

Strengthening Civil Society in Malawi

Final Evaluation of Intrac
Malawi programme 1998-2007

Rob Watson and Catherine Collingwood
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List of terms

CABUNGO	Capacity Building Unit for NGOs
CADECO	Capacity Development Consultants (Malawi)
CB	Capacity Building
CBO	Community Based Organisation
CDRA	Community Development Resource Agency (South Africa)
CISANET	The Civil Society Agriculture Network (Malawi)
CONGOMA	Council for Non-Governmental Organisations (Malawi)
CORAT	The Christian Organizations Research and Advisory Trust of Africa (Kenya)
Cordaid	Catholic Organisation for Relief and Development Aid (The Netherlands)
CSO	Civil Society Organisation
CU	Concern Universal
CURE	Co-ordination Unit for the Rehabilitation of the Environment (Malawi)
DCA	DanChurch Aid
DfID	Department for International Development of the British Government
EASUN	East African Support Unit for NGOs (Tanzania)
FBO	Faith-based organisation
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
INTRAC	International NGO Training and Research Centre (United Kingdom)
IPRAD	Institute for Policy Research and Analysis for Dialogue
M&E	Monitoring and evaluation
MEJN	Malawi Economic Justice Network
MHEN	Malawi Health Equity Network
MPRSP	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
NGOSO	NGO Support Organisation
OD	Organisational Development
ODPs	Organisational Development Practitioners
OLIVE	Organisation for Training and Development (South Africa)
ONTRAC	INTRAC Broadsheet
POBS	Projects Office Blantyre Synod
Praxis	INTRAC programme - Linking Research and Practice in Organisational Capacity Building
TOR	Terms of Reference
TRACE	Organisational Development Training and Facilitation Centre (Tanzania).

Executive summary

This is a summary of an external evaluation of the Malawi Programme of INTRAC commissioned by Cordaid a long-time donor, and undertaken between November 2008 and January 2009. The purpose of the evaluation was both for learning and accountability, as it was seen as an opportunity for INTRAC and Cordaid staff involved with the programme to reflect on their experiences and analyse the programme's strengths and weaknesses through an external and objective assessment of the quality of the programme and the results achieved.

The programme in Malawi arose out of a DfID funded assessment undertaken by INTRAC in 1995 which identified a wide range of training and capacity building needs to strengthen Malawian civil society organisations. At that stage civil society organisations were young and the development sector in Malawi was primarily made up of international NGOs and newly established Malawian civil society formations.

Initially INTRAC's input was advice and training in the form of a twenty month intensive ODP training and reflection process with the capacity building unit of Concern Universal which led to the establishment of CABUNGO as a Malawian NGO. Later the programme developed to involve extensive accompaniment and mentoring in OD interventions with Malawian civil society, and extensive reflection and publication of learning. Leadership as a capacity building need in Malawi became a focus and involved consulting and mentoring CSO leaders particularly in membership based CSOs and coalitions. A focus on HIV/AIDS impact and policy in civil society organisations involved collaborative action research and promoting organisational and policy responses.

From Malawi, INTRAC established fruitful links with other African OD organisations and used the opportunity to share learning from Malawi, and embark on joint regional research in areas of ODP Formation, leadership and the impact of AIDS. Through its regional networking INTRAC facilitated the connection of the ODP graduates with five African OD capacity building organisations (CORAT, EASUN, CDRA, OLIVE and TRACE). Therefore there has been a contribution of both learning and capacity building expertise as CABUNGO and CADECO continue to actively participate and contribute to regional capacity building networks.

In 2000, a process of collective strategic thinking about civil society advocacy was initiated and led to the establishment of the Institute for Policy Research and Analysis for Dialogue (IPRAD). The fledgling organisation however, experienced a tough start with contested ideas about its purpose and identity and insufficient support, and when problems developed with the newly appointed director IPRAD closed in 2003.

The evaluation found that the programme highlights the key difference between 'targeted' and 'untargeted' interventions in poverty eradication. The latter being those that establish conditions for change and then monitoring the context to see what emerges. The former involves targeting a specific group only with a defined intervention and then judging its success by whether, and how well, that specific group is doing what it was specifically meant to do with what it was 'given' (Mkandawire). Untargeted interventions usually aim to establish favourable conditions for longer term development. This key difference in understanding accounts for a lack of clarity between Cordaid and INTRAC as to the targets and goals of their partnership, and this evaluation points to a coming together to flexibly combine the two approaches, particularly including participating organisations and their beneficiaries in setting the anticipated results at different levels.

The achievements of this programme, in terms of the training and establishment of Malawian OD practitioners are exemplary and highly relevant to the development agenda of Malawi. It can not be underestimated how important it is to have Malawian experts able to take a lead in this work. The research and analysis produced has been of a high quality and has made an

important contribution to the field of organisational development and support for capacity building of civil society in Africa.

The overall impact of the programme in Malawi can best be seen at the level of key individuals in OD providers trained and developed, and key leaders in some of the civil society and capacity building and coalition organisations. Better monitoring, coordination and a programmatic approach involving a range of interventions aimed at the civil society sector, civil society organisations and their beneficiaries could have improved the results.

INTRAC has played a key role in establishing learning relationships between some key leaders, facilitated the emergence of two values-led OD organisations, built a discourse around OD in Malawi – of which the analysis and documentation will be referred to as a resource for many years to come. The INTRAC Programme worked with the ODPs to take on research and propose policy change to tackle the effects of HIV/AIDS which was ‘close to home’ and a clear need – and through this way of working enabled a number of NGO leaders and programme staff to develop experience and confidence in action research. All of the above examples involved linking and learning – a capacity and a value which remains within Malawi and is a building block for future strategies to develop the sector and improved development practice.

The involvement of INTRAC head offices in Oxford appears to have been limited to back-stopping and information sharing particularly during the first part of the programme and there were key areas where closer support from INTRAC could have improved programme implementation.

It could be said that through INTRAC’s pioneering work on the organisational effects of HIV/AIDS in Malawi, it facilitated the shift in relationship between a northern development agency and a local capacity building NGO. Cordaid has remained tenaciously engaged with organisational capacity building in Malawi for the past ten years, encouraging and supporting INTRAC’s efforts and the two local civil society capacity building organisations it helped to midwife.

The challenge of monitoring results and impact of capacity building could have been more effectively followed through and there appears to have been no systematic approach to gathering information on the effects at the level of civil society. The evaluation suggests INTRAC is well positioned to taking up the challenge of developing and supporting the implementation of tools and processes to monitor effects of its own and other OD and capacity building interventions on the organisations they work with.

The INTRAC Malawi programme has produced many valuable contributions to learning and analysis of capacity building with civil society from its experience in Malawi. The ‘field based’ and pragmatic nature of Rick James’s reflection is particularly appreciated, as well as the skill and simplicity perceived in its drafting.

In this evaluation, it is suggested that Cordaid improve its ability to clarify results with OD and capacity building organisations at the different levels of individuals, organisations, beneficiaries and communities and the sector as a whole. These should not be applied rigidly but in a way that encourages participation of beneficiaries and communities in designing indicators, or anticipated change at the different levels to be used as indicators. Expected results could be included in contracts to illustrate anticipated change at the different levels and help build consensus between Cordaid and partners they support.

During interviews, civil society leaders spoke of a ‘distortion of focus’ from the community and beneficiaries, to the donor needs. There was said to be a lack of authentic participation of beneficiaries and communities in programme planning, implementation and monitoring. Predominantly a ‘vertical upward accountability to donors’ has developed with little demand

or practice of genuine participation of target groups and information sharing and co-operation among similar organisations. Many civil society leaders spoke about the lack of transparency and financial accountability of civil society groups, and how the organisational and political implications of this – i.e., how this affects organisations and their relationships with donors, other organisations and their sustainability – was raised.

Programme and fieldworker capacity needs to be enhanced particularly to enable authentic participation of ‘downward’ and ‘horizontal’ stakeholders, through joint planning, monitoring of results and sharing good practice.

