Support to the National Adult Literacy Programme Monkey Bay 2001–2004

External evaluation

by Karl Benediktsson and Linley R. Kamtengeni

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ACDO	Assistant Community Development Officer
AFO	Administrative Field Officer
CDA	Community Development Assistant
CWIS	Core Welfare Indicators Survey
DCDO	District Community Development Officer
ICEIDA	Icelandic International Development Agency
IHS	Integrated Household Survey
LFA	Logical Framework Approach
MAREFO	Malaŵi Reflect Forum
MASAF	Malaŵi Social Action Fund
MGCWCS	Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services
MPRSP	Malaŵi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
NALP	National Adult Literacy Programme
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NSO	National Statistical Office og Malaŵi
PIT	Project Implementation Team
PMC	Project Management Committee
PRA	Participatory Rural Appraisal
REFLECT	Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
UNESCO	United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The assignment

Content

- This report is the outcome of an external evaluation of the Government of Malaŵi and ICEIDA supported project, "Support to the National Adult Literacy Programme, Monkey Bay 2001–2004."

- The Terms of Reference were to evaluate the project's progress and results from 2001 to 2004, with special attention to *efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance, sustainability* and *future support.*

- The evaluation centred on the main objectives in the project document, which can be summarised as follows:
    - ❖ To increase literacy activities.
    - ❖ To improve the quality of instruction.
    - ❖ To improve the quality of supervision and support to literacy activities.
    - ❖ To link literacy to socio-economic needs of learners.
    - ❖ To develop post-literacy activities.
    - ❖ To revise NALP learning material.

Methodology

- Review of documentation.
- Discussions with Ministry officials, ICEIDA, UNDP and ActionAid.
- Focus group discussions with literacy circle committees and participants.
- Observation of literacy circles in session.

Main findings

Relevance

- The project is highly relevant at all levels: in terms of ICEIDA's mandate; in terms of Malaŵi's development priorities and efforts towards poverty reduction; and at the local village level.

Effectiveness

- *The objective of increasing literacy activities.* The project has established 30 literacy circles and over 800 learners have participated. Increased participation by men and youth has not been achieved and dropouts remain a problem. The project has succeeded in creating a socially comfortable learning environment. Many village communities are mobilising themselves to provide learning shelters and childcare centres. To a large extent the project has been effective in meeting this objective.

- *The objective of improving the quality of instruction.* Thirty facilitators have received training in REFLECT methods which are central to the project. The PRA component of REFLECT is not being used to the maximum by the facilitators, which may reflect a lack of emphasis on this aspect during training. The project has timely paid the honorarium of MK1,000 per month to facilitators. Their commitment is good, with only two dropouts so far. A Facilitator's Manual appropriate for the Mangochi District has been developed. In sum, the project has made great progress towards improving the quality of instruction.

- *The objective of improving the quality of supervision and support to literacy activities.* Three CDAs have been posted to the project office. They have been trained in the REFLECT approach, but due to high turnover of CDAs those currently working with the project have not received full training. The project has provided means of transport. Adequate monitoring and reporting systems have been developed. Village circle committees have also received training for support to the circles in the villages. The project has been flexible in facilitating supervisory visits from Ministry officials. The project has therefore largely fulfilled this objective.

- *The objective of linking literacy to socio-economic needs of learners.* Although the facilitators' manual provides for discussions and problem analysis, leading to the development of activities for addressing the identified needs, this has not been achieved fully. Action points are not systematically identified. The success of linkages with other supporting actors in the area is variable. The project has thus not quite achieved this objective.

- *The objective of developing post-literacy activities.* Twelve easy-to-read booklets have been produced and distributed to all circles. Metal boxes have been provided by the project for better storage and the facilitators have been trained in rural library management. This objective has been effectively met.

- *The objective of revising NALP learning material.* No action has yet been taken with regard to this objective.

Efficiency

- The budget of the project is relatively small and financial management is simple and straightforward. Allocation of funds is flexible. It is difficult to conclusively assess the efficiency of fund allocations by comparisons with other projects.

- On the ICEIDA side one person is employed full time for administering the project locally on a daily basis and another spends a good part of her time on the project. There is a clear allocation of responsibilities, short lines of communication, efficient implementation of decisions and efficient distribution of funds.

- On the Ministry side, allocation of managerial responsibilities is not wholly clear. Officials at different levels assume differing supervisory roles, but there are gaps in information flow and decisions. Communication lines are long and confusing. Project management is thus not as efficient as it could be.

Impact

- Literacy skills acquired by learners are variable. Only one assessment of literacy skills has been done, of learners in circles that had been operating for one year. The pass rate was satisfactory.

- Empowerment is a long-term process which needs a different methodology to be evaluated fully. This process has started, with many participants realising the need for individual or collective action to improve their situation.

- Awareness of important issues, such as human rights, gender relations, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS and deforestation, has increased. This is mostly due to the guest speaker component of the project, but not because of discussions within the circles.

- The project has led to decisions by most communities to undertake action points to improve their conditions. Those action points already embarked upon are small in scale and most relate to physical structures. Few have been finished so far and some of the more ambitious ones need resources from the outside.

- The literacy circles have provided a platform for other development activities where other platforms, e.g. Village Development Committees, have been inactive.

Sustainability

- Most participants have not yet reached the level of skills in reading, writing and arithmetic which would enable them to use these skills in the future without continued learning and further support. The post-literacy activities have just started.

- The awareness of social and other issues raised by guest speakers is not sustainable without following it up with more in-depth information and discussion in order to maintain enthusiasm and excitement that could lead to action.

- The sustainability of the project activities after ICEIDA's support has been phased out hinges on whether the Ministry will be able to demonstrate its commitment and political will through progressively increased funding and takeover of management functions. This has not been addressed yet.

Recommendations

- There is a need for literacy activities to continue, both to consolidate the gains already achieved and to respond to existing needs in other villages. Hence the evaluation team recommends that the project be extended to a second phase.

- Achieving literacy skills and sustained empowerment – the two components inherent in the REFLECT method – are long-term goals. A project period of three years is too short to achieve sustainable impact. Hence the team recommends that the second phase of the project should be five years, 2005–2009.

- A number of recommendations are made in the report for the second phase of the project. They include the following themes:
  - ❖ Geographical extension of the project to cover the whole Nankumba Traditional Authority.
  - ❖ Strengthening of links between literacy and development activities.
  - ❖ Increased attention to social and health issues.
  - ❖ Support for action points and income-generating activities.
  - ❖ Improved training of CDAs and facilitators.
  - ❖ Improvements of work procedures at the project office in Monkey Bay.
  - ❖ Attention to the placement of the project within Ministry structures and increased role of the District Community Development Office in Mangochi.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

1   INTRODUCTION

> If learning to read and write is to constitute an act of knowing, the learners must assume from the beginning the role of creative subjects… Insofar as language is impossible without thought, and language and thought are impossible without the world to which they refer, the human word is more than mere vocabulary – it is word-and-action.
>
> Paulo Freire, *The Adult Literacy Process as a Cultural Action for Freedom* (1970)

1.1   The project

This report presents an external evaluation of an adult literacy education project in the Monkey Bay area. The project is supported by Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) from 2001 to 2004. The overall goal of the project is to

> assist the Malawi Government in the implementation of its National Development Goal of Poverty Alleviation by strengthening the NALP activities in the Monkey Bay area (ICEIDA 2001b:15).

The REFLECT approach, which provides for an integration of literacy work with other development activities in a holistic way[1], was adopted in the project. While the project period ended formally on July 31st 2004, activities have continued and an extension is being discussed. In addition to being an end-of-project evaluation report, this document can hopefully provide some suggestions for the next phase of ICEIDA's activities in this important field in Malaŵi.

1.2   Evaluation methodology and workplan

The evaluation was carried out in accordance with the project document, which was signed in December 2001 by the contracting parties: ICEIDA and the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services[2]. By July 2004 an evaluation team had been appointed and Terms of Reference finalised (cf. Annex A). In accordance with ICEIDA working rules, the team consisted of an Icelandic consultant – in this case a geographer with expertise in rural development, who was the team leader – and a local Malaŵian counterpart, an expert in social development including adult education and gender. The evaluation was carried out in August to October 2004. In the Terms of Reference, the team was instructed to pay special attention to several areas; notably efficiency, effectiveness, impact, relevance, sustainability and future support.

    The team members were initially provided with relevant documents relating to the project itself and its progress, as well as with various supplementary information (see

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[1] The acronym REFLECT stands for *Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques*. The approach is based on the work of Brazilian educational theorist Paulo Freire. As implied by the quote at the beginning of this chapter, this entails in a nutshell the integration of basic literacy skills with awareness-raising and practical action (cf. Archer and Cottingham 1996). No primer is used, but learners are encouraged and assisted to decide on topics covered, in the spirit of participatory development and ideals of empowerment. Graphical methods derived from Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) play a key role in defining community concerns and discussing possible solutions. Basic knowledge of reading, writing and arithmetic is introduced simultaneously, and is ideally closely linked to the graphics and discussion. The 'literacy circle' is the group of learners in a village.

[2] Now the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services (MGCWCS).

Annex D). The evaluation team collected most of the data in Lilongwe and Mangochi district, especially in the Monkey Bay area, from August 23rd to September 9th. The Malaŵian counterpart on the team prepared an itinerary which was fine-tuned when the Icelandic member arrived. Following the fieldwork period, the two team members continued their collaboration through email in September and October, finalising at the end of October a draft report that was submitted to ICEIDA Lilongwe office and the MGCWCS for their feedback.

In Lilongwe, the team held discussions and interviews with a range of people (see Annexes B and C). A round table meeting was held with officials in the Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services at the beginning of evaluation, where broader policy issues including policy on decentralization were discussed. The Principal Secretary in the Ministry presided over the meeting, which was followed by an in-depth discussion with officials in the Department of Community Development. Towards the end of the period, more meetings were held with the Director of Community Development and other Ministry staff, in order to further clarify issues. Other persons interviewed included the Project Manager and the Director of the National Adult Literacy Programme, as well as representatives of ActionAid and UNDP. ActionAid has pioneered the REFLECT approach worldwide and also has experience of literacy projects in Malaŵi. UNDP is planning to provide substantial support to adult literacy activities in the country through a comprehensive project that has just started.

Focus group discussions were held at the project office in Monkey Bay with Community Development Assistants posted to the project, and all literacy facilitators. Individual discussions were held with the Administrative Field Officer and the Assistant Community Development Officer. The District Commissioner of Mangochi District received the team for a discussion, and officials from the district's Department of Education and Department of Social Welfare were interviewed. Finally, the Regional Community Development Officer met briefly with the team.

Last but not least, much emphasis was put on obtaining first-hand knowledge of the workings and impacts of the project in the rural villages in which the intended beneficiaries live. Eight of the thirty villages which are participating in the project, were selected from a list provided by the project office. Focus group discussions were held with literacy committee members and literacy learners in six villages. These villages were selected so as to provide a representative geographic and ethnic sample of the communities in the area, but also with a differing length of project operations. Two had been with the project since its inception in 2001, two started their literacy circles in 2002, and the final two joined in 2003. In addition, the team observed two circles in session. The village discussions took place in Chicheŵa[3], with the Malaŵian team member briefing the Icelandic member on the main points. These village discussions and general observations at the 'grassroots' level provided invaluable insight into the realities surrounding the project.

The team members had intended to debrief the project staff in Monkey Bay on the preliminary findings and tentative recommendations before their departure from Monkey Bay on September 3rd. This meeting did not take place, as it turned out that one Community Development Assistant had decided to attend another meeting in Mangochi on the same day, and the Assistant Community Development Officer and the other two CDAs had fallen ill. The consultants debriefed ICEIDA's Country Director and Project Manager in Lilongwe as well as the Ministry officials. This provided an opportunity for feedback on the findings.

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[3] Although not the mother tongue of nearly all inhabitants of the ethnically mixed Monkey Bay area (Kamtengeni 2001:7–8), the Chicheŵa language is understood by most people. It is the language of instruction in the project literacy circles and the official language of Malaŵi (besides English).

1.3 Structure of report

The report covers all areas specified in the Terms of Reference. Following this introduction, the next chapter briefly reviews the history of literacy activities in Malaŵi and then describes this project in some detail. The overall relevance of the project is assessed in the third chapter, with reference to Icelandic aid priorities, the Malaŵian policy context and local conditions in the Monkey Bay area. The fourth chapter is concerned with evaluating the effectiveness of the various project activities. Efficiency is the subject of the fifth chapter, followed by separate chapters evaluating the project's impact and sustainability. Lessons learned are summarised in the eighth chapter. The ninth and final chapter contains the evaluation team's overall conclusions and recommendations for an eventual follow-up project. Finally, several annexes provide further information about the evaluation itself.

Both members have contributed to the text of this report. Final editing was in the hands of the Icelandic team member, however, and he should be held responsible for any factual errors or omissions. We have tried to keep technical jargon and acronyms at bay, but some concessions to the genre of development literature are unavoidable, though.

2 HISTORY AND DESCRIPTION OF THE PROJECT

2.1 Previous adult literacy activities

2.1.1 The Functional Adult Literacy Pilot Project

Following an assessment of the traditional literacy programme in 1979, the government of Malaŵi implemented a functional literacy project on a pilot basis in three districts[4] from 1980 to 1985 (Ministry of Community Services 1986). The functional literacy approach was a popular and accepted approach worldwide because, unlike the traditional approach that was concerned with teaching reading and writing skills, the functional approach paid equal attention to the content. It was believed that the learners needed to be taught things that would be of immediate use in their daily lives, such as modern agricultural methods and techniques. Professional staff for curriculum development, evaluation and training were recruited and trained in their areas of specialisation. UNDP and UNESCO supported the project technically and financially.

2.1.2 The National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP)

An evaluation of the pilot project resulted in the establishment of the National Adult Literacy Programme (NALP) in 1986, with the main purpose of providing functional literacy training and continuing education in order to reduce adult illiteracy in the country. A management and services delivery structure was created from the central level down to the field level to ensure successful and effective implementation of the programme. A National Board for Literacy and Adult Education had been constituted in 1983 through a Government Notice under the Education Act, to advise on policy issues (Ministry of Community Services 1986). A National Centre for Literacy and Adult Education was constructed to house the headquarters of the programme, together with a printing unit and a training centre for staff working on the programme.

The NALP has been identified as one of the critical means for reducing illiteracy in the country and to promote capacity building among the poor and illiterate. However, a number of evaluations of NALP have indicated that the outputs from the programme declined over the years and the programme has not achieved its objectives (Kamtengeni 1993). Major reasons include lack of political will; scant resources allocated to the programme; a lack of policy on adult literacy and adult education; and an absence of an effective post-literacy programme. The HIV/AIDS pandemic has also affected the programme, as many capable fieldworkers – who are essential for its success – have died and their replacement is very slow. NALP activities have been drastically scaled down and the structure has been made ineffective due to the economic problems that continue to haunt the Malaŵi economy.

For example, in 1986 – the year NALP was launched – the plan was to make 50,000 adult people literate. In 1991 the goal was 225,000. However, 64,075 and only 40,661 literate adults successfully went through the project in these two years respectively (Kamtengeni, 1993). The trend has continued to worsen with the Ministry controlling the number of literacy centres to be opened each year, despite a continuing demand for literacy activities. It is in response to this situation that the project which is subject to this evaluation was initiated in 2001 in the Monkey Bay area, where only two adult literacy centres were then in operation.

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[4] Karonga, Salima and Chikwawa, belonging to three different Agricultural Development Divisions.

2.1.3 Implementation of adult literacy activities by other agencies

Several non-governmental organizations, such as ActionAid, Oxfam, Save the Children Federation USA, and religious organizations, have supported literacy activities in various parts of the country. Most of their efforts have been of short duration and the zones of impact rather small, such as a Traditional Authority in a district. However, some of these organisations have been innovative and are implementing different approaches, in particular the REFLECT approach to adult literacy education, and have therefore provided valuable information and experiences of this new approach in Malaŵi.

2.1.4 Literacy activities in Monkey Bay

A baseline survey done in the Monkey Bay area in 2001 (Kamtengeni 2001), as part of the ICEIDA support to NALP, revealed that the activities of NALP were almost nonexistent in the area, and the materials and methods of teaching were outdated. The literacy instructors were not motivated and therefore not willing to teach because the honorarium reached them too late and was too small. However, the demand for the programme was very high. Apart from the NALP, no other literacy projects had a presence in the area at that time, and the ICEIDA-supported project thus was a timely response to this need.

2.2 History of the project

Development cooperation between the governments of Iceland and Malaŵi started in 1989. For the first decade, almost all projects supported by Iceland were fisheries-related, although a handful of other projects received small support. As from 1999, ICEIDA has paid increased attention to the health sector and general social issues. The donor agency has concentrated much of its work in the Monkey Bay area in Mangochi District, which is in the southern part of Malaŵi. This is explained by the agency's original emphasis on fisheries. Monkey Bay is an important fishing area situated at the southern arm of Lake Malaŵi where the national Marine College is also situated.

Ideas about ICEIDA's support to adult literacy in the Monkey Bay area were first formally mooted in 1998 (ICEIDA 2001a), although the possibility had earlier been informally discussed. An official request was made in 1999 to the Icelandic government for support to NALP activities in general and in Monkey Bay in particular. Systematic preparation for this project began in early 2001. By August 2001 a draft project proposal for ICEIDA's support to literacy had been developed. A representative from the Ministry who was the desk officer for the project and ICEIDA representative discussed the project proposal document in August 2001. A thorough baseline survey of the Monkey Bay area was completed in September 2001 by a local consultant (Kamtengeni 2001). It assessed the impact of the NALP in the Monkey Bay area, developed profiles of the villages and the illiterate adults and solicited the inputs of the potential beneficiaries. The survey was used to fine-tune the project proposal document and also as the first activity of project implementation. In the survey report several concrete recommendations were made to both the Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services and to ICEIDA. Among other things, it recommended that the APPLE/REFLECT method be adopted instead of the conventional functional literacy approach of the National Adult Literacy Programme.

By November 2001 the project document was finalized (ICEIDA 2001b), including the budget, and a project agreement signed by the concerned parties. The estimated expenditures were just over US$700,000 for a period of three years. ICEIDA was supposed to cover 95% of the project's costs, whereas the Malaŵi government should

provide 5%, mostly in kind. ICEIDA agreed to pay salaries, fees and agreed costs for a Project Manager and an Administrative Field Officer (AFO). In addition, ICEIDA agreed to pay the honoraria for the literacy instructors, as well as means of transport for CDAs, office space, and various other costs.

ICEIDA appointed the Programme Manager for Social Projects as the Project Manager of the project on its part. The Ministry of Gender, Youth and Community Services identified its desk officer during the project preparation period. A deputy desk Officer was later identified. These officers are based at the Ministry Headquarters in two separate departments, of Gender Affairs and Community Development respectively.

