



Citizens For Justice

2014 ANNUAL REPORT



CONTENTS

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR.....	i
ABOUT CITIZENS FOR JUSTICE (CFJ).....	ii
ECONOMIC JUSTICE.....	1 - 6
RESPONSIVE MINING GOVERNANCE.....	1
PUBLISH WHAT YOU PAY (PWYP).....	5
EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE (EITI)	6
SOCIAL JUSTICE	7 - 10
IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGAL AID ACT IN MALAWI.....	7
STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTIONS IN MALAWI.....	9
OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP (OGP)	10
FUTURE PROJECTS.....	11-13
STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTIONS IN MALAWI.....	11
BUDGET AND EXPENDITURE TRANSPARENCY PROJECT.....	11
CHILD RIGHTS AND SAFETY IN THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY	12
EXPANSION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGAL AID ACT PROJECT	13

MESSAGE FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR



Looking to the future, I hold an optimistic view of the direction CFJ is heading and strongly believe the organisation shall continue to address the challenges our ever-evolving society presents with “out-of-the-box” solutions and determinations

It is my pleasure to present to you the 2013-2014 Annual Report detailing last year’s activities that will shape the focus of Citizens For Justice’s (CFJ) work going forward. Last year saw CFJ branch out from its focus on environmental justice to optimise social and economic justice with regards to governance and accountability issues and particular emphasis placed on vulnerable and marginalised Malawian populations. Projects encouraging responsive mining and corporate social responsibility, improving access to efficient and effective justice and promoting cross-agency collaboration between accountability institutions in a bid to improve anti-corruption were just some of the year end’s highlights.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all of our funding partners who continue to provide substantial core and financial resources in support of our projects. Looking to the future, I hold an optimistic view of the direction CFJ is heading and strongly believe the organisation shall continue to address the challenges our ever-evolving society presents with “out-of-the-box” solutions and determinations. As CFJ, we are sitting well to influence policy and decisions and we ought to utilise this opportunity to the mark. The road continues with an initiative of launching CFJ as a regional organisation and our work in Malawi being used as a benchmark for doing similar work in the Region.

Looking into the future, it is both bright and demanding all the while we are addressing hugely important injustices. I am proud of what the organisation has achieved in the past year and I am extremely excited about what lies ahead.

We look forward to the leadership and support from the board and the amazing work that the secretariat does to deliver what lies ahead.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Reinford Mwangonde'. The signature is stylized and somewhat abstract, with a large initial 'R' and 'M'.

REINFORD MWANGONDE
EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR FOR CITIZENS FOR JUSTICE

ABOUT

CITIZENS FOR JUSTICE (CFJ)

Citizens for Justice (CFJ) is a non-profit organization advocating for Good Governance, Environmental, Economic and Social Justice in Malawi. Founded in 2005, CFJ was established with the aim of advocating for the rights of communities affected by environmental challenges emanating from the newly emerging extractive industry.

In the last couple of years, CFJ has registered the following achievements: (a) created awareness and debate on the impact of the extractive sector in Malawi at the local, national and international level; (b) leads a process and coalition of NGOs in engaging industry, government and communities on matters relevant to corporate governance, human rights, community benefits and equity and application of best practice in the sector; and (c) lobbied for the introduction of uranium mining legislation, adoption of EITI and introduction of the Publish What You Pay Coalition and Campaign in Malawi.

In the context of Governance and Rule of Law, CFJ has registered the following achievements thus far: (a) created awareness on the role of the courts in promoting social economic rights; (b) with the support of other NGOs like the World Justice Project, managed to initiate and launch the Rule of Law Index for Malawi; (c) ignited the debate on judicial accountability, independence and separation of powers in Malawi; (d) promoting access to justice through provision of legal representation to vulnerable groups and conducting prison camp courts in Malawi; (e) conducted a policy and legal audit on accountability institutions in Malawi and the role of citizens in holding public officials to account; (f) implementing a budget and expenditure transparency project in a number of districts in Malawi that helps citizens monitor expenditure of government funds in comparison to services offered; and (g) working with Government in the Open Government Partnership project.

