

Narrative Report



Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices on Flood Early Warnings and Early Action among local communities in Zomba and Phalombe, Malawi

Conducted in collaboration between MRCS, DRC, and three graduates, including a Malawian Disaster Risk Management graduate (MUST), and two Danish Political Science graduates (UCPH)

Field work was carried out in September 2023

Background

Compounded by climate change, Malawi has been a victim of repetitive hydro-meteorological disasters, notably floods and droughts, triggering widespread destruction and health risks in the country. Dry spells have caused multiple seasons of crop failure, and storms, cyclones and extreme rain have caused intense flooding in 2015, 2019, twice in 2022, and most recently after Tropical Cyclone Freddy in March 2023. Malawi Red Cross Society (MRCS) has been implementing an Anticipatory Action approach towards multi-hazards in the country since 2017, with a special focus on predicting sudden-onset flooding and activating life-saving actions before the disaster impact. Critical to this approach is reliable early weather forecasts disseminated to local responders for timely action. The Early Warning messages can however only be useful if the local recipients of the messages understand them, trust their validity, and are empowered to act before the disaster impact. It is therefore crucial that the national Disaster Management level know how to tailor these warnings by engaging communities and enhancing the opportunity to ensure effective preparation and Early Action.

Objective

The objective of the study was to survey local communities on their Knowledge, Attitude and Practice on Early Warning and Early Action building on theoretical approaches from Early Warning and Early Action literature, and using a KAP survey methodology through local enumerators. Moreover, this study is based on FGDs with highly impacted local communities in Zomba and Phalombe to nuance the survey findings. Finally, the study is based on KIIs with relevant stakeholders from national Disaster Management departments, district council (DCPC), local authorities (ACPC), Humanitarian Organizations (incl. UN agencies, NGOs and MRCS) and academia. The purpose of conducting the survey and carrying out KIIs as well as FGDs was to create a holistic understanding of the Flood Early Warning System in Malawi, enabling us to provide recommendations for improvements of the system, based on present gaps and challenges.

The study has been conducted by three graduate students, including a graduate student in Malawi studying Disaster Risk Management at Malawi University of Science and Technology (MUST) and two graduates from Denmark studying Political Science at University of Copenhagen (UCPH) to foster knowledge sharing, local anchoring and sustainability.

Target group

Vi targeted the districts Phalombe and Zomba in the Southern Region of Malawi, as these two districts were hardly hit by Cyclone Freddy in 2023, but have only sparsely been researched previously as they are not perceived as "usual suspects" to flood disasters. The districts are both located in the southern high-lands of Malawi and border Lake Chilwa. Moreover, both districts historically share the same high risk level in terms of drought but a low risk level in terms of flooding. As a result of Cyclone Freddy, Zomba and Phalombe are both characterized as part of the six most affected districts in Malawi with the highest number of displaced persons compared with the total population living in the district. When looking at the impact from Tropical Storm Ana in 2022 to

Tropical Cyclone Freddy in 2023, Phalombe went from 869 displaced households after Ana to 26,178 displaced households after Freddy (a 2,900% increase), and Zomba went from 376 displaced households after Ana to 18,036 displaced households after Freddy (a 4,700% increase). In September 2023, both districts were classified as having populations that could barely meet basic food requirements resulting in households either exhausting their pivotal livelihood assets or taking emergency measures to deal with the crisis, and the trend was exacerbated by Cyclone Freddy. Moreover, Phalombe experienced landslides which in some cases wiped away entire communities, including infrastructure. Both districts were victims of extreme 24-hour rainfall from the night of March 13 until the morning of March 14 2023.



Picture 1: FGD in Zomba, GVH Chaweza

Outcome

During the field work in September 2023, comprehensive insights were gained into the multifaceted Flood Early Warning System in Malawi. Through insights from community level stakeholders such as the ACPC and VCPC to top level stakeholders, such as DCCMS, DWR and DoDMA, strengths and gaps in the current system were revealed. Through close collaboration between Malawian and Danish students, knowledge sharing on both methodology and Malawi's climate and context was fostered. In the field, the close collaboration between a Malawian student and two Danish students, enabled overcoming of language barriers and thus an understanding of the context the vulnerable communities find themselves in due to recurring and devastating flood incidents.