The project officially started 1st August 2001 with the baseline survey and was to end 31st July 2004. Subsequent activities were designed in line with the survey report's recommendations. The REFLECT method was to be the cornerstone of the literacy activities.

Office space was made available in a disused building in Monkey Bay. Some repairs had to be carried out before the office was opened, in the first half of 2002. Identification and training of Community Development Assistants started immediately. In November 2001 two additional CDAs were made available to the project and upon further request one more CDA was posted to the area in early 2002, replacing the original CDA who was promoted, although not posted away. ICEIDA appointed a Field Administrative Officer in February 2002, who is based at the project office in Monkey Bay.

The project's four first literacy centres (or 'circles') were established in four villages in the Monkey Bay area towards the end of 2001, albeit using the conventional teaching approach of functional literacy inherited from the National Adult Literacy Program. After a ten month learning period these centres switched to REFLECT. In May 2002 eight more REFLECT circles were opened, which made use of the REFLECT approach right from the start. Further 12 circles were started in April 2003 and six circles in April 2004. Training of literacy facilitators and others who are in supporting roles in the villages has been carried out prior to the opening of the literacy circles, followed up by refresher courses.

The term of office of the ICEIDA Programme Manager for Social Projects, who prepared the project and oversaw its implementation more than half-way through the project period, ended in January 2003. A new Programme Manager took over and proper handover was done, including a briefing on the project by the departing Manager. This arrangement provided for a smooth change and the project was not affected in any way.

2.3   The project matrix

The Logical Framework Approach (LFA, cf. NORAD 1996) – which is one of the commonly used tools in project planning – was used for the development of the project document. This method entails that a project document should clearly define the overall objectives, special objectives, project outputs and activities, indicators and external risk factors. A project matrix should provide a clear summary of these items.

The project document itself is thorough and obviously prepared with a great deal of knowledge of local conditions. However, the components of the project matrix have not always been clearly separated (cf. Table 1, next page). There is, for instance, considerable overlap between the 'special objectives' and the 'activities'. While the breakdown of the objectives into smaller components might have been of use for ensuring that nothing was left out, it is not easy to relate objectives to activities. Moreover, the suggested indicators are not all well defined. In future project documents prepared for ICEIDA, more attention should be paid to these aspects.

Table 1: The Project Matrix

Development objectives	Indicators	Risks/External factors
To assist the Malawi Government in the implementation of its National Development Goal of Poverty Alleviation by strengthening the NALP activities in the Monkey Bay area	Strong NALP in Monkey Bay	• Economic change • Natural catastrophes
Immediate objectives	**Indicators**	**External factors**
• Improve training of CDAs • Improve monitoring and supervision of NALP activities • Increased participation of social groups underrepresented in NALP before • Improved training of instructors • Reduce instructors' absenteeism and dropout rates • Increase flexibility and receptivity • Decrease dropout rates • Adequate teaching and learning material • Incorporate REFLECT approach • Improve physical learning environment • Create socially unthreatening learning environment • Meet practical needs of learners • Meet strategic needs of learners • Experiment with the establishment of community-based child-care centers • Revision of NALP learning material • Improve post-literacy facilities	• Training meets NALP needs • Monitoring and supervision • Interest in communities • Dropout rates and absenteeism • Level of flexibility • Activities of literacy committees • Participation of previously underrepresented groups • Supplies and adequacy of teaching and learning material • The extent training has improved living situation and social awareness • Function of child-care centers • Function of post-literacy facilities	• Sufficient supply of management and extension personnel • Level of interest among local leadership and communities • Available adult literacy expertise
Main Output	**Indicators**	**External factors**
• Baseline socio-economic survey • Improved working environment and means of transport for CDAs • Improved and updated training of CDAs and instructors • Monthly honorarium to literacy instructors • Improved supervision and support to instructors • Sufficient supplies of teaching and learning material • Establishment of child-care centres • Revision of NALP teaching and learning material • Post-literacy facilities	Same as above	Same as above
Main Activities	**Indicators**	**External factors**
• Baseline survey • Development of improved and more flexible teaching and learning material and methods • Develop methods to meet learners' practical and strategic needs • Revision of NALP material • Establishment of child-care facilities • Development of post-literacy facilities		

Source: ICEIDA 2001b:30–31

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3   PROJECT RELEVANCE

In an assessment of project relevance, different levels have to be examined. Policies of both donor and partner have to be taken into account, as well as local priorities and needs (DANIDA 1999:58). In this chapter we first briefly outline ICEIDA's mandate and modalities of work. Then we turn towards a broad analysis of Malaŵi's situation in terms of adult literacy and discuss the poverty reduction strategy which currently guides governmental practice in the country. This is followed by a rather cursory discussion of relevance as seen from the local level, but further evidence of this are found in subsequent chapters.

3.1   ICEIDA's priorities

The Icelandic International Development Agency (ICEIDA) is a governmental body, which operates according to an Icelandic Act of Parliament (*Lög nr. 43/1981*) and Icelandic government policy. In the policy statement which guides current activities of ICEIDA (ICEIDA 2004), the point of departure is the Millennium Development Goals adopted at the UN's 55th General Assembly in 2000. Assistance to the poorest sector of society is prioritised and the agency strives to work in accordance with the Poverty Reduction Strategies adopted by the countries in which it operates. It also endorses participatory approaches to development and issues of equality and democratic development are likewise prominent in the agency's policy document.

   Whereas many larger government development agencies have turned towards providing sector-wide assistance, ICEIDA has due to its small size generally used a project approach in its work, despite being a government agency. It is also directly involved in the implementation of all its projects, which many larger government donor agencies are not. It does however strive to work in concert with the counterpart government's structures and programmes.

   The agency has in recent years decreased its former emphasis on technical assistance projects, paying increased attention to projects which aim at strengthening human capital. Until the year 2000, the projects supported by the agency were mostly in the fisheries sector. From that year, support to social, education and health projects has been increased, in addition to fisheries-related projects. Gender equality has become an important consideration.

3.2   Adult literacy and poverty reduction in Malaŵi

3.2.1   Poverty, education and illiteracy

Malaŵi counts as one of the world's poorest countries by most economic yardsticks. Current Gross National Income was estimated to be approximately US$170 per person in 2003 (World Bank 2004). An analysis of poverty in the country some years ago (Government of Malaŵi and United Nations 1993) defined poverty as a situation whereby deprivation or lack of human basics of life becomes a normal occurrence. According to the 1997–1998 Integrated Household Survey (IHS), the consumption and expenditure of almost two-thirds (64.3%) of the population was living below the poverty

line, and 36.3% were defined as "ultra-poor"[5] (Benson et al. 2002:27–30). Malaŵi is also poor in terms of social development and public health, the HIV/AIDS pandemic being especially devastating in the present situation. The country currently ranks no. 165 out of 177 countries for which the United Nations Development Programme calculates its Human Development Index (UNDP 2004:142).

Gender is an important dimension in this regard. Some 70% of agricultural work, which is the means for earning a living for most Malaŵian families, is done by women (Government of Malaŵi 2002a:89). Geographical unevenness is another consideration. Poverty is for instance more prevalent in the rural areas than in urban centres. In Mangochi District, where Monkey Bay is located, the proportion of poor people is somewhat higher than the national average, or 68.8% in 1998 (2000 Profile of Poverty in Malaŵi, 1998).

One of the most telling indicators of poverty is the illiteracy rate. In 1966 only some 12% of the population were literate, according to Census data (Government of Malaŵi and United Nations 1993). Despite radical improvement until the 1990s, Malaŵi's adult literacy rate is still comparatively low, or in the vicinity of 60%, and the current trend seems to be negative (Table 2) [6]. Ambitious programmes designed to combat illiteracy, most notably the NALP (Government of Malaŵi 2002a), have not performed according to plan, as explained before. Government efforts in this field have been scaled down over the years, due to high competition among national programmes for limited resources in an economy that has been doing poorly.

Table 2: Estimates of adult literacy in Malaŵi

	Integrated Household Survey 1997–1998	**Core Welfare Indicators Survey 2002**[**]
Adult literacy rate, overall	64.1	60.9
- male	74.9	73.8
- female	54.0	48.9
- urban		90.5
- rural		58.7

Sources: Benson et al. 2002:45–46; Mpando 2003:26

3.2.2 Gender and geography: two dimensions of illiteracy

Illiteracy, just like poverty, has gender dimensions (cf. Table 2). Over half of all adult women (15 years and above) are illiterate, compared to one-fourth of all men. Historically, by far most participants in literacy activities (about 86% in the NALP) have been women. Providing literacy is a sure way of targeting development towards women. Integrating literacy with development issues and using methods that empower women is an effective way to promote sustainable development.

Apart from rural-urban contrasts, illiteracy is very unevenly distributed in geographical terms (Benson et al. 2002; NSO 2003). In general it is notably higher in the south of the country than in the north (Figure 1). In Mangochi District, illiteracy is much higher than the national average. A survey in 2002 estimated the adult literacy rate in the

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[5] In 1998, the poverty line was at the level of MK 10.47 (US$ 0.41) per day. Ultra-poverty was arbitrarily defined as consumption less than 60% of the level denoted by the poverty line, or about MK 6.28 (US$ 0.25) per day (Benson et al. 2002:27–30).

[6] The adult literacy rate is technically defined as "[t]he percentage of people ages 15 and above who can, with understanding, both read and write a short, simple statement related to their everyday life" (UNDP 2004:272).

district to be only 42.8% (NSO 2003). In addition, the difference in literacy between women and men is considerably greater than nationwide (Benson et al. 2002:46). The Mangochi District Education Office identified low enrolment and school dropout as some of the priority areas in its Education Plan 2002–2005.
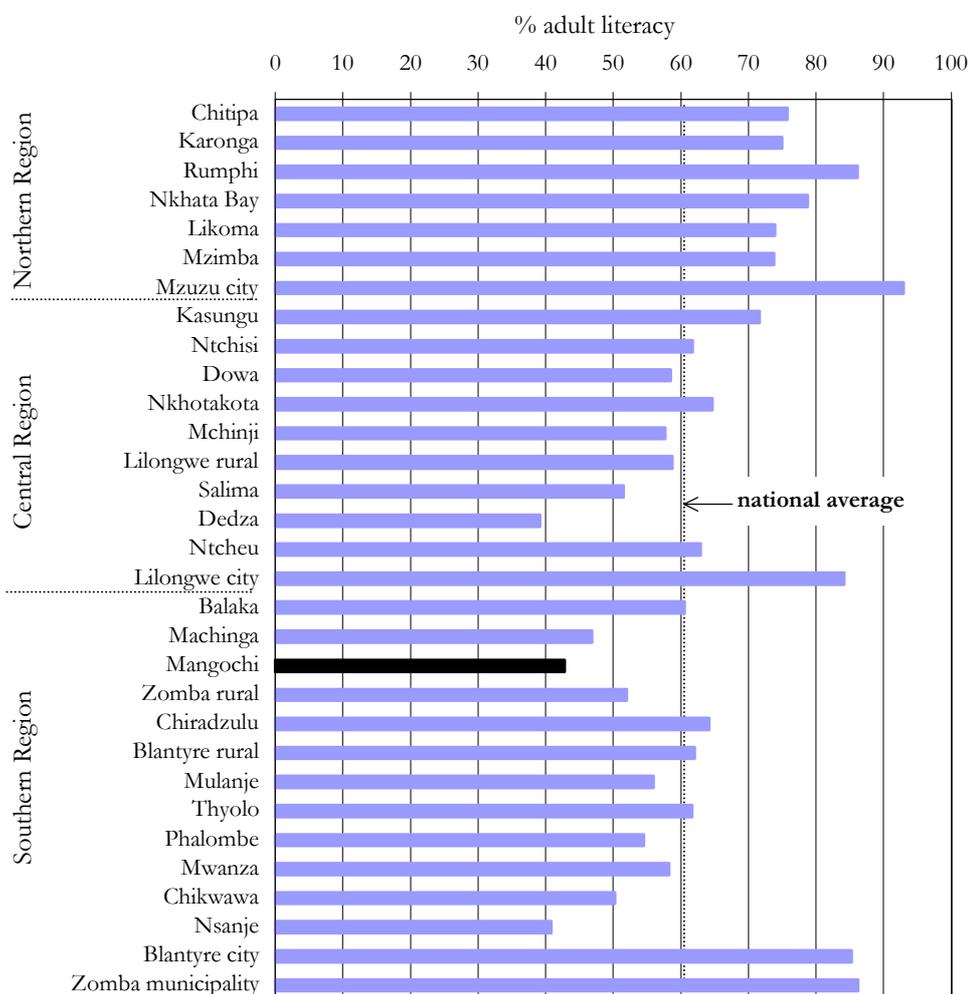
Figure 1: Adult literacy rates by district (Source: Mpando 2003:26)

3.2.3   Malaŵi's development priority: the Poverty Reduction Strategy

The Malaŵi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) 2002 is the blueprint for directing development efforts towards reducing poverty in the country (Government of Malaŵi 2002a,b). The MPRSP recognizes the many dimensions of poverty, including income and human capacity, and that it is strongly related to low levels of education. The illiterates are most likely the poorest. To reduce poverty, the MPRSP has identified four pillars, one of which is human capital building. Increasing the level of literacy is recognised as an important goal in this regard. Through the MPRSP the government is focusing on the issue of gender equality as a way of ensuring sustainable development.

The preceding decade has seen important changes to the educational system. The government introduced free primary education in 1994. However, the success of this effort has been hampered by issues of quality, which has led to more pupils dropping out, especially girls in the first four years of primary education. It is believed that four years of primary education would be sufficient to make one functionally literate.

3.3 Perceptions of the project's relevance by local people

The available data and surveys discussed above clearly speak of a great need for adult literacy activities in Mangochi District and Monkey Bay – the area where ICEIDA's development assistance has been concentrated. The final judgement on a project's relevance, however, should be made by the intended beneficiaries. Through open discussions during the consultation period, the evaluation team sought the opinions of village people about literacy in general.

Those interviewed unanimously agreed on the importance of literacy. A range of situations was mentioned where an illiterate person was disadvantaged. Simply being able to sign one's name is a major step, in terms of personal achievement and self-esteem as well as in practical terms. It brings, for instance, an increased ability to deal with health care centres and other service institutions. Literacy is also seen as very important for being able to help children with school homework. Numeracy is a prerequisite for conducting financial transactions with confidence. Indirect benefits mentioned included a greater awareness of social and health issues and increased self-esteem.

It should be noted that most people consulted in the villages had either registered for the literacy circles or were serving on circle committees. Of course, one would expect that those already motivated to join literacy classes would assess the relevance of such activities highly. Nevertheless, it seems warranted to conclude that the people living in the villages in Monkey Bay are no doubt of the opinion that adult literacy activities are highly relevant to their communities' well-being.

3.4 Overall assessment of the project's relevance

This chapter has discussed the project's general relevance from three different perspectives. From the perspective of the donor country, the overall objective of the ICEIDA supported literacy project in the Monkey Bay area (cf. p1) is highly relevant. It fits well into the general priorities of ICEIDA as these are outlined in Icelandic legislation and policy statements referred to above. With reference to the state of literacy and current development policy of the Malaŵi Government, the overall objective is also relevant. It first and foremost relates to the second pillar of the Poverty Reduction Strategy: Human capital development. According to the MPRSP, basic education is to receive top priority and NALP is recognised as an important component in this (Government of Malaŵi 2002a:51). One of the specific objectives relating to adult literacy as spelled out in the document is to "increase and improve functional adult literacy and numeracy" (Government of Malaŵi 2002a:51). Ambitions targets are set in the paper[7], towards which the project contributes – albeit in a small way – using revised methods and materials. Also the MPRSP recognises the gender dimensions of education, as evidenced by a much higher illiteracy rate of women than men.

Some important actions are now being taken to address the issue of adult illiteracy. The Malaŵi government, in partnership with UNDP, has from 2004 embarked on a comprehensive three-year project to support literacy activities in 12 of the country's 28 districts. The Monkey Bay literacy project supported by ICEIDA can act as a learning ground for effective implementation of this national project.

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[7] An enrolment target of 300,000 was set for 2005, an increase from 37,000 in 1999 (Government of Malaŵi 2002a:52). No fewer than 10,000 instructors were to be trained, bringing their numbers up from 2,000 in 1999. Given economic conditions as well as various other constraints, such high targets are not likely to be met – even with the help of large donors – but they signal a recognition of the country's great needs in this sector.

The project's intended beneficiaries are illiterate rural people, who are among the poorest in Malaŵi and whose options for improving their lives are very limited indeed. The rural poor include both men and women, although women have been far more numerous among participants in the literacy circles. From observations and discussions in the villages of the Monkey Bay area, as well as from the analysis of policy documents and survey data, we thus conclude that the project is highly relevant.

4 EFFECTIVENESS: PROJECT OUTPUTS AND OBJECTIVES

This chapter will systematically review the objectives, activities and outputs of the project in its major thematic fields. We present and discuss various issues, both positive accomplishments and issues of concern, which we became aware of during the consultation process. In the context of an LFA evaluation, the concept of effectiveness relates to the extent to which formally specified objectives have been achieved through the particular outputs produced (Samset 1993:37; DANIDA 1999:54). We will here briefly discuss the overall objective, but pay more attention to the specific objectives.

4.1 Goal and purposes

The stated overall objective (or 'goal', in conventional LFA terminology) of the project is to "assist the Malawi Government in the implementation of its National Development Goal of Poverty Alleviation by strengthening the NALP activities in Monkey Bay to help raise the literacy level in the country" (ICEIDA 2001b:15). This obviously is a broad and ambitious overall goal, but the evaluation team can unequivocally state that the more specific objective formulated in the second part of the statement has been accomplished: There were almost no NALP activities present in the Monkey Bay area before this project, whereas now several hundred learners benefit from it. However, it should be noted that the project is quite modest in geographical extent and covers only part of the Nankumba Traditional Authority (to which Monkey Bay and vicinity belongs). The Monkey Bay area has 57 villages altogether and the Nankumba area has 38. The project currently operates in 30 of the 57 villages of the Monkey Bay area.

As noted earlier in the report, numerous immediate objectives (or 'purposes', according to LFA terminology) are listed in the project matrix (cf. Table 1, p7). These range from very broad ones to quite specific objectives, and some are indeed methods or activities rather than objectives. Discussion in the project document itself (ICEIDA 2001:15–17) does not really clarify the issue, although the document as a whole is comprehensive and in many ways well prepared. Likewise, suggested indicators are differently well suited to operational measurement or judgement. This makes a straightforward assessment in the LFA-mould somewhat difficult, while it should be noted that, given the process-oriented and socially transformative nature of the project, a narrowly-focused and strictly objective assessment is neither feasible nor desirable.

