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**Watchdog NGOs in Malawi: The Case of Centre for Human Rights and  
Rehabilitation in Malawi (CHRR)**

**A RESEARCH PAPER PRESENTED BY**

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**This document represents part of the author's study programme while at the Institute of Social Studies; the views stated herein are those of the author and not necessarily those of the Institute.**

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## **Dedication**

To my late sister Nubby Kishombe who passed away while I was in The Netherlands. Your departure stabbed my heart but your memory made me carry on. You were a dear sister to me, a loving mother to Neema and Faith and a loving wife to Frank. May your soul rest in peace.



## **Abstract**

This study is an investigation on the factors that impede upon the functions of watchdog NGOs in Malawi using the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR) as a case study. Using participatory data collection tools such as focus group discussions and one-to-one interviews, information on good governance, human rights and freedom were collected from target groups and watchdog organizations.

The key findings are categorized in two ways. First are the challenges related to CHRR itself which amongst many of them are external than internal. The other findings affect all NGOs in this sector. The key findings in this study were that of the tension and suspicious kind of the state and watchdog NGOs relationship. This hinges upon the aspect of trust and the political space where both of them are to interact. The practice of state accountability happens to be problematic as well for NGOs since the state in itself is not accountable to its citizens. However, amongst NGOs, there are internal factors that contribute to their lack of effectiveness. There is inadequate internal accountability. Corruption and lack of financial accountability remains a greatest weakness for them. This has affected their credibility amongst the duty bearers whom they want to hold them accountable as well as citizens they claim to represent. The citizens as well have let down these NGOs in the sense that people are not inclined to get involved in controversial political and economical issues. This is a biggest challenge since, Watchdog NGOs relies heavily on the participation of grassroots in order for their claims to be legitimized and sustained.

By giving details of what they are involved in, their limitations and challenges, opportunities for improvements were identified including need to strengthen strategies that focus on capacity building on the part of the grassroots population as well as improving on networking so as to reduce the competition spirit that exists amongst them. Therefore, this study about watchdog NGOs in Malawi has laid groundwork for further research aimed at re-shaping the understanding of how to make watchdog NGOs serve the cause of development better.

The first part of the document discusses the importance of maintaining accurate records of all transactions. It emphasizes that proper record-keeping is essential for the integrity of the financial system and for the ability to detect and prevent fraud.

It is also noted that the system should be designed to be user-friendly and to provide clear and concise information to all users. This will help to ensure that the system is used effectively and that the data is reliable.

The document concludes by stating that the system is a key component of the organization's financial management and that it is essential to ensure its continued success and reliability.

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## **Abbreviations and Acronyms**

CBE	Community Based Educators
CSO	Civil Society Organizations
CHRR	Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation
DA	District Assembly
DC	District Coordinator
CC	Community Coordinator
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
PAC	Public Affairs Committee
NICE	National Initiative for Civic Education
HIVOS	Humanist Institute for Co-operation with Developing Countries, Netherlands
NGO	Non Governmental Organizations
MHRC	Malawi Human Rights Commission
CSC	Centre for Social Concern
GVH	Group Village Headman
VH	Village Headman
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
UDF	United Democratic front

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REPLY TO THE SUBCOMMISSION

The Commission has received the report of the Subcommission on the activities of the Commission during the period from 1968 to 1970. The Commission has reviewed the report and has found it to be a valuable contribution to the work of the Commission. The Commission has also received the report of the Subcommission on the activities of the Commission during the period from 1971 to 1973. The Commission has reviewed the report and has found it to be a valuable contribution to the work of the Commission.

## **Chapter One: Setting the Context of the study**

### **1.0 General Introduction**

The proliferation of non-governmental organizations (NGOs) is one of the most striking features of the contemporary world (Welch, 2001:1). The non governmental sector has exploded since World War II, with its growth curve seemingly exponential. The NGOs, as players, were rarely written into the scripts of global and domestic politics, with the major exception of the international committee of the Red Cross. But by the start of the twenty-first century, non governmental organizations were definitely part of the entire production. They distributed disaster relief and development aid, consulted openly with governments about the wording of international treaties, increasingly monitored governments' performance, and increasingly received attention in academic research. In recent years, NGOs increasingly perform other roles such as watch-dogging besides relief and development. However, the question that is often asked is how well the watch-dog NGOs have performed the tasks in which they have established themselves for. With all these facts, it is important to evaluate the performance of the non governmental organizations working in the field of human rights.

