

Guide on Social Accountability in Social Protection in Malawi



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Civil Society Social Protection Network

Acronyms

CSAC	Community Social Accountability Committee
CSSC	Community Social Support Committee
CSSPN	Civil Society Social Protection Network
DCPC	District Civil Protection Committee
DEC	District Executive Committee
DSAC	District Social Accountability Committee
DSSC	District Social Support Committee
GIZ	Gesellschaft für Internationale Zusammenarbeit
ILO	International Labour Organization
NSAC	National Social Accountability Committee
PPWP	Productive Public Works Program
SCTP	Social Cash Transfer Program
UNICEF	United Nations Children Fund
VCPC	Village Civil Protection Committee

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1.0 Introduction

In the year 2018 two important studies were commissioned. One was commissioned by the International Labour Organization (ILO) to conduct an assessment on social accountability in social protection sector. This study had three main objectives; i) to highlight current efforts of the key partners in civil society, media, and the local communities demanding accountability from public institutions in the field of social protection, ii) to identify systemic and institutional weaknesses and capacity gaps which prevent non-state actors from effectively engaging and overseeing the performance of local government units, and simultaneously pinpoint institutional strengths and installed capacity that can be further explored for the improvement of the system, and iii) to develop policy and operational solutions to overcome the issues and gaps identified, designed as a set of social accountability tools. This was one of the ILO's contribution to system strengthening in social protection in Malawi.

The other study was commissioned by German Technical Cooperation (GIZ) and United Nations Children Fund (UNICEF). This study was a review on grievance redress mechanisms in Malawi's key social protection programs of Social Cash Transfer (SCTP), and Productive Public Works (PPWP). The main objective of this study was to assess case management system in these two programs focusing on the practices, structures and processes. The study findings had to contribute on harmonized grievance redress mechanisms in social protection programs.

Both studies were coordinated by Ministry of Finance and Economic Affairs through the Poverty Reduction and Social Protection Division.

The key findings from these studies were that; i) in social protection sector there were some social accountability mechanisms being used though their impact varies from program to program, ii) the gaps in social accountability mechanisms are among other factors due to low interest and uptake by the civil society organizations, low knowledge of what social protection is, and perception of social protection as a charity by governments, iii) the mechanisms didn't offer maximum security as the complaints were made to the same duty bearers because there were no alternative structures to handle complaints without engaging those directly involved on program implementation.

In response to the gaps identified, civil society social protection network (CSSPN) with financial support from the International Labour Organization has developed this guide on effective design and implementation of social accountability in social protection in Malawi.

1.1 Social Accountability Guide

Social accountability guide is a tool which harmonize social accountability mechanisms in this case in social protection sector. This guide will help in designing and implementation of social accountability in social protection sector. The guide will be used by all stakeholders and powerholders like communities, committees at local, district and national levels.

2.0 Social Accountability

There are different definitions of social accountability, but this guide will use 2006 World Bank definition which defines it as the broad range of actions and mechanisms that citizens can engage in for purposes of holding the state (represented by public officials and service providers) to account, as well as actions on the part of government, civil society, media and other societal actors that promote or facilitate these efforts.

There are different mechanisms of social accountability and include the following; help desks, hotlines, suggestion boxes, grievance redress mechanism, traditional leaders, social audits, citizen report cards, community score cards, community committees and project management committees.

2.1 Importance of Social Accountability

Social Accountability is beneficial to program implementers, beneficiary communities, and beneficiary individuals or households. It is a means for internal and external accountability.

3.0 Designing Social Accountability

Social accountability requires the availability of structures, mechanisms and laws that define people's rights, and the extent to which they can go in exacting accountability from duty bearers. It is a responsibility of every project or program to design a mechanism through which beneficiaries and powerholders will be engaging each other.

3.1 Consideration on Designing Social Accountability

Social accountability requires the availability of structures, mechanisms and laws that define people's rights, and the extent to which they can go in exacting accountability from duty bearers.