Civil society leaders spoke of a lack of transparency in terms of which organisations are funded for what purpose. Communication and coordination seems to be mostly with their direct partners, and insufficient testing of reports and claims for results, mean that often proposal and reports are written in the capital with little involvement of testing with beneficiaries and target communities. This was said to increase competition between Malawian civil society for scarce resources, and does not provide the best opportunity for learning and co-operation between actors.

Donors such as Cordaid, with its partnership approach to funding and sectoral focus on Health and HIV/AIDS in Malawi, are well positioned to work on a sectoral basis to go beyond sharing information to strengthening the links between fellow donors and between their civil society partners, and their beneficiaries and target communities through dialogue around planning and monitoring of results.

In conclusion, the evaluation makes the following recommendations for Cordaid:

1. Cordaid seeks to improve its contracting and negotiations with OD and capacity building partners on the purpose and anticipated results at different levels (i.e., individuals, organisations, beneficiaries and communities, and civil society as a whole). Contracting could include anticipated results and a specific process for monitoring, either by the partner or a 3rd party.
2. Cordaid review its processes with its partners and explore ways of working at a sectoral and cluster level, and in a way which promotes ‘downward’ and ‘horizontal’ accountability with and among partners and their constituencies through increased transparency and going on from information sharing, to joint planning and monitoring of results and evaluation.
3. Cordaid considers how OD and capacity building organisations fit with its overall strategy in Malawi, and shift its focus to strengthening the link between civil society groups and their constituencies through increased participation of beneficiaries and monitoring of results at different levels, including target communities. The ODPs developed through the INTRAC Malawi Programme and other capacity building organisations in Malawi could be considered suitable for engaging at a sectoral level to conduct research to help address the organisational and political aspects of financial accountability and improve programme participation and joint monitoring and evaluation.

In closing, it has been particularly rewarding to see the level of self-reliance that has been generated by this programme among those with whom it has worked in Malawi. Particularly as other programmes appear, at times, to entrench dependency on outsiders and experts – this programme has worked against dependency, and moved beyond it. Ten years on, the Malawian ODPs are seen by their peers and other OD practitioners internationally as having a strong sense of their own professional competence. Those they work with have a high regard for their ability to continue to expand the work of INTRAC in facilitating OD interventions and capacity building processes, in a competent and values driven way. Since

this was initially a core objective for the programme in Malawi it can be seen to have been achieved with considerable success.

1. Introduction

This report sets out the findings and recommendations of an external evaluation of INTRAC's programme in Malawi (www.intrac.org). The evaluation was conducted in December 2008 on behalf of Cordaid, which is a Dutch development organisation (www.cordaid.nl) and a small, but long-time and consistent funder of this programme.

1.1 Purpose, objectives and methods

The objectives of the evaluation were developed jointly by Cordaid and INTRAC, and were set out in Terms of Reference which is attached as Annex A.

The purpose of the evaluation was both for learning and accountability. It was seen as an opportunity for INTRAC and Cordaid staff involved with the programme to reflect on their experiences and analyse the programme's strengths and weaknesses through an external and objective assessment of the quality of the programme and the results achieved. It is hoped that this exercise will help identify issues useful for both Cordaid and INTRAC to bridge the gap in understanding that currently exists, and stimulate discussion on some of the key issues raised.

In short, the aim of this evaluation was to gain insight into:

1. The quality and sustainability of capacity building providers and CSO coalitions supported by INTRAC;
2. The influence of these NGOSOs on civil society in Malawi;
3. The relevance and efficiency of the INTRAC involvement in Malawi to meet the capacity building needs of NGOSOs and civil society in this country;

The evaluation was undertaken by two independent consultants, namely Rob Watson (Den Haag) and Catherine Collingwood (Cape Town). They were chosen by Cordaid and INTRAC to enable the evaluation team to have both experience with capacity building with civil society in Malawi and Southern Africa, as well as some expertise and international experience in the subject. For more information see Annex B.

The consultants would like to thank staff at INTRAC and Cordaid for their time and assistance during this evaluation. Particularly, we would also like to thank CABUNGO and CADECO, and all those who made time for interviews in Malawi.

1.2 Background to the INTRAC programme

INTRAC is a not-for-profit organisation based in Oxford, working to strengthen civil society and development aid policy and practice through training, research and capacity building interventions (www.intrac.org).

The programme in Malawi arose out of a DfID funded assessment undertaken by INTRAC of capacity providers and needs in Malawi which was facilitated by Rick James from INTRAC in 1995 with a representative sample of concerned and influential civil society activists and NGOs in Malawi. The assessment identified a wide range of training and capacity building needs and recommended the establishment of an indigenous capacity building organisation which would work principally with organisational development methods to provide support to strengthen Malawian civil society organisations. At that stage civil society organisations were young and the development sector in Malawi was primarily made up of international NGOs and newly established Malawian civil society groups.

Having received the outcome of the Needs Assessment, DfID put out a call for proposals, and Concern Universal (CU), which already had an NGO capacity building unit, won the bid (having included INTRAC in their proposal). This gave substantial funding for five years for CU to expand its capacity building work in Malawi. INTRAC was hired for the formation and training of Malawian organisational development practitioners (ODPs) who would be recruited into CU's unit and CONGOMA. It was planned that this would become an autonomous local capacity building organisation (which later became CABUNGO).

Concern Universal took responsibility for management of the DfID programme from their offices in Blantyre, Malawi. Rick James of INTRAC relocated to Blantyre from the UK and worked closely with CU in the selection and development of six Malawian development practitioners. Rick initially provided 20 months training and mentoring in Organisational Development. INTRAC Malawi's input was managed by CU. The impulse to develop Malawian ODPs did not belong to INTRAC alone and the subsequent understanding of OD, the training orientation and the activities of the programme had to be negotiated from the beginning. Initially INTRAC's input was a twenty month intensive ODP training project but INTRAC's programme in Malawi was not only the development of OD Practitioners, although this was the initial project and a key focus.

The INTRAC Malawi programme was funded by Cordaid with approximately 30,000 Euros per year from October 1998 for 9 years¹. Later, Dan Church Aid and Oxfam funded with similar amounts to subsidise consulting fees and costs for Rick James to work with key organisations in Malawi. This role built on a close co-operation with CABUNGO, and INTRAC's role with Malawian civil society involved close cooperation with them and other past participants in the training who had set up their own consulting agencies. Substantial action research was done by Rick James during these years, publishing widely. A management development training and mentoring programme was developed jointly with Wye College and leadership seminars and mentoring were established for mostly Blantyre based leaders and managers of Malawian civil society organisations.

After the twenty month training programme and after the DfID funding came to an end, half of the ODPs left CABUNGO/Concern Universal and established themselves as independent consultants or took up programme and organisational leadership positions primarily in development organisations in Malawi although one graduate is now working in the UK for an international development organisation. Rick James continued to provide mentoring and support to the work of the ODP graduates and often worked together with them in joint consultancies/ OD interventions and action research. The issue of HIV/AIDS and workplace policy was taken up by Rick James in collaboration with CABUNGO from 2003 and became an important focus in the following years.

In 2006-7 funding for INTRAC's capacity building programme in Malawi came to an end and Cordaid's support for OD capacity in Malawi shifted to contracting CABUNGO directly as an OD service provider to its other partners and to supporting the internal reflection and learning of CABUNGO. It has also encouraged and funded CABUNGO's action research programme, to build the capacity and solidarity of CSOs in the face of the organisational effects of HIV/AIDS. It also began contracting CADECO directly as a service provider to undertake civil society research studies. In 2006 Rick James returned to the INTRAC offices in Oxford.

¹ Cordaid contribution 1998: E40,000, 2001: E31,000, 2002: E66,200, 2004 E133,000.