CFJ's technical opinions on issues of Governance, Separation of Powers, Human Rights and Business, Corporate Abuse, Mining and Human Rights, and Revenue Transparency are well regarded. Its advocacy and awareness strategies using the Rights Based Approach sets itself apart as a unique institution in its programming. Additionally, CFJ serves as a Board Member for the Democratic Governance Sector Strategy (DGSS) project owing to its interventions in the governance sector. In 2013, CFJ and the World Justice Project (WJP) co-hosted to launch the first Rule of Law Index for Malawi which provides an annual assessment report on how Malawi is faring on governance issues in both the continent and world at large. Finally, CFJ also engages with the Malawi Judiciary to promote judicial accountability and efficient and effective administration of justice for all Malawians.

“ CFJ was established with the aim of advocating for the rights of communities affected by environmental challenges emanating from the newly emerging extractive industry.



ECONOMIC JUSTICE

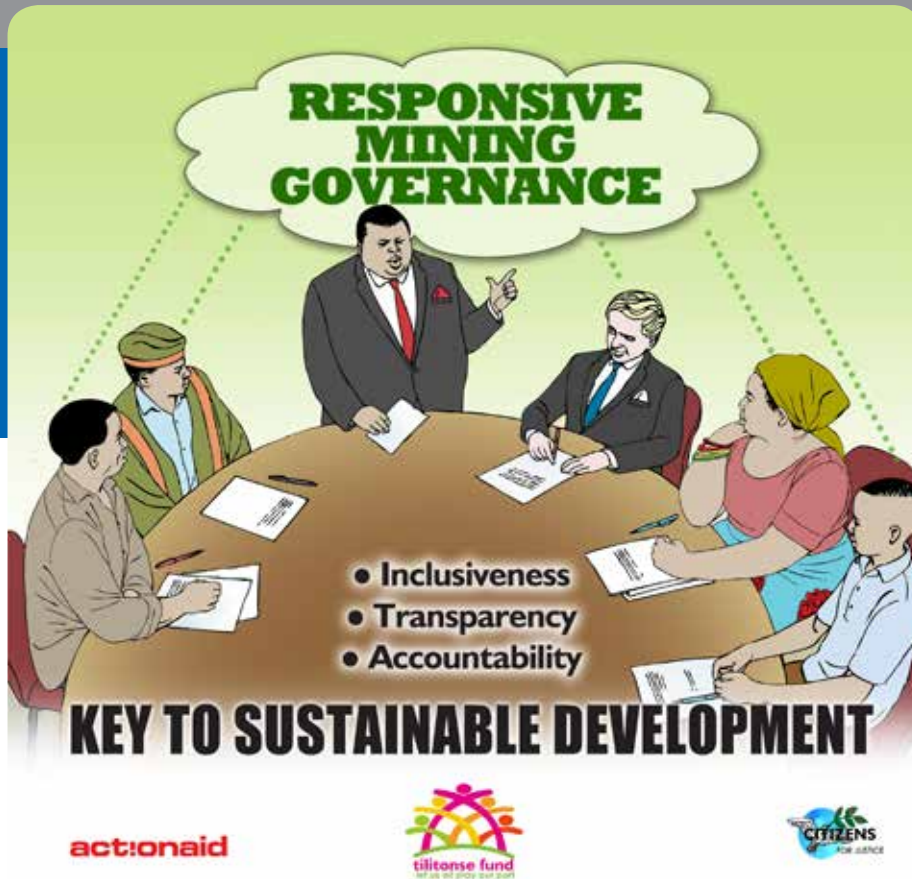
CFJ's Economic Justice programme last year placed great emphasis on the mining sector. With the launch of the Responsive Mining Governance project in partnership with ActionAid Malawi and the introduction of Publish What You Pay (PWYP) and Extractive Industries Transparency Initiative (EITI) in Malawi, the focus has shifted from the economic benefits of mining and placed more on corporate social responsibility and ensuring that grassroot communities are benefiting fully from mining. It is our belief that these projects will go a long way in developing mining frameworks that will boost Malawi's standing in the extractive industry both locally and internationally.

RESPONSIVE MINING GOVERNANCE

The Responsive Mining Governance for Equitable and Sustainable Development of Malawi is a project that is funded by the Tilitonse Fund, implemented by ActionAid International Malawi (as main grant holder), and CFJ as an implementing partner. The duration of the project is from September 2013 to August 2015.