According to Asian Development Bank (2010), a good social accountability system has the following characteristics:

- i. Is known to the public and affected persons.
- ii. Has a systematic way of recording and monitoring the progress or resolution of issues.
- iii. Is accessible to all affected persons irrespective of their economic status, literacy level, ethnicity, caste, religion, gender, disabilities, geographical location, etc.
- iv. Includes participation, representation, and consultation of affected persons in its design, planning, and operational processes.
- v. Provides security (both physical and psychological) for affected persons to participate without fear of intimidation or retribution.
- vi. Has respect for the dignity and self-esteem of affected persons and an empathetic relationship towards affected persons.
- vii. Provides equitable access for affected persons to information, advice, and expertise
- viii. Has different levels to allow for appeals
- ix. Has a reasonable time frame that prevents grievances from dragging on unresolved

- x. Evidences social and cultural appropriateness of the systems, approaches, and methods adopted
- xi. Possesses values, attitudes, and commitment to fairness and justice
- xii. Shows transparency, accountability, and objectivity in conducting grievance redress processes and realizing their outcomes
- xiii. Is independent and has a clear governance structure with no external interference with the conduct of grievance redress processes and reaching agreements
- xiv. Shows clarity in procedures, processes, and time frames adopted
- xv. Has flexibility in decision-making processes, taking into account the unique and diverse character of grievances
- xvi. Is in compliance with existing systems without undermining them
- xvii. Is run by professionally and technically competent grievance redress mechanism implementors who have been able to win trust and recognition from the communities
- xviii. Shows respect for the freedom of affected persons to opt for alternative grievance redress mechanisms if they so decide

4.0 Malawi Project Implementation System

The process of designing a good social accountability system in social protection require better understanding of how projects and programs are implemented in Malawi. This will help in designing structures are response to the needs of the people in the program impact areas and the implementing agencies be they government or other partners.

Implementation structures of projects, programs and initiatives are guided by the Decentralization Policy of 1998 which recognizes district, municipal, and city councils as leading agencies in implementation of government programs, projects and initiatives. At district, municipal and city council level there are different structures which are there to coordinate different interventions. These structures are either technical or administrative. For example, each district has a district executive committee (DEC) which is a main coordinating committee for all interventions in the district. This committee approves projects or interventions to be implement among others. Below such committee there are committees like District Social Support Committee (DSSC) responsible for social protection interventions, district civil protection committee responsible for disaster interventions. Membership to such committees is determined by relevance to the interventions except for the DEC where all heads of departments are members.

At community level the decentralization policy recognizes village development committee as the lowest structure where implementation of programs, projects and initiatives take place. At the level we have some technical committees like village civil protection committee, community social protection committee, school project management committee among others. These committees are used as entry points for projects. Most of the members in these committees work as volunteers.

4.1 Malawi Social Protection Implementation Structure

The key structures are; national level, district level and community level.

4.1.1 National Level

At national level there are two main structures; social protection steering committee chaired by Office of the President and Cabinet and membership is drawn from line ministries and heads of foreign missions. Its mandate is to provide oversight role in social protection. The ministry responsible for economic planning and development is secretariat.

The other structure is social protection technical committee which is headed by Secretary for Economic Planning and Development. Membership is heads of department from relevant ministries and from heads of foreign missions. Its mandate is to discuss and provide technical support to district councils in implementing social protection programs.

4.1.2 District Level

At district level there are structures like district social support committee (DSSC), district civil protection committee (DCPC) which coordinate implementation of programs through line departments. The recommendation has been to harmonize structures by making the DSSC an all-inclusive in social protection, The office of director of planning and development coordinates implementation of the programs with guidance from line technical department at that level.

4.1.3 Community Level

At community level implementation is through community social support committee (CSSC) and through village civil protection committee (VCPC). The recommendation is to harmonize the structures by making CSSC an all-inclusive committee for social protection interventions.

5.0 Social Accountability in Social Protection

As we have seen in section 3.1 that a good social accountability mechanism should be transparent, accessible and user-friendly among others, establishing such a system should consider main structures being used by social protection interventions.

Social accountability mechanisms should have structures at community, district and national levels to respond to technical and administrative issues at these levels.