As an introduction to the work done during the time of the programme, the following timeline will be of interest:

INTRAC Malawi Programme Timeline²

1997

OD Formation programme CABUNGO/CONGOMA/Concern Universal

1998

Programme broadened to encompass other CB providers (CURE, Christian Service Committee)

1999

Funding received from Dan Church Aid, Oxfam. Cordaid

Started Wye College NGO Management training

2000

Broadened to address CSO Networks –consultancy

CABUNGO M&E system design consultancy

First programme evaluation – internal by INTRAC

Conceptualisation of IPRAD

2001

DCA funding stops

CSO Networks research

Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre consultancies

2002

Broadened to research – leadership development

Key Publications:

“People and Change: Explorations in Capacity-Building in Africa”

‘The Formation of Local OD Consultants’ with CDRA and CORAT

‘What makes CSO Coalitions Effective’ INTRAC OPS 38, INTRAC

Establishment of IPRAD

2003

Regional leadership research

Started HIV pilot research

Research on CSO contribution to MPRSP

MEJN strategic planning

Demise of IPRAD

Second programme evaluation

2004

INTRAC Praxis funding starts

Leadership development training with Vision Quest

Oxfam funding comes to an end

New INTRAC programme developed for advocacy/scaling up

2005

Publication of learning from Malawi

CB through reading – dissemination of learning project

Regional HIV research

Projects Office Blantyre Synod (POBS), CONGOMA consultancies

2006

Learning Focus: CSO Coalitions, follow-up research

Research into FBOs in Malawi

Follow-through to CABUNGO, CADECO

Rick James leaves Malawi

2007

Final follow-up visits to CABUNGO and CADECO

² Developed by Rick James with additions from the evaluation team.

The timeline shows that the original impulse was the formation of ODPs and local capacity building organisations and that this impulse remained unto the end with the last activities mentioned on the timeline being follow up visits to CABUNGO and CADECO who have sustained themselves to date as Malawian providers of OD to Malawian civil society organisations. This appears to fit Rick James's strongly held view that Malawian sovereignty over its development is crucial and the best actors to bring about change and development in civil society and their country are Malawians. In this regard, it can be said that the programme remained true to its vision unto the end.

More prosaically, the timeline also shows us that the programme began with the formation of individual ODPs and a focus on strengthening other capacity building organisations and later moved to consulting and mentoring CSO leaders particularly in membership based CSOs and coalitions. A focus on a specific contextual issue developed - that of HIV/AIDS and its organisational effects of HIV and AIDS through coordinating collaborative action research and promoting organisational and policy responses.

What the timeline does not show are the ongoing processes that cumulatively formed over time the INTRAC Malawi Programme. These include the in-country ongoing accompaniment and regular mentoring of OD Practitioners and CSO Leaders (over nearly ten years), the writing that wove the connections between the many threads of the programme and lessons learned and the significant OD contribution of facilitating the autonomy of CABUNGO, Malawi's first OD organisation for CSOs. Neither does the timeline show the long-term relationship between Cordaid and INTRAC in the common pursuit of increasing the capacity and effectiveness of Malawian civil society.

Further details of activities can be found in INTRAC six-monthly reports, and two internal evaluations of the programme which were done by Brenda Lipson at INTRAC in 2000 and 2003.

1.3 Methodology

The evaluation's five main methodologies, namely desk research, review of reports and products, interviews with those involved with the programme at INTRAC and in Malawi, a questionnaire to ODP peers and semi-structured focus group meetings with beneficiaries and non-beneficiaries separately. The key areas of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability were focused on to develop analysis and findings.

In preparation the consultants undertook a brief desk review and prepared sets of questions for INTRAC, Cordaid to facilitate reflection and also questionnaires for the programme participants and OD Peers around the world.

The INTRAC Malawi staff member was interviewed and the consultants undertook a nine day field trip to Malawi. Meetings were arranged by CABUNGO with programme beneficiaries and key organisations involved with this work in Blantyre and Lilongwe, with the final sample interviewed as follows:

Participants

Original ODP's participants on the initial 20 month programme	(3)
Subsequent ODPs	(2)
Leadership development participants	(7)

Organisational capacity building organisations

(Local, including CABUNGO and CADECO)	(3)
(International)	(4)

<u>Civil society organisations in Malawi</u>	
Single issue CSOs	(3)
Membership Based Organisations	(2)
Coalitions	(2)
Networks	(2)
<u>Respondents to Questionnaires</u>	
OD Peers	(6)
Ex INTRAC Staff	(1)
Cordaid Officers	(2)

A full list of those interviewed is attached as Annex C.

1.4 Limitations and evaluation challenges

Undertaking an evaluation commissioned by a third party is always a delicate matter. Although both parties may contribute to drafting the Terms of Reference, they may still be asking different questions. Whereas, as a capacity building organisation such as INTRAC may be asking, 'What has the value of our work been for the organisations we work with, and what methodologies can we use in the future?', Cordaid as a donor may be asking 'Was our ten year's of financial support worthwhile and in what ways can we see organisations strengthened and their capacity built?'. These are slightly different questions with different foci which have more likelihood of being bridged if both parties reach a common understanding of the impact anticipated from the programme. It is hoped that this evaluation can help identify some of the issues that could lead to better understanding and can be acted upon to support the role of a capacity building organisation such as INTRAC and donors such as Cordaid to achieve common goals.

Although the project for Cordaid was a relatively small one, Cordaid was only one of the donors supporting the programme, and the programme was quite substantial both in terms of funding and complexity as it involved Concern Universal and a number of other OD, leadership and Malawian organisations. In her book '*Programme Theory*' Patricia Rogers makes the point that the orientation to an evaluation must be decided on the basis of whether the intervention being evaluated is 'simple', 'complicated' or 'complex'. The distinguishing features between each are how much is known about the situation at the outset, how many variables are involved in the intervention and how much control the intervener has in the situation. The INTRAC programme in Malawi qualifies as complex due to the pioneering nature of the programme and the high number of variables which could affect its success as well as the limited programme management and control which INTRAC had as the programme was managed by Concern Universal.

The issue of attribution of results is often far from exact in any evaluation, and here so too as during the implementation of the programme other organisations were involved in the same or similar work with the same 'target group'. Therefore, it has not been easy to separate out the strands of the programme for which INTRAC can be held accountable and similarly which impact/s can be directly attributed to INTRAC and not others.

Given the above, the main limitation of the evaluation was the time constraint for the consultants to do in-depth research and analysis. The limited number of days provided a practical and a process challenge, requiring on occasion less than desirable choices about use of time. This also required the consultants to lower expectations for a thorough analysis of the programme and its many facets, and rather to focus on some of the most pertinent issues and develop limited but hopefully valuable findings and recommendations for INTRAC and Cordaid. We hope that the issues raised during the evaluation and in this report will be useful and possibly further developed by both INTRAC and Cordaid in their on-going work.

2. Review of activities

In this section the main activities undertaken are briefly described and discussed.

2.1 OD practitioner formation

This aspect of the programme consisted of an initial twenty month intensive training and accompaniment of six development practitioners recruited by Concern Universal (CU) into its capacity building unit for the training. The recruits were mostly selected as young graduates with limited development or leadership experience, whilst some were already employed in CU's capacity building unit and were interested in learning about OD. The twenty month period included limited consultancies undertaken by the recruits – funded through the DfID grant, and on several occasions accompanied by Rick James.

Once the initial training was over, and once the capacity building unit became autonomous as CABUNGO (staffed by ODPs from the training programme), the formation programme became to consist of mostly periodic training, reflection on practical experience and ongoing mentoring. In this way, accompaniment and learning from experience was the main method of learning through OD interventions often supported by Rick James. In all, eleven staff members over seven years received OD formation input from the INTRAC Malawi programme (and other training organisations) and are listed as follows:

Joyce Mataya – now Director of CABUNGO
Chiku Malunga – founder of CADECO
Charles Banda - founder of CADECO
Leonard Satali – now with CABUNGO
Mavuto Kapyepye – founder of Mlambe Consulting
Brenda Katundu – Gender Programme Director: CIDA
Wilson – Programme manager: CIDA
Angela – CB Manager Revenue Watch International (UK)
Augustine Chikowi – Deceased
Timothy – in the private sector, no longer active with civil society
Joseph Chiwaula – independent consultant

As can be seen many of the above stayed within the OD field and within Malawi, with six working as consultants with organisational development, and several others working as top professionals in donors or international development agencies. Respondents in the evaluation spoke highly of the calibre of all the trainees. The success and results of this process of ODP formation is exemplary.