In an attempt at post hoc clarification, we have identified the following six basic objectives in the project document:

    I.   Increased literacy activities.
   II.   Improved quality of instruction.
 III.   Improved quality of supervision and support to literacy activities.
 IV.   Linking of literacy to socio-economic needs of learners.
  V.   Development of post-literacy activities.
 VI.   Revision of NALP learning material.

Each of these was intended to be met with the production of a range of outputs. The effectiveness of the project in meeting these basic objectives will now be discussed.

4.2 Objective I: Increased literacy activities

In terms of activities and output, this has above all meant the starting up of new literacy circles and enrolment of new learners, including learners from underrepresented social

groups (men and youth). It has also entailed efforts to lower the rate of dropouts and create an environment which is supportive and conducive to learning, both socially and physically.

4.2.1 Number of literacy circles and learners

In this regard, the project has performed according to plan, and even better. A total of 30 literacy circles have been established over the course of three years (Figure 2).
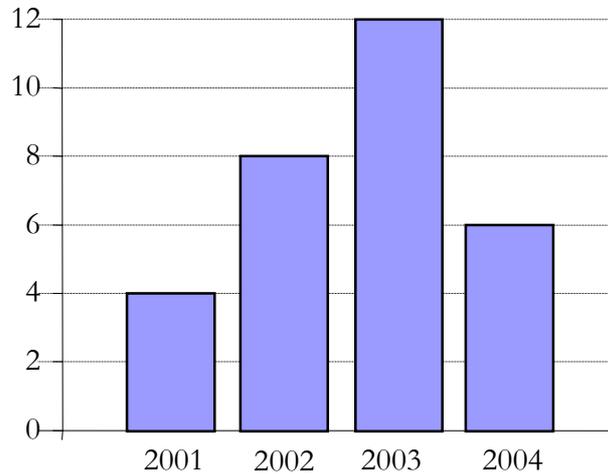
Figure 2: Yearly established literacy circles 2001–2004

Number of classes to be established each year was always decided in advance, but with flexibility. The project document supposed that four circles should be opened in 2001 and six in 2002. In reality, eight circles were opened during 2002. Twelve circles were opened in 2003. In the activity plan for 2004 it was decided to open seven classes. The training was carried out for the Village Heads and circle committees as well as facilitators. Not all of these classes were started, due to facilitator dropout. Also the untimely death of two CDAs late in 2003 affected the capacity of the project.

When the number of learners is examined, more caution has to be exercised. The initial registration does not tell the whole story, because of learner dropouts and sometimes sporadic attendance. Nevertheless, the growth in registered learners has been healthy, matching the growth in the number of circles (Figure 3). A total of 819 learners have registered for the literacy circles since the project's inception, compared with less than ten before the project started. The average number of learners per circle is 23.
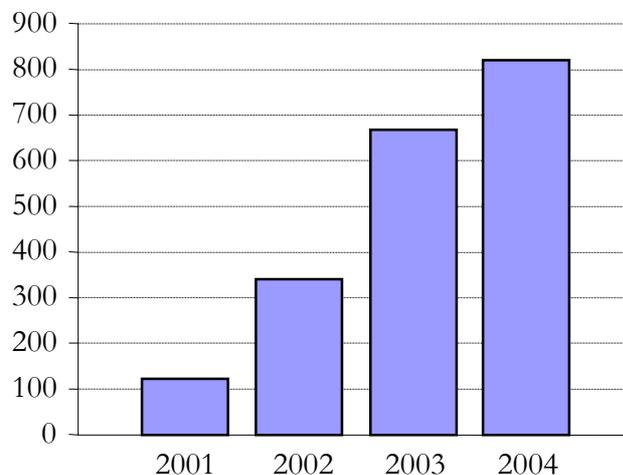
Figure 3: Cumulative number of registered learners 2001–2004

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It should be noted that only two out of the 30 circles are not currently functional because the facilitators have opted out. This is a very substantial improvement from the mainstream NALP programme.

4.2.2 Participation of hitherto underrepresented groups of learners

Recruit of male learners is still a problem in the Monkey Bay project (Figure 4) as has been the case in the general NALP programme, as well as in other literacy projects in the country using the REFLECT approach. The evaluation team was informed that at the time the project activities were being introduced in the villages men were particularly encouraged to attend, but the option to form male-only classes was not made known to the potential participants and was rarely encouraged. One circle tried a class for males only and started with seven participants. The class closed as four of the men dropped out and the remaining three joined the then female-only class, where they were still attending at the time of the evaluation. It should be noted that those men who are determined to learn have persisted in a dominantly female class, but such men are very few indeed.
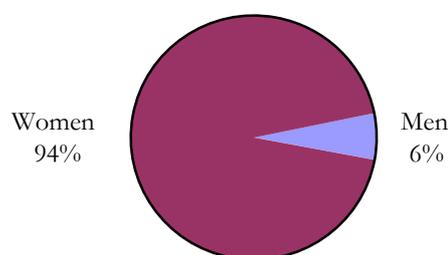
Figure 4: Gender distribution of all registered learners

Women 94%   Men 6%

Project staff, circle committees and the participants gave different reasons for this state of things. Often it was simply stated that the men are "lazy" or "shy", but in all likelihood the reasons are a little more complicated that. The same factors as various people have pointed to (e.g. Kamtengeni 2001) are still operating: Shame at acknowledging illiteracy; unwillingness to join a class of female learners or be instructed by a female facilitator; or conflicts with fishing activities. More importantly, some practices that are deeply rooted in local culture, such as avoidance relationships, cannot be changed easily over the short lifespan of a three-year project.

Given the situation in the project with respect to male participation, the policy goal of gender equality needs to be actively and continuously promoted. However, noting the issue of limited resources and the complex nature of the reasons for lack of participation by men, it may be asked whether the limited interest of men does actually constitute a major problem for the project. Since the REFLECT activities are not only about literacy, but just as importantly about grappling with everyday community concerns, the answer has to be *yes*. If issues such as the HIV/AIDS crisis and gender-based violence, to mention a few, are to be addressed, the participation of men is surely no less important than that of women. The men's low participation in literacy activities *per se* may, however, be partially compensated for by ensuring that other REFLECT related activities, such as guest speaker talks and action points, do involve the whole community and not just the literacy circle participants.

Likewise, few unmarried youth attend the literacy circles. The marriage age in Malaŵi is fairly low[8] and it is even lower than the national average in Mangochi district. The project staff has not undertaken any specific campaigns for attracting youth, and indeed

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[8] The national average age of first marriage in 1998 was 18.9 years for women and 23.2 for men (Benson et al. 2002:46). For the Nankumba Traditional Authority the figure was lower still for women but close to or just below the average for men.

it is not certain whether such a campaign would be effective. The best that can be done is to make it abundantly clear, during the initial mobilisation stage, that the circles are open to all interested, regardless of age or gender. Further efforts could be made to establish separate classes either for the youth only or gender-specific if need be.

4.2.3   Reduction of dropouts

From discussion with literacy facilitators and learners, as well as from the reporting forms made available to the evaluation team, it seems that dropouts are still a problem. In some circles that started with as many as 60 participants, about 26 participants were regularly attending at the time of the evaluation. Absenteeism is an issue in all the circles. Learners have many and varied reasons for dropping out. Some do not see the point in attending literacy classes, as it does not directly lead to improvements in their livelihood. Others have to concentrate their energies on more immediate concerns of food and shelter in order to keep themselves and their families going. Also some older people have dropped out because they feel they are at a disadvantage, and poor eyesight has caused some to drop out.

In the project document, it was suggested that dropouts in the NALP were related to a limited linkage of literacy with immediate needs of the learners (ICEIDA 2001b:11). This linkage is on the other hand at the heart of the REFLECT approach. But benefits are often slow to materialise. This particular project has not prioritised income-generating activities in its non-literacy work, but has put more emphasis on social education. In any case, the project has not been effective with regard to this particular sub-objective.

4.2.4   Socially comfortable learning environment

One of the stated objectives of the project is to create a learning environment which is "socially comfortable and unthreatening" (ICEIDA 2001b:14). This is not spelled out clearly in the project document, but presumably this means for instance that admitting one's illiteracy by registering for classes is not seen as shameful. Also there is mention of the possible connotation (by men) of literacy activities with immoral behaviour, to the extent that the (female) participant can become stigmatised as morally dangerous (ICEIDA 2001b:11). This has certainly not happened in Monkey Bay. On the contrary – judging from the team's admittedly limited observations – the attitudes of village communities toward literacy activities appear to be very positive and the learners seem to be proud of their participation. Careful initial mobilization is undoubtedly important. The project has performed well in this regard, although we are not sure whether this was a big problem in the first place.

Another important aspect of the social environment in the situation of the literacy session is the relationship between the facilitator and the learners. Gender is an obvious and important aspect, but general attitudes of the facilitator are very important. Here the careful selection and training of facilitators seems to have paid off. Many learners stated that their facilitator was polite, respectful and patient. The two sessions which the evaluation team observed both had male instructors, whereas most of the learners were female. This did not seem to matter much. Of course these are not necessarily representative sessions, and facilitators' personalities differ, but the project has in our view succeeded in creating a social setting which is conducive to learning.

4.2.5   Adequate physical conditions

There is a general realization that learning in an open space is not effective. Where there is a primary school, such facilities are used by the REFLECT circles. But where such

facilities are at a distance, attempts have been made to construct mostly temporary grass shelters (Plate 1). As learning takes place during the dry season, these are adequate as long as they are repaired or reconstructed each year. The circle committees have ensured that such structures are built before the circle starts operating and they made this as their priority responsibility. One circle has constructed a permanent learning shelter of burnt bricks. The project has provided black/chalkboards and exercises books, most of which were donated by a charitable organisation from Iceland. Most learners are able to buy pencils or ball point pens and they sometimes buy exercise books when the need arises. To a large extent, adequate physical conditions for effective learning have been created and provided.

Plate 1: A literacy shelter at Chigonere.

4.2.6   Childcare centres

The project document provides for the establishment of childcare centers in 2003 in order to facilitate regular participation and attendance of mothers. Three centres were established on a pilot basis in three circles. The Department of Social Welfare[9] in the MGCWCS at the district level was contacted by the AFO to assist with the establishment of the centers. The District Social Welfare Officer trained the circle committees in management of the childcare centres. The centres are run according to the childcare policy, which requires the community to contribute food, cooking utensils, toys and support the childcare givers.

The evaluation team saw two of the three established centres, but they were not in session. According to the circle committee members there, the childcare givers are quite willing to offer their services free. However, the community sometimes decides to present them with something as a token of appreciation. The centres are well patronised

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[9] This is a sister department to the NALP, located in the same Ministry.

and have proved important and effective for enabling women to attend literacy sessions and concentrate better. Any child can attend and not necessarily only those of circle participants. The major problem is that the children have no toys to play with. Sometimes food is a problem and as a result parents are requested to give their children food as they go to the centres. At one centre the evaluation team visited a simple shelter, which was made of grass and poles and can not be used during the rainy season (Plate 2).

Plate 2: Basic childcare facilities at Mdala Chikowa.

Discussions which the evaluation team had with the District Social Welfare Officer revealed that the childcare centres can be assisted through MASAF III. Mangochi District is allocated MK92m for Social Support under this programme. What is required is for the centres to make an application for the support. The District Social Welfare Officer will then appraise the applications. The support would be towards construction of permanent shelters, provision of furniture, utensils, toys and training for the childcare workers. This would indeed be a very important input to the overall effectiveness of the literacy project, as the other literacy circles have expressed the need for childcare services..

The evaluation team raised the issue of honoraria for the childcare givers, considering that in the parallel programme, which the centers are supporting, the facilitators are paid honoraria. These childcare givers are providing a valuable service to the community and the evaluation team is firmly of the opinion that this should be duly acknowledged. There is also potential conflict between policies within the Ministry, which needs to be properly addressed if the two programmes will be supporting each other, which hitherto has not been the case. The important question is who should pay such a honorarium. The evaluation team appreciates that some communities have decided to remunerate the childcare givers with money or food, but this may be in the short term.

…

To conclude this section, the evaluation team is of the view that the project has been very successful in meeting the objective of increased literacy activities. While only two centres were working under NALP previously, 30 literacy circles have now been established. Social and physical conditions to ensure effective learning have been provided. The number of learners has grown correspondingly. Some issues and problems which need further attention have also been pointed out.

4.3 Objective II: Improved quality of instruction

Outputs related to this objective are, first, appropriately trained and committed facilitators and, second, teaching and learning material including methods that meet the learners' practical and strategic needs.

4.3.1 Literacy facilitators

Recruitment and working conditions

The facilitators are key persons, as it is they who carry out the actual literacy activities in the villages on a day-to-day basis (Plate 3). An elaborate process for their recruitment has been developed. First the CDA visits the Village Head to introduce the project and the preparatory work to be done before the project starts. The Village Head summons a village forum to introduce the project and the CDA attends. Once the project is accepted, three people are identified at the forum, whose qualifications are at least at the level of Primary School Leaving Certificate, as possible candidates for the position of facilitator. Characteristics such as good manners are also considered. These three are subjected to an interview by the CDA who selects the facilitator. This process provides for selection of a person who is accepted by the people but also who is technically sound, albeit somewhat limited by education level. It would in all likelihood not be easy, however, to recruit people with higher formal educational background.

The facilitators are mostly in their 20s and early 30s. The gender division is rather even, although men are a slight majority.Judging both from discussions between the evaluation team and the facilitators, as well as from observations of two literacy circles in session, the facilitators seem a dedicated and competent group of people. They are volunteers, who receive an honorarium of MK1,000 per month, which is paid at their monthly meetings with the project staff at the Monkey Bay office. The honorarium, while much higher than the MK200 paid by the NALP up until then[10], has remained unchanged since 2001 and some facilitators expressed dissatisfaction with this as inflation has considerably lowered its *de facto* value. Within this project, ICEIDA pays the honorarium, whereas other NALP instructors are paid by the government. The fact that only two facilitators have left the project over the period of three years is a clear indication that they are committed to their work.

Training

According to reports concerning the training, as well as information from the CDAs and the circle facilitators during the time of consultations, all the facilitators had been trained in the REFLECT approach soon after being selected and before they started teaching for a period of two weeks. In the course of their teaching, all the facilitators were exposed to one week (five days) refresher course except for the group recruited in March 2004 which is yet to have a refresher course. The first refresher courses are given within one year from recruitment.

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[10] The NALP honorarium was raised to K500 in 2002.
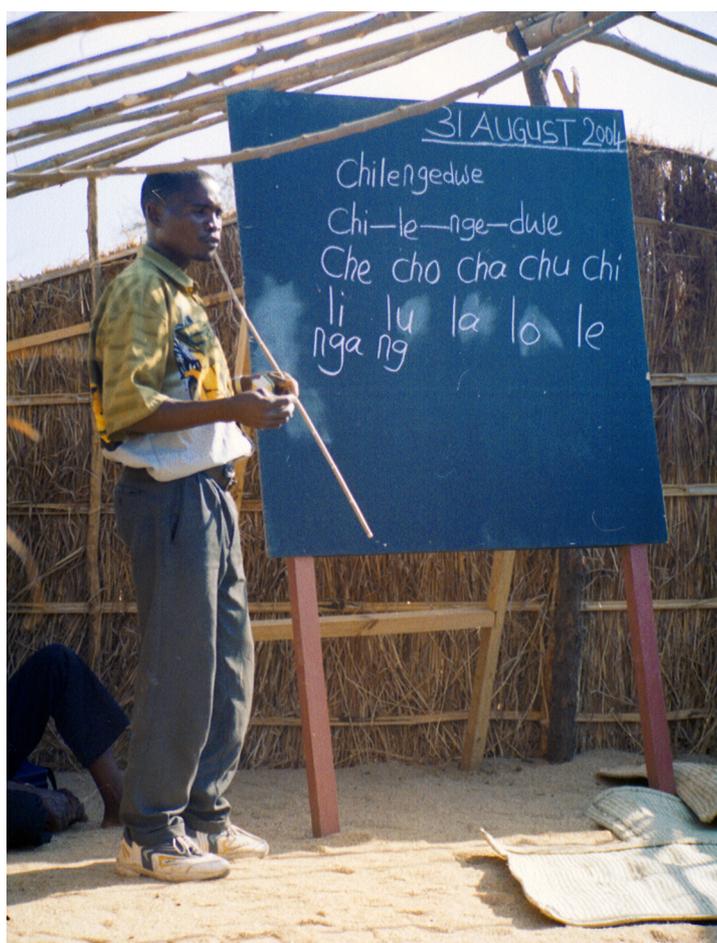
Plate 3: Village literacy facilitator at Kamwetsa

Most facilitators indicated that they considered the time for the refresher courses rather too short. Nearly all expressed some concern about insufficient training in the use of graphics – an important part of the REFLECT method. This is not surprising given that most have only primary education, although we have already noted that the selection process is in itself fully appropriate. Many of the facilitators therefore find it difficult to use graphics at the beginning of each unit. It was very revealing to the evaluation team that most of the circles visited admitted having used graphics when the circle had just started. The team also observed that there was more emphasis on literacy skills than on the promotion of discussions among the participants. The problem with the effective use of graphics has indeed been identified earlier, e.g. during a mid-term evaluation undertaken in mid-year 2003 (Khonje and Kachere 2003) and in a supervision report from the Regional Office in August 2004 (Kabwira 2004). The PMC and the PIT have thus been well aware of this problem and have indeed discussed possible remedies.

Monthly meetings for the facilitators and CDAs, held at the project office at Monkey Bay, are a crucial part of the project. These meetings provide an important opportunity for the facilitators to learn from each other's experiences, share ideas and revise methods, as well as learning from the staff at the project office. The facilitators are encouraged to use the project office as a place they can come to for assistance if needed.

4.3.2   Improved teaching and learning materials

The project was required to develop improved and more flexible teaching and learning materials to ensure improved quality of instruction. The REFLECT approach operates on the principle of flexibility and uses methods that strive to respond to the needs of the learners. To this effect, no pre-determined learning materials are necessary. The project did not therefore produce learning material. Ideally, the project should have developed a facilitator's manual which, according to the REFLECT method, should be adjusted to social, economic, cultural and environmental conditions of the project area before classes are started. However, due to the urgent need to start classes as detailed in the project plan, a manual for Salima District[11] was used initially.

A manual appropriate to conditions in the Mangochi District was ready in June 2003. The participants had an input in its production. Copies were made available to the evaluation team (ICEIDA 2003a). It took almost a year to get the manual finalised and distributed. Problems with printing caused the delay, as the NALP printing press is not functional. The PMC expressed its concerns at several of its meetings. However, this delay did not seem to affect the project activities much as the facilitators had the option of using either the draft manual or the Salima one. At the time of the evaluation only seven facilitators had the final version of the manual.

The facilitators' manual is an essential guide for the facilitators in how to conduct REFLECT sessions (Archer and Cottingham 1996). During the learning process, participants develop their own learning materials, such as key words for learning literacy skills, or various types of maps, diagrams and calendars, which are collectively called 'graphics'. The graphics are used to stimulate discussions, reading and writing, numeracy and actions to address problems identified during the process. The manual for Mangochi is divided into units and has a total of 20 units.