The goal of the project is to promote transparency and accountability in the extractive sector for equitable and sustainable development in Malawi. Targeting 3 districts in Malawi (Mzimba, Karonga and Phalombe), the main purpose of the project is to improve collective action amongst Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) actors and communities for effective advocacy on accountability and transparency in the extractive industry in Malawi. The project is designed to meaningfully contribute towards attaining the inclusiveness, transparency and accountability in the extractive industry in Malawi. The project aims to achieve this by improving collective action among CSOs to pursue advocacy on mining issues; increasing the technical capacity of member CSOs on issues of mining; and by increasing the capacity and voice of the poor and vulnerable communities including women to influence decisions on issues of mining at community level.

Some of the project's highlights last year include the following:



Graphic Design of the Billboard placed in Lilongwe, Blantyre and Mzimba

1. Improved collective action among CSOs to pursue advocacy on mining issue

Annual General Meeting and Bi-Annual General Meeting for the NRJN.

The main purpose of these meetings was frequent engagement and interaction amongst Natural Resources Justice Network (NRJN) members, for collective advocacy and healthy networking. An Annual General Meeting was held on 31st July to 2nd August, 2014 at Crystal Waters Resort in Salima. At this meeting, the operational documents for the NRJN i.e. Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), Code of Conduct and the NRJN Constitution, were developed and discussed. The members fully subscribe to these documents to guide their operational and legal conduct within the network. An election to appoint new coordinating institutions was conducted. The election was both participatory and democratic. CFJ was voted as the Secretariat for the NRJN and Foundation for Community Support Services (FOCUS) was voted as the Board Chair for the Network.

A Bi-Annual General Meeting was held at Riverside Hotel in Lilongwe on 15th December, 2014 where CFJ, ActionAid Malawi, FOCUS and the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP) were elected to be the four (4) CSOs to sit on the Malawi EITI Multi-Stakeholder Group. Other key advocacy issues which the Network is working on were discussed. Members agreed that a letter should be sent to the Minister as a reminder to take action on the issue of Paladin Malawi interest to release water from the Tailings Dam into the North Rukuru River which communities use for domestic purposes.

2. Increased technical capacity of member CSOs on issues of mining

Develop IEC materials

Posters with responsive mining governance messages have been designed and printed. Billboards with responsive mining governance messages have been erected in Blantyre, Lilongwe and Mzimba. The NRJN website was created to increase communication and information flow on mining among stakeholders. The website is updated frequently to keep all stakeholders updated on issues concerning Malawi's extractive industry. Additionally, it is also used as a platform to share both national and international information.



3. Increased capacity and voice of poor and vulnerable communities, especially women to influence decisions on issues of mining at community level

3.1 Annual Mining Indaba

Participants to the 1st National Alternative Mining Indaba held at Crossroads Hotel

An Alternative Mining Indaba was held at Crossroads Hotel in Lilongwe for 3 days from 25th to 27th November, 2014. This was organised to enhance the exchange of information and shared skills amongst stakeholders on mining in Malawi and internationally. The platform provided an interactive session between all stakeholders especially the community. Amidst calls from the participants, the Minister was recalled to the Indaba on the second day to respond to governance issues raised during the deliberations. The theme for the Indaba was "Achieving Inclusiveness, Accountability and Transparency in the Mining Sector for Sustainable Development." Participants included local mining community members, large



Participants to the 1st National Alternative Mining Indaba held at Crossroads Hotel

scale and small scale miners, Malawi Government (Ministry of Finance, Ministry of Labour, Department of Mines, and the Environmental Affairs Department), Academicians, (MZUNI, LUANAR, UNIMA), researchers, CSOs, Banks (National Bank & FDH Bank) and members of the media to name a few.

3.2 Community Capacity Needs Assessment

CFJ and ActionAid Malawi conducted a Community Capacity Needs Assessment in three mining communities in Karonga and Mzimba to gauge people's understanding of mining issues. Despite progress in the mining industry, it is still faced with a number of challenges ranging from poor policies and lack of community involvement when it comes to mining work. Communities are left in the dark and there is lack of stakeholder engagement at community level. Communities are not involved in decision making processes and if they are, the participation is largely exclusionary either of community members as a whole or representing the interests of women.



PUBLISH WHAT YOU PAY (PWYP)



Inception Meeting of PWYP Coalition

Publish What You Pay (PWYP) involves in-country activities promoting transparency and accountability of resource revenues. The PWYP Coalition was established in 2002 to bring together CSOs from all over the world to campaign for transparent management of revenues generated by the oil, gas and mining industries in developing countries, many of which are all too often characterized by high levels of corruption, conflict, instability and poverty. To address this “resource curse” the coalition has worked to require resource companies to publicly disclose what they pay in taxes, royalties and bonuses to governments for the right to extract natural resources, and for governments to publish what they receive so as to allow citizens to hold the government accountable for the use of this important source of income.