2.2 OD interventions with capacity building organisations and coalitions

Consultancies, often partly subsidised by Cordaid, Dan Church Aid or Oxfam were undertaken by Rick James with key Malawian organisations. Priority was given to capacity building organisations like CABUNGO, the Christian Service Committee and CURE, then later with coalitions and networks (including the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN), The Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) and the Malawi Health Equity Network (MHEN).

Working often with past ODP trainees, Rick James responded to requests from these organisations, and typically facilitated strategic planning, leadership coaching, team-building, and governance support to boards on their role and function.

With limited funding and working with the demand requirement of consulting, rather than pro-active programming, Rick James developed close relationships with leaders and staff of some of these key organisations over the years, and was able to have a marked influence on

their development, particularly the motivation and competence of key individuals and leaders.

In addition to the consultancies initiated as part of the Cordaid/Dan Church Aid/ Oxfam supported programme of INTRAC, Rick James undertook consultancies both for INTRAC and independently in both Malawi and other parts of Africa and internationally. These were in the fields of OD and other organisational capacity building such as leadership and small business development.

2.3 Leadership development

From the late 1990's leadership development and support became a focus of INTRAC's work and research in Malawi with civil society organisations.

Oxfam sponsored Wye College students were supported in taking a post-graduate diploma in NGO management from 1999, and Rick James supported this process with lectures, mentoring and marking exams. Half-day leadership seminars were run every two months for civil society leaders, mostly in Blantyre, and close working relationships were developed with many through regular contact and mentoring (which was at times weekly, or monthly, depending on the relationships developed).

In 2003, INTRAC joined with Vision Quest of South Africa to develop a leadership training programme which ran two training courses for civil society leaders.

2.4 Research and publications

Intentionally learning from experience was an important part of the programme, and Rick James reflected and wrote prolifically for a range of INTRAC other publications. Some of the main pieces of writing include:

- OD Formation – A Case Study of the CABUNGO experience, 2000
- Changing People: Postcards of Capacity-Building, INTRAC's learning in Malawi, 2000
- Key Success Factors in CSO Coalitions, 2001
- OD Formation Programmes throughout Africa, 2001
- Learning Leaders, John Hailey and Rick James, 2001
- Managing Change, Notes for Presentation to Young Women's Leaders Network, 2002
- People and Change: Exploring capacity building in NGOs 2002
- Supporting NGO Partners Affected by AIDS, 2002
- Leaders Changing Inside Out, 2003
- Does OD Fit into Africa Cultures, 2003
- Capacity Building: The Challenge of Impact Assessment, 2003
- Autocratics Anonymous, 2003
- Capacity Building with Spirit: Reflections on Current Thinking about Spirituality in Organisations, 2003
- Dodging the Fists: HIV and Leadership in Malawi, 2004
- Supporting NGO Partners Affected by HIV, 2004
- Creating Space for Grace, 2004
- The Use of Africa Proverbs in Organisational Assessment, with Chiku Malunga, 2004
- What can we learn from the Vision Quest approach to leadership development, 2004
- Building Organisational Resilience to HIV/AIDS: Implications for Capacity Building, 2005

In addition, INTRAC published a regular Praxis Notes containing short informative articles about OD and other organisational capacity building. Aimed at the busy leader and development practitioner, the content provided an opportunity for quick reflection on OD, leadership and development practice for the reader – and the writer. Over the years all the ODP graduates of the training programme contributed to Praxis Notes, thereby bringing an African voice to the OD and development discourse, in a format accessible to CBO's and NGOs alike.

2.5 Policy research and advocacy

In 2000 a process of collective strategic thinking about civil society advocacy was initiated by Rick James which saw the formation of a Steering Committee/Concept group to discuss the need for a co-ordinated approach to applied research and policy analysis. The group was made up of Malawian ODPs and CSO leaders who shared experience and ideas about how to influence strategic development issues in a more meaningful way. Two years later the Institute for Policy Research and Analysis for Dialogue (IPRAD) was established. The IPRAD Concept Group functioned as the Board and Rick James as INTRAC played a pioneer role, advising the organisation and conducting some of the initial research, fundraising and establishment of the office and NGO. In 2003 the internal evaluation of INTRAC highlighted this as an important new role of INTRAC in Malawi, and funding was committed by Cordaid and staff hired.

However, the fledgling organisation experienced a tough start with contested ideas about its purpose and identity and when Cordaid initial funding came to an end, there was insufficient cushioning and support available to the fledgling organisation. Problems developed between the newly appointed director and other civil society organisations and IPRAD closed a year later in 2005³.

Despite the closure of its organisational form, two significant studies were completed viz the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) study and the scan of the effects of HIV/AIDS on CSOs. The MPRSP marked a huge shift in the orientation of INTRAC's presence in Malawi in that it shifted focus to include an analysis of the State, politics and poverty in relation to civil society. The scan of HIV/AIDS effects also introduced a broader contextual view into the programme which coincided with Cordaid's shift in focus to health and HIV/AIDS in Malawi.

From 2003 both INTRAC and CABUNGO became increasingly involved with research and support for developing arguments for and models for AIDS workplace policies for civil society and CADECO put its research expertise to use in analysing the sectors response to HIV/AIDS. Many respondents during this evaluation highlighted the value and relevance of INTRAC's work on HIV/AIDS workplace policy.

It is interesting to note from the above that IPRAD as an initiative was not sustained while the work on HIV/AIDS was, partly due to the influence of 'constituency'. The benefit of hindsight can show us that when venturing into the political terrain, constituency and mandate are crucial factors determining whether initiatives succeed and outputs are deemed useful. Constituency can be understood broadly as the relationships and ownership by civil society actors in this field which would be needed to garner support for the initiative. In the case of IPRAD, this process of making political input had not been sufficient. Whereas, the take-up of the subsequent action research into the effect of HIV/AIDS was possible due to the presence of already established long-term relationships of trust and credibility INTRAC had built over the years with CSO leaders and ODPs.

³ Cordaid commitment was € 115.500 over July '02 – June '05 Final instalment was made in November '04.

2.6 Regional networking

From Malawi, INTRAC established fruitful links with other African OD organisations and used the opportunity to share learning from Malawi, and embark on joint regional research in areas of ODP Formation, leadership and the impact of AIDS. Through its regional networking INTRAC facilitated the connection of the ODP graduates with five African OD capacity building organisations (CORAT, EASUN, CDRA, OLIVE and TRACE). Therefore there has been a contribution of both learning and capacity building expertise as CABUNGO and CADECO continue to actively participate and contribute to regional capacity building networks.

2.7 Praxis - Linking Research and Practice in Organisational Capacity Building

The Praxis programme was launched by INTRAC in 2003 to establish a community of reflective capacity building practitioners to actively monitor their practice and critically reflecting on this through a regular writing rhythm. From feedback from OD practitioners' working in Africa it is clear that this has become a highly respected publishing forum with its publications being regarded as very practical and relevant to application "in the field" and sufficiently rigorous academically for tertiary development studies programmes for example. An internal evaluation of the Praxis programme was done in 2008 and is available on INTRAC's website <http://www.intrac.org/pages/praxis.html> .

3. Programme analysis

Morgan (2003) characterises capacity building processes as 'fluid and iterative'. This is certainly true of the INTRAC capacity building intervention since as we shall see, from the outset INTRAC's intended intervention had to adapt to changed local conditions and in fact had to maintain this high level of flexibility throughout in order to pursue the goals of its programme. Its actual capacity building project had to shift its axis from set objectives, and specific activities to achieve them and the autonomy with which to direct these activities towards a subcontracted relationship with another organisation which justifiably had its own ideas of how to undertake the capacity building. Thus, from the outset INTRAC was in relationship and not in sole control. Rather than partnerships and targets for results being established prior to implementation, which is a growing trend in development aid, INTRAC's programme linked strategically with others along the way as the opportunities arose and its own understanding grew of the context it was intervening in.

