



Malawi Government

KEYNOTE ADDRESS

***“STRENGTHENING EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAMMING
IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS
(MALAWI)”***

WALUSUNGU KAYIRA

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“STRENGTHENING EVIDENCE BASED PROGRAMMING IN LOCAL GOVERNMENTS

- It is my great honour and privilege to be here this morning and be part of this important Africa Evidence Network (AEN) colloquium.
- It is also with pleasure that I wish to join the Director of Ceremonies in welcoming you all to this auspicious function. Let me register my sincere appreciation to all of you for patronising this Africa Evidence Network colloquium which is key in building capacity to use research evidence in all disciplines of socio and economic development.
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**, the government of Malawi through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development in Collaboration with the Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development introduced the Monitoring and Evaluation System for all the Local Authorities as a catalyst for the smooth implementation of the development programmes.
- In order to facilitate this initiative, the Monitoring and Evaluation Officers and Data Entry Clerks were recruited and deployed to all the 35 Local Authorities in order to facilitate data collection and processing in the Local Authorities. Similarly, District Monitoring and Evaluation Coordination Committees were instituted in order to facilitate collection of data and utilization of various evidence based reports that are generated by Local Authorities.

- You may wish to know; **Ladies and Gentlemen** that in tandem with the Decentralisation philosophy, the Government instituted Local Authorities by the act of parliament (local government act, 1998). The act establishes both rural and urban authorities (City, Municipality, Town and District Councils).
- The Local Government Act and the Decentralisation Policy (1998) in this context, has empowered the Local Authorities to plan, implement and monitor development initiatives at the local level and with the fulfilment of the Local Government elections that ushered in the Ward Councillors, the governance cycle at the Local Authority level is almost complete.
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**, the Government designed a result based Monitoring and Evaluation system to track the performance of the national strategies, thus the first and second generation of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS). This M & E system was strengthened through the district and community level monitoring mechanism.
- To this end, the Government in collaboration with the development partners have since 2005 to date contributed significantly in supporting capacity development for Result Based Monitoring and Evaluation initiatives for the Local Authorities (LA) in order to improve on monitoring of progress for development programmes. However the development has revealed slow progress in achieving the planned milestones.

- **Ladies and Gentlemen**, Let me echo that, this culture of Monitoring and Evaluation unveiled much hunger and passion to strengthen the research discipline especially in the health, agriculture and economic sector just to mention some. One would therefore imagine that with a myriad of evidence through research, formulation of policies, decision making and empowerment of the rural masses would benefit from such endowment.
- Despite all this concerted efforts, **Ladies and Gentlemen** the Local Authorities still experience several challenges in terms of both reporting and collecting relevant data for decision making at the Local Authority level. It should therefore be echoed that the process of producing the Local Authorities planning documents namely; Socio Economic Profiles (SEP's) and the District Development Plans (DDPs) have a bearing on credible data supported with evidence.
- The M&E systems at district level are still in their formative stages, especially with regard to capacity of M&E staff, the infrastructure for data collection, storage and analysis. The same challenges of harmonization faced at the national level are present at district level; further complicated by lack of access to appropriate technologies.
- In the same vein, a number of studies have also revealed that lack of strategic leadership skills within the administrative structures in terms of the council operating as a coordinated team and providing direction to officers on their roles is one of the major constraints. Consequently a lot of activities and meetings appear to be ad hoc, uncoordinated, and unplanned. This clearly indicates that decisions on allocation of resources are made with limited or without use of evidence.

- In view of such developments, there is an urgent need to reverse the situation and transform Malawi into a nation that will respect, value and strengthen a culture of using evidence in both decision making and programming.
- **Ladies and Gentlemen**, with such challenge before us, it should be highlighted that establishing a credible, effective and sustainable M&E system in Malawi is not simply a technical fix that can be transferred from another country and setting. It must be relevant to the constraints and opportunities that are present in 2014 in Malawi.
- Most Malawians remain sceptical that a sufficient alliance of interests and critical mass of reformers and incentives can be generated to create a demand for evidence and monitoring and evaluation that will sustain introduction of new or improved systems. The current vicious circle of poor supply of data and equally low demand for evidence and analysis of data has to be replaced by a virtuous circle of increasing demand for data and its analysis complemented by an improving supply and quality of data.

- In the same vein, another important issue to be addressed is the strengthening of evidence-based planning and decision making of District Councils. To this end, the “M&E Culture”, and its benefits, needs to be advocated for and strengthened not only at district level but nationally. The aim of national advocacy campaign is to ensure sufficient resources flows to the M&E systems at district level in order to strengthen the systems in a sustainable manner.
- It is therefore the dire expectation of Malawians **Ladies and Gentlemen**, that such workshops like this colloquium should culminate into positive transformation and value addition to the current systems which are critical in achieving the objectives articulated in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy II(MGDS II)
- May God bless you abundantly.