In the field, we carried out four FGDs in the villages in Zomba and Phalombe with a total of 26 VCPC members present (see table 1). Moreover, we carried out KIIs with several stakeholders from almost every layer of Malawi's Flood Early Warning System (see table 2)

With important support from local enumerators, 813 respondents from the four villages in Zomba and Phalombe answered the questions in the KAP household survey about their knowledge on Malawi's flood Early Warning System, their trust in the warning messages and whether they feel empowered to take Early Action prior to potential future disasters. Hereof, 542 were female, and 271 were male (see table 3 and 4).



Picture 2: FGD in Phalombe, GVH Mapondo

Table 1: Overview of focus groups discussions

Focus group discussions with Village Civil Protection Committees				
Date of focus group discussion	District	Traditional Authority	Group Village Head	Number of participants (female/male)
September 21st	Phalombe	Nkhulambe	Mapondo	8 (5 female/3 male)
September 22nd	Phalombe	Nkhulambe	Nkhulambe	6 (1 female/5 male)
September 23rd	Zomba	Mwambo	Magoli	6 (3 female/3 male)
September 25th	Zomba	Mwambo	Chaweza	6 (0 female/6 male)

Table 2: Overview of Key Informant Interviews (both

Key informant interviews			
Date of interview	Position of key informant	Organisation	Organisation type

September 14th	Forecast based action specialist	Malawi Red Cross Society	NGO
September 18th	Data analyst & PMER (Planning, monitoring, Evaluation and Reporting) coordinator	Malawi Red Cross Society	NGO
September 18th	Head of Humanitarian Operations & Resilience	Save the Children	NGO
September 19th	Innovation specialist (Drones & Data for Development)	UNICEF	IGO
September 21th	Chair	Area Civil Protection Committee (ACPC), Phalombe	Local authority
September 22nd	Principal Nutrition Officer	District Civil Protection Committee (DCPC), Phalombe	Local authority
September 23rd	Chair	ACPC Zomba	Local authority
September 25th	Secretary of District Officer	DCPC Zomba	Local authority
September 26th	Senior Meteorologist, Officer in-charge	DCCMS (Department of Climate and Meteorological Services)	Government
September 26th	Head of Department in Climate Sciences at Ndata School of Climate and Earth Sciences (NSCES)	MUST (Malawi University of Science and Technology)	University
September 29th	Project Coordinator for the Green Climate Fund funded Modernised Climate Information & Early Warning Systems (MCLIMES) project in Malawi	UNDP (United Nations Development Program)	IGO
September 30th	Disaster Risk Mitigation Officer	DoDMA (Department of Disaster Management Affairs)	Government
October 3rd	Senior Hydrologist	DWR (Department of Water Resources)	Government
October 11th	Principal Hydrologist	DWR (Department of Water Resources)	Government
October 11th	Resilience Officer	CARD (Churches Action in Relief and	NGO

		Development)	
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Table 3: Overview of gender distribution in the KAP survey

Gender distribution in the KAP Survey data		
Location	Male	Female
Phalombe, GVH Mapondo	76	142
Phalombe, GVH Nkhulambe	72	126
Zomba GVH Magoli	61	143
Zomba, GVH Chaweza	62	131
Total	271	542

Table 4: Overview of age distribution in the survey

Age distribution in the KAP Survey data				
Age Range	Phalombe, GVH Mapondo	Phalombe, GVH Nkhulambe	Zomba, GVH Magoli	Zomba, GVH Chaweza
18 - 29 years	90	68	72	64
30 - 45 years	87	85	79	80
46 - 64 years	30	32	32	37
65+ years	11	13	21	12
Total	218	198	204	193

Policy recommendations

We have presented six overarching policy recommendations, including sub recommendations, which are based on key findings from the analysis. Our recommendations are inherently interconnected, yet we have categorized them into six distinct themes. The recommendations are structured by outlining a problem, the recommendation, timeframe, and action points to achieve it. Finally, it is crucial to emphasize how donor aid will play an important role in our solutions, given its significant impact on Malawi's economy. However, donor funding is at the same time at risk of reproducing the country's already deep-rooted aid dependency making donor funding problematic in terms of economic independence long term. Nonetheless, for the time being, donor funding is the most pragmatic and realistic option for implementing the following recommendations.

Policy Recommendation 1: Consolidate DCCMS and DWR's hydrology unit under the same Ministry

Collaboration difficulties exist between the DWR and the DCCMS who are placed in separate ministries despite their common task to produce flood warnings. Overlapping

mandates, minimal exchange of information and data, and bureaucratic procedures impede their effective collaboration.