Although the objectives of the INTRAC Malawi programme changed with the various contracts between INTRAC and Cordaid, it is fair to take the objectives used by INTRAC during the period 2001 to 2003 as a guide. They were:

1. To strengthen the providers of capacity-building services to CSOs in Malawi.
2. To support the capacity-building of senior CSO managers.
3. To assist the development of local capacity in policy research and analysis.
4. To influence the international development communities approach to capacity building.

A key to understanding this programme is to explore the differences in understandings of programme methodology between INTRAC and Cordaid. INTRAC on one hand, which is common among OD organisations, can see aspects of programme planning if applied rigidly as limiting and counter-productive to effective programming, whereas Cordaid, on the other hand is increasingly requiring more detailed planning and projections at the outset.

Malawian Professor Thandika Mkandawire highlights the differences between 'targeted' and 'untargeted' interventions in poverty eradication. The latter being those that establish conditions for change and then monitor the context to see what emerges. The former involves targeting a specific group only with a defined intervention and then judging its success by whether and how well that specific group is doing what it was specifically meant to do with what it was 'given'. Untargeted interventions introduce specific ideas and services into a particular community and then wait to see where the interest and will lies to engage with what is offered. It is seen as a process of engagement that then defines what output is developed rather than a pre-designed product 'delivered' to a target group who then can be monitored for its use of the product. Untargeted interventions usually aim to establish favourable conditions for longer term development, rather than results or impact that can be seen in a short or medium terms.

The initial emphasis on intensively training six development practitioners to be OD practitioners resembles a targeted intervention. However, the programme over time worked at so many different levels in a web of relationships rather than a sequential implementation of pre-planned activities, that it strongly resembles an untargeted intervention as well. This is an important distinction since untargeted interventions try to create enabling conditions for a particular change to happen and it is obvious that monitoring the presence of conditions is much more challenging than listing the results of outputs. INTRAC to some extent targeted CSOs, CSO leaders and OD Practitioners and was able to accompany many of these over time to monitor their subsequent practice. However in relation to strengthening the organising capability of civil society as a whole, INTRAC's intervention was untargeted in that it did not focus on strengthening key mobilising capacities as such, but rather assumed that stronger CSO leaders at the helm of purposeful CSOs would mobilise civil society.

In his analysis of these different types of interventions, Professor Mkandawire concludes that the untargeted interventions in his study have proved more sustainable. Be that as it may, this key difference in understanding accounts for what we perceive to be a lack of clarity between Cordaid and INTRAC as to the targets and goals of their partnership, and this evaluation recommends a coming together to flexibly combine the two approaches, particularly including participating organisations and their beneficiaries in setting anticipated results at different levels.

3.1 Relevance

The achievements of the INTRAC Malawi Programme, in terms of the training and establishment of Malawian OD practitioners, are highly relevant to the development agenda of Malawi. It can not be underestimated how important it is in a place like Malawi with decades of colonialism, paternalism and dependency, to have Malawian experts able to take a lead in this work. This programme has met a clear need and produced top level OD practitioners and consultants, whose work is highly regarded both in Malawi and internationally – yet they retain the Malawian know-how and knowledge of how things work in reality in Malawi. This is highly relevant and will likely reap results and benefits for the development agenda in Malawi for many years to come.

The learning and research undertaken is also highly relevant as we have an opportunity to learn from an extensive period, rather than short research or consultancy time frames. Its commendable that INTRAC and specifically Rick James took the step to be so closely associated for such a long period, and due to the sensitivity and the skill used in approaching this task, the results – particularly in terms of leadership and OD practice and the analysis of the strengths and weaknesses of the functioning of coalitions, were found by civil society leaders in Malawi to be most relevant.

The results with the OD interventions with capacity building organisations and coalitions were seen to be less relevant as although key organisations received support (MEJN, CISANET and CURE for example) the interventions lacked an overall strategy to work at a number of levels and in a sustained way to see results institutionalised. Limited funding and staff will have informed this, but also a responsive – consulting rather than a strategised or targeted approach, is also a main reason. Although the OD interventions were done though working closely with the ODP graduates and the experience was shared and was an important part of their learning, the ability to make a lasting impact without a programmatic or co-ordinated approach was limited.

The particular interests and competence of Rick James appears to have been the focus of the INTRAC inputs, but better co-ordination and linking with other capacity building organisations in Malawi could well have improved the programme. This led INTRAC to be seen as an actor – and later an actor among many others providing consulting services, rather than as facilitating and coordinating with other capacity building organisations.

The focus on leaders and individuals as the key to development and change produced results in terms of individuals, but from interviews in Malawi, what was found to be lacking was an approach to provide training and support to the organisation more broadly. The INTRAC internal evaluation of 2003 highlighted this issue in its findings and recommended a variety of strategies to provide a balance between the focus on leaders, and the needs of organisations more broadly. In 2004 the programme was reworked along these lines, but unfortunately failed to secure funding and not realised.

3.2 Effectiveness

The effectiveness of the programme is currently being seen by INTRAC and Cordaid somewhat differently. INTRAC on one hand sees the programme as being effective

particularly in terms of ODP formation, research and as an opportunity for Rick James to develop OD experience and make a contribution in 'the field'. In many ways this has been valuable in itself, both for many civil society organisations in Malawi, and also in the field of organisational development and capacity building of civil society organisations internationally. But it falls short of the expectations of Cordaid that results be demonstrated at the level of capacities built of Malawian civil society to organise itself as a sector, and the effectiveness of its organisations.

There is much evidence that INTRAC Malawi undertook painstaking reflection on the effectiveness of its work with civil society organisations, both single organisations and networks. Many PRAXIS and other publications were practice based and many researched specific themes pertinent to the development of Malawian CSOs and their sector. However, none of INTRAC's M and E practice makes as visible as it could, the link between its interventions and effects within the organisations it works with and the civil society sector.

INTRAC questions if it has the responsibility, accessibility and resources to monitor results at the level of civil society's strength as a whole and the effectiveness of civil society organisations, particularly given their focus on leaders and individuals in this programme, and the fact that the contracting (between INTRAC and Cordaid) was always at the level of objectives – not expected results at the level of civil society.

The interest from Cordaid for monitoring of results at the level of civil society arose later in the programme (from 2004 proposal and expected outcomes of the INTRAC programme (see ToR for this evaluation with summaries of objectives during the different periods in the programme⁴)). Given the responsive and iterative (or non-targeted) style of the programme, it would have taken a different approach involving closer co-operation with INTRAC and likely more funding for this to have been done effectively. However, the consequence of not monitoring the effects and impact of a training or capacity building programme on its target group, and its effectiveness with its beneficiaries, leaves the capacity building organisation without vital information on which to assess and improve its strategy and methods. Therefore, the need for monitoring of results needs to be seen not only as a demand of donors but important for INTRAC and other capacity building organisations in their work. Although the monitoring of results in OD work is an area which requires further development, the absence of a theory of anticipated impact or common indicators for impact in organisations in this programme and a systematic approach to monitoring the effects on the might of civil society as a whole is a weakness in the INTRAC Malawi Programme.

Therefore, it is suggested that the purpose of the programme was not sufficiently clarified and shared between INTRAC and Cordaid, and this could be an important learning for Cordaid as they work with INTRAC and other capacity providers in future. Suggestions for how to achieve such clarity, and options for monitoring are offered later in this report.

The most important and sustainable result achieved in this programme, was the development of a cadre of top level Malawian ODPs, now working either as consultants, or in key positions in international development agencies. This has been the greatest contribution to the objective of strengthening capacity building organisations in Malawi.

The leadership training and mentoring to key civil society leaders (mostly in Blantyre) has improved the understanding and quality of leadership of some civil society leaders. For example, in two of the interviews with CSO leaders (one of a membership based organisation working to eradicate poverty and the other of a small business development organisation) we heard how the latter had been able to become independent of its INGO founders and still able to sustain itself four years on, whilst the former has been able to manage its own leadership

⁴ See ToR for this evaluation as Annex A with summaries of objectives during the different periods in the programme)

succession process (in other words managing its own internal change process without external OD intervention) and to recently negotiate on its own terms with a Northern NGO wishing to partner in a development collaboration. Whereas before, the organisation has felt that it is implementing the vision of others, this time it insisted on actively participating in the conceptualisation of the intervention and the proposal development process. This organisation's leader attributed this strengthened sense of its own ability to the ongoing accompaniment Rick James had provided.