Each unit first states the issue or theme that is the focus for the learning process (Table 3). A graphic is provided for each unit, as a starting point for the teaching. The objectives of the unit are stated, as are the ways the facilitator must prepare for it. On the basis of the graphic (Figure 5), the facilitator initiates and guides a discussion. Possible action points are discussed and learning words or numbers are singled out for literacy and numeracy skills learning.

Table 3: The content of a unit in the REFLECT facilitators' manual

Theme
Teaching aid
Objectives
Points to guide the facilitators' preparation
Graphic work
Discussion points
Ideas on action points
Ideas on literacy and numeracy skills learning
Other ideas/actions to support what was learned

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[11] The NGO ActionAid – the pioneer of the REFLECT method – has been working with this approach in the Salima district. Being a lakeshore district, the natural environment of Salima is close to that of Monkey Bay, although there are some important sociocultural differences.
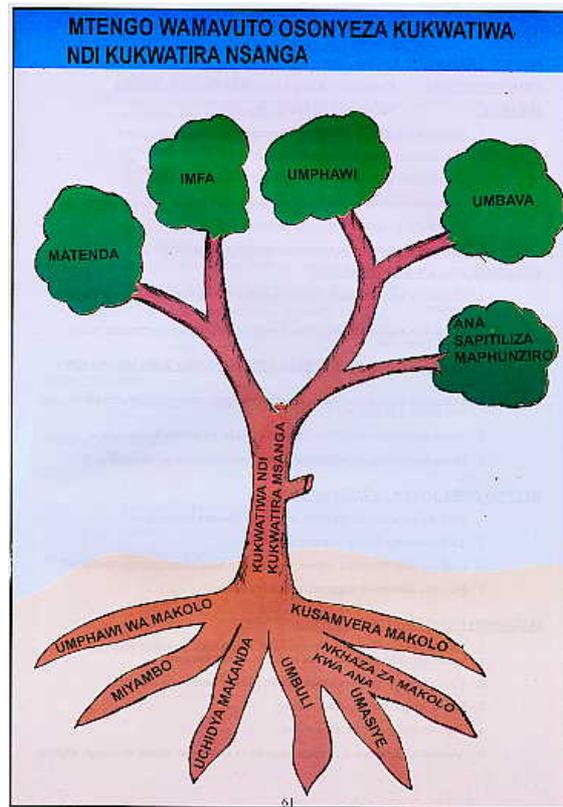
*Figure 5: An example of a graphic from the new facilitators' manual:
a 'problem tree' about causes and consequences of early marriages.*

According to records at the project office, it is taking between one to three months to finish a unit. The manual provides for six days to finish a unit. According to the plan of the manual, the learners are expected to take 120 days to complete it. Assuming they meet regularly, which is four days a week for two-hour sessions, it would translate to 30 weeks, which is less than 10 months. However, at the rate the learning process is going on, it would take probably even two to three years before the manual is fully covered. A visit to two circles in session only gave the evaluation team an opportunity to observe the teaching of literacy skills.

During the evaluation team's discussions about the REFLECT process with participants in the six circles, it was revealed that the graphics are not used as planned in the manual. According to the AFO, the educational background of facilitators (many have only finished Standard 8) means that many of them find the graphical methods difficult. Where graphics had been significantly used, the results were encouraging. During visits to some literacy circles, some circle members talked about how the whole village had participated in the graphic sessions and how this had helped them to identify problems affecting their village, from which action points had been developed. However, this process was also sometimes done with little or no involvement of the rest of the village members, resulting in no action points developed. It was also clear from the discussions with the facilitators and circle members, and from observations of the circle sessions, that there is generally more emphasis by the facilitators on teaching literacy skills, although this differs from circle to circle.

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In sum, the project has developed an excellent facilitator's manual, which has just been put into use. However, there are problems in using some of the methods proposed in the manual, especially the graphics and effective discussions. The timeframe proposed by the manual for each unit is unrealistic and should be treated as a mere guide. Thus, while the project has been somewhat effective in achieving the basic objective of improving the quality of instruction, some adjustments can be suggested to still enhance its effectiveness. Close attention needs to be paid to the training of facilitators in the basics of the graphic PRA-methods. This could be improved both at the initial training stage and through follow-up courses.

4.4   Objective III: Improved supervision and support

Here the relevant outputs include training courses and means of transport for CDAs, as well as office space. They also include the mobilisation of village populations and Village Heads and establishment of circle committees and their training to perform their roles. Effectiveness and efficiency are difficult to separate in a discussion of these issues, and the circle committees are discussed in more detail in the fifth chapter, together with some other aspects of support, supervision and reporting.

4.4.1   Improved training of CDAs

Appropriate training of the Community Development Assistants is a prerequisite to effective supervision. The CDAs who were initially assigned to the project were given Training of Trainers for two weeks, which was core training in REFLECT at the start of project activities. ActionAid provided this training. This was followed up with refresher courses each year. Of the three CDAs currently working on the project, one attended the core training in REFLECT for one week[12]. However, she and one of the other two current CDAs had prior exposure to PRA and REFLECT respectively before they were posted to the project. The other CDA did not have the core training in PRA. Some concerns were expressed by this CDA about the difficulties he encounters with the approach, since he neither attended the core training nor had experience in either PRA or REFLECT approaches.

All the CDAs have attended one refresher course for a period of five days. The course does not seem to have been sufficiently responsive to the needs of the CDAs. The project has depended on other organisations that have experimented with REFLECT, in particular ActionAid, in training the CDAs. At the time of the evaluation, no firm plans had been made for assisting the one CDA who lacks the specific training needed, although claims were made that he was given on-the-job training. A visit to literacy circles under his supervision revealed that the group does not adhere closely to the process of REFLECT approach. From the limited observation of the two circles in session and hearing experiences from the facilitators, the CDAs seem to be limited in effectively providing technical support when they supervise the circles.

The project has thus made great effort to provide training for the CDAs, but external risk factors have made their mark. Their training has not been as effective as planned because of the high turnover of CDAs. Also we have noted a certain need to make the refresher courses more responsive to the CDAs' individual needs, coming as they do into work with the REFLECT approach with quite different previous experiences.

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[12] The intention was for a full two-week training, but the CDA in question was brought in during this time to replace another CDA, who tragically died at the very time the course was being held.

4.4.2 Improved working conditions for CDAs

Mobility is the key to the CDAs' ability to carry out their supervisory work in a successful manner. One of the inputs from ICEIDA for the project was purchase and running expenses of motorcycles for the CDAs. Four motorcycles were purchased. One was involved in an accident but it was replaced in January 2004. Each of the CDAs, together with the ACDO, has a motorcycle for easy travel to supervise the literacy circles. All the CDAs were trained in motorcycle driving, and have obtained motorcycle driving licenses. This has ensured that all the circles are visited and circles have been opened in very remote villages that are not accessible by public transport. They are much better equipped than their colleagues in the NALP. ICEIDA issues MK4,000 (US$30) to each officer each month for fuel. There was no consensus on the adequacy of the fuel allocation. Some CDAs considered it insufficient, but the AFO felt this was adequate.

Even so, the evaluation team established that the visits of the CDAs to the literacy circles are not as regular as they should be, for a number of reasons. First, the CDAs have other duties besides the project activities. They are responsible for implementing the Ministry's programmes for gender, leadership training, and community construction projects, in addition to being general resource persons whenever needed for various NGOs operating in the area. The positive aspect is that they are better able to carry out these tasks because the motorcycles provide easy and quick transport, so that the Ministry's other programmes are benefiting indirectly from the project. Second, two of the three CDAs are not in good health and one of them cannot, for some time to come, drive a motorcycle. These are situations that are unavoidable and beyond any one person's control. The best that could be done is that the CDAs should try to cover each other's circles when one is not able to visit them due to uncontrollable reasons.

Supervision of literacy circles by CDAs is generally effective, but is subject to much variation. The CDAs try to visit the literacy circles approximately once a month. When something particular is going on, e.g. related to the guest speaker programme, they might visit more frequently, but visits can also be less frequent, e.g. when demand on their time from other duties is heavy. Supervision could also be further strengthened with more careful planning (e.g. monthly) by CDAs of their visits to the literacy circles. The CDAs need to plan their visits and provide the technical support to the facilitators regarding methodology and techniques.

4.4.3 The role of the Village Heads and communities

The involvement of Village Heads and communities has been effective, especially during the initial stages of the project when it needed to be accepted by the people. Thereafter their participation has varied. In most circles the Village Heads are very supportive and have played the role of encouraging participants to attend classes (Plate 4). In many circles the communities have participated in the guest speaker programme, the action points and the childcare services.

…

Also in regard to the basic objective of improving supervision and support, the project has made notable achievements. The necessary material conditions have been provided and training of CDAs has taken place, although various circumstances, partially beyond the project's control, have meant that more training is needed. Some of the issues surrounding supervision are further discussed in a subsequent chapter on efficiency.

Plate 4: Village headman Chigonere observing a literacy session.

4.5 Objective IV: Linking of literacy to socio-economic needs of learners

The REFLECT approach is a process that starts with the sensitisation of the communities through to training of the key players and conducting of the sessions. The approach centres on flexibility and learners' strategic needs, as discussed in other section in this report. It includes participatory rural appraisal methods for learning, such as graphics followed by analytical discussions, giving participants an opportunity to identify problems in their areas and act on them to solve them. The graphic and the discussion that follows are key elements for the participants, because they determine how the issue affects them and what decisions are taken about collective measures, or 'action points'. The outputs to achieve the fourth main objective of the project are the REFLECT materials, the action points and the guest speakers program. Some issues concerning the REFLECT approach have been discussed under Objective II.

4.5.1 REFLECT materials that address the needs of the learners

The choice of the REFLECT approach was the first step towards ensuring that the socio-economic needs of learners were incorporated. The project document recommended this approach/method for the project. It was chosen because it

> encourages and enables participants to critically assess their lives, take control of their future, enhances their literacy skills, generates a written vocabulary, which is relevant to their own community or situation, recognizes and builds upon their knowledge and mobilizes for individual and collective action (Tizora 2004)

The process for the production of the manual started with a 'needs assessment' in some villages in the Monkey Bay area. Experts in REFLECT (including a few officers from the MGCWCS, the project team) met for two weeks and they started with a field visit in the project area to determine the strategic needs of the potential learners and their physical

and socio-economic environment. The process also incorporated some facilitators. A follow-up workshop was organised in June 2003, at which the draft manual was pre-tested in 20 circles.

The discussion process is expected to focus on the needs, issues and possible solutions in order to change the learners' situation. The issues identified and incorporated in the manual are detailed in Table 4 below. It is important to note that the issues the learners are focusing on through the manual are similar to those being addressed in the MPRSP.

Table 4: Issues incorporated in the facilitators' manual

Unit	Topic covered	Type of graphic
1	Benefits of being literate	Map of a village showing houses with or without illiterate members
2	HIV/AIDS and sexually transmitted infections	Matrix of Sexually transmitted infections and HIV/AIDS
3	Care for Orphans	Problem tree on being an orphan
4	Environmental management	Matrix of short cuts in the village
5	Nutrition	Flow chart showing causes and effects of malnutrition
6	Alcohol and drug abuse	Charts showing effects of alcohol and drug abuse
7	Problems of employment	Flow chart showing shortage of employment
8	Good fishing practices	Matrix of types of fish
9	Population growth	Map showing number of houses
10	Hygiene	Map showing clean houses
11	Business management	Chart showing organisations that provide credit to rural areas
12	Democracy and human rights	Chart showing human rights organisations
13	Gender roles	Calendar of gender roles
14	Good leadership	Tree showing effects of good leadership
15	Early pregnancy and early marriages	Problem tree on results of early marriages
16	Saving	A Web chart showing sources of income and saving
17	Deceased estate	Wheel chart showing distribution of deceased estate
18	Domestic violence	Matrix showing victims of domestic violence
19	Malaria	Calendar of prevalence of Malaria in a year
20	Development	Chart showing institutions dealing with development

Source: ICEIDA 2003a

4.5.2 Action points

The most critical element of the REFLECT approach is that it promotes action to change and improve the environment of the learners. The learners, or the learners together with the village community, identify points of practical action, following discussions based on graphical PRA-like methods. In most circles it would seem that this process was intense at the beginning. The involvement of village community has varied. In some circles it is the committee that has taken the lead, for example with the construction of circle shelters with little or no involvement of the learners. In other circles, the learners, the committee members and the village community have worked together on action points such as the construction of feeder roads.

The types of action points identified have also varied. They include circle shelters, road and bridge construction, small scale businesses for women, moulding and burning bricks for school blocks (Plate 5), construction of a health centre and an orphan care project.

Plate 5: Bricks for new school classroom, made as part of an action point.

While the identification of action points has been prompt, their implementation has not been as effective. One of the problems mentioned was the need for material and financial support, which circles and community are not able to provide. Most action points are being undertaken with little help from or knowledge of Village Development Committees or sector-based village committees. External support for the action points, where it has been solicited, has in some instances been forthcoming. One facilitator reported that her circle managed to get support from Malaŵi Social Action Fund (MASAF), and another facilitator reported that his circle got support from Save the Children Federation USA in the form of implements. On the other hand, one circle that the evaluation team visited was failing to get support for roofing of their permanent shelter, despite having contacted their Ward Councillor. While some circles have been successful in sourcing support, when properly linked with other institutions such as the development committees and local leaders, the majority finds it extremely difficult to access external support. The major issue that needs to be addressed in relation to sourcing support for the action points is the need for the circles to link up with local

institutions and leaders. The CDAs should effectively play their other roles as change agents in facilitating the development of the linkages with the necessary institutions.

It was revealed to the evaluation team, through discussions with the District Commissioner for Mangochi, that there is a possibility of sourcing funds to support action points either through the Assembly or through the District Executive Committee that is chaired by the District Commissioner. However, the current District Commissioner had only been in this position for a short while and he acknowledged that he was not familiar with the ICEIDA-supported literacy project.

Another issue that has affected the action points component relates to the level of involvement of the learners in the whole process, from identification through to implementation. In some circles involvement of the learners has been minimal. For instance, with reference to the shelters for the circles, which are popular action points, in some places the circle committees have taken the lead in constructing them, sometimes these have been constructed without the participation of the learners. One would draw the conclusion that it is an assignment given to the circle committee members at the end of their training. While the involvement of the communities and circle committees is critical, learners need to be in the forefront.

4.5.3   Guest speakers

A guest speaker programme has been developed as part of the REFLECT approach to meet the needs of the learners as they arise during discussions, in accordance with the facilitator's manual. Officials from organisations such as the District Social Welfare Office, the Safe Motherhood project, human rights institutions, and the Departments of Forestry, Fisheries and Wildlife were invited to give talks to all the circle members on the issues in these fields as they affect the people of Monkey Bay area.

In the focus group discussions, the literacy participants told the evaluation team that the project office designed the programme without consulting them. The CDAs and the AFO only told them which organisation would be visiting them and when the visit would take place. The speakers' focus did not correspond to issues the participants were discussing in the circle sessions at the time of the visit.

Many participants recalled how the guest speakers' talks had opened their eyes to things they took for granted. The issues that the participants seemed to be most engaged by were safe motherhood and domestic violence. Many called for more information on these issues. These talks have so far been one-off activities and no follow-up visits or action plans have been made to facilitate the application of the information provided. However, there are plans to follow up the issue of domestic violence with further guest speaker activities this year, depending on the staff situation. Such a follow-up is necessary to sustain the enthusiasm of the learners and stimulate further action.

…

Our summary judgement is that good progress has been made towards achieving the basic objective of linking literacy to development needs, but that various obstacles have to be cleared and follow-up to activities provided before one can state confidently that the objective has been met. Many aspects of this objective in fact demand an ongoing attention beyond the three-year term of the current project, coupled with outside resources to greater or lesser extent.

4.6 Objective V: Development of post-literacy activities

The objective relates to the production, distribution of easy-to-read booklets for use by the circle participants and the village communities, including facilities that would promote easy access to the booklets.

4.6.1 Easy-to-read post-literacy materials

Twelve easy-to-read titles have been developed and distributed to all the REFLECT circles. One circle reported that they were able to source additional books from a primary school. Any member in the village has access to the books. All facilitators have been trained in the basic management of rural library centres. The National Library Services provided the training.

Some members in the circles visited were able to show the books they were reading. However, the general complaints were that most of the participants had not yet acquired enough literacy skills to be able to read the books. Even so, the presence of the books at the circle has been a motivation, as most participants said they working hard to acquire literacy skills to enable them to read the books.

4.6.2 Post-literacy facilities

The materials are kept by the facilitators and are stored in metal boxes that have been provided by the project. In one centre visited (Mdala Chikowa) participants are in the process of building a room for storage of the books (a rural library), but this is as a result of pressure from the facilitator, who feels the books are too much to be kept in her house. This is a development that the project needs to observe, as keeping the books with the facilitator may not be the best option.

…

The basic objective of developing post-literacy activities has been successfully achieved. It may however be appropriate for the project to produce more of the do-it-yourself kind of books, to promote the development of skills for improvement of the learners' situations. In the spirit of REFLECT, the learners themselves could be involved in the production of such material, which would both give an added weight to their participation in circle activities and lead to material which is appropriate and relevant to conditions in the Mangochi District.

4.7 Objective VI: Revision of NALP learning material

This objective intended to have the teaching and learning materials currently in use in NALP revised and updated. Revision of NALP materials has been a priority for NALP (Kamtengeni 2001). The activity was to start in 2003.

There has been no effort on the part of the Ministry to initiate the implementation process of this activity. No adequate explanations were forthcoming from the Ministry as to why such an important activity had not been implemented. The head of NALP was not aware that the project had such a provision. The ICEIDA Country Director, however, indicated that this objective was not seen to be necessary anymore, following the adoption of the REFLECT approach and production of REFLECT materials. The Ministry did not hold this view and it was clear that this decision had in any case not been clearly communicated to the Ministry. It was learned that NALP will continue to

use both the conventional functional literacy approach and REFLECT for some years to come, and therefore the revision of the NALP material should still be relevant.

The objective was therefore not achieved. This raises a question discussed further in the next chapter, of whether the current placement of the project in the Ministry under the two divisions of Gender and Community Development has sufficiently secured the interface with NALP activities. NALP is the focal point for all literacy activities and should therefore be directly involved in all the stages of a project of this nature – that is supposed to support it.

It should be noted here that the large UNDP-supported project mentioned earlier in the report does also include the revision of NALP material among its objectives. If ICEIDA's support will be extended, it may therefore be better to leave this activity out of the next phase, although experiences from the Monkey Bay project can no doubt be of value in the revision process. Efficient channels should be established for communication between these projects.