Recommendation: The division of hydrology in DWR should be reallocated to the Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Changes where DCCMS is placed. This restructuring aims to streamline workflows, improve data sharing through access to the same databases, and reduce bureaucratic delays by only having one procedure for approving the warning. A unified department overseeing both meteorology and hydrology could enable rapid and seamless collaboration, resulting in timely distribution of flood warnings in Malawi.

Action points: It requires a political buy-in to do an organizational restructuring and might only be feasible following the next general election in 2025. Such a restructuring will have personal impacts on the employees who will be moved to other positions and the recommendation will require advocacy towards the government. A first step to convince the government could be conducting research on how other countries similar to Malawi in profile, structure these two pivotal tasks and the efficiency of it. This could be done in a collaboration between Malawi's University of Science and Technology, covering the field of disaster risk management, and University of Malawi's Department of Political and Administrative Studies to ensure insights from both fields.

Policy Recommendation 2: Strengthen Malawi's information management systems for risk mapping

Currently, no unified information management system exists in Malawi to produce risk mapping, which hinders accurate predictions of flood impact, putting communities at risk. This was the case with the occurrence of landslides in Phalombe, a phenomenon that could have been predicted by risk mapping.

Recommendation: Establish a centralized database that integrates all data sources required to do risk mapping, such as hydrology, meteorology, population, infrastructure, history of disasters, and socioeconomic data. This should include standardizing a format for data collection to facilitate seamless data exchange and compatibility, ensuring that data can be used to create risk mapping.

Action points: This could possibly be feasible long term, possibly within five years, as the data already exists but it requires restructuring and that one department is responsible for a unified database accessible for DoDMA, DCCMS, and DWR. As mentioned in the literature, data is costly across the globe (Werner, 2022), and the suggestion will require both time, human resources, and political will. Organizations such as UNICEF are already implementing projects to create risk mapping in the Northern region of Malawi (KI UNICEF), but going forward, it is critical that the data is not collected into fragmented projects in the country. The centralized database should be placed within the Ministry of Information and Digitalization who could gather all data types from various government bodies into one system, ensuring that the data are consolidated and available to assess risks. Funding could be provided by the Systematic Observations Financing Facility (SOFF), a UN

Fund that aims to bridge the data gap in climate and weather observations in countries facing severe shortages, with a priority on LDCs and Small Island Developing States (WMO, n.d.).

Policy Recommendation 3: Improve communication and awareness across

3.1 Conduct research post disasters to assess what types of warnings are successful

An evaluation gap in warnings disseminated at national and district level are considered to be a key impediment towards improving the warning messages and ensuring response as there is no clear indication of what types of warnings reach the end-users and enable them to take action.

Recommendation: It is pivotal to implement evaluation and reporting mechanisms, to monitor to what extent the different channels reach the local communities. Post flooding events, surveys should be conducted in each affected district on which channels the local communities heard the warnings from and which of the messages enabled them to act. By collecting such data, future early warnings can be based on data indicating the percentage of the reach of different types of warnings and their impact.

Action points: The Ministry of information and Digitalization in Malawi should be the responsible ministry to initiate this process and conduct the research, having both officers in the central government and officers in the district councils. Donor funding could be allocated to the Ministry of Information and Digitalization, earmarked to conduct research post a disaster. The data collection service "Datawinners" could be a tool to collect the data as it can send out questionnaires that can be received on regular SMS, i.e. to non-smartphones (The Communication Initiative Network, 2017). However, this would still require people on the ground to assist with interpreting the questionnaire. While the research could be initiated short-term, the collection of data across all districts will require human resources, expertise and standardized procedures initiated from scratch. Therefore, the enabling of research that predicts warnings' impact is a long-term suggestion.

3.2 Boost the Emergency Telecommunications Cluster, ensuring streamlined warnings

Dissemination of nationally broadcasted warning messages is not streamlined across channels, which confuses the local communities about the impact. Currently, warnings are disseminated nationally through telecommunication, including radio, TV, cell phones, and the Internet. However, the substance of the warnings is not streamlined, and guidance on how to disseminate a warning on community level is lacking.