In most African countries there was a spate of new NGOs around the time of independence. In Malawi, just as was the case in other African countries, prior to multiparty system of government in the early 1990s, there were 'developmental NGOs', as opposed to governance NGOs. The later is a recent phenomenon. These organisations have continued to grow ever since (Bratton 1989:571). Fowler argues that NGOs have mushroomed, doubling and tripling their numbers in many countries since the 1980s. However, statistics for southern NGOs are usually not available, but the explosive growth of NGOs in many countries is clearly related to the availability of official funding (Fowler, 1991; Constantino-David, 1992). The picture is the same for Malawi. Chirwa, (2001:1) indicates that the advent of multi party politics in 1993/4 ushered in a generation of non governmental organizations. They are concerned with political and socio-economic concepts and interests such as human rights, empowerment, gender equality,

poverty reduction, political participation, and sustainable development. Since the change to political pluralism, Malawi has adopted new legal and policy frameworks. One such policy is that of decentralisation adopted in 1998 (MGPDD, 2005:4). The overall objective of this policy is to improve service delivery to the citizens and strengthen democracy at grassroots level. This transition coincided with change in focus by donors. The technical and financial support from the donor community started being channeled to NGOs, who are seen to be working directly with the local communities. Due to the fact that political power, responsibilities and financial resources were to be transferred to local governments, this led to the increased number of watch-dog non governmental organizations both at national as well as local level. More non governmental organisations assumed the role of watchdog especially in monitoring human rights, governance and service delivery by government.

At this point therefore, understanding the role in the picture of NGOs as watchdogs is crucial to levelling the play ground. Therefore this study focuses on understanding and analysing the role of CHRR and identifying factors that affect them as a watchdog organisation in good governance, human rights and freedom.

## **1.1 Problem Statement**

Malawi, as elsewhere in Africa after the 'second liberation' of the early 1990s, researchers, donors, actors and agencies have commonly seen NGOs as the leading guardians of civil society. Englund (2003:1), states that the common expectation has been that these organizations should provide outlets for popular concerns and grievances, while also acting as watchdogs against the abuse of rights and freedoms in the new dispensation. However, NGOs especially those that focus on the advancement of human rights have come under heavy criticism as how they execute their functions. Phiri, (2002:9) contends that 'non-governmental organizations are funded to participate in the affairs of a country...in most cases it is the ideas of the country from which the funds come that they promote'. Further, the ruling elite, and those who to seek its favours, have tended to offer critical remarks on these NGOs, accusing them of donor-driven agendas,

enrichment at the expense of the poor, elitism, being unpatriotic and many other ills (Englund: 2003: 191). These, among other issues, undermine the effective performance of these watchdog NGOs in Malawi.

Even though the political situation in Malawi seems to be more conducive for these watchdog NGOs to operate now than fifteen years ago, abuses of human rights appear to be on the increase, even in areas where they operate. Despite the increasing number of watch-dog NGOs in Malawi working in the fields of governance and human rights, service delivery at the local level has not improved much, nor has reported cases of embezzlement of public resources reduced.

## **1.2 Relevance and Justification**

There have been a lot of studies on NGO in Malawi which focused mainly on their roles in democratic decentralization, budget advocacy and participation. While appreciating the importance of this focus, this research takes a different dimension by focusing on why watchdog NGOs perform the way they do. This area of investigation seldom receives any attention from researchers. Understanding the underlying factors impinging upon effective watch-dogging by NGOs is pertinent to the whole discourse on good governance, human rights and freedom.

This type of research appears to offer a comprehensive framework for discussing effective watch-dogging and provides new insights and uncovers promising angles for the future choices by this sector of NGOs. Therefore, by exposing the obstacles and weaknesses of watchdog local-based NGOs in Malawi this study has laid the groundwork for further research aimed at re-shaping our understanding of how to make watchdog NGOs serve the cause of development better. By giving details of their limitations and challenges, the study unveils opportunities for improvements both to the donors and the beneficiaries. This study has proposed that things can change within the watchdog NGOs. If the results and the recommendations from this study are incorporated by the respective

NGOs, they have the potential to benefit not only the watchdog NGOs fraternity but also government as a whole.

### **1.3 The Case Study: CHRR**

This research takes Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation which is one of the Malawi's leading local non governmental organizations as a case study. CHRR has been selected due to a joint partnership between ISS/HIVOS research collaboration as well as based on the role different HIVOS' partners play in democracy, good governance and human rights monitoring in Malawi. CHRR as an organization offered a unique opportunity to investigate a wide range of issues because it is one of the few local watchdog NGOs in Malawi that operate both at national and grassroots level. In addition, CHRR has a relatively long history of existence on the area of watch-dogging, which made it a suitable case with a stronger possibility for finding out lessons learned.

### **1.4 Research objective and questions**

Using a case study approach (CHRR), the aim of this study is to identify the potential obstacles to the watchdog function of NGO for purposes of promoting good governance, human rights and freedom in Malawi. In line with this aim, the central research question was: What are the factors that impede upon the effective functioning of watchdog NGOs in Malawi? More specifically, the main research question was broken down into the following:

1. What conditions permit the growth and vibrancy of watchdog NGOs?
2. What internal structures, procedures, methods and relationships within and among NGOs and other stakeholders make them effective watchdogs?
3. How has the history, evolution and identity of CHRR shaped its role as a watchdog institution?
4. How is CHRR perceived by others as a watchdog NGO?
5. What lessons can be learned about what constitutes a credible watchdog NGO from the CHRR case?