4.8   Cooperation with other agencies implementing REFLECT

ICEIDA is one of eleven agencies which are currently supporting and/or implementing REFLECT projects in Malaŵi. Apart from ICEIDA and the Ministry, these agencies include NGOs, religious organisations and local governments. Together they have created the Malaŵi REFLECT Forum (MAREFO) in order to co-ordinate activities relating to REFLECT and also set standards concerning REFLECT in Malaŵi, including reporting forms for effective supervision of circle activities. The AFO is the current chair of MAREFO. Through meetings and a Newsletter, the project staff is informed of the developments in this approach both locally and regionally.

In its early stages, the project relied on ActionAid for training of the CDAs and, as mentioned earlier in the report, also used a REFLECT facilitators' manual developed by ActionAid for a district with conditions in many ways similar to Monkey Bay.

With the much larger UNDP-sponsored project to support the NALP becoming operative, effective cooperation will become even more important to avoid the duplication of efforts between those agencies implementing that project's activities. The Monkey Bay project can play an important role here.

5 EFFICIENCY: PROJECT INPUTS AND OUTPUTS

The basic question to be asked in the evaluation of efficiency is whether the inputs provided have, in an economical manner, provided the outputs planned (Samset 1993; DANIDA 1999). Two issues will be considered here: The efficiency of resource use, and the efficiency of management systems, structures and styles.

5.1 Use of resources

The inputs into the project are presented in the project document as contributions by the Malaŵi government and ICEIDA (ICEIDA 2001b:2). On the Malaŵi side the contributions include the provision of extension workers, payment of their salaries and necessary allowances, providing institutional/administrative support at the district and Ministry levels and providing a building as an office for the project. Inputs from ICEIDA include salaries for key staff, motorcycles, payment of the instructors' honoraria, allowances for local staff working on the project, revision of the teaching and learning materials and development of post- literacy facilities.

5.1.1 Human resources

ICEIDA has one staff member, the AFO, working on the project full time, in addition to the Project Manager, who also has other responsibilities. On the side of the Malaŵi government, attempts were made to ensure that extension workers and other required officers were made available to the project.

Project Manager

This role is in the hands of ICEIDA's Lilongwe-based Programme Manager for Social Projects, which is a senior position in ICEIDA. This reflects the seriousness with which ICEIDA perceives the project, which is also obvious by the fact that ICEIDA's Country Director keeps a close eye on the project, both by taking an active part in the PMC and by her daily contact with the Project Manager. This enables the Country Director to provide advice when needed.

The Project Manager works hand in hand with the desk officers in the Ministry and supervises the AFO. She visits the project office in Monkey Bay frequently. The manager has been instrumental both at the Ministry and project levels in facilitating the provision of the necessary inputs from the ICEIDA side, as requested.

Administrative Field Officer

A full-time AFO for the project was recruited by ICEIDA in February 2002. He operates from the project office in Monkey Bay. According to his contract, in addition to administering the project on a day to day basis and being the sole manager of project resources, he is also expected to supervise the extension workers posted to this project. He is therefore the bona fide team leader at the project office and in fact the only person from both the Malaŵi Government and ICEIDA who works on the project full time. Due to the fact that the CDAs have other responsibilities and technically are also supervised by the District Community Development Office, the AFO does not have full control over their activities.

The AFO was one of the first CDAs on the project and therefore his training relates to extension work. The additional training he has is a one-year diploma in development studies. This included project planning and management, and some – albeit limited –

training in financial management for project implementation. Further training in management and administration is planned next year.

Desk Officers

The project was expected to have a designated desk officer at the Ministry level. Although the desk officer is mentioned only in relation to the Project Management Committee, this is a key position in as far as the project efficiency is concerned. The Ministry designated a Gender Programme Officer (Nutrition) in the Department of Gender Affairs as the desk officer. In an attempt to bring the project into an appropriate location in the Ministry, a Community Development Officer from the Department of Community Development, under which the NALP is placed, was designated as deputy desk officer. These positions have been useful in providing linkages between the project, the Ministry and ICEIDA.

Some concerns have been expressed about the level of Ministry officials assigned to the project, who by virtue of their positions may not be able to make decisions. They are desk officers who are located in interim positions in the civil service and not at a similar level as ICEIDA's Project Manager. The result is a somewhat unbalanced management structure which, in the view of the evaluation team, does not lead to efficient decision making on the Ministry side. In addition, the designation of the ICEIDA Programme Manager as the Project Manager, with the Ministry only providing desk officers, contributes to the perception that the project is an ICEIDA project and not one that belongs to the Malaŵi Government.[13] These arrangements thus have repercussions for the ownership of and commitment to the project.

A imminent reorganisation of departments within the Ministry may go some way toward solving the problem of management. According to information from the Ministry, the subject of nutrition (the Food Utilisation and Dietary Diversification programme) is to be moved back under the Department of Community Development.

Extension workers

At the inception of the project, two CDAs who were already at Monkey Bay were assigned to the project and stationed at the project office. On request by the project, a third CDA was also posted to the project office. However the project has suffered from high turnover. Of the two original CDAs, one was promoted to the post of Assistant Community Development Officer, and the other was appointed as the Administrative Field Officer. These were replaced by two CDAs who were posted to Monkey Bay from other locations. However, in 2003 two CDAs died within a period of few months. Once again these have since been replaced. While the retention of the promoted people on the project has ensured some continuity, the implementation of project activities has thus suffered from high staff turnover. Those CDAs who currently work for the project are committed people, but two of them have only been on the job for less than a year.

The project document does not specify whether the CDAs are expected to be 100% available to the project. They have always been available and have carried out the project activities expected of them. In addition, an officer of a higher grade (the CDA who was promoted to ACDO) has been made available to the project although such services were not initially found needed. The Ministry has therefore provided more staff than planned

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[13] It may be noted here that in the large UNDP-supported project referred to earlier in the report, the Ministry's counterpart is from a higher management level. The Project Manager reports to the Ministry and not to UNDP and, although the salary is paid by UNDP, is not part of the UNDP structure. One should also, however, keep in mind the difference in the size of these two projects, the UNDP-supported one operating with much bigger funding and more extensive geographical coverage.

and paid their salaries on time, although these extension workers do not spend all their time on work for the project.

5.1.2 Financial resources

The original budget for the project was US$718,800 (ICEIDA 2001b:24). ICEIDA was supposed to contribute US$682,300[14] and the Malaŵi government US$36,500 in kind (salaries of CDAs, institutional support and allowances), over a period of three years. Overall, this has held up fairly well. At the end of August 2004, the total expenditure of ICEIDA on the project stood at US$682,636 which is almost the exact figure of the skeleton budget. This includes expenditures in both Iceland (salaries, insurance, travel costs etc.) and in Malaŵi.

Project expenditures have gradually increased through time (Figure 6). This corresponds to the increase in project activities and the number of literacy circles operating.

Figure 6:   Total expenditures on the project by ICEIDA over the project period (Source: Data from ICEIDA Country Manager)
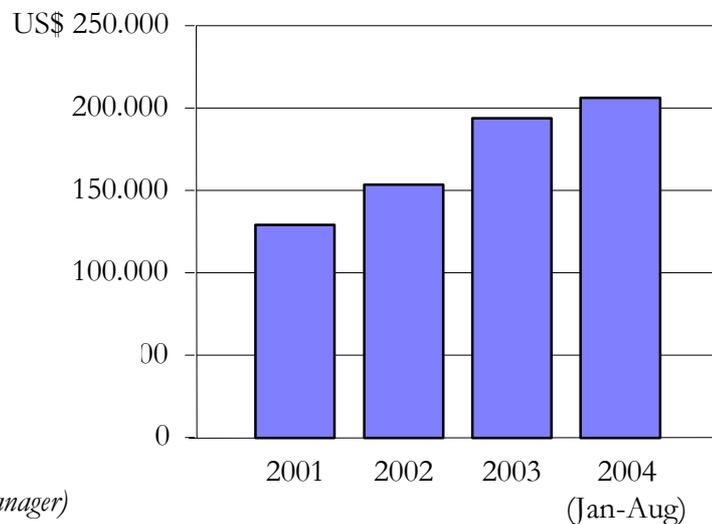
In the project document, expenditures were grouped into four main categories (Figure 7). Over two-thirds of the original budget was supposed to be spent on "human resources", including the salaries of all those working on the project as well as the cost of outside consultancies. In operational costs were included the running costs of motorcycles, daily office costs, and production of learning materials. Only 56,000 US$ were allocated to meetings and training, but this has been a very substantial part of project activities.

Figure 7:   Main categories of expenditure in the skeleton budget (Source: ICEIDA 2001b:24)

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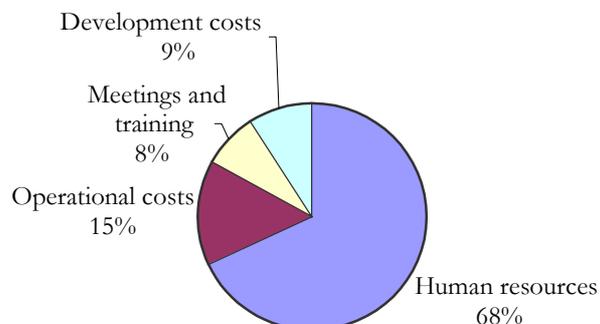
[14] This figure includes expenditures in both Iceland and Malaŵi.

Finally, under the category "development costs" the skeleton budget lists the purchase of motorcycles and other materials. The evaluation team did not ask for an itemised list of expenditures, and it was not technically possible to get the summed figures for each of the categories budgeted for, but given the fact that the overall expenditures were not exceeded, the original budget seems to have been sensibly prepared and realistic.

Some adjustments have been made. Most notably, ICEIDA has paid allowances for those staff from the government side which have attended meetings and training. This includes meetings of the Project Management Committee and Project Implementation Team. The issue is further discussed below.

Financial management procedures

Management of project finances is relatively simple. The AFO and the Project Manager together prepare a working budget, which is based on the annual activity plans made by the PIT and approved by the PMC. The budget is presented to the Country Director and then to ICEIDA headquarters in Iceland for approval. The counterparts in the Ministry are also consulted. Day-to-day financial responsibility in the running of the project rests jointly with the Project Manager and the AFO. The Project Manager checks invoices paid by the AFO, and these are also cross-checked by the Country Director. Normal auditing procedures of the Ministry of Finance in Iceland apply from then on.

Money is then gradually released to the AFO as needed to pay for various goods and services. ICEIDA staff travel frequently between Monkey Bay and Lilongwe and the cash disbursements are therefore relatively frequent but small. Some purchases are paid directly by the office in Lilongwe. Financial transactions at the project site include the payment of honoraria to facilitators, of allowances, and paying for goods and services in general for the project. All local payments are made in cash, as there are no banking services in Monkey Bay and few local people have bank accounts. The project does not have a bank account in Mangochi, due both to the distance of 60 km and the risk of delayed transactions, e.g. when clearing cheques. The AFO has access to a security box of another project in Monkey Bay, but all ICEIDA projects there are in the same situation in this regard.

This way of operating is fast and non-bureaucratic, albeit somewhat unconventional and based on a great deal of personal trust. It is more usual in management practice to separate the functions of administration and financial management. Having a separate financial manager or accounts assistant has been discussed, but this was not deemed warranted due to the small size of the project. If the project is extended and expanded, this will become necessary. Channelling payments e.g. to village facilitators through the established government channels would in all likelihood result in some delays, due to the much longer and more formal system through which the payments would have to be made. This would not be conducive to maintaining local commitment and enthusiasm. The issue is presumably common to other parts of the NALP programme and workable solutions have to be found in the longer term. In the meantime, having a qualified accounts assistant would result in increased transparency without sacrificing speed and simplicity.

Meeting financial obligations

The Ministry is responsible for payment of salaries of the extension workers and allowances of the Ministry's staff on field visits on the project. The Ministry has duly paid the salaries. However the allowances and transport expenses of the Ministry staff at all levels who have worked on the project (attending project meetings and doing supervisory work) have been paid from the ICEIDA budget line. The payment of such allowances has been in accordance with ICEIDA's rules, which are based on a simplified form of

the Malaŵi government regulations. At times, the decision whether to pay allowances or not has been taken by the AFO, e.g. regarding lunch allowances for CDAs.

ICEIDA has made its contributions and has even bailed out the government when need has arisen. Flexibility in financing requests outside the budget has been a positive characteristic of ICEIDA.

5.1.3 Project equipment and office space

The purchase of four motorcycles for the project has already been discussed. In addition to this, the AFO has since early in 2004 also had the use of a seven-seater vehicle owned by ICEIDA, previously used by the former Project Co-ordinator. This has further enhanced mobility and is particularly valuable for instance for the guest speaker component of the literacy circle activities. The AFO is responsible for the management, including maintenance, of the vehicles. This is paid for by ICEIDA and has been fully adequate. The project staff are thus well provided for as far as transport is concerned, which is an important prerequisite for efficient implementation.

ICEIDA has responded to the need for efficient information processing and communication by providing three used computers; one for the AFO and the other two for the CDAs. Only one of these (that of the AFO) was fully functional, however, during the visit of the evaluation team. The office is connected to e-mail services. Some of the CDAs, but not all of them (due largely to the high turnover of CDAs), have received appropriate training in computing skills, paid for by ICEIDA. A scanner was also purchased for the office but it is yet to be made operational. All necessary office stationery, as well as telephone expenses, are paid by the project. The project office is therefore well equipped for the staff to carry out their duties efficiently, although the maintenance of the computers and further training of staff need ongoing attention.

Provision of office space is the responsibility of the Ministry. The Monkey Bay project office is located in a building owned by the Regional Buildings Office of the Ministry of Transport and Public Works. ICEIDA provided funds for necessary repairs. There are two offices, one for the AFO and the other one for the ACDO and the CDAs. One larger room is used for meetings and training. This room is also used for storage of the project motorcycles. Appropriate furniture for the offices and the training room was purchased through the project funds. There is therefore adequate office space and furniture for the project staff.

5.2 Management structures and systems

Effective management of a project is only possible if the management process and structure is well thought out, clearly defined and provided for. The project document provided for a Project Management Committee and Project Implementation Team, both of which were duly set up.

5.2.1 The Project Management Committee

The Project Management Committee (PMC) had its first meeting in July 2002. According to the project document, it is supposed to be comprised of the Principal Secretary in the Ministry, the ICEIDA Programme Manager (since 2002 called Country Director) in Malaŵi, the Deputy Director of the Community Development Division of the Ministry, the Director of NALP and the Ministry's desk officer of the project. The document clearly defines the functions of the committee. It allocates the overall responsibility of the project to the PMC, in addition to its function in reviewing the status and progress of

the project and approval of project plans and budgets. The committee is scheduled to meet twice a year (ICEIDA 2001b:21).

Five meetings were held during the three-year period of the project, all of them at the Ministry Headquarters in Lilongwe. The Project Implementation Team, which is discussed in the next section, prepares the agenda of the PMC meetings and provides the necessary reports. The agenda has included reviewing the progress of the project, providing general guidance and sometimes approving the annual work plans of the project. One aspect which might be further strengthened is the review of the project's annual budgets. ICEIDA's Country Director presented a summary of the past year's expenditures at one of the biannual PMC meetings[15] but, judging from the minutes from these meetings, the committee does not review the budget in any depth or formally approve the expenditures. Other than that, the PMC has made many constructive suggestions to the implementation team and has served an important role for information exchange between the project partners.

Participation in the PMC has been somewhat variable, especially from the Ministry's top management, while the number of officers attending the meetings from the Ministry's side has increased over the years. The most senior person available has always chaired the meeting. There has been a change of Principal Secretaries in the Civil Service and the person currently holding the office had only been about two months in the Ministry at the time of the evaluation. ICEIDA's Country Director has attended all PMC meetings.

5.2.2 The Project Implementation Team

The Project Implementation Team (PIT) is responsible for the day-to-day implementation of the project and has the power to adjust the activities, inputs and budgets to realize project objectives. The team consists of the ICEIDA Programme Manager for Social Projects as leader, the Administrative Field Officer, the District Community Development Officer for Mangochi and the Community Development Assistants working on the project. The Ministry's desk officers, and on one occasion the Regional Officer, have also attended PIT meetings. It is prescribed to meet every quarter.

Records were made available for three meetings in 2002, three meetings in 2003 and one meeting in 2004 showing that it has, insofar as possible, met regularly albeit not four times a year as recommended in the project document. All meetings took place in the Monkey Bay. The PIT has been instrumental in ensuring that the PMC meets and it provides all the necessary information for discussion. It has resolved various issues affecting the project and provided the needed leadership for project implementation. There has been good liaison between the PMC and the PIT.

The presence of ICEIDA on the PIT is strong, indicating the agency's commitment to the project. The ICEIDA Programme Manager for Social Projects (the Project Manager) is a senior position, which is not matched with the presence of a senior person from the Ministry. A more active involvement of the District Office (the DCDO and ACDO), with the DCDO designated as the leader of the team, would be beneficial. The AFO could adequately represent ICEIDA at this level, while the Programme Manager would provide supervisory services to the AFO who reports to her. This is discussed further in section 5.2.5 below.

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[15] In fact this has only once been done, in 2003 (expenditures from 2002), but as the first PMC meeting in 2004 was held in January, the figures for 2003 were not available yet. It should be noted that preliminary summaries of expenditures are presented in ICEIDA's Biannual Reports, which are distributed to the project team.

5.2.3 The literacy circle committees

Although the project document does not provide for the establishment of specific circle committees, they have been found to be indispensable for the activities of the project at the village level. Every circle therefore has such a committee overseeing and assisting with its work. Committee members could be considered to be volunteers, as they are not paid anything for the job they do except during training, when they are given upkeep allowances. This seems to provide enough motivation and they are a committed group.

Appointment and duties

A committee is elected through an open vote at a village forum. It consists of ten members; usually five men and five women. Many committees have learners among their members. The main duty of the committee is day-to-day management of the literacy circle.

Judging from the focus group interviews, most members of the circle committees take their responsibilities seriously. They consider it an honour to serve on the committees and thus to be able to contribute to village development activities. There is, however, a wide variety of involvement and support which the committees give to the literacy learners. Those who perform best keep a close eye on the activities at the literacy circles. The members see it as their role to visit the REFLECT classes and see what is happening. Some have a duty roster to ensure that there is always a committee member present during any circle session. They monitor attendance and try to solve problems which learners may have. They also liaise with the Village Head if needed and consult other village committees.

Other committees are much less active. In some cases the learners and the committee members did not agree on the level of involvement. The learners complained of indifference by the committee. Likewise, there is a wide range in terms of support and encouragement that the committee members receive from the Village Head or the village community at large. Some committees do not actively involve either the Village Head or the Village Development Committee, especially in the implementation of action points. On the other hand, some committees have to all intents and purposes taken over the work of the Village Development Committees where such committees are not functional.