The PWYP campaign in Africa has seen a rapid expansion with more than 15 established PWYP national coalitions and a presence of members in more than 25 African countries. National coalitions and member organisations are active EITI players in their respective countries. To that effect, they organize awareness, capacity-building, research and advocacy activities to support and complement the EITI process.

In January 2014, CFJ with funding from GIZ began

the process of formalising the establishment of PWYP Malawi. The initial task was to disseminate the PWYP concept in order to attract more CSOs to constitute the Coalition. This included sharing international PWYP standards with CSOs and those CSOs which made commitment to the PWYP standards completed PWYP organizational sign up forms. In September, the PWYP inception workshop was held to formalise membership of the Coalition. Following the inception workshop, CFJ, with technical support from the PWYP Regional Coordinator for Eastern & Southern Africa based in Nairobi embarked on the task to undertake paperwork towards submission of a national coalition application to the PWYP international office in London.

In November, the PWYP Regional Coordinator came to facilitate the PWYP strategy development process for Malawi. Following the strategic plan workshop, the national and regional coordinators have been working hand in hand to finalise the development of the two year strategic plan for PWYP Malawi. In December, PWYP held a meeting to elect four CSO representatives on the EITI Multi-stakeholder Group and the Coordinator frequently updates members on the progress of the EITI sign-up process.

EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRIES TRANSPARENCY INITIATIVE (EITI)



Participants at the EITI MSG Training

PWYP was instrumental in the creation of the EITI and since its inception plays a crucial role in shaping the initiative – pushing for more rigorous policies and processes to ensure the global standard and reputation are upheld. PWYP coalitions at the national level are therefore very involved in EITI. National coalitions support the adoption and implementation of the initiative and act as a watchdog to ensure it is being done effectively. In many countries, PWYP coalitions help with the dissemination of the information on EITI. Some PWYP members also serve as civil society representatives on the national multi-stakeholder groups (MSG) responsible for EITI implementation.

At the end of November 2014, Jürgen Reitmaier EITI focal point for Malawi, based in Germany,

held meetings with EITI stakeholders in Lilongwe. CFJ participated in these meetings in which the four sign-up steps for Malawi to apply for EITI candidacy were outlined.

In order to sign up to the EITI, each constituency group (Civil Society, Government and Industry) has to select representatives for the MSG that governs the national EITI implementation. On 15th December, 2014, CSOs under the NRJN which CFJ is coordinating, held a meeting with the Council for Non-Governmental Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA) to vote for civil society representatives for the EITI MSG. CFJ was voted. We expect that next year, Malawi will sign up to the EITI and CFJ will be a leading member in the MSG in contributing to the meeting of the sign-up and candidacy criteria.

SOCIAL JUSTICE

CFJ's Social Justice programmes last year stuck to the organisation's core mission, which is "to speak with and for the poor and the voiceless so that they are part of development processes." It is our belief that once human rights occur, it is imperative that the communities do not suffer violations in silence but are able to take concrete and appropriate action to obtain remedy for the violations. Launching projects such as the 'Implementation of the Legal Aid Act in Malawi' and 'Strengthening of Accountability Institutions' shall go a long way in empowering communities with knowledge and mechanisms for obtaining remedies of violations and shall strengthen the capacity of duty bearers to deliver on their obligations and on rights holders to claim their rights. In the long run, these projects shall ensure that citizens become partners with their governments and other service providers in a manner that promotes good governance and human rights.

IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGAL AID ACT

In July, 2014, CFJ through a one year grant from the WJP launched the 'Implementation of the Legal Aid Act in Malawi' project at Ufulu Gardens in Lilongwe. Since its establishment nearly ten years ago, CFJ has maintained a firm interest in governance and rule of law issues in Malawi. Therefore, the official launch of the new project represented the significant progress CFJ has made in its drive to play an active and positive role in improving access to justice in Malawi.

The 'Implementation of the Legal Aid Act in Malawi' project is aimed at improving access to justice for vulnerable Malawians. The project was introduced in light of the WJP Rule of Law Index 2013/14 which revealed four serious problems with Malawi's justice system namely; that cases



Camp Court at Maula Prison

take too long, there is lack of mechanisms to track court efficiency, court congestion, and a lack of pro bono lawyers to represent poor clients.

CFJ's approach to the programme was to tackle the Index problems head-on by implementing a project that is aimed at increasing speedy conclusion of cases so that poor and vulnerable clients receive legal recourse quicker and reducing court congestion for all. The project specifically targets Malawi's criminal justice system and tackles overcrowding in prisons due to massive caseload, lack of resources, and insufficient manpower. The work initially involved conducting camp courts in the project's pilot districts (Lilongwe and Ntchisi) but we had to respond to the public call to spread to other districts in the Central and Southern Regions of Malawi. By conducting camp courts, legal clinics and addressing capacity gaps and insufficient dissemination of legal information, the project focuses on the gap between formal access to justice mechanisms and the vulnerable beneficiaries the mechanisms target. It is CFJ's belief that furthering the realisation of human rights particularly of the vulnerable and enforcing the duty bearer's capacity to perform their obligations and on rights holders' right to claim those obligations falls within the framework of human rights norms and standards.

The project currently operates in ten districts namely: Lilongwe, Ntchisi, Mponela, Kasungu, Dedza, Ntcheu, Balaka, Machinga, Mangochi and most recently Nkhotakota. CFJ has managed to spread its access to justice project to these districts with the help and collaboration of its stakeholder partners such as Women Judges Association of Malawi (WOJAM), Malawi Judiciary, Paralegal Advisory Services Institute (PASI), Malawi Police Services, Malawi Prison Service and the Women Lawyers Association (WLA).

The project has reached several milestones and has already exceeded project expectations/targets. Firstly, it has spread to ten districts in two regions of Malawi which is an improvement from the two pilot districts we initially targeted at the commencement of the programme. Secondly, the project has legally concluded (either through conviction, discharge, judgment, and fine) 219 cases which has surpassed our project expectation of having concluded 120 cases by the end of the project. We have helped over 250 people in the



Accused persons stand before a Magistrate during Camp Court at Dedza Prison



Camp Court in Ntcheu



A Community Service Officer addresses prisoners at Ntchisi Prison

course of six months despite the challenges we faced. Lastly, our project has garnered interest with some local and international stakeholders who are willing to partner with us going forward. We expect to at least have concluded more than 400 cases by the time the project wraps in June, 2015.

The table below depicts the camp court results.

OVERALL CAMP COURT RESULTS					
NO.	DISTRICT	PERCENTAGE OF NUMBER OF CASES LISTED OVER NUMBER OF CASES HEARD (%)	PERCENTAGE OF NUMBER OF CASES HEARD OVER REMANDEES RELEASED (%)	PERCENTAGE OF MALE BENEFICIARIES (%)	PERCENTAGE OF FEMALE BENEFICIARIES (%)
1	Dedza	62	75	54	46
2	Ntcheu	58	4	90	10
3	Balaka	80	89	97	3
4	Machinga	82	50	100	0
5	Mangochi	78	29	100	0
6	Ntchisi	46	17	100	0
7	Kasungu	100	50	100	0
8	Maula	87	60	100	0
9	Mponela ¹	+1.2	23	100	0
SUCCESS RATE (CASES HEARD OVER REMANDEES RELEASED)²			75%		

¹ Initially, 14 cases were identified for Mponela but on the day, 18 cases were heard giving a +1.2% increase.

² 219 remandees released out of a total of 291 cases heard to date.

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTIONS IN MALAWI

CFJ with support from GIZ is implementing the “Advocacy for a Corrupt Free Society through the Strengthening of Accountability Institutions in Malawi” project. The overall objective of the project is to contribute towards the creation of a corrupt free society in Malawi. The project focuses on strengthening cross-agency collaboration and coordination capacity of accountability institutions namely; the Anti-Corruption Bureau (ACB), the Office of the Ombudsman, the Human Rights Commission, the National Audit Office, the National Assembly, Financial Intelligence Unit, Malawi Police (FISCAL) and the Malawi Judiciary. In addition, the project emphasizes on improving accountability mechanisms by mobilizing stakeholders, especially community based groups and marginalized groups in order to enable them to lobby and demand for an incrementally corrupt free society but also contribute to debate. It is envisaged that the actions supported by the project will empower the Malawian citizenry to participate in debates concerning transparency and accountability in the country.

During the implementation process, CFJ recognized a potential partnership opportunity with the ACB on the project since they are the main accountability institution in Malawi. On 31st July, 2014, CFJ signed an MOU (lasting three years) with the ACB which formalized their working relationship on this and other future anti-corruption related projects. Both the Board Chairperson for CFJ, Dr. Margaret Sikwese and the former Director General for the ACB, Justice Rizine Mzikamanda SC, recognised the importance of this agreement as a major milestone in the fight against corruption. Speaking during

the ceremony, Dr. Sikwese explained that CFJ recognising its role as a CSO realised the importance of partnering with the ACB in its bid to strengthen accountability institutions as the ACB is the main oversight accountability institution in Malawi. She mentioned that the signing of the MOU was the beginning of a great partnership with the potential for benefitting all Malawians as CFJ will engage with the ACB in all areas of mutual interest and strategic value especially in the fight against corruption. Following the signing of the MOU, CFJ and the ACB jointly released a call to conduct an Institutional Policy and Legal Audit of Accountability Institutions in Malawi. Several competitive applications were received and interviews of the best two candidates were conducted by CFJ, the ACB and GIZ. Ultimately, the offer was made to Wilkinson & Associates who are currently in the process of conducting the audit in the aforementioned institutions.



CFJ Board Chairperson and ACB Director General shake hands during MOU signing ceremony

OPEN GOVERNMENT PARTNERSHIP (OGP)

CFJ has been a lead advocate for the Open Government Partnership (OGP) in Malawi. OGP was launched in 2011 to provide a global platform for local reformers committed to making their governments more open, accountable, and responsive to citizens. The Government of Malawi, through the then Minister of Foreign Affairs and International Cooperation, signed up to OGP in July 2013.

Last year, in October 2014, CFJ along with the Government and GIZ organised the launch of the OGP with a wide range of stakeholders from government, private sector and civil society to work towards developing a National Action Plan for Malawi's domestic reforms particularly in the areas of accountability, transparency and citizen participation.

CFJ helped to draft the National Action Plan in 2014 and envisage this being submitted and used by all players in 2015 to promote domestic reforms. This Plan will likely include targets around transparency in the extractive industries, access to information, and enhanced use by government of the Integrated Financial Management Information Systems.

FUTURE PROJECTS

The year ahead promises to be exciting and filled with several opportunities to venture into new territories to keep up with our ever changing societal needs. We look forward to these new ventures as it shall give the organisation an opportunity to grow and fill the gaps Malawi is lacking in the social justice field. However, we also look to expand our current projects following the positive feedback and we hope to set bigger milestones along the way in the extractive industry and promotion of access to justice where we do our best work. Armed with experience of what we did wrong and right in the past year, we embark on an ambitious new year with renewed zeal and determination to improve the lives of all Malawians.

STRENGTHENING ACCOUNTABILITY INSTITUTIONS IN MALAWI

Wilkinson & Associates is expected to produce and present a draft Institutional Audit Report to CFJ, the ACB and GIZ following the review of the named accountability institutions. CFJ and the relevant stakeholder partners shall then provide their inputs on the findings before the Report is finalised and published. An inception meeting revealing the results of the Audit to the participating institutions and other relevant stakeholders shall be organised mid-year 2015.

BUDGET AND TRANSPARENCY EXPENDITURE PROJECT

GIZ has provided financial support amounting to MWK 50,760,920.00 to the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC) to implement a Budget Transparency and Expenditure project in collaboration with CFJ. This project support has been provided on the basis of the agreement between the Government of the Federal Republic of Germany and the Government of the Republic of Malawi concerning technical cooperation under the strengthening Public Financial and Economic Management project. The Budget and Expenditure Transparency project will be implemented for three months in the following nine districts across the three regions; Chitipa, Karonga , Nkhatabay, Nkhotakota, Kasungu, Mchinji, Chikwawa, Blantyre and Balaka. The project aims at enhancing citizen participation in sound and prudent financial management in local councils; promote efficient utilization of local council's resources; enhance delivery of stated objectives, priorities and services at the local level; and increase citizen participation in budget and expenditure transparency.

The main project activities include an inception meeting aimed at explaining the objectives and scope of the project to key stakeholders. The inception meeting will bring together stakeholders from Government, the CSOs, the Private Sector and Development Partners. Following the inception meeting, district stakeholder orientation and training workshops will be conducted in each target district in order to orient key stakeholders in the districts on the objectives of the project and equip them with skills and knowledge on budget and expenditure transparency. These workshops will involve the District Commissioner, the Director of Planning and Development, the Director of Finance and Administration (from the District Council), heads of departments from Ministries of Agriculture, Health and Education; NGOs; Community Based Organisations (CBOs); a traditional leader; special interest groups (the faith community, women, youth, HIV/Aids, physically challenged and the elderly and elected officials (one Member of Parliament and one Councillor).

Budget and expenditure information will be also be collected and analysed with a view to determine the efficacy of financial management systems in the local councils. Finally, a report containing the findings and recommendations emanating from the budget and expenditure analysis in each district will be presented to stakeholders to raise awareness on the findings and recommendation as well as inform future decisions on strengthening financial management in local councils as well as promoting greater accountability and transparency in the use of resources at local levels.

CHILD RIGHTS AND SAFETY IN THE EXTRACTIVE INDUSTRY

CFJ is applying to the Oak Foundation to conduct a project to research child rights and safety in extractive industries projects that are funded by the World Bank in Malawi. The research seeks to analyse the impact of World Bank's funded Extractives Industry sector – (Mining, Oil and Gas) on children's rights in Malawi, Tanzania and Uganda and advise on specific actions to mitigate on the impacts. This objective will be achieved by documenting the experiences of children in the three countries and exploring the link between extractive industry operations, products and services and delineate their actual impacts on children. The research findings will be used in lobbying governments and non-state actors to address impacts of the extractive industry on children in line with the recommendations of General Comment 16. The research on the impact of businesses in the extractive industry on children will also inform the following project interventions in providing:

- a. Advocacy for improved protections for children in World Bank Safeguards, including a requirement that the World Bank conduct child impact assessments for each of their funded projects, monitor World Bank projects in Malawi, Uganda and Tanzania to ensure that quality child rights impact assessments are carried out and appropriate mitigation measures are identified and put in place;
- b. Community awareness and sensitization campaigns on child rights and protection;
- c. Design of training materials and training members of CBOs, local/traditional leaders, teachers, police, prosecutors and magistrates on respect, protection and fulfilment of child rights; and
- d. Support children and their guardians to lodge legal complaints through established mechanisms to help provide children whose rights have been infringed by a business enterprise with an effective remedy.
- e. The findings at the national and regional levels will be organised to support Bank Information Centre's national and international campaign. In this context, the project will generate global benchmarks that will be shared with other stakeholders involved in the promotion and protection of children's rights.

EXPANSION OF THE IMPLEMENTATION OF THE LEGAL AID ACT IN MALAWI

As previously mentioned, CFJ received a one year grant from the WJP to launch the ‘Implementation of the Legal Aid Act in Malawi’ project aimed at improving access to justice in Malawi. The current funding for this project ends in June 2015, but the project has garnered applause and respect from both local and international stakeholders and demand has increased. It is therefore pertinent that CFJ should continue to offer the same legal assistance on a larger scale.

Going forward, CFJ would like to expand this project and conduct more camp courts to cover districts from Nsanje to Chitipa to reach wider masses and have a bigger impact. The programme has already started strengthening the public’s understanding of the Rule of Law and its relevance by raising awareness. Through the litigation of overdue cases, the rural population has taken notice and has started becoming more aware of their rights and legal options in the formal justice system instead of solely relying on the informal justice system.

Beneficiaries of the project have referred other people with similar cases to the project. Vulnerable groups are speaking up more and choosing not to be silent in the face of injustice. Additionally, through conducting camp courts on location at the prisons, it gives the opportunity for fellow in-mates to experience first-hand the legal process as well as gain some legal knowledge particularly on their rights as prisoners.

The essential partnerships created with WOJAM and WLA are crucial for the project going forward as they provide the project with an influential link in the judiciary. Additionally, there are plans to expand further than camp courts but to also include advocacy on human rights issues, civic education of the masses on newly implemented acts such as the Child Care Protection and Justice Act, 2010 the Marriage Divorce and Family Relations Bill, 2015, and the Deceased Estates (Wills, Inheritance and Protection) Act, 2011 and introducing capacity building programmes for members of the Judiciary (e.g. a training programme for lay Magistrates at a recognised institution) to name a few.



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