## **1.5 Methodology**

### **1.5.1 Study sites**

This research was conducted in Lilongwe (urban and rural) and Salima Districts (See Annex III). Within these districts, there are specific communities where CHRR implements activities and these are Traditional Authorities Kalolo and Chiseka (Lilongwe rural), Traditional Authorities Tsabango and Chitukula (Lilongwe Urban). In Salima District, CHRR implements activities in Traditional Authorities Khombedza and Kalonga. Note that these districts are amongst the 9 districts where CHRR operates.<sup>1</sup>

### **1.5.2 Study design and sampling**

This research was based on qualitative case study approach with primary data obtained through semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions. Data was collected from CHRR employees and a board member and its target communities. Government officials, CHRR volunteer workers as well as members of the community including traditional chiefs as key informants at grassroots level, were also involved in the interviews. The idea was to have deep insights into the roles, strategies and approaches of the watchdog NGOs in Malawi.

The research further conducted semi-structured interviews with Malawi Human Rights Commission, which is a government institution aimed at promoting human rights and accountability: Lilongwe District Commissioner (DC), National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE), Public Affairs Committee and the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), an international organisation, by way of detailed interviews on the conceptual areas of this study. The aim was to help the researcher clarify conceptual linkages and relations among the issues under research and to have a general picture of the challenges associated with this set of NGOs. These organizations were purposely chosen for diversity, ease of reach,

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<sup>1</sup> The sites are within the central region. Lilongwe is the capital city of Malawi and this is where CHRR secretariat is located. Salima district is situated 150 kilometers east of Lilongwe

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like minded and familiarity with the contextual issues in Malawi and the entire the Southern African region

### **1.5.3 Data collection**

#### **1.5.3.1 Primary data**

Qualitative data forms the bulk of the study using a number of methods for data collection that includes the interviewees' perceptions, and explanations to actions and contextual information about interventions. Qualitative research used interview panels: semi-structured interviews, key informant interviews and focus group discussions to provide data for the study from different areas of interest.

#### **1.5.3.2 Data Collection Methods**

Reliance on the semi-structured interview led to answers that are discursive and normative. These interviews were held with as many members of the organization as possible, although some organizations' members had busy schedules. The bulk of this work was collected using focus group discussions with selected target communities to come up with views and perceptions on issues of good governance, human rights and freedoms. In total the study managed to conduct 16 focus group discussions. The focus group discussions were conducted in many cases because most of the data required was supposed to be exploratory and explanatory. These focus group discussions, therefore, followed that pattern and collectively communities were able to generate more information required for this study. The groups were separated in some cases depending on the issues pursued. For example, in many cases, men and women were interviewed separately. This was done to make sure that there is equal representation of the issues discussed especially those that were sensitive in nature. Of course, in some cases both men and women were interviewed together.

### **1.5.3.3 Secondary data**

Since democracy, good governance and human rights watching is widely practiced, some information on these aspects in Malawi are also found in NGO reports and consultation reports by watchdog agencies in Malawi. Thus use was made of NGO' own literature like programme documents, reports, websites, strategic plans and miscellaneous reports. This did not only provide a backup resource for objective information on mission statements, past and present activities and achievements, but also material for assessing competence at technical skills such as monitoring. Other sources of information were utilized as well. A variety of contextual and theoretical material has been provided in course materials. The theoretical aspects of NGOs theory and their actions have been sought in books and articles on the Internet and a number of informal meetings with International Non governmental organization (INGOs) and watchdog NGOs. In addition to this research information was also searched from within the ISS and several libraries in the Netherlands.

### **1.5.4 Data management and interpretation**

Accordingly the study is based upon interpretation rather than hard data, and conclusions were made by contrasting the statements and opinions of respondents with both verifiable facts and the statements and opinions of other respondents in the field. The triangulation technique for verification of data was employed.

### **1.5.5 Research Limitation**

The main limitation of the study was the short duration. However, this was mitigated by a highly selective sampling, and the kind assistance CHRR management provided at professional and material support.

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### **1.5.6 Presentation of the research**

The rest of the research is organized around five inter-linked chapters. Chapter two defines the key concepts and the analytical framework; Chapter three discusses the political context in which civil society organizations emerged with particular emphasis on their watch-dog role in Malawi. The field research findings are presented and analysed in chapter four. The paper then closes with a set of conclusions and recommendations in chapter five.