Training

According to reports made available, one-week courses were conducted for village committees in an effort to ensure that the REFLECT approach was generally understood. Refresher courses have also been conducted for all the members except those trained in 2004. This activity was not planned for, but was considered vital for the effective introduction of the approach. The content of the training is considered highly relevant. It opens the eyes of committee members to issues they have not thought of before, and makes them aware of their roles and responsibilities in the committee. Some expressed concern, however, that the topics covered were so many and varied that the training became a little disjointed. They suggested that tackling one issue in more depth in a day (e.g. HIV/AIDS; gender), before turning to the next one, would make the training more thorough and effective.

The literacy committee, as a management tool at the circle level, is indispensable. Well-planned training that focuses on the functions of the committee and provides better understanding of the REFLECT approach should continue to be provided.

5.2.4 The Project Office

The day-to-day management and administration of the project activities at the Monkey Bay office is in the hands of ICEIDA's Administrative Field Officer (AFO). His duties include general office administration and purchase and safe keeping of ICEIDA properties relating to the project. He also sits on the Project Implementation Team and works closely with the Project Manager in Lilongwe, who visits the project office at least once a month and is actively involved in many aspects of management. The AFO is supposed to supervise the CDAs in their implementation of the project.

On the government side, there is an Assistant Community Development Officer (ACDO) at the project office, who is working on the project although she is not officially designated to do so. She has done a commendable job and provided on-the-spot supervisory services to the CDAs by virtue of her seniority to the CDAs, and in accordance with government structure. Technically therefore the AFO and the ACDO together supervise the CDAs. The ACDO was in fact the original CDA on the project, but was later promoted to this level and has not been posted away, presumably due to the fact that she is married to the AFO. The training that was invested in her through the project has therefore not been lost, as the project continues to use her services. Ordinarily she should however have been operating from the District Office, as there is no provision for such a position at the project office. This unclear state of affairs has also contributed to inefficient relations between the project office and the DCDO.

This arrangement also seems to cause some problems at the project office itself. The AFO has no control over the CDAs as they are employed by the Ministry and naturally their loyalty is to their employer first and foremost. Although, according to his contract of employment with ICEIDA, the AFO is meant to supervise the CDAs in their work for the project, this arrangement is not to the advantage of the project. As the AFO is employed by ICEIDA but the CDAs by the Ministry, he does not have a *de jure* capacity to tell them how to organise their time. That role rests with the ACDO, who works for the Ministry, occupying an office together with the CDAs next door to the AFO's office. As noted earlier, the CDAs have other tasks to fulfil besides working for the ICEIDA project. Simply put, the CDAs on this project have two masters. This situation has disrupted communication flows and caused unnecessary confusion and stress, to the disadvantage of the project.

Another complication needs to be mentioned: The people currently filling these important management positions at the project office are a married couple. This makes for still more uneasy relationships between the CDAs, the ACDO and the AFO. It has negative implications for the team spirit which is so necessary for a project of this nature.

The style of management at the office did not seem to promote a team spirit among the team members. Some concerns were expressed about the lack of regular management meetings at the project office for the CDAs, ACDO and the AFO. Only issue-based meetings are held when need arises. As a result, the CDAs do not always receive feedback on important issues. Instructions tend to be issued down to the junior officers from the AFO. A two-way communication process needs to be ensured at the project office.

5.2.5 The role of District Community Development Office staff

The project document states that the DCDO is to be a member of the PIT. Ordinarily, a DCDO is responsible for all community development staff under the Ministry who are operating in the district. The DCDO, at a PMC meeting in January 2003, confirmed this supervisory role with regard to the project's activities and that this is done through the CDAs placed at the project office. The DCDO has been participating in project

activities, such as training and assessment of the learners. It seems there were no clear instructions initially as to how the CDAs placed with this project and the DCDO were going to operate. There is a literacy desk officer at the District Office, but the involvement of this officer in project activities appears minimal.

The District Office seems to be a weak link in the management structure. It would seem there are no clear instructions on how the CDAs posted to this project and the DCDO were going to operate. The supervisory responsibility has not been delegated to the ACDO stationed at the project office, despite the valuable work she is doing. This came out strongly during the consultations. ICEIDA's Country Director has indeed complained of a "lack of seriousness" by district officers (PMC meeting 20 October 2003). This was mainly due to the designation of a person of almost the same level as the extension workers stationed at the project office. A newly appointed District Community Development Officer, who is more senior, is expected to show her commitment in due course, but this is an area which needs immediate attention[16]. To confound this problem, personal working relations between the ACDO stationed in Monkey Bay and the DCDO in Mangochi have not been good. The role of the ACDO is moreover not clearly defined, as mentioned before.

One possible way forward would be to put more resources into capacity building at the District Office level in order to enable this office to take on a more central role in project implementation. Such increased responsibility of the District Office would also be in tune with the move towards decentralisation currently underway in Malaŵi. If the project is to be extended, ICEIDA could consider supporting the institutional strengthening needed, with training and equipment[17]. This would also make the participation of the Regional Office partly or wholly unnecessary, but according to current government structures that office does have a supervisory role. According to the decentralization policy, which the Ministry is beginning to implement, regional structures are being dissolved and emphasis is on strengthening the District Assemblies. The Regional Office is ill-placed to provide advice, however, located as it is in Blantyre. A simpler and more efficient management structure could thus be achieved by strengthening the District Community Development Office.

5.2.6   Supervision and reporting by the CDAs

An elaborate yet functional system of supervision has been set up in the project. Some aspects of it have been discussed in an earlier section of this report. We will concentrate here on several aspects of efficiency regarding the most fundamental step: the supervision of village activities by the CDAs. The CDAs are in turn supervised by the ACDO, who is based at the project office. We also separately discuss the efficiency of reporting, in which the CDAs again play a key role.

Supervision of literacy activities

Each CDA is responsible for the supervision of a group of literacy circles in a specific area. At the beginning of the project the CDAs were not assigned to any specific geographical area, but this proved to be inefficient and was thus changed. The basic supervisory setup is now quite satisfactory in our view. Even so, several aspects can be improved. The CDAs do not, for example, make individual plans for visiting the literacy circles each month or quarter. Judging from admittedly limited observations of only two

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[16] Unfortunately the evaluation team was unable to speak with the DCDO on this issue, as it turned out that the she had another meeting to attend at the same time the team visited District headquarters in Mangochi.

[17] ICEIDA has already provided some limited support to the District Office in Mangochi, for instance by donating a computer.

literacy sessions, the evaluation team is of the view that the CDAs' visits are not used as efficiently as they could be. Rather limited attempt is made to provide on-the-spot technical assistance and demand-responsive training to the facilitators, so that they fully embrace the REFLECT approach. Apart from the reporting forms, which are discussed during the monthly facilitators' meetings, there are no checklists to guide the CDAs when they go on supervisory visits.

The CDAs combine project work with other functions attached to their positions, such as supervising various community-based projects, conducting leadership training and organising economic empowerment activities. They are also called upon by other development agencies to assist them in their development work. In interviews with the evaluation team, the CDAs expressed their concern with how their energies are scattered by the many and varied demands on their time. The same concern was expressed by the AFO, who cannot be sure that the CDAs will be available when the project activities need them.

To ensure that the CDAs do not face hardships when they go on supervisory visits out of Monkey Bay town, the project pays them a 'lunch allowance' of MK550 for each day. At the time of the evaluation team's visit, the allowance had been suspended, as it was felt that supervision was part of the CDAs' normal duties. The decision was, however, not clearly communicated to the CDAs, who felt the AFO had the mandate to decide at will when to pay the allowances. The effect of the suspension was not easy to assess but the team detected some concerns from the CDAs. These payments have now been resumed, in accordance with instructions from ICEIDA's head office in Lilongwe. Indeed, at a PIT meeting in 2002 these allowances had also been discussed. The matter needs to be handled sensitively by those responsible for daily financial management, and above all transparently in order to prevent misunderstandings or misinterpretations.

All in all, despite these weak points, the structure for supervision is generally sound and probably plays a large part in the much better retention of facilitators in this project than in the general NALP. Apart from field visits by CDAs, the facilitators know that they can turn to the project office in Monkey Bay for advise. The monthly meetings at the project office are also vitally important. Supervision can still be made more efficient in various ways, for instance by developing guidelines for the field visits of the CDAs.

Improved reporting system

Standardized monitoring and reporting forms (developed by the Malaŵi REFLECT Forum – MAREFO, and sponsored by ICEIDA) were adopted early in 2004. These include a Facilitators Monthly Report Form, Supervisor's Monthly Report and District Reflect Monthly Report. The reports are detailed, but simple to use and should provide a good record of attendance, dropouts, material covered, action points and other basic indicators of circle activity. There is also space for qualitative comments regarding the state of activities. The CDAs compile the information from the facilitators and pass it on to the ACDO, who in turn compiles it into one report which is passed on to the Regional Office in Blantyre through the DCDO and thence supposedly to the Ministry Headquarters in Lilongwe. However, the ACDO complained that the DCDO, Regional Office or Headquarters never acknowledged the receipt of these reports. Ministry officials and the DCDO likewise complained of not receiving the reports through the correct channels, but only from the ICEIDA office in Lilongwe, which gets its reports from the AFO. A change of the reporting channels was recently instigated, so that the ACDO now sends copy of the monthly reports directly to Headquarters. The reporting forms are thus fully adequate, but the delivery of reports though their intended channels on the government side may need to be firmed up.

5.3   A summary assessment of efficiency

To summarise, a great degree of efficiency in project implementation has been achieved. Adequate financial resources have been provided by ICEIDA, to the extent that where government was not able to fulfill its obligations, ICEIDA budget has been flexible enough to bail it out. The budget was responsive to emerging needs. Both government and ICEIDA have provided adequate personnel to implement the project and provided the necessary resources to facilitate project implementation. Management structures and systems have been put in place and are working. Fine-tuning of these is nonetheless still possible in order to make them more efficient.

6   IMPACT OF PROJECT ACTIVITIES

The concept of impact in project evaluation covers a broad range of consequences which the project has brought with it – both positive and negative; planned and unplanned (Samset 1993; DANIDA 1999). Many issues relating to impact have already been covered, especially in the chapter on efficiency. We will here attempt to highlight the impacts the project has had on three levels: on the learners attending classes; on other members of the village community; and finally we will look at the impact on institutions. As the actual measurement of impact was beyond the resources and timeframe of the evaluation team, the discussion is inevitably going to be somewhat impressionistic.

6.1   Literacy learners

6.1.1   Basic literacy skills

The impact of the literacy component of the project would ideally be judged by reference to how many have passed a literacy test. However, only one assessment test has been administered to assess the levels of literacy skills gained, which is too limited to draw firm conclusions. This test was done in circles that had been operating for about one year. Of those who took it, 59% qualified, which has to be seen as a satisfactory result. More than half of those who were expected to take the assessment test did not do so.

In fact, most learners who participated in the focus group discussions stated that they would very much like to undergo a test of their skills and get a formal certificate. They feel this is necessary for themselves to get a confirmation of their achievement. This is an issue which should receive more attention in the future, even if the REFLECT method puts at least equal emphasis on practical action as on literacy learning *per se.*

Literacy skills acquired by learners are indeed variable, depending on sundry personal and situational factors. The evaluation team observed sessions at two literacy circles. One of these circles (Chigonere II) had been established since May 2002, whereas the other only started in May 2004. Yet in both we observed learners with a wide variety of skills. Some appeared to have acquired very good skills in reading, writing and arithmetic, whereas others had great difficulties writing words from the blackboard or even writing their own names. Many stated that they found arithmetic particularly difficult.

Of course, many things can distract from effective learning, apart from personal abilities. One very obvious distraction was the presence, especially in one of these circles, of numerous toddlers and children, who in some cases needed nearly constant attention by their mothers (Plate 6).

In the focus group discussions, learners were asked what they considered to be the most important benefits associated with their participation in the circles. Many mentioned the importance of being able to assist children with school homework had made a difference. Being able to read various signs was a much appreciated benefit. Also being able to sign one's name at the health centre and other service facilities was a major personal achievement for many. Some mentioned that they had become able to read letters and various documents in the home. They could now assess their importance and avoid throwing away important papers. Moreover, some mentioned that their literacy skills had enabled them to undertake income-generating activities, such as market trading, with some confidence. They were now, for instance, able to give accurate change if a customer paid with a large note. Finally, learners in several circles appreciated their newfound ability to read religious text – the Bible or the Quran – and make their own

judgement about the message, rather than having to rely solely on others to interpret these texts for them.

In sum, the impact of literacy activities *per se* has been positive, but most learners realise that they need more to get to a level of adequate and sustained skills.

Plate 6: From a literacy session at Kamwetsa.

6.1.2 Empowerment

Empowerment is a long-term process of qualitative change, which needs a different methodology – e.g. long-term observation and/or in-depth personal interviewing – to be evaluated fully. Judging from our fleeting observations, the process of empowerment has started. Many participants now say they better realise the need for individual or collective action to improve their own situation. They are, for instance, able to contribute to the work of various village committees.

The impact from the project on the social environment of the learners has also been positive. The members of one circle (Mbeya) stated that they now provide social support for each other and have even established a small fund, to which circle members contribute, and which can be used, f.ex. for medicine if suddenly needed.

In some cases, the learners felt that they need somewhat more knowledge and training in order to really be able to practice the skills which the project has brought them. They were first and foremost thinking of income-generating activities / small

businesses. This opinion was not offered as a criticism of the project activities so far, but rather as an exhortation to follow it up properly.

Even if the focus of our consultations was on literacy learners, many of the project activities (e.g. guest speakers, action points) are not limited to them, but attempt to involve villagers in general. We will therefore now discuss in terms of the wider village community several fields of impact related to empowerment.

6.2   Villagers in general

6.2.1   Awareness-raising

Awareness of various important social and environmental issues has increased in the villages. This is mostly due to the guest speaker component of the project, but not because of discussions within the circles. Among those issues are human rights, gender relations, domestic violence, drug and alcohol abuse, HIV/AIDS, health and sanitation; overfishing and deforestation.

Regarding domestic violence for instance, several women of those we consulted said that now they were aware that this was not simply a normal and acceptable fact of married life. They said they knew how and where to take the matter further if needed, in order to prevent it from happening in the future. Interestingly, several men among those consulted – who served on the literacy circle committees but had wives attending literacy classes – mentioned how they were now better able to reason with their wives about various matters. Thus, the project appears to have brought a real positive impact in that very important sphere of domestic life which is gender relations. However, this is rather limited and anecdotal evidence and it takes much more than this, of course, to achieve a lasting social change.

Apparently, great demand exists in the villages for more practical information relating to home management. This subject was mentioned in nearly every village we visited. Some of the women we talked to told us that the project had already resulted in an improved home environment and management, even if means were limited. This included, for instance, hygiene and the handling of food. Much more information was desired, also about other aspects of home care and crafts, such as sewing and knitting.

6.2.2   Action points

The project has led to decisions by most communities to undertake certain actions to improve their conditions – the 'action point' part of the REFLECT method. Those action points already embarked upon are small in scale and most relate to physical structures, such as literacy shelters, feeder roads, bridges and school classrooms. Few have been finished so far and some of the bigger ones need resources from the outside. In fact, initiating such projects without having a clear means of finishing them can lead to disillusionment in the villages. This is therefore something which needs to be attended to in a possible extension of the project.

6.2.3   Other development activities

The literacy circles and/or circle committees have in some cases provided a platform for other development activities where other platforms, e.g. Village Development Committees, have been inactive.

6.3   Institutions

While the ICEIDA-supported project in Monkey Bay is both a small project and also only one of several in Malaŵi that utilise the REFLECT approach, it is well known by those concerned with adult literacy and community development and seems to have had some impact on other agencies, both governmental ones and NGOs. REFLECT is now the preferred approach in most literacy projects in the country. The approach has up until now been largely associated with NGOs, which often have implemented it without much consultation or cooperation with government institutions. There is now increasing recognition of the merits of the approach within government circles. One of the CDAs working with the project stated the opinion that the REFLECT approach was very promising: *"If this was carried out as it should be, it would change things."* CDAs are generally trained in a different mode of delivering their extension services.

The experience with REFLECT through this project seems to have given the Ministry confidence to engage in a larger and more comprehensive project of a similar nature. This is the UNDP supported project mentioned earlier in this report, which is to be implemented in the context of the Malaŵi Poverty Reduction Strategy. The UNDP supported project has a proposed budget of US$3 million over a three-year period.

6.4   A summary evaluation of impacts

In general, the impacts of the project have been positive, and largely along the lines foreseen at the design stage. These impacts have been limited however by the short timeframe of three years. Negative impacts were not observed by the evaluation team.

7 SUSTAINABILITY OF PROJECT BENEFITS AND ACTIVITIES

Two issues were considered when assessing the sustainability of the project. The first issue relates to the sustainability of the knowledge and skills acquired by the participants and the communities. The second issue relates to operations of the circles and the action points. The overarching question the evaluation team had to answer was: Will these continue when and if ICEIDA support is pulled out?

7.1 Literacy skills

It is difficult to say that even those who have passed the one test which has been administered have acquired permanent literacy skills. Some of those who took the test referred to in the previous chapter, and passed it, are still attending the circles. As one of these learners explained: *"I still find it difficult to read and write. I should not cheat here – I find it difficult to combine syllables to make new words, although I passed the examination."* Most of the learners who have been on the programme for one to two years seem to have difficulties to write even their own names. Most of them said they could not yet read the post-literacy materials. It will therefore require more time – in all likelihood even some years – before the learners achieve permanent literacy. If the project does not support the learners to achieve substantial and solid skills, and gets them to a stage where their literacy is of practical value to their daily lives, the skills are likely to be lost after a few years. Literacy is best maintained with constant usage, which again has to come from a close interweaving of the skills into everyday activities.

7.2 Knowledge and awareness

Awareness of the participants, as well as of many other members of the village communities, has been raised, about issues that affect them in their day to day lives, and some limited knowledge given to them. Mostly this has happened through the guest speaker programme. This awareness has not yet been followed up with more in-depth information to sustain the enthusiasm and generate a momentum that could lead to action. At the time of the evaluation, the team sometimes had to remind the people of the guest speakers that had visited them. Some participants had already largely forgotten about the guest speakers and, given a few more months, the knowledge will have been largely lost. Although claims were made by some participants that they were now using the information such as construction of latrines, using family planning methods, and talking to their husbands on issues of domestic violence, further probing revealed that this may not be the reality. Some circles indicated that they wanted the speakers to come back and talk to them further.

Hence, the knowledge and awareness gained through the guest speaker programme so far would in all likelihood not be sustained were the project to cease its activities now. If it is decided to carry out another phase of the project, attention should be paid to the way in which initial awareness-raising is to be followed up with more in-depth information and linked to action points.