The research and analysis produced has been of a high quality and has made an important contribution to the field of organisational development and support for capacity building of civil society in Africa.

The experience with establishing IPRAD, which was an important part of the third objective, was the most innovative, risky and unsuccessful. Although the initiative met a clear need at the time, the organisational form appears to have lacked broad ownership and this brought a premature crisis of purpose usually not experienced until an organisation has been around for longer. The organisational form seems to have been “built too high”⁵ with a dependence on substantial donor contribution in a ‘hostile terrain’ since from inception it was potentially in competition with similar work of single NGOs and networks, and therefore lacked some key support. Malawian civil society leaders suggest that it was a good idea whose time had not yet come and that the impulse to build research capacity for advocacy was too early institutionalised within a single organisational base. The interventions to build action research capacity within and between singular civil society organisations appears to have been a much more locally rooted approach and has resulted in sustained impact.

3.3 Efficiency

On the whole, the programme was led and predominantly implemented from Malawi by Rick James. This had important influences on the efficiency and relevance of the programme as personal relationships could be developed which were key in the success of the programme, but also it meant a high level autonomy. Therefore, interventions were on the whole well targeted, and through extensive writing, the value of the experiences was increased through broad distribution.

Through co-operation with INTRAC in this programme, Cordaid has been able to support an important capacity building contribution in Malawi for a relatively small investment. In Malawi, several other capacity building programmes have been initiated i.e. Shared Project USAID, Tikambirane, TRANSFORM, PACT Malawi. Along side these examples, the INTRAC Programme is relatively cost effective and has produced value above the investment made by Cordaid.

Although the overall management was competent and efficient, the involvement of INTRAC head offices in Oxford appears to have been limited to back-stopping and information sharing, particularly during the first five years of the programme. From 2002 a more engaged approach was taken by the programme officer, and there were two internal programme evaluations facilitated by Brenda Lipson of INTRAC of which the second in 2003 was particularly influential but Rick James remained the key decision maker in terms of programme strategy. The ‘Malawi Advisory Group’ established to provide advice and support from Oxford provided little of such, and there were key areas where closer support from INTRAC could have improved programme implementation, particularly the organisational issues and differences in vision with Concern Universal, and the development of monitoring systems.

⁵ This comment was made by one civil society leader who was involved in the establishment of the organisation, referring to the high expectations and need for substantial resources early on, in a highly centralised structure.

In terms of success of the programme, INTRAC tended to regard the ongoing consulting and writing as valuable in itself for INTRAC and those they work with, particularly as it was from an African country. The extensive writings and analysis generated by the programme through reflection on its work with civil society was highly regarded. The many PRAXIS and other publications bear witness to that, and received very positive feedback from many of the OD practitioners who were consulted during this evaluation. All of the publications were practice based and many researched specific themes pertinent to the development of Malawian CSOs and their sector.

Regular reports were submitted internally and to various donors based on activities and feedback from readers. However, although it is clear that the INTRAC Malawi Programme took monitoring and evaluation seriously we would like to suggest that it did not theorise sufficiently about how to monitor shifts in the sector as a whole, i.e. How to go about observing the *net* effects and not only the effects of its work on key individuals? Instead, INTRAC developed an M&E tool for clients – notably CABUNGO – to monitor the changes in the organisations they work with and what results can be attributed to their interventions. Later in the programme, a CABUNGO underwent a self-evaluation process involving gathering stories of the most significant changes they have supported in organisations which was supported by INTRAC. However, none of INTRAC's M&E practice makes as visible as it could, the link between its interventions and the civil society sector and its context more broadly.

The challenge of monitoring results and impact of capacity building was taken up principally in 2000 with the development of the ripple model for monitoring and evaluation used with CABUNGO and then later in 2002 and 2003 with the development of indicators to assess plausibly associated impact from INTRAC's interventions⁶. In some ways this was pioneering work (at the concept stage) which went as far as identifying the kinds of change envisioned and some indicators which could help demonstrate such change. However, it was not effectively followed through and there appears to have been no systematic approach to gathering information.

IPRAD was possibly an attempt to study the context more in depth, but ultimately the main research inquiry that was sustained after it closed, was more at the level of how individual organisations were coping and the action research practice being the methodology used to facilitate connections of solidarity between the organisations.

The INTRAC Malawi Programme took care to grow ongoing relationships of accompaniment with ODPs and CSOs as well as to facilitate relationships between CSOs. This indicates a high sense of responsibility for the future development and support of those with whom it worked. This is monitoring of a different nature to following up organisations to see if they are doing what they said they would when their strategic plans were facilitated. Here, monitoring is expressed as a relationship of accompaniment in which much learning is taking place between those in close proximity to each other and who have a common project which benefits through searching out understanding and insight. It appears the purpose of the monitoring was not primarily accountability, where the intention is to make transparent to others not so closely involved, one's successes and failures.

3.4 Impact

As INTRAC quite rightly points out in its research, the overall effects and long-term impact of CB programme interventions is unreliable in assessment. The influences within the context are often so powerful and often far outweigh single interventions. The timing of the

⁶ Page 5 of INTRAC's report to Cordaid and Oxfam dated 1st July to 31 Dec 2002.

assessment – whether this year, or in five years time has substantial influence and how too can one programme claim to have achieved a particular result when there have been many other influences and other organisations involved?

For example, respondents described that they received practical OD experience with Olive, and excellent facilitation training from CDRA. However, for the purposes of this evaluation, we are able to say, based on our interviews that the programme has left a significant and positive mark on the people it worked with in Malawi and use this as a basis for making some assessment of influence and contribution to civil society more broadly.

Most importantly a cadre of ODPs has been developed and demonstrate exemplary leadership qualities and are continuing to play key influential and dynamic roles in this work (albeit in different positions, and predominantly they are limited to the donor and agency initiated interventions (because of how development aid is still structured in Malawi).

Further, the programme has inspired a new generation of thinking about needs and opportunities for developing civil society and the development sector in Africa. Many civil society leaders that Rick James worked with during these years aspire to greater levels of professionalism and leadership as a result. Organisational development practitioners and those working with capacity building in Africa have benefited from a body of highly relevant analysis of key capacity building issues produced either by INTRAC, or a previous trainee – or often by both.

To illustrate the effects we heard about in Malawi about INTRAC's impact, we will take the time here to substantiate this with a few examples.

In 2007 CADECO was commissioned to undertake a study of the response of the sector to HIV/AIDS. The 2007 CADECO report found that there are 'dense linkages between Malawian civil society at the centre of many of the service delivery networks, but that the networks themselves do not reach as far on the ground as they could'. The CADECO report provides a fascinating visual map of all CSOs active in the field of HIV/AIDS and the connections between them. The report also inserts a table from Cooney et al (2005) showing the evolution of the local NGO sector in Malawi. The value of this study was mentioned to us by the client who plays a highly influential role in HIV/AIDS capacity building in Malawi. Although INTRAC has not provided the only input to build CADECO's research capacity (Alan Fowler has also played a significant role for example), INTRAC has consistently accompanied CADECO through its phases of development. It is therefore fair to say that in this way the INTRAC programme built a substantive quality of research capability for Malawian civil society.

Interestingly, to facilitate the capacity enhancement needed as identified by the study, the client selected CABUNGO to practically work with the organisations on the ground. One of the qualities they appreciated was CABUNGO's ability to engage them as a client and not only comply with them – CABUNGO discussed the clients design with them and suggested an alternative, more participatory one. It is therefore fair to say that the INTRAC programme nurtured the development of local OD Practitioners with 'backbone' able to relevantly influence development processes in partnership with resource powerful organisations. This we heard is not always the case in Malawi, with several situations where consultants were acting as 'functionaries' just writing strategic plans and proposals for donors for example.