## **Chapter Two: Conceptual Framework and Theoretical Orientation for Analyzing Watch-dog NGOs**

### **2.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses the relevant concepts in this study. It gives an overview of the academic debate on watchdog NGOs, good governance, human rights and advocacy. The arguments and critiques in the conceptual frame will lead to the analytical frame used in the study. In this study the conceptual definitions and contributions by various authors on the relevant concepts are discussed. Operational definitions are adopted and relations between the concepts are outlined.

### **2.1 Concepts Defined**

#### **2.1.1 Watch-dog**

This is a societal and institutional anchored monitoring system (Lohmann: 1997:46). This monitoring system is used by NGOs to provide checks and balances within the political system. The activities that they monitor ranges form policies, budget tracking and upholding constitutional and human rights. The argument behind is that constitutional rights have to find their institutional expression. As much as there are legal guarantees of human rights, those cannot be completely secured although countries' constitutions respect human rights. Therefore watch-dog NGOs are monitors for human rights who observes and provide information about human rights abuses. Watchdog NGOs focus their interest on monitoring human rights violations and power abuses. They try to create awareness among the population and to collect significant data.

Why is watch-dogging an issue in the contemporary world and particularly in Malawi? The whole concept is derived from the concept of governance. Therefore, according to UNHCHR (2000:1) governance 'is the process whereby public institutions conduct public affairs, manage public resources and guarantee the realization of human rights'. Good governance accomplishes this in a manner essentially free of abuse and corruption,

and with due regard for the rule of law. The true test of "good" governance is the degree to which it delivers on the promise of human rights: civil, cultural, economic, political and social rights. The key attributes of good governance are transparency, responsibility, accountability, participation and responsiveness to the needs of the people.

'Good governance' in the World Bank's parlance, refers to improved accountability for 'sound development management'. It is thought to be facilitated by a panoply of liberal institutions, including freedom of expression and association, an independent judiciary and adherence to the rule of law<sup>2</sup>. Tim Kelsall (2001: 1-2) states that it is believed that liberal democracy will first furnish populations with the electoral right to remove corrupt, incompetent or unpopular regimes, and second, enable them to hold the state accountable on a day to day basis. To do this, individuals should organize themselves to confront the state by forming a 'civil society' of associations, of which NGOs are expected to be an integral component. Oyugi states that good governance is responsive governance. Its hallmark are the rule of law, a fair and efficient system of justice, broad popular involvement in political, social and economic processes; the capacity to manage development; and accountability and transparency in the management of public affairs (Oyugi 2001 pp iii-xix)

Within the context of watch-dogging is the emphasis of realization of human rights. Therefore, human rights are often contrasted with legal rights or civil rights that derive from the laws or customs of particular societies. Donnelly quoted by Freeman (2002:56) states that 'human rights are those rights that an individual has simply because one is a human being'. However, he contends that human rights may not be such simply because one is a human being, but they are rights of exceptional importance, designed to protect morally valid and fundamental human interests, in particular against the abuse of political power. Donnelly (1982:304) argues that human rights are rights, not benefits, duties, privileges, or some other perhaps related practice. Rights are special entitlements of persons. Sepulveda & et al (2004:3) states that human rights are inalienable fundamental

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<sup>2</sup> See World Bank, *Governance and development* (Washington DC: World Bank, 1992), pp. 1-3; World Bank, *Sub Saharan Africa-From Crisis to Sustainable Growth* (Washington DC: World Bank, 1998), pp.60-61,192

rights to which a person is inherently entitled simply because she or he is a human being. Freedom, according to Human Development Report (2000:19) is where one is able to meet bodily requirements, such as the ability to avoid starvation. It also includes the enabling opportunities given or the liberty and the economic means to move freely and to choose one's abode. It also entails the 'social' freedoms such as the capability to participate in the life of the community, to join in public discussion, or to participate in political decision making.

This then boils down to the question how watch-dogging is achieved? What strategies do these watchdog NGOs employ? The term watchdog can be seen as a sum of two related concepts which in turn are used as strategies, namely advocacy and monitoring. In the quest to achieve their objectives of watch-dogging many NGOs use advocacy as a strategy (Fisher, 1998:108). Advocacy is based on a refusal to be co-opted or controlled but involves direct communication with government about policies or situations. Fisher (1998:109) argues that advocacy '.....[...]. may involve everything from quiet negotiations on limited organisational objectives to mass protests on major issues....'. NGOs advocates use many different advocacy techniques, sometimes simultaneously, including friendly persuasion, 'acupuncture'<sup>3</sup>, legal and lobbying efforts, electoral politics, networking and mass advocacy. Jordan & Peter van Tuijl (2000:2052) explains that informed by the needs and experiences of the poor or disadvantaged sectors in their or other societies, NGOs mobilize, articulate and represent people's interests or concerns at different levels of decision making. This advocacy work is increasingly seen by NGOