

Reflections on engagement for policy reform in Malawi

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Introduction

The purpose of this brief is to provide an overview of component 3, activity 4 as well as early reflections from our engagements in policy reform in Malawi. The main purpose of the activity in Malawi is to provide support to the Malawi government reform of policies by identifying a range of possible improvements with regard to agriculture and nutrition policies and the design of the Comprehensive Africa Agricultural Development Programme (CAADP) National Investment Plan (NAIP). This support is intended to increase the probability that Malawi will be in a position to deliver fully on (a) its 2014 AU Malabo Declarations and food security and nutrition (FSN) related SDG commitments, and (b) key FSN-related international, African, regional and Malawi domestic policy and statutory obligations and commitments. Whilst the two 2014 Malabo Declarations aims for Africa are to have, by 2025, ended hunger and reduced stunting to 10% and underweight to 5%, SDG 2 seeks to end hunger and improve nutrition. In addition, Agenda 2063's first 10 Year Implementation Plan (2014-2023) aims at reducing hunger by 20%, and malnutrition to 50%, of their 2014 levels. This study seeks, amongst others, to determine to what extent these (and other related) instruments have been integrated into national mechanisms, and are coordinated, in the Malawi policy, legal and administrative systems.

We have been involved in a number of activities at country level to provide support in the development of policies and strategies in Malawi. The University of Pretoria has, amongst others, provided input into the forthcoming National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy 2016 – 2020, the National Agriculture Policy and the National Agriculture

Reflections

- Focused information on key international, African and regional FSN-related obligations and commitments is not readily available
- Key international, African and regional FSN-related obligations and commitments have not yet been domesticated and commitments must be appropriately incorporated in NAIP II and other FSN-related policy formulation processes
- A comprehensive electronic database of FSN-related international, African and regional instruments) as well as FSN-related aspects of the Malawi constitutional, policy, statutory and programme framework does not exist
- Acknowledgement of the urgent need for the establishment of such a database and the migration thereof to a Malawi government website that will be accessible – free of charge - to officials, the private sector and the public on a 365/24/7 basis
- Acknowledgement of the fact that there is as yet not full policy coherence in respect of all Malawi FSN-related policies and implementation strategies (whether approved or still in draft form)
- Acknowledgement of the need for the establishment and operationalisation of an overarching coordinating structure, at political and senior administrative level, responsible for the coordination (and monitoring and evaluation) of all activities relating to the execution of NAIP II
- Gender-focused stakeholders were not sufficiently equipped with appropriate tools to assess the gender-responsiveness of government policies and programmes

Investment Plan. These engagements have not only provided support directly through data, documentation



and insight but also in building capacity, embedding ownership and building and strengthening relationships between stakeholders. The engagement is also facilitating the streamlining of work on various sector strategies and policies and linking the outcomes of these to the SGDs.

Methodology

A framework for documenting international, continental, regional and national commitments was developed simultaneously with the South African micronutrient case study. While this framework was not developed as part of the FSP project, the method has been applied to the Malawi case study. The methodology entails:

1. The establishment of a comprehensive electronic database in electronic form of FSN-related international, African and regional instruments as well as FSN-related aspects of the Malawi constitutional, policy, statutory and programme framework.
2. The perusal and analysis (by means of a comprehensive desktop review) of the most important applicable FSN-related international, African and regional instruments. Within this context, a distinction must be made between the following two categories:
 - a. Legally binding instruments that, through a process of ratification and domestication, have become an integral part of the Malawi legal system. Instruments in this category impose binding obligations on the Malawi government. part of the Malawi legal system. Such obligations are both enforceable and justiciable. Usually state parties are obliged to submit reports on a regular basis to an entity linked to the issuing authority.
 - b. Non-binding instruments which are supported by the Malawi government through voting in favour of a specific resolution or declaration by a UN organ (e.g. the UN General Assembly); an AUC o (African Union Commission) or regional organisation (SADC). Notwithstanding the fact that from a legal perspective these instruments are non-binding (and thus neither enforceable nor justiciable), they do have a strong moral persuasive and compliance nature. State parties are expected to comply with all commitments specified in such instruments. They often provide for specific targets, outputs and outcomes as well as the submission of regular reports to a specific reporting entity.
3. The perusal and analysis (by means of a comprehensive desktop review) of the applicable FSN-related Malawi constitutional, policy, statutory and programme framework; the Malawi CAADP Country Compact and Malawi's first Agriculture Sector Wide Approach (ASWAp I), and appropriate

policy and regulatory frameworks, as well as the current policy and strategy design approaches, also with regard to the identification of gaps and the formulation of appropriate implementable options for improvement during the policy renewal process.

4. On site discussions with key Malawi officials to obtain empirical information on their experiences as regards the factual situation relating to the application of the above international, African, regional and Malawi frameworks, as well as to provide information on the Malawi case study and to jointly identify areas of possible cooperation.
5. Attendance of relevant meetings and workshops.
6. Provision of specific inputs when requested.
7. The drafting, approval and dissemination of a research brief on the above, including also findings, the identification of gaps and the formulation of appropriate implementable recommendations for improvement.

Policy engagement and policy impact

The National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy

A desk review of Malawi's previous National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan 2007 – 2012 was conducted to determine the extent to which the policy was gender-responsive. This desk review was followed-up by individual interviews, focus group discussions and workshops with policymakers and policy beneficiaries in Lilongwe and rural Malawi.

Findings from this process culminated in a policy dialogue which brought together various stakeholders including civil society, government officials, NGOs, donors, journalists and community leaders to provide inputs and recommendations on the forthcoming National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy. The dialogue not only resulted in two recommendations being taken up in the latest draft of the forthcoming National Multisectoral Nutrition Policy, but it also resulted in strengthening the capacity of various stakeholders to conduct gender analysis in policies and programmes. Partnerships were fostered between various stakeholders and the uptake of community based approaches for informing programming was strengthened.

The National Agriculture Policy

We were invited by the New Alliance Policy Acceleration Support unit in Malawi to participate in the Agricultural Policy and Institutional Strengthening in Malawi: a national workshop on ASWAp II (24-27 October 2016). While none of the inputs made were integrated in the National Agriculture Policy,

information was shared. This engagement resulted in a request to participate in the development of the National Agriculture Investment Plan.

The National Agriculture Investment Plan

In addition to participating in the in the 14 February 2017 NAIP II formulation workshop on gender and nutrition, we were requested to participate in the executive planning meeting for this workshop. Support was provided in terms of advising on key documents to consult as well as key officials to invite to attend the consultation. Engagement in this process resulted in requests from the organisers to provide focused information on international, continental, regional and national commitments that could inform the gender and nutrition specific aspects of the NAIP.

FAO Southern Africa requested that information on the international, African and regional commitments be provided for the NEPAD knowledge hub. It was recognised that while this study is currently focused on Malawi, the reach of the output could have benefits for the larger regional network, drawing on work already completed on the international and African policy framework and the South African policy and programme landscape conducted through an early case study of policy change in nutrition under component 3, activity 2.

Interaction and networking

During the site visits, meetings and workshops, discussions and networking took place with senior Malawi officials and representatives of other organisations. The following is a non-exhaustive list of such entities:

- Vice-President, Malawi
- Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development
- Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development
- Ministry of Foreign Affairs
- Ministry of Justice
- FAO (Southern Africa)
- IFPRI (Malawi).

Many of these meetings stimulated the demand for this database; with government officials asking when the database would be complete and available. An official from the Department of Economic Planning and Development requested that we propose an institutional framework for coordinating reporting on international and regional commitments. Another official in the

NAIP process requested that we draft a paragraph to be included in the NAIP to explain the value of establishing such a database. Other stakeholders expressed that there was a need to focus on policy issues beyond food security and nutrition, recognising that a comprehensive approach is essential.

During the various interactions, it was agreed that in upcoming visits, the University of Pretoria would explore the best avenues for transferring this database to the government of Malawi. Once transferred, the maintenance (including the continuous updating) of a website housing within the Malawi government system (to be accessible – free of charge - to government officials, the private sector and the public on a 365/24/7 basis) would be the responsibility of the Malawi government. Ownership would be retained by the Malawi government.

During the next two site visits, meetings will be arranged with officials of, amongst others the Office of the President and Cabinet (OPC), the Ministry of Health, the Department of Nutrition, HIV and AIDS, and the Ministry of Information.

Some early insights from engagement

By attending, participating in, and presenting at policy discussions as well as the NAIP II formulation meetings and workshops, we have been able to identifying the need for the establishment and operationalisation of an effective and efficient coordination mechanism as a prerequisite for the successful implementation of all NAIP II related programmes and activities. We were also able to identify gaps in the timing of various policy formulation processes that are not sufficiently synchronised, resulting in, amongst others, policy incoherence. For example, while Malawi's overarching national development plan (the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy) is still under development, the National Agriculture Investment Plan is already being developed. This suggests that it is likely that the overarching national development plan and the National Agriculture Investment Plan, of which the former should ideally inform the latter, will not be aligned.

Next steps

The following activities will be completed during the remainder of the project:

1. The integration of documentation obtained during recent site visits in the already established database as well as the perusal and analysis thereof.

2. The provision of written inputs specifically requested by key Malawi government officials and FAO facilitators involved in the drafting and finalisation of the Malawi NAIP II. Examples of such requests are:
 - A detailed proposal on the establishment of an overarching coordinating structure, at political and senior administrative level, responsible for the coordination of all planning, programme, budgetary, implementation and monitoring and evaluation activities relating to the execution of NAIP II.
 - A statement – to be included in NAIP II - on the need for a comprehensive electronic database consisting of relevant international, African and regional instruments as well as Malawi government documentation; such database (accessible to a government officials, the private sector and the public) is deemed to be an absolute prerequisite for the effective implementation of NAIP II.
3. Site visits to Lilongwe meetings with key Malawi government officials and other stakeholders in order to obtain additional information on the status quo, the policy renewal process and relevant documentation, as well as to provide information on the Malawi case study, during April and early May 2017.
4. The drafting of a research brief on the above, including also findings, the identification of gaps and the formulation of appropriate implementable recommendations for improvement.
5. Dissemination of the Malawi research brief to key Malawi government officials, other Malawi stakeholders as well as other relevant entities.
6. Transfer of the electronic database to an institution in the Malawi government.

international, African, regional (West African) and Ghana official documents will be established and analysed with the view on providing focused inputs into the Ghana policy formulation process (April to September 2017). Thereafter, dependent on the availability of funding, a case study will be undertaken in respect of Senegal. This will be followed by case studies of other African countries.

In addition, subject to approval by all relevant parties, the individual country-specific electronic databases will be made available to the NEPAD Office for integration into its continent-wide electronic database of official sources.

Upscaling: the way forward

Based on the methodology applied in the Malawi study, a similar case study will be undertaken in Ghana. An electronic database of all relevant FSN-related

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