Recommendation: The Emergency Telecommunications Cluster (ETC) should be empowered, ensuring better cooperation among telecommunication companies, such as the national companies Airtel and TNM, DCCMS and DoDMA in dissemination of the warnings (ET cluster, n.d.). This means that when DCCMS and DWR have produced a warning, DoDMA should include the network of telecom providers in the dissemination process. If recommendation 3.1 were to be fulfilled, it would be essential to draw on such findings to conclude how the warning messages should be disseminated nationally going forward.

Action points: DoDMA is currently developing a new communication strategy, making this recommendation possible in the short term. For the strategy, it is pivotal that it focuses on empowering the ETC, outlines the responsibility of each stakeholder, and includes a step-by-step plan on how to disseminate early warnings. Moreover, a “warning provider” focal points should be appointed for each organization in the ETC, who should be part of frequent meetings and a WhatsApp group, enabling cooperation, knowledge sharing, and streamlining of the warnings. To assist with funding and technical expertise in policy recommendation 3.1 and 3.2, we suggest replicating the project “Big data for development”. This project was established in cooperation between, among others, Digital Impact Alliance, Malawi Ministry of Health, MACRA and Airtel to improve information on the availability of health services in Malawi using network operator data. Today, the Ministry of Health in Malawi utilizes the project’s model to deploy 900 health posts across Malawi and the project has been replicated to 14 other countries (Digital Impact Alliance, n.d.).

Policy Recommendation 4: Capacity building in the districts

4.1 : Assign a MET Officer to each district for advice and information sharing

The absence of meteorological expertise in every district limits the timely mobilization of the CPCs and hampers the ability to issue timely, precise, and tailored impact-based warnings, leaving communities unprepared to respond to impending flood hazards.

Recommendation: There should be a MET Officer assigned to each district, facilitating a more precise risk assessment in collaboration with DCPC officers covering other areas such as health, disaster management, agriculture. With a MET Officer assigned, there is capacity for real-time monitoring of weather changes and timely mobilization of CPCs and Early Warning Teams. This swift response is critical to allow the VCPCs to alert communities well in advance, allowing for adequate preparation and mitigation measures. To ensure implementation of the action points in recommendation 4.1., 4.2, and 4.3 below, we recommend seeking funding from the Climate Adaptation Fund’s “Direct Access” programme (Adaptation Fund, n.d.). The fund aims to help vulnerable communities in developing countries to adapt and build resilience to climate change, and once accredited the Direct Access programme, Malawi's implementing entities would be fully responsible for project and programme management, including monitoring, finances, and reporting (ibid.). By doing this, the districts can avoid that their capacity depends on Humanitarian Organizations transient strategic focuses.

Action points: It should be feasible short term as UNDP already has an established project with DCCMS, training 37 MET officers, which should eventually result in having two MET officers present in all of DCCMS’ 22 weather stations in Malawi (KI UNICEF; DCCMS, n.d. a). With 28 districts, this should enable one MET officer to have the responsibility for one specific district. The weather stations are spread across the country but are not necessarily located close to a District Council (DC). Even those located close to a DC might only report to DCCMS Headquarter and not share information with the DC (KI MRCS2). Hence, there is a need to change the mandate of the MET officers to also

encompass a responsibility to inform and advise the assigned district closest to the weather stations. Moreover, as a solution to the long driving distances between DCs and weather stations, and the fact that gasoline is a very expensive commodity in Malawi, implementing online meetings and WhatsApp group communication could be the way forward.

4.2: Every district should disseminate impact-based warnings tailored to the district's local communities

The absence of timely, precise, and impact-based warnings from all districts result in communities being inadequately prepared, leading to increased vulnerability and preventable losses. The districts' varying resource levels directly affect their ability to effectively disseminate customized, impact-based warnings to local communities.

Recommendation: By customizing impact-based warnings to specific areas and communities, the warnings can convey actionable information, enhancing trust in stakeholders, preparedness, and response measures within the local communities. To meet this gap, it requires the implementation of 1) recommendation 2 which will allow risk mapping, enabling precise impact-based warning, 2) recommendation 3.1 recommending reporting and evaluations of the warnings' reach as this will give an insight into the different dissemination channels in terms of what works when, where, and how, and 3) recommendation 3.2 which will ensure a MET Officer present in each district to advice on meteorology, ensuring timely warnings. Hence, achieving this recommendation to its fullest will only be feasible long-term. Nonetheless, based on this paper's findings, short-term initiatives can also improve the current ways of doing impact-based and tailored warnings, outlined in the following three action points.

Action points:

- I. Besides nationally broadcasted radio and SMS warnings, DCPCs should collaborate with community radio stations and telecom companies, such as Airtel and TNM, and ACPCs on issuing warnings at the district level about the specific impact in the district's TAs. This would require the appointment of focal points in each organization who could take part in meetings between the stakeholders. Specifically, for tailored SMS dissemination, the DC has a phone directory of all individuals in the districts which should be available to telecom providers when early warnings have been issued. As this is already being done during election campaigns in Malawi, the timespan of such initiatives is short-term (African Elections Project, 2009). Inspired by the EWS in Mozambique, the data collection tool Datawinners could be used to disseminate the warning messages and at the same collect data on the warnings' reach, fulfilling recommendation 3.1 (The World Bank, 2023b).
- II. The warnings through telecommunication should always be accompanied with on the ground dissemination by local gatherings and door-to-door warnings in the GVHs to prevent misunderstandings and delayed responses. With on-the-ground dissemination, it is possible for the communities to ask questions, create synergies between the upcoming hazard and previous experiences and to include local customs, e.g. indigenous knowledge and religious

beliefs, to ensure adequate perceptions of the risk. Moreover, there is a high trust in the stakeholders disseminating the messages who will often be ACPCs, VCPCs and the chiefs. It further enables reaching the part of the population who do not have access to WhatsApp, SMS, or radio.

- III. While the van publicity does not enable impact-based warnings, it does enable a tailored warning to the GVHs. However, it is pivotal that it is done frequently in the days up to a potential hazard hit and that a map of where the van should drive is developed together with the ACPCs and VCPC chairs who have in-depth knowledge about the areas and where community members are localized, particularly those living furthest from the main roads.

To ensure the three action points, an action plan should be developed together with all ACPCs, on how, when and where the three dissemination channels are to be implemented. It is paramount that the warnings include phrasings that explicitly describe that the danger of staying is greater than the costs of evacuating.

4.3: Capacitate every VCPC in Malawi with basic equipment, training and contingency plans

VCPCs are crucial to ensure last-mile reach of the warnings through door-to-door warnings and local gatherings. They ensure that a link is made between scientific warnings and local customs in the communities. However, **if VCPCs are not provided with basic equipment such as megaphones and bicycles, or equipped with training on disseminating early warnings, their ability to warn all members in their GVH is severely reduced.**

Recommendation: Providing all VCPCs with rubber boots, uniforms, handheld megaphones, and bicycles enables swift movement across vast or challenging terrains facilitating the rapid dissemination of warnings. This ensures that crucial information reaches everyone in the communities, also the ones living far from the main roads and who do not have access to the other warning channels, such as WhatsApp, text messages, and radio. Moreover, facilitating trainings are also important to capacitate the VCPCs with the right knowledge and tools on how the warnings are most effectively disseminated, as well as how to handle situations where community members are reluctant to evacuate. All VCPCs are supposed to be trained in elements such as early warnings. However, when VCPCs rotate every five years, it is critical that new members are trained as well. Finally, it is paramount that the contingency plans are developed for each GVH to ensure that the VCPCs have a step-by-step action plan to rely on before an impending flooding.

Action points: Capacitating the VCPCs with equipment and contingency plans is already provided to previously affected districts through donor funding and government resource allocation. Hence, the structures are already in place, but additional donor funding should be earmarked to equip all VCPCs in the country. Likewise, there should be a plan in place to ensure that new VCPC members are swiftly trained by the DCPCs so there is never a knowledge gap when a disaster hits. It is critical

that these elements are met in the short-term as telecom dissemination still risks not being heard by all.

Policy Recommendation 5: Improve the functionality of river gauges and raise awareness among local communities about their significance

5.1 Improve the functionality of river gauges

When river gauges wash away, are out of power, or provide false alarms, accurate monitoring of river levels is compromised, hindering timely flood predictions and warnings to vulnerable communities.

Recommendation: Replacing and reinforcing the river gauges is imperative to bolstering the country's ability to anticipate floods and execute timely disaster response plans.

Action points: Besides the need for the manufacturers to improve the gauges, donor funding short-term should be provided to DWR to ensure they have adequate human resources for replacing, reinforcing, monitoring, and setting up river gauges when they are damaged. This could also be funded by the Climate Adaptation Fund's "Direct Access" programme as the funding will need to be continuous and not limited to a project period. Because the fund's approach is to allow national entities to control finance, monitoring and reporting, DWR can use the funding to continuously uphold the adequate human resources needed in DWR.