7.3 Institutional structures

Management structures have been created, such as the PMC and the PIT, which have contributed towards efficient management of the project. The literacy committees have also provided on-the-spot supervision of literacy circles. Their continued operation when ICEIDA support is withdrawn is not certain, however. It is unlikely, give the current economic situation, that the Malaŵi government will or can sustain the operations of these institutional structures, as ICEIDA has been paying most of the costs involved. Even if an already existing government structure – the CDAs – is at the heart of the activities, their effective service delivery has until now been very much dependent upon the support by ICEIDA.

There is indeed a worrying perception at all levels, including senior officers as well as literacy participants, that the project belongs to ICEIDA. We have already noted the strong presence of ICEIDA on the PIT. It is a fact that government structures, including the counterpart Ministry, are underresourced financially. This certainly limits the Ministry's capacity to demonstrate in practice, through the PIT and at other levels, the commitment and political will of the government's side and assume true ownership of the project, which will be necessary for the long-term sustainability of the activities. In a subsequent phase of the project, this would have to be addressed in several ways. One is the strengthening of the District Community Development Office, as suggested earlier, in order to gradually move the locus of management to the Ministry. Another would be the progressive allocation of government funds to the literacy activities at the Monkey Bay office, alongside a proportional decrease in ICEIDA support for corresponding budget lines.

There is no officer specifically designated to work with the AFO, who is currently co-ordinating and supervising the work of the CDAs and ensuring that all needs for effective functioning of the project are fulfilled. The current AFO is a very capable and efficient person. While this is of course an advantage, his strong position in the project also carries a certain danger for its long-term sustainability. The Ministry depends on him for effective flow of information about the project, through the ICEIDA office in Lilongwe, because government communication routes are long and inefficient. The Ministry's communication process is not working effectively and there is some finger-pointing as to who is responsible for the failure of the system. It is unlikely that there will be an effective flow of information when ICEIDA support pulls out if things remain the way they are now. Again, assigning a more active role to the District Office, accompanied by a clarification of the responsibilities of the DCDO and the ACDO, would go some way.

7.4 Financial sustainability

Adequate resources for the implementation of activities is key to sustainability of the activities beyond the lifespan of the project. The project has been providing financial support for all project activities, including allowances and expenses for supervision by the Ministry officials at all levels. All the running costs of the project office are paid for by the project. It was learned that the Regional Community Development Officer for the Southern Region, who supervises Mangochi in addition to 11 other districts, is allocated a mere MK70,000 a month. At times the Mangochi District Office goes without electricity and water. It will be difficult for the District Office to maintain the project office in Monkey Bay and keep it running if the current allocation to District and Regional Offices does not change. It is not yet possible to judge how effective the process of decentralisation which is currently underway in Malaŵi will be in this regard.

As already noted, the project has made very substantial progress in the training of facilitators and others who support the work. Training costs have been a large part of the project's budget. Due to these costs, training is a function which the Ministry would have difficulty in taking over when ICEIDA eventually pulls out.

The increased honorarium of facilitators in the project from MK200 to MK1,000 a month has undoubtedly helped in retaining the commitment of facilitators to the literacy work. NALP keeps a limit on the number of literacy centres each year, because it has chronically inadequate funds to pay an increasing number of facilitators/instructors. It was made clear during the consultations that it would be difficult to retain the honorarium at the current level. More facilitators would be likely to opt out, which is a serious question mark over the future sustainability of the project. The decentralisation of financial transactions through the AFO has also reduced the problem of delayed payment of honorarium. To revert to the old complex and tedious financial procedures when the project phases out is likely to negatively affect the interest of the facilitators.

8   GENERAL LESSONS LEARNED

The Monkey Bay project is considered to be a pilot project by both the Ministry and ICEIDA. The REFLECT methodology has mostly been associated with NGOs but not official, government-based development assistance. **The major lesson learned from this project is that the REFLECT approach can indeed work in a government set-up, and that it is an approach that – if well planned, coordinated and implemented, and backed up with sufficient resources – can bring about social transformation and promote a bottom-up approach to development.** It is in a way a rights-based approach, as it enables people to start demanding for services and facilities. Some other major lessons that may be learned from the project are highlighted below.

REFLECT as a means to promoting self-help

Some commentators have observed that the spirit among rural people to contribute towards the development of their own communities by offering their services seems to be weakening and that people are increasingly expecting the government to do everything for them. The REFLECT approach has proved to be an effective way of motivating and empowering people to take an active part in community development. If matched with external support as appropriate, the success could be tremendous.

Complexity of the issue of male participation

The project was expected to get more men interested in joining the literacy classes through targeted campaigns, creation of male-only classes and by incorporating some aspects that would interest males in particular. However, despite substantial efforts, male participation still remains a problem. This is indeed a complex issue, as it relates to people's norms, value systems and cultural practices. Increased male participation can not be realised overnight and increased inputs to achieve this end would not be a productive use of resources.

Culture of dependence on project funds

In a poor economy like that of Malaŵi, it is easy to create a dependency on donor support. The result is that projects are controlled and managed by the donor. Commitment from the recipient organisation becomes minimal and the ownership of the project is seen to rest with the donor. Constant attention is needed by the donor to ensure that the partner organisation is genuinely involved in all aspects of the project, from its design to implementation.

Good design ensures effective implementation

Effective collaboration and consultation in the designig of a project by all relevant parties involved is key to effective implementation, together with clearly specified activities and targets. A lot of collective thought is needed at this level. Serious consideration of various options to achieve goals and objectives is critical to ensure that the best options are identified. Appropriate placement of the project within government structures, clear definition of roles and responsibilities, and well-defined channels of communication are among those issues that need to be considered at the design stage.

9 CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

In this chapter we attempt to sum up the outcome of this evaluation, by looking first at the past experience we have observed and described in this report, and then by providing some pointers to a possible future of ICEIDA's support in this area in Malaŵi. The discussion will be brief, as most of these points are discussed at length elsewhere in the report.

9.1 Conclusions

Our analysis has shown that many of the original objectives of the project have been achieved. To recapitulate from previous chapters:

- *Adult literacy activities in Monkey Bay have increased substantially.* New groups of learners have been started in some 30 villages.

- *The quality of instruction and supervision has improved markedly.* The facilitators are committed and the mechanisms instituted for supervising their work are sound.

- *New and locally appropriate learning materials have been developed,* including a thoughtfully prepared facilitators' manual suitable for the Mangochi District and material for post-literacy.

- *The project has by and large been implemented in an efficient manner.* The original budget has not been exceeded. Flexibility and short lines of communication have characterised ICEIDA's approach. Management on the Government side is somewhat less efficient.

- *The project has made a positive albeit limited impact.* This applies both for those taking part directly as well as for their fellow members of the village communities, although project activities have not been long-standing enough to achieve a major and sustained increase in adult literacy, or reduction of poverty.

- *The relevance of the project is beyond doubt.* It addresses concerns of local people and the Malaŵi government, and is designed in accordance with ICEIDA's priorities and modes of work.

Even if our conclusions are thus largely positive, we have also discovered many aspects which can be improved upon, in order to ensure that a second phase of the project – if ICEIDA and the MGCWCS decide to embark on it – still better serves the rural communities which are at the centre of the project. In the following points we draw together some of our observations, with constructive suggestions about improvements wherever appropriate. Many of these suggestions are developed further in the section that follows.

- *Linkages between the literacy aspect and the development activities in the REFLECT circles are rather weak.* Most circles have embarked on building shelters for themselves, but often these are initiated by the circle committees themselves, following their initial training. The action points should, if the REFLECT method is used effectively, come out of the discussion/debate in the circles. There is need for better training for facilitators in graphics and discussion methods. This training must be 'hands-on'. Follow-up or refresher courses should address needs for training in those methods where

facilitators feel they need strengthening, but not simply a regular refresher course for its own sake.

- *High turnover of supervisors has affected many circles.* Even if CDAs are assigned to certain areas, there should be a mechanism to ensure that circles are not left without any supervision in case a particular CDA is unavailable for any length of time. This is especially important when circles are at the beginning of the cycle. A cohesive project team should be able to handle these situations.

- *The team spirit among the staff working at the project office is weak.* Consultation among project team members is sometimes lacking and misunderstandings have arisen about, for instance, the rights to allowances.

- *Refresher courses for circle committee members are sometimes not sufficiently specific.* These courses tend to cover fairly general aspects, but should instead provide further specific training to enable the committee members to more effectively carry out their central task of supervising the work of the literacy circles.

- *Many facilitators have difficulties in coping with a very diverse group of learners.* The facilitators are not fully-trained teachers. They have little or no experience in coping with everyday practical and pedagogical challenges, e.g. how to handle those who join the circle after it has started. Some are not fully conscious of the fact that their duty is to give advice to all learners and not only those who find the learning easier.

- *The project has not succeeded in increasing the enrolment of male learners.* The possibility of separate circles for men should be clearly introduced at the initial mobilization stage. If there is an interest, this should be followed up, for example with Open Days when circle members show their skills.

- *Follow-up to initial guest speakers has been less than adequate.* The guest speakers often generate great interest amongst circle members. There needs to be a possibility of follow-up immediately afterwards, if the circle members want this. The topics thus covered could easily lend themselves to the development of action points. The guest speakers and the action points are weakly connected now.

- *Monthly meetings of literacy facilitators provide an essential setting for learning.* These meetings should not be simply about the facilitators handing in their reports to the project staff in Monkey Bay, but they should be encouraged to bring up specific practical problems and issues and discuss their solutions as a group.

9.2   Recommendations

Undoubtedly there is a need for the project activities to continue in the area. This would make it possible both to consolidate the gains already achieved and build on them, as well as to respond to existing needs, which are no less urgent, in other villages. Continuation is also needed for the lessons learned from this project to be better incorporated into literacy activities nationwide via the NALP.

- **The evaluation team therefore recommends that the project will be extended to a second phase, involving both consolidation and expansion.**

The achievement of practical and durable literacy skills and sustained empowerment – the two components inherent in the REFLECT method – are by their very nature long-term goals. A project period of three years is too short to achieve sustainable impact.

- ***The team therefore recommends that the second phase of the project should extend over the period of five years, 2005–2009.***

Understandably, slightly different activities have to be emphasised in new villages when compared to those villages already participating. The following sections offer some guiding points.

9.2.1 Current villages

- *Continuation of literacy learning* until most current learners have mastered the basic skills of reading, writing and arithmetic, and have undergone a test.

- *Post-literacy activities* need to be continued in the existing circles.

- *Increased attention to social and health issues* (human rights; gender-based violence; birth spacing; HIV/AIDS etc). This should not (only) be achieved with one-off guest speakers, but with extended discussions which can lead to action. The District Social Welfare Officer could be a central actor here.

- *Support for income-generating activities and home management skills.* The project could provide further technical or/and training in business and home management skills. Almost all the circles visited expressed the desire for these skills. Support to these activities would especially strengthen women's economic and social empowerment. The CDAs and the ACDO have the capacity, in their other roles, to provide that expertise in these fields. However, as much as possible the project should not be involved in direct credit provision for the income generation activities. Instead it should facilitate linking the circles to lending institutions.

- *New circles* could be established in villages which already have circles, if there is demand.

9.2.2 New villages

- *We endorse the idea of extending the project's coverage to the whole Nankumba Traditional Authority.* This idea was mooted by both ICEIDA staff and Ministry officials. Demand is reportedly great in the Nankumba area, on the Western side of the Traditional Authority, and development activities have been minimal. There are also still several villages in the Monkey Bay area that have not participated. They could be brought in, provided there is demand for literacy activities.

- *Circles should be gradually added from 2005 to 2007.* The last two years (2008–2009) should be for consolidation of activities and preparation for eventual takeover by government, but not expansion.

- *Additional CDAs are needed, to be stationed at Nankumba or Malembo.* One additional CDA from the second year would be appropriate, as there is already one CDA stationed at Malembo.

- *Development activities and post-literacy* should gradually be given more emphasis over literacy skills during the five-year period.

9.2.3 General recommendations

- *Training of facilitators should be more practical than theoretical.* They need to be provided with hands-on experience in PRA methods before they start working with their circles.

- *Facilitators should be given technical support during supervisory visits,* e.g. how to handle those who join the circle after it has started. Facilitators need to be reminded that they should give advice to all learners.

- *New CDAs posted to the project should ideally have some experience of PRA.* We realise that this may not always be possible, in which case care should be taken to provide PRA training as soon as possible after the CDA has been assigned.

- *Training for CDAs should be responsive to their felt needs.* This would in practice mean that both initial and refresher courses should insofar as possible be tailored to those working with the project at any one time, addressing their individual needs, rather than simply ready-made courses. This also requires a constant alertness by the AFO and others who serve in supervisory roles.

- *Refresher courses for circle committee members should first and foremost focus on their roles in supervising the work of the literacy circles.* They should not be concerned with general aspects, but provide further training to enable the committee members to carry out their tasks more effectively.

- *Support to action points should be provided.* This may be achieved partly directly by small grants to complete certain projects, but the more important aspect would be increased efforts to link villages or Village Development Committees with the District Executive Committee, the District Assembly, the Area Development Committee and/or other fora and organisations which can provide funds. This should be relatively straightforward, as the CDAs already have the capacity to do this in their extension work. The Area Development Committee is a particularly important venue for linking Village Heads, Councillors and NGOs, together with Ministry staff, and should be a natural point of attention. These small-scale initiatives should be a nucleus for development and should provide an agenda for ADC meeting(s) and dialogue.

- *Community-based childcare centres should be encouraged and supported.* Their value for the learners is clear. Support is likely to be available from MASAF-III funds through the District Social Welfare Office and from other agencies.

- *Linkages between the literacy aspect and the development activities in the REFLECT circles should be strengthened.* Most circles have embarked on building shelters for themselves, but often these are initiated by the Circle committees themselves, following their initial training. The action points should, if the REFLECT method is used effectively, come out of the discussion/debate in the circles.

- *There should be a mechanism to ensure that circles are not left without any supervision in case a particular CDA is unavailable for any length of time.* This is especially important when circles are at the beginning of the cycle. A cohesive project team should be able to handle these situations.

- *The Ministry and ICEIDA should work together to strengthen the team spirit within the project office.* Consultation among project team members should be a two-way process. Planned management meetings, for example every Monday or Friday or once a fortnight, involving all project staff at the project office should be encouraged. During such meetings they could share plans and experiences and discuss the day-to-day happenings relating to the project. The ACDO could take charge of such meetings, which could be documented in very simple form. In addition, an open-door policy at the project office should be encouraged to promote a free flow of information.

- *An extended and enlarged project needs a separate accounts assistant.* This would increase transparency while maintaining the speed and simplicity which has characterised the financial management of the project.

- *ICEIDA should consider putting resources into strengthening the District Community Development Office in Mangochi.* This would enable that office to take over from ICEIDA some important functions of project management and implementation. Such a move would be both in the spirit of decentralisation, and conducive to a stronger sense of project ownership on the government side. Accompanying this, a clarification is needed of the roles and responsibilities of the DCDO and ACDO and their relations to the project office.

- *The Ministry should start budgeting for an eventual takeover no later than in the fourth year of the project extension.* ICEIDA should correspondingly start reducing its allocations.

- *Attention should be paid to the level of Ministry desk officers assigned to the project.* The identified person should have a capacity to make decisions on behalf of the Ministry when needed. This would both increase the efficiency of project management and create a stronger sense of ownership on the Government side.

- *A more direct linking of the project with NALP within the Ministry is recommended.* NALP should take a more central and active role in all aspects of the project and not merely participate passively. There should be a constant flow of information between the desk officers and NALP. This can be effective if they are in the same department where NALP is located. NALP should be actively involved in the supervision of the project and be in more frequent contact with the partner agency. This would create more synergy with other literacy-related projects and programs.

9.3 Closing words: Freire revisited

It is apposite to end this evaluation report as it began – with a reference to the radical thinker Paulo Freire, whose 'pedagogy of the oppressed' (Freire 1972) inspired the development of the REFLECT method. According to his vision, the ultimate goal of education is to become

> the practice of freedom, the means by which men and women deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world.

The project evaluated in this report has made a very modest contribution towards realising this vision in the context of rural Malaŵi. There is still a long way to go. Indeed Freire's humane vision will never be wholly captured inside a logically framed 'project space' of instrumental rationality. The transformative process itself is what defines true education.

ANNEX A
TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR THE EVALUATION

1. Project background

I. Introduction

The co-operation between the Ministry of Gender and Community Services, hereinafter referred to as MoGCS and the Icelandic International Development Agency, hereinafter referred to as ICEIDA, began in 2001, with the signing of the Plan of Operation for the implementation of the Project *Support to the National Adult Literacy Programme, Monkey Bay 2001 – 2004,* hereinafter referred to as the Project.

The Malawian Government launched the National Adult Literacy Programme in1986 to meet the need for adult literacy education in the country.

During many years the National Adult Literacy Programme, NALP, had experienced severe constraints due to lack of governmental funds allocated to adult literacy. In 2000 - 2001 the adult illiteracy rate in Malawi was estimated to be more than 60 % among women above 15 years old and approximately 45% among men older than 15 years.

Most of ICEIDA's activities in Malawi during the last decade have been carried out in Monkey Bay in Mangochi District. Therefore, knowledge and experience of the local condition and circumstances in the area have accumulated. ICEIDA was therefore interested to continue its concentration on Monkey Bay and assist the communities in the area by supporting the NALP activities there.

In 2001, when the ICEIDA support to the NALP was launched, no donor agency was directly supporting adult literacy activities in Malawi. However, various NGOs (e.g. Action Aids, OXFAM) and civic groups did run their own literacy programmes in the country.

In 2004 the United Nations Development Programme, hereinafter referred to as UNDP, decided to step in and support the Adult Literacy Programme in Malawi over the next three years in co-operation with the MoGCS as an implementing partner. The support will be provided in 12 districts and one of them is Mangochi.

II. The Project

The preparatory phase for the ICEIDA supported Project included a baseline socio-economic survey of the Monkey Bay area with the purpose of assessing the impact of the existing NALP activities and determining the need and demand for adult literacy classes. An

independent consultant was hired for the purpose on a short-term basis to conduct the survey in August and September 2001.

The main recommendations of the consultancy were: Create incentives to attract people to adult literacy classes; experiment with gender segregated classes; offer childcare; offer flexible meeting schedule; incorporate REFLECT (Regenerated Freirian Literacy through Empowering Community Techniques) approach in the NALP; provide post-literacy material for learners to maintain what they have learned and develop updated learning material.

Upon receiving these results the Project Document was completed and the Project was launched in October 2001 with the opening of literacy classes in four villages. The Government provided a building in the Monkey Bay town to be used as an office for the Project's administration, as well as being a location for classes and post-literacy facilities. Early 2002 ICEIDA recruited an Administrative Field Officer to the Project to be responsible for the office administration and the day to day running of the Project in Monkey Bay in co-operation with the Government officials. Four Community Development Officers (CDO) recruited by the Malawian Government are now located at the Centre. They work for the Project as well as various other rural development projects in the communities run by the Government.

