity (including relevant political skills); forms of local leadership receptive to the initiative (i.e. District Commissioners, sector heads, traditional authorities); and community characteristics which support collaborative working and have the capacity for self help.

  Where these conditions do not already exist, strategies will need to be developed to address any shortfalls or to mitigate the impacts of these. This is likely to be particularly challenging in the more rural and isolated areas. For example, where there is limited local leadership, use could be made of peer networks from neighbouring areas to encourage greater engagement; where there is limited capacity for local CSOs, this may need to be invested in before significant roll out of programme activities. Where there are significant weaknesses across a number of these pre-conditions, it will be important to decide whether the CBMP resources should be targeted at this area, or whether they should seek out areas where most of these conditions are present.

- **Invest more systematically in political skills and analysis**: Our research suggests that a number of staff involved in implementing the CBMP have strong political skills and understanding and that this helps to explain some of the key successes of the CBMP. However, there are risks of staff turnover which could undermine how systematically these skills and analysis are being captured. The integration of political economy analysis into programme design and into monitoring and evaluation would help to ensure that analysis and lessons are captured and can be shared. Support for implementing partners would also benefit from greater reflection on political skills and capacity for analysis – peer support and mentoring could be provided by the PIU in this respect, and strategies could be developed before interface meetings for how any

political risks and sensitivities would be managed and for how the CBMP would engage with supporters and also manage potential opposition to programme findings.

References

Action Aid/Congoma/Plan (2010) CITIZENS' RIGHTS TO PUBLIC FINANCING, Community Based Monitoring Project, Annual Report (2008-2010), CBMP Secretariat.

Action Aid/Congoma/Plan (2011) Community Feedback to Duty Bearers and All Stakeholders Involved in the Implementation of the Farm Input Subsidies Programme for 2010-2011, CBMP Secretariat.

African Economic Outlook (2011) Malawi report, http://www.africaneconomicoutlook.org/en/countries/southern-africa/malawi/.

David Booth, Diana Cammack, Jane Harrigan, Edge Kanyongolo, Mike Mataure, Naomi Ngwira (2006) Drivers of Change and Development in Malawi, Working Paper 261, ODI: London.

Booth, D. (2011) 'Towards a Theory of Local Governance and Public Goods Provision', *IDS Bulletin* 42: 11-21.

Diana Cammack, Edge Kanyongolo and Tam O'Neil (2009) 'Town Chiefs' in Malawi, APPP.

Diana Cammack and Edge Kanyongolo (2010) Local governance and public goods in Malawi, Working Paper No. 11, APPP.

Diana Cammack and Tim Kelsall with David Booth (2010) Developmental patrimonialism? The case of Malawi, APPP.

Diana Cammack (2009) The Politics of Chameleons revisited, in Martin Ott, Edge Kanyongolo (ed.) Democracy in Progress – Malawi's 2009 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections, Kachere Series: Malawi.

Centre for the Future State (2010) *An Upside Down View of Governance*, Brighton: Institute of Development Studies.

Vikki Chambers and Frederick Golooba-Mutebi with Yvonne Habiyonizeye, Jean-Claude Mugunga and Edward Munyaburanga (2011, forthcoming) Is the bride too beautiful? Safe motherhood in rural Rwanda, Africa Power and PoliticsBlessings Chinsinga (2011) Seeds and Subsidies: The Political Economy of Input Programmes in Malawi, IDS Bulletin Volume 42 Number 4.

Blessings Chinsinga (2009) Malawi's Political Landscape 2004-2009, in Martin Ott, Edge Kanyongolo (ed.) Democracy in Progress – Malawi's 2009 Parliamentary and Presidential Elections, Kachere Series: Malawi.

Asiyati Lorraine Chiweza (2010) A Review of the Malawi Decentralisation Process: Lessons from selected districts – A joint study of the Ministry of Local Governance and Rural Development and Concern Universal.

DFID (2009) 'How To Note: Political Economy Analysis', A DFID practice paper, London: Department for International Development.

Harri Englund (2001) A Democracy of Chameleons: Politics and Culture in the New Malawi, CLAIM, Blantyre/Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala.

Joshi, A (2010) Review of Impact and Effectiveness of Transparency and Accountability Initiatives: Annex 1 – Service Delivery, Prepared for the Transparency and Accountability Initiative Workshop, Oct 14-15, Institute for Development Studies.

Khan, M. and K. S. Jomo (eds) (2000) *Rents, Rent-Seeking and Economic Development – Theory and Evidence in Asia*, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Brussels Mughogho and Richmond Msowoya (2011) Community Based Monitoring Programme –Mid Term Review for Plan Malawi.

Ostrom, E., C. Gibson, S. Shivakumar and K. Andersson (2001) 'Aid, Incentives, and Sustainability: An Institutional Analysis of Development Cooperation', Sida Studies in Evaluation 02/01, Stockholm: SIDA.

Rocha Menocal, A. and B. Sharma (2008) 'Joint Evaluation of Citizens' Voice and Accountability: Synthesis Report', London: DFID.

Milo Vandemoortele with Kate Bird (2011) Progress in economic conditions: A recent example of progress in Malawi, ODI.

World Bank (2010) Problem-Driven Governance and Political Economy Analysis, Good Practice Framework, Washington, DC: World Bank.

This research was funded by Plan UK