5.1 Community Social Accountability Committee

This committee will be at group village level where there is such a structure, the community social support committee. This committee will comprise civil society organizations in social protection sector. The civil society can either be a community-based entity or a stand-alone committee which is being supported by the civil society organization working in that district.

5.1.1 Key roles and responsibilities

The community social accountability committee (CSAC) which will be established at community level will be responsible for the following among others:

- i. Raise awareness on social protection projects, interventions
- ii. Documents complaints from individuals and communities
- iii. Respond to issues related to the interventions within their mandate
- iv. Refer to district social accountability committee on all issues which have not been resolved at community level.
- v. Support community social support committees on community mobilization.
- vi. Ensure that all issues are resolved within 5 working days while those referred should be resolved within 10 working days.

5.1.2 Support required

The community social accountability committees will require support for them to perform their duties. Some of the support they will require include the following:

- i. Capacity building on social protection in general and social accountability structures and tools at hand
- ii. Provision of tools such as social accountability guide, forms to be used and stationery like files, pens
- iii. Occasionally communication support such as voice bundles, transport to and from the district headquarters for reporting.

5.2 District Social Accountability Committee

District social accountability committee (DSAC) will comprise members of civil society social protection network at district level. It will be working with district social support committee.

5.2.1 Key roles and responsibilities

The district social accountability committee among others will be responsible for the following:

- i. Receive and resolve issues referred by the community social accountability committee within 5 working days.
- ii. Refer cases beyond its mandate to national level structure for guidance and action point
- iii. Support capacity building of community social accountability committees
- iv. Support community social accountability committees

5.2.2 Support required

District community social accountability committees will require support for them to play their roles and responsibilities. This includes:

- i. Capacity building on social protection in general and social accountability structures and tools at hand
- ii. Provision of tools such as social accountability guide, forms to be used and stationery like files, pens
- iii. Occasionally communication support such as voice and internet bundles.

5.3 National Social Accountability Committee

At national level, civil society social protection network is represented at technical social protection committee. The network will be responsible for engagement with all national level key players like ministries and development partners.

5.3.1 Key roles and responsibilities

The national social accountability committee (NSAC) will be key in ensuring that there is accountability in social protection sector in Malawi. This committee among others will be responsible for the following:

- i. Establish district and community social accountability committees
- ii. Organize capacity building initiatives of social accountability committees
- iii. Monitoring and supervising social accountability committees
- iv. Review of social accountability mechanisms
- v. Work with national structures like technical social protection committee, ministries and other stakeholders

5.3.2 Support required

The national social accountability committee will require technical and financial support for it to play its oversight role

6.0 Operationalization of Social Accountability in Social Protection

In order to operationalize social accountability mechanisms in social protection, the national social accountability committee should establish committees at district and community levels. These committees should be trained in accountability and the tools to be used.

The committees should be trained in social protection in general, how each program has been designed, its implementation structure and how transfers are calculated to beneficiaries. This is important so that they provided timely support to beneficiaries who lodge complaints about their respective programs.

7.0 Supporting Documents

Figure 1: Community Social Accountability Form

COMMUNITY SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY		
Date.....	TA.....	District.....
Village.....		
Complainant.....		
Complaint.....		
.....		
Action taken.....		
.....		
.....		
Issue resolved ?		
.....		
.....		
Issue referred to high authority?		
.....		
.....		
Name of officer handling the case:.....		
Date:.....		

Figure 2: District Social Accountability Form

DISTRICT SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY	
Date.....	District.....
Where complaint came from.....	
Complaint.....	
.....	
Action taken.....	
.....	
.....	
Issue resolved ?	
.....	
.....	
Issue referred to high authority?	
.....	
.....	
Name of officer handling the case:.....	
Date:.....	

Figure 3: National Social Accountability Form

NATIONAL SOCIAL ACCOUNTABILITY	
Date.....	
Where complaint came from.....	
Complaint.....	
.....	
Action taken.....	
.....	
.....	
.....	
Issue resolved ?	
.....	
.....	
.....	
.....	
Name of officer handling the case:.....	
Date:.....	