Today the Project run 30 literacy classes in the area and the participation is around 20 – 30 learners in each village. 30 facilitators has been trained in the REFLECT methodology, 30 circle committees in the villages have gone through training courses and villages' headmen have also participated in training courses.

III. Overall objective of ICEIDA's co-operation:

The overall objective of the Project is to assist the Malawi Government in the implementation of its National Development Goal of Poverty Alleviation by strengthening the NALP activities in the Monkey Bay area to help raise the literacy level in the country. With the recognition of the close linkage between poverty and illiteracy, the Project's goal is to link its literacy training directly to people's socio-economic needs in an attempt to facilitate their economic empowerment. Identifying gender imbalance as a key factor contributing to poverty, an important part of the Project's overall objective is also to support the National Platform for Action in Malawi, which calls for the integration of gender perspectives in all policies and programmes.

IV.   Specific objectives of ICEIDA's co-operation:

Special Objectives

❑ Offer literacy training to the poor and the rural population in the Monkey Bay area.

❑ Improve the training of the CDOs in the Monkey Bay areas to bring it up to date and ensure their ability to meet the demands of NALP.

❑ Improve the working environment and provide support to the CDOs in the Monkey Bay area in order to facilitate effective implementation of the Project and to improve the monitoring and the supervision of NALP activities.

❑ Carry out a continuous mobilization in the villages to maintain awareness and interest in NALP activities, and to develop an increasing interest among groups that have been underrepresented in NALP classes.

❑ Reassess the material and methodology for the training of adult literacy instructors to bring it up to date.

❑ Facilitate the participation of the communities in the selection of literacy instructors, while maintaining adequate qualification standards.

❑ Encourage instructors' commitment and reduce their absenteeism and dropout, by ensure regular payment of honorarium, as well as support and supervision of their activities.

❑ Develop an attitude of flexibility and receptivity among the literacy instructors and their supervisors towards the needs of the learners, and to encourage the participation of learners in the organization and operation of the literacy classes.

❑ Establish literacy committees in villages where literacy classes are established to facilitate the interest and participation of the communities in the operation of the literacy classes.

❑ Increase the participation of groups that have been underrepresented in the NALP activities in the past.

❑ Decrease dropout rates from literacy classes.

❑ Provide adequate physical learning environment in villages where adult literacy classes are established.

❑ Create socially comfortable and unthreatening learning environment for different groups of people.

❑ Link the literacy training to the practical needs of people in rural villages to encourage participation in the literacy classes and to facilitate the improvement of the learners' immediate living conditions.

❑ Link the literacy training to the strategic needs of the learners to promote their social awareness and empowerment.

❑ Experiment with establishing and operate community-based child-care centres simultaneously with literacy classes to encourage the participation of mothers of young children.

❑ Ensure adequate supplies of teaching and learning material.

❑ Develop a method to incorporate the REFLECT approach to literacy teaching in NALP activities.

❑ Sponsor a revision and update of the teaching and learning material used in the NALP in the country.

❑ Improve and develop post-literacy facilities appropriate to the socio-economic environment of the Monkey Bay area.

V. Strategy:

ICEIDA provides assistance to the Adult Literacy Programme in Monkey Bay in the form of:

a) Technical advice and supervision;
b) Administrative Field Officer who is responsible for the office administration and the day to day running of the Project in Monkey Bay;
c) Funds for training and capacity building for governmental staff members as well as facilitators of the circles[1] and committees members from the villages;
d) Funds for running cost of the ALP centre;

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[1] REFLECT is a new approach to literacy and do not use the traditional terminology such as class, teacher or learners. The REFLECT authors believe that these words bring with them a range of images, memories or association that they wish to avoid. Therefore they replace these words with:
Circle: a literacy class or group
Facilitator: the literacy teacher /instructor
Participant: learner in a REFLECT circle

e) Providing vehicle (car and motorcycles) for local staff members (CDOs), as well as necessary equipment and material.

One full time ICEIDA Project Manager has been engaged in the administration and planning of the Project in co-operation with the Ministry and the Administrative Field Officer in Monkey Bay.

The Plan of Operation is valid from August 1st 2001 to July 31st 2004 or for four years. The Co-operation Partners have agreed upon an extension until 31st of January 2005.

Estimated duration: Four years.
Skeleton budget, (including 2004): **US$ 718,800.00**

In Appendix 4: Financial summary for the expenditures and budgets for the years 2001, 2002, and 2003 and estimated budget for the year 2004 as well as summary of the expenditures for the first 6 months of the year.

2. Reasons for evaluation

This independent external evaluation is undertaken in accordance with the Plan of Operation signed by MoGCS and ICEIDA in August 2001. The purpose of the evaluation is to study the activities undertaken, the implementation and outputs of the Project, as well as the results obtained and possible continuation of the ICEIDA support to the ALP in Malawi. The consultants shall make recommendations for future directions of the support and ICEIDA's co-operation with MoGCS in the social sector. They shall specially focus on how the support shall be phased out and how new phases could be added and developed.

3. Scope and focus of the evaluation

The evaluation shall focus on providing information for ICEIDA and MoGCS. The results and recommendations of the evaluation shall be regarded as guidelines for continuing assistance to the ALP and the future co-operation between ICEIDA and MoGCS.

In general the evaluation shall:

a) consider the goals and purpose of the Project, as well as inputs and outputs and financial management;

b) consider unintended outcomes of ICEIDA's support to the Project, for the villages, Monkey Bay etc....

c) provide a description of major constraints and risk factors for continued support;

d) provide a description of lessons learned in relation to future programme implementation;

e) assess the degree of sustainability (as far as this is possible, bearing in mind that the support to the ALP in Monkey Bay has just been going on for three years), and what will happen when ICEIDA´s support will be phased out;

f) provide recommendations regarding future ICEIDA support to ALP in Monkey Bay and the co-operation between ICEIDA and MoGCS.

The final draft is to be submitted to MoGCS and ICEIDA.

4. Issues to be studied

Special attention shall be paid but not necessarily limited to the following issues:

I. Results obtained – efficiency and effectiveness: of the support.

Have resources been efficiently used? What kind of problems have arisen? Look at inputs and outputs?

✓ Review of the Project organisation (including management, reporting and monitoring);
✓ Assess the development of the personnel and their needs for further capacity building and training;
✓ Assess the infrastructure facilities, equipment etc., provided by ICEIDA;
✓ Assess the needs for eventual additional equipment and other capital investments and resources for teaching and learning material.

Has the Project (through ICEIDA´s assistance) achieved, or is in the process of achieving, the objectives (see above) regarding to offer training and capacity building, providing funds for teaching and learning material and in strengthening the target group through the circles?

II. Impact

Assess other effects of the ICEIDA support, *negative or positive effects?*

What are their causes?

Technological and socio-cultural factors affecting the Project implementation shall be considered.

III.   Relevance

The direction and usefulness of the support to ALP in Monkey Bay.

- ✓ Assess the relevance of the ICEIDA support in relation to MoGCS policy.
- ✓ Assess the relevance to other international development organisations or agencies' input and support to ALP (and the social sector?).

IV.   Sustainability[2]

Benefits of the support continuing beyond donor involvement. Has the Project managed to empower the target groups and somehow participated in the struggle for poverty reduction.

V.   Future support and co-operation.

- ✓ Assess the feasibility of continued support and co-operation between ICEIDA and MoGCS, and make recommendations for future directions of the ICEIDA assistance to ALP in Monkey Bay or elsewhere and for further co-operation in the social sector.

5.   Plan of work and methodology

The information collected will be both qualitative and quantitative:

- A. The evaluation team is expected to carry out interviews with the key contact people: representatives from the group of circles participants, the group of facilitators, members of circles committees and the village headmen. Staff members of the ALP centre in Monkey Bay, including representatives from MoGCS and ICEIDA, will be interviewed as well.

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[2]   As far as it is possible, bearing in mind that the co-operation has just been going on for three years.

B. Meetings will be held with the authorities in question, including representatives of UNDP, NGOs such as Action Aid and OXFAM, that are supporting activities in the same field and using the REFLECT methodology.

C. The evaluation team will have full access to reports, contracts and other material concerning the ICE Ida's support as well as policy papers and relevant report from the MoGCS.

6.   Evaluation team.

The members of the evaluation team shall have a university degree in social sciences and/or pedagogics and relevant experience in development countries (from the social and educational sector). Fluency in English is required.

The evaluation team: Dr. Karl Benediktsson (team leader)

and Mrs. Linlely Rosa Kamtengeni

Technical assistants to the team:

Ms. Matasi Mkwamba, MoGCS Co-ordinator of the Project

Ms. Regina Kananji, MoGCS deputy Co-ordinator of the Project

Ms. Margrét Einarsdóttir, ICEIDA, Project Manager

Mr. Fred Chizule, ICEIDA, Administrative Field Officer.

Other resource persons will be:

Ms. Þórdís Sigurdardóttir, ICEIDA´s Country director in Malawi

Ms. Gudrun Haraldsdottir, former Project Manager of the Project

Mr. Sighvatur Björgvinsson, Director of ICEIDA

Mr. Smart Namagonya, MoGYCS Director of Community Development

Mr. George Mkamanga, MoGYCS Deputy Director of Community Development
Mr. George Kachere, MoGYCS Acting National Coordinator of Adult Education

Mr. David Kabwila, MoGYCS Regional Community Development Officer

Ms. Moira Zinyemba, MoGYCS District Community Development Officer

Ms. Phaless Chizule, MoGYCS Assistant Community Development Officer

Ms. Ellena Mphongozidana, MoGYCS Community Development Assistant.

Mr. Lester Kanyangala, MoGYCS Community Development Assistant.

Mr. Jasper Kabango

The cost of the evaluation will be paid by ICEIDA.

7.   Timetable and reporting

Preparation for the evaluation will take place during 10 days in July or August 2004. Fieldwork will be carried out in Malawi on the 25th August to 8th - 9th of September 2004, (ca 14 days), with a draft report being prepared on-site.

The team leader shall have the main responsibility for the writing and compilation of the report. The final draft of the report is to be submitted to the board of ICEIDA and the MoGCS by 1st of November 2004.

The final report shall be submitted in English, one copy to ICEIDA and one copy to MoGCS no later than 1st of November 2004.

8. List of Documents:

1) GENERAL AGREEMENT on forms and Procedures for Development Co-operation between the Government of the Republic of Iceland and the Government of the Republic of Malawi.

2) Plan of Operation signed on August 1st 2001 and Project Document: SUPPORT TO THE ADULT LITERACY PROGRAMME, MONKEY BAY 2001-2004.

3) Kamtengeni, Linley R.: Report on Baseline survey on the Impact of NALP Activities and Demand for Adult Literacy in the Monkey Bay Area in Mangochi District, September 2001.

4) Khonje, James Alex and George Kachere: *Midterm evaluation of the ICEIDA support to Adult Literacy Programme in Monkey Bay Area*, Mangochi, November 2003.

5) Memorandum by Guðrun Haraldsdottir: Re: The Internal Evaluation of ICEIDA´s support to the National Adult Literacy Programme, Monkey Bay and related events July – November 2003.

6) Minutes from Project Management Committee (PMC) meetings:
   - 11-07-2002
   - 28-01-03
   - 20-10-2003
   - 20-01-2004

7) Annual Plan of Action for : 2001, 2002, 2003 and 2004.

8) Project Progress Reports: June 2002
   a. August-September 2002
   b. January-October 2003
   c. July-December 2003

9) Minutes from Project Implementation Team (PIT)meetings:
   - April 2002
   - June 2002
   - Sept 2002
   - Jan 2003
   - April 2003
   - October 2003
   - Jan 2004

10) ICEIDA Bi-Annual Reports:
   - January-June 2001
   - July – December 2001
   - January- June 2002
   - July- December 2002
   - January – July 2003
   - July – December 2003

11) ICEIDA Annual Reports 2001 –2002, ICEIDA´s Head Office in Reykjavik

9. List of Documents in Icelandic:

   a) Verklagsreglur Þróunarsamvinnustofnunar Íslands, samþykktar á stjórnarfundi 11. Mars 2004.

   b) Stefna Þróunarsamvinnustofnunar Íslands, samþykkt á stjórnarfundi 11.mars 2004.

   c) Langtímaáætlun Þróunarsamvinnustofnunar Íslands fyrir árin 2000 -2004/ ICEIDA´s Long term plan for 2000 - 2004. (Fáanleg á aðalsskrifstofu í Reykjavík).

   d) Fundargerð frá fundi í Malaví apríl 2001 um Þróunarverkefni ÞSSÍ í félagslega geiranum/ Minutes from meeting in Malawi april 2001 concerning ICEIDA´s social projects.

   e) Fundargerð frá fundi í Namibíu í febrúar 2003 um þróunarverkefni ÞSSÍ í félagslegageiranum/ Minutes from meeting in Namibia February 2003 concerning Iceida´s social projects.

   f) Ferðaskýrslur frá Malawi 2001-2004 (Fáanlegar á aðalskrifstofu í Reykjavík).

   g) Þróunarmál nr. 31, 18./19. árg. 1. tbl. April 2004. Grein skrifuð af Guðrúnu Haraldsdóttur: Fullorðinsfræðsla og baráttan gegn fátækt og valdaleysi.

10. Further Documents

   a) Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, December 2001.
   b) Phiri, Mthakati Alexander R.: Evaluation of the National Adult Literacy Programme, April 2003.
   c) NORAD: Evaluation of Development Assistance, Handbook for Evaluators and Managers, 1993.
   d) DANIDA: Evaluation Guidelines, February 1999
   e) Archer, David and Sara Cottingham: Regenerated Freirean Literacy Through Empowering Community Techniques (REFLECT Mother Manual), Action Aid March 1996.

ANNEX B
ITINERARY FOR THE EVALUATION TEAM

Consultants: **Dr. Karl Benediktsson (Team leader)**
Linley Rosa Kamtengeni

Date	Time	Activity
22.08.04	---	Arrival of the external consultant
23.08.04	09.00	Meeting of the 2 consultants
	14.00	Meet ICEIDA Project Manager
24.08.04	09.00	Roundtable meeting with Ministry Officials
25.08.04	08.00	Depart for Monkey Bay
	Afternoon	Meet Project Team (Officers And Supervisors)
26.08.04	09.00-12.00	Msumbi 2: FGDs with Literacy Participants and committee members separately.
26.08.04	13.00-16.00	Mbeya FGDs: with Literacy Participants and committee members separately
27.08.04	09.00-12.00	Consultations with Literacy Facilitators at the Project Office
28.08.04	09.00-12.00	Chizuula: FGDs with Literacy Participants and Committee Members
28.08.04	13.30-16.30	Observe a literacy circle in session at Chigonere
30.08.04	09.00-12.00	Mkupa: FGDs with Literacy Participants and Committee Members
30.08.04	14.00-17.00	Discussions with individual Project Team members
31.08.04	09.00-12.00	Chiwalo – FGDs with Literacy

		Participants and Literacy Committee Members
31.08.04	13.30-16.30	Observe a Literacy Circle in session at Kamwetsa
01.09.04	09.00-12.00	Mdalachikoza – FGDs with Literacy Participants and Literacy Committee Members
02.09.04	09.00-12.00	Meetings with District Officials (DCDO, DSWO, DC, DPO and DEM)
03.09.04	09.00	Debriefing the Project Team
03.09.04	-	Depart for Lilongwe
06.09. 04	09.00-12.00	Discussions with the Project Coordinator and the Deputy
07.09.04	09.00-10.00	Discussions with the Director for Community Development Services
07. 09 04	10.30-11.30	Discussions with the Directors of Planning and Financial Services
07.09.04	14.00-15.00	Discussions with the Programme Manager of the UNDP Literacy Supported Project
08.09.04	09.00-10.00	Discussions with ActionAid
10.09.04	14.00-16.00	Debriefing Ministry Officials on preliminary findings
13.09.04	09.00	Debriefing the ICEIDA Country Director

ANNEX C
LIST OF PERSONS CONSULTED

ICEIDA:
Mrs. Þórdís Einarsdóttir, Country Manager
Mrs. Margrét Einarsdóttir, Co-ordinator for Social Programme / Project Manager
Mr. Fred Chizule, Administrative Field Officer

Ministry of Gender, Child Welfare and Community Services:
Mrs. B. Kumangirana, Principal Secretary
Mr. Smart Namagonya, Director of Community Development
Mr. Saulos Nyirenda, Director of Planning
Mr. George Mkamanga, Deputy Director of Community Development
Mr. L.F.A. Simwaka, Principal Accountant
Mr. David B. Kabwira, Regional Community Services Officer, Blantyre
Mr. Silas Jeke, National Co-ordinator for Literacy and Adult Education
Mr. George Kachere, Acting National Co-ordinator for Adult Education, NALP
Mrs. Matasi Ruth Mkwamba, Gender Division, Co-ordinator of project
Mrs. Regina Kananji, Community Development Officer, Deputy Co-ordinator of project
Mrs. P.T. Kutengule, Community Development Officer
Mrs. Phaless Chizule, Assistant Community Development Officer, Monkey Bay
Mrs. Ellena Mphongozidana, Community Development Assistant, Monkey Bay
Mr. Lester Kanyangala, Community Development Assistant, Monkey Bay
Mr. Jasper Kabango, Community Development Assistant, Monkey Bay

Mangochi District:
Mr. Kinswell Dakamau, District Commissioner, Mangochi
Mr. White Jali, District Education Adviser, Mangochi
Mrs. Grace Banda, District Social Welfare Officer, Mangochi

United Nations Development Programme:
Mr. Chris Dzimadzi, Project Manager
Mr. Manuel Mang'anya, Monitoring and Evaluation Officer

ActionAid:
Mr. William Bwanaope, Programme Learning and Development Officer

Literacy Facilitators:
Tabitha Mhango, Rabhim Stande, Agness Kondowe, Ellen Benjamin, Livinet Siwed, Mercelina Manesi, Sophilet Tambala, Mary Lyama, Fosco Madzedze, Joseph Braim, Arnold Sula, Jeoffrey Chitani Bauleni, Charles Chimatiro, Janifa Conis Adam, Aida Juside, Arnold Mbwana, John Arthur Chiwalo, Nalaford P. Seko, Medison Sili, Rodreck Anderson, Maxwell Chilembe, Addon Kasale, Andrew Chidothi, Alick M. Kadango, Evious A. Gusala, Martha Mwamulowe, Salomy Kaliza, Dalitso Lumasi

Literacy learners and circle committee members:
Dziha Udindo, Filipo Makwinja, Weston Nkhoma, Janet Chataiga, Memory Mwamadi, John Kalumbi, Neles Matoia, Nema Magi, Unice Banda, Josephy Uzeni, Rashid Selleman, Ester John, Paxon Adam, Lucy Dabulo, Roben Mwechande,

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ANNEX D
LITERATURE AND DOCUMENTATION

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