Problem 5.2: Create awareness among local communities about river gauges' function

The lack of transparency towards the local communities on the river gauges' purpose and function, results in mistrust and vandalism. Communities in rural Malawi feel surveilled by the river gauges or are not fully aware of their function. This leads to misunderstandings, distrust in stakeholders, and in the worst case, vandalism of the river gauges. The absence of awareness hampers effective communication between stakeholders and communities, impeding the collaborative effort needed for accurate flood monitoring and response.

Recommendation: As it is now, only the ACPC and VCPCs are oriented about the river gauges and their function. This means that the rest of the community members are not made aware of the gauges unless the CPCs conduct awareness campaigns on their own initiative. Moreover, ACPC and VCPCs are elected for a five-year term, resulting in new members who will not know the purpose of the river gauges unless the information is shared to them. It is pivotal that it is not only the VCPCs but the whole GVH who is oriented about the river gauge installation.

Action points: The same SMS system recommended in recommendation 5.2 should be used here, so the DCPCs, in collaboration with telecommunications companies, distribute a SMS explaining the installation of a river gauge. The text message should be accompanied with a local gathering with the VCPCs elaborating on the installation where community members have the possibility to ask follow-up questions. This could be implemented short-term as the system is already in place. It requires having physical or online meetings between the DC, Airtel and TNM, The Malawi

Communications Regulatory Authority and the involved ACPC and VCPC chair in the districts prior to the installation of a river gauge. Here, they should agree on a message to distribute, including a date and time for a local gathering.

Policy Recommendation 6: Ensure that the humanitarian organizations complement the system

6.1 : Establish projects that are locally embedded in the communities and with a clear exit strategy

The transient nature of project-based humanitarian efforts in Malawi's FEWS creates a cycle of inconsistent support, leading to gaps in sustainable disaster preparedness and response within vulnerable communities, consequently affecting trust in the organizations.

Recommendation: It is paramount that structures are in place to ensure more sustainability in project-based activities. This includes ensuring that the projects are locally embedded, ensuring local communities are actively involved in maintaining and managing the systems for long-term effectiveness, and that HOs cannot enter a district without living up to certain requirements about sustainability.

Action points:

- I. Implement a strategic focus on community ownership in projects. Ensuring this strategy is fulfilled, HOs could conduct evaluation studies mid-term on whether communities feel and take ownership of the project initiatives, ensuring they are actively involved in maintaining and managing the systems for long-term effectiveness.
- II. Incorporate an exit strategy within the project framework, focusing on how the HOs withdraw from areas. The exit strategy should involve a gradual transition of responsibilities to the local communities and relevant government departments. This strategy should ensure that when humanitarian organizations withdraw, communities can independently sustain and manage the activities.
- III. Implement a no-cost extension policy that enables humanitarian organizations to stay engaged during a disaster without the pressure of an immediate project end. This extension allows them to continue support and implementation without the risk of exiting amid an ongoing disaster.

It is the District Executive Committee (DEC) that accepts or declines HOs in the districts. Therefore, the committee should include a requirement that HOs have to include these three strategies in their project document, in their protocols. These initiatives should be feasible in the short term as there has been a growing push in recent years to shift humanitarian efforts toward more sustainable, long-term solutions, building community engagement, and creating lasting change rather than solely providing short-term aid or interventions.

6.2 Guarantee that projects align with national structures

Lack of alignment between donor-funded projects and national structures leads to projects undermining mandates and agreements in the national FEWS structure. Aligning projects with national structures empowers both national departments and the overall structure of the National Disaster Risk Management (DRM). If projects are to be sustainable, HOs must ensure that all their activities empower the national, district, and community structures.

Action points: At the national level, within the Office of the Presidency where DoDMA operates, there is a need to establish protocols requiring engagement and approval from relevant government departments before initiating projects, ensuring alignment with national mandates and agreements. Malawi has a government department, NGORA (NGO Regulatory Authority), which should be responsible for monitoring HO's compliance to these requirements. Similarly, at the district level, the District Executive Committee (DEC) should adopt a parallel approach to ensure proper alignment and coordination with local structures such as the DCPC, ACPC and VCPC.