Another case was where the leader of an influential membership based organisation of women living with HIV and AIDS was able to articulate how CABUNGO has supported them to turn their organisation around from a lack of strategic direction and much conflict between members and secretariat, and misunderstanding between

secretariat and donors, to a situation where dialogue is possible and strategic direction was clearer. When asked what the most important thing was that CABUNGO had provided, the answer was 'hope and encouragement'. Since hope and encouragement cannot be measured as inputs but so deeply affect the quality of outcomes, this deserves mention.

We found that much of the 'hope and encouragement' – or the expression of commitment beyond just doing the job - is done after hours, and is not covered within the time and budget limits provided for in normal consultancy time-frames. This is a distinctive quality of the local OD organisations whose sustained establishment to date can be plausibly associated with the relationship they have enjoyed with INTRAC and this programme. That ineffable quality was best made visible when respondents distinguished between organisations who identify with their project and so go the extra mile to support them, and consultants who see them as just another consultancy. This is a valuable quality to have nurtured, particularly since the original impulse of the INTRAC programme was to particularly strengthen grassroots organisations and the continuing presence of its intention suggests that despite INTRAC's absence, this capacity to work with grassroots organisations from a platform of belief in their worth and not just as a consultancy, is still alive.

It is interesting to note that although Cordaid's relationship with the INTRAC Malawi Programme began as one of INTRAC Malawi depending on Cordaid for funding, Cordaid's relationship with CABUNGO is now more one of interdependence. CABUNGO and Cordaid share a common project – that of strengthening civil society's ability to transform the effects of HIV/AIDS.

It could be said that through INTRAC's pioneering work on the organisational effects of HIV/AIDS in Malawi, it facilitated the shift in relationship between a northern development agency and a local capacity building NGO. Cordaid has remained tenaciously engaged with organisational capacity building in Malawi for the past ten years, encouraging and supporting INTRAC's efforts and the two local civil society capacity building organisations it helped to midwife.

Although the individual stories of significant organisational change are indisputable, the question of net impact on civil society and specific civil society organisations remains unanswered. This evaluation finds that INTRAC is well positioned to taking up the challenge of developing and supporting the implementation of tools and processes to monitor effects of its and other OD and capacity building interventions on the organisations they work with and their beneficiaries, but not necessarily on their longer-term impact.

For a clearer picture of impact at a grassroots level in Malawi and at a policy level, INTRAC, CADECO, Cordaid and CABUNGO could consider commissioning or undertaking joint case study research or cluster assessments limited to the faith-based membership based organisations that INTRAC/CABUNGO/CADECO have worked with. Such a study could place the question of impact in the social research realm, where it arguably belongs and would provide opportunity for all parties to pursue a common inquiry into the role of organisation and organisations in development in Malawi.

3.5 Sustainability

The benefits of having a member of staff based in the field for many years can clearly be seen by INTRAC in this programme through the sustainability of the results which has been supported by *on-going* mentoring and support. The regular formal and informal working together and encouragement provided by Rick James is the greatest reason for such motivated, competent and values driven Malawian ODPs who have been able to adapt and continue their work in a fast-changing and at times difficult environment.

The training and mentoring was of an excellent quality and highly relevant to the OD needs and working with Malawian civil society groups on OD interventions. But it is interesting to note that the training programme did not include input on how to sustainably run an organisation, although autonomy was the objective for the capacity building unit at CU which became CABUNGO. INTRAC Malawi's input did not include a business development aspect and this seems to be the most difficult challenge presently faced by the local OD capacity building organisations as they struggle to sustain themselves.

The greatest challenge to the sustainability of this work and civil society in Malawi is the way civil society is functioning itself. During interviews, civil society leaders spoke of a 'distortion of focus' from the community and beneficiaries, to the donor needs. There was said to be a lack of authentic participation of beneficiaries and communities in programme planning, implementation and monitoring. Predominantly a 'vertical upward accountability to donors' has developed with little demand or practice of genuine participation of target groups and information sharing and cooperation among similar organisations. Many civil society leaders spoke about the lack of transparency and financial accountability of civil society groups, and how the organisational and political implications of this – i.e., how this affects organisations and their relationships with donors, other organisations and their sustainability – was raised. This of course is not true of all, but a marked trend.

This appears to be exacerbated by the way donors themselves are often functioning. Civil society leaders spoke of a lack of transparency in terms of which organisations are funded for what purpose. Communication and coordination seems to be mostly with their direct partners, and insufficient testing of reports and claims for results, mean that often proposal and reports are written in the capital with little involvement of testing with beneficiaries and target communities. This was said to increase competition between Malawian civil society for scarce resources, and does not provide the best opportunity for learning and co-operation between actors.

Donors such as Cordaid with its partnership approach to funding and sectoral focus on Health and HIV/AIDS in Malawi are well positioned to work on a sectoral basis to go beyond sharing information to strengthening the links between fellow donors and supporting initiatives that link their civil society partners, and their beneficiaries and target communities through dialogue around planning and monitoring of results. The input of organisations like CABUNGO and CADECO would be valuable here.

4. Lessons learned

Apart from the analysis above, this evaluation would like to highlight the following lessons from our interviews with INTRAC, Cordaid and civil society leaders in Malawi.

For Cordaid

For Cordaid the question of how capacity of partners can be built is key to the success of its development mission. The comparatively moderate investment in this programme (270,200 Euro over 9 years) has produced valuable experience and analysis, as well as several highly competent Malawian OD and capacity building providers.

There appears to have been a difference in understanding between Cordaid and INTRAC when over time, the state of civil society organisation and political effectiveness of civil society organisations became the focus of Cordaid, whereas INTRAC Malawi appears to have maintained its in-depth approach with individual leaders and OD interventions. Whereas for INTRAC the collaboration it facilitated was often about learning, it was not necessarily about addressing capacity needs of civil society broadly, but demonstrating changes within key organisations as fulcrums for development. This disconnect between the two is most evident when one examines the monitoring of the programme.

This evaluation shows the need for improved understanding and clarity about the purpose and anticipated effects in a programme like this – i.e., what results are expected at the different levels (individual, organisational and civil society as a whole). These would be indicators and not rigid or inflexible, but would be particularly useful if participating organisations and even beneficiaries are involved in considering the kind of change that could be expected in an organisations functioning after one or a series of interventions and in the economic and political terrain.

The area of monitoring of capacity building would need to be better developed both by Cordaid and the capacity building partner such as INTRAC if better results are to be enjoyed at the level of organisations. The process of discussing the kinds and level of results expected between Cordaid and capacity building partners like INTRAC needs to be improved in the contracting process and preferably included in the contracts (as currently contracts are made at the level of objectives and planned activities).

The evaluation also discussed the key question – who should be monitoring? Currently the expectation is that the partner – in this case INTRAC, should be monitoring results at the different levels. This would require a systematic approach, which has not been included in the programme, and INTRAC questions their responsibility to be accountable for more than the quality of their input and the effects on those they work with. This experience shows that unless there is more clarity on anticipated results and how they will be monitored, the capacity building organisation may achieve their objectives, but Cordaid may not have information about the change in capacities of the organisations they work to support. If it is important to Cordaid to specifically have information on results at different levels, a specific monitoring system needs to be established and resourced. Better use of external consultants (particularly from Malawi) – and where appropriate working on a sectoral, or cluster basis for joint planning, monitoring and evaluation could make these changes more transparent.

Although Cordaid has been a long-time and often substantial supporter of OD organisations in Africa, partners themselves decide to use or not use such services, and increasingly use other approaches such as horizontal learning. There appears to be benefit in promoting awareness of the different strategies for building capacity, and examples of good practice, which can be shared.

More could have been made of the sharing of learning from this programme within Cordaid. Currently there is no one person responsible in the Policy Department to act as a contact

person for OD issues and there seems to be no system to methodically share information between colleagues and departments on organisational learning. To some extent Cordaid has 'outsourced' its OD/ID role to an 'in house consulting firm' called I/C Consult, but it would be important to discuss how what we are learning from different organisational strengthening interventions can better be shared among staff in Cordaid and even with partners.

The above suggests that more value for Cordaid and its partners could be derived if the role of the OD point person is established to share learning within the organisation and develop guidance for how project officers can plan, contract and monitor organisational strengthening interventions.

For INTRAC

It is interesting that CABUNGO has emerged from a donor funded service NGO, providing subsidised organisational assessments and OD interventions but now in practice predominantly works as a freelance consulting agency. The range of experiences from being housed by an INGO with substantial donor funding, to finding its way on a commercial basis can be seen. This later structure – a combination of donor funded and consulting was initially envisaged by INTRAC as the most sustainable model. But CU had substantial funding from DfID and specifically required INTRAC to only train on OD, not other capacities that would be required by an independent organisation (which CABUNGO eventually became). The benefits of having a 'hybrid' institution like CABUNGO with both donor funding and consultancy is most obvious as we see the need for capacity building interventions which are not typically covered in consulting contracts. If such 'hybrid' organisations are desirable, what additional entrepreneurial or financial management training or support would therefore be important for such an OD formation programme?

The INTRAC Malawi programme demonstrates the value of having a member of staff based in the field, but also raises the question of what support mechanisms can best be established to support strategy development and problem solving particularly? The internal evaluations were useful, particularly the second in 2003, but what would it take to enable the staff member to feel challenged and supported by colleagues? Is review of reports, and occasional visits enough, or would the critical involvement of another senior member of staff in the design of the programme have been useful? We would like to suggest that a fellow INTRAC staff member with a focus on the organising and advocating role for civil society would have been a valuable in-field accompanier for Rick James.

Whilst the establishment of IPRAD as an organisation can be accepted as a normal part of the risk taking associated with learning about what works, it brings into question the suitability for INTRAC to be involved with establishing such institutions (even with Rick James based in Blantyre) and indeed, if it were to be attempted again, what could be done differently? Civil society leaders spoke about the experience positively, and all agreed that the need was clearly there. But they also spoke about the project being 'built too high' (meaning too much too fast) and hand-over from pioneer (Rick James) to the new organisation not having enough time or support. While each situation has its own dynamics and needs, and there are no sure recipes for success, there are surely lessons to be learned by INTRAC as an INGO in its facilitation over several years of the establishment of a key organisation and its collapse.

5. Conclusions and recommendations

INTRAC's programme in Malawi established a number of important enabling conditions to support CSOs wishing to be purpose driven in Malawi. From our interviews in this evaluation we could see that INTRAC has played a key role in establishing learning relationships between some key leaders, facilitated the emergence of two values led OD organisations, built a discourse around OD in Malawi – of which the analysis and documentation will be referred to as a resource for many years to come. The INTRAC Programme worked with the ODPs to take on research and propose policy change to tackle the effects of HIV/AIDS which was 'close to home' and a clear need – and through this way of working enabled a number of NGO leaders and programme staff to develop experience and confidence in action research. All of the above examples involved linking and learning – a capacity and a value which remains within Malawi and is a building block for future strategies to develop the sector and improved development practice.

The overall impact of the programme in Malawi can best be seen at the level of key individuals in OD providers trained and developed, and key leaders in some of the civil society and capacity building and coalition organisations. This is due to the focus of OD formation and leadership training and mentoring in the programme, as well as the changes in civil society itself with high levels of staff turnover and often turbulent organisational change. However, the benefit of hind-sight over the past ten years shows that other choices could have been made and results more institutionalised and improved through:-

- Better monitoring at the level of organisations benefiting from OD interventions or leadership training and mentoring,
- Better coordination with other capacity building providers working on other aspects other than OD, and particularly
- A programmatic approach involving a range of interventions aimed at the civil society sector, civil society organisations and their beneficiaries, which would complement the focus on civil society leaders.

The INTRAC Malawi programme has produced many valuable contributions to learning and analysis of capacity building with civil society from its experience in Malawi. The 'field based' and pragmatic nature of Rick James's reflection is particularly appreciated, as well as the skill and simplicity perceived in its drafting.

While on one hand there has been a good relationship between Cordaid and INTRAC over the eight years duration of the programme, there also has been a lack of clarity of purpose and expected results. Different understandings about how best a programme of this nature could be planned and monitored – in a 'targeted' or 'un-targeted' way, and a lack of clarifying expected results at different levels and how they will be monitored, and by whom, has been missing. This has led to, very simply put, INTRAC achieving its objectives (as agreed in the contracts) and Cordaid lacking the information they need to claim the programme is successful at the level of civil society, namely the effects of the programme on civil society organisations and civil society as a whole.

In this evaluation, it is suggested that Cordaid improve its ability to clarify results with OD and capacity building organisations at the different levels of individuals, organisations, beneficiaries and communities and the sector as a whole. These should not be applied rigidly but in a way that encourages participation of beneficiaries and communities in designing indicators or anticipated change, to be used simply as indicators. Expected results areas could be included in contracts.

Many civil society leaders in Malawi spoke of the context becoming more confrontational as rights based education takes hold and government is increasingly de-centralised. With government officials being closer to 'the people' and people become stronger in demanding development, programme staff and fieldworkers face an increasingly complex and potentially conflictual context. Civil society leaders in their NGOs and coalitions often in the city are becoming separated from the realities among beneficiaries and communities due to vertical upward accountability to donors being the main focus.

In this situation programme and fieldworker capacity needs to be enhanced particularly to enable authentic participation of 'downward' and 'horizontal' stakeholders, through joint planning, monitoring of results and sharing good practice. Arguably, if mobilising and organising at a community level is ultimately where results are also required, then programme and field staff are on the front line and the link between the civil society organisations, and the participation and results at the level of their beneficiaries and therefore communities are a key focus for demonstrating the success and increased capacity of the organisation and the accountability and relevance at a community level. An improved link between civil society organisations and their constituencies will also strengthen advocacy efforts aimed at policy change in the development sector and help forge alliances between different organisations in a sector, and between different actors in a given community.

Although the evaluation did not allow for exhaustive contextual analysis most of the people interviewed felt that in the Malawian development sector financial management and accountability remains weak. Many civil society leaders spoke of a 'distortion of focus' from the community and beneficiaries, to the needs of donors. There was said to be a lack of authentic participation of beneficiaries and communities in programme planning, implementation and monitoring. Predominantly a 'vertical upward accountability to donors' has developed with little demand or practice of genuine participation of target groups and information sharing and cooperation among similar organisations.

In conclusion, the evaluation makes the following recommendations for Cordaid:

1. Cordaid seeks to improve its contracting and negotiations with OD and capacity building partners on the purpose and anticipated results at different levels (i.e., individuals, organisations, beneficiaries and communities, and civil society as a whole). Contracting could include anticipated results and a specific process for monitoring, either by the partner or a 3rd party.
2. Cordaid review its processes with its partners and explores ways of working at a sectoral and cluster level, and in a way which promotes 'downward' and 'horizontal' accountability among partners and with partners and their constituencies through increased transparency and going on from information sharing, to joint planning and monitoring of results and evaluation at a sector or cluster level.
3. Cordaid further explores how OD and capacity building organisations fit with its overall strategy in Malawi, and further shift its focus to strengthening the link between civil society groups and their constituencies through increased participation of beneficiaries and monitoring of results at different levels, including target communities. The ODPs developed through the INTRAC Malawi Programme and other capacity building organisations in Malawi could be considered suitable for engaging at a sectoral level to conduct research to help address the organisational and political aspects of financial accountability and improve programme participation and joint monitoring and evaluation.

In closing, it has been particularly rewarding to see the level of self-reliance that has been generated by this programme among those with whom it has worked in Malawi. Particularly as other programmes appear at times to entrench dependency on outsiders and experts – this

programme has worked against dependency, and moved beyond it. Ten years on, the Malawian ODPs are seen by their peers and other OD practitioners internationally as having a strong sense of their own professional competence. Those they work with have a high regard for their ability to continue to expand the work of INTRAC in facilitating OD interventions and capacity building processes, in a competent and values driven way. Since this was initially a core objective for the programme in Malawi it can be seen to have been achieved with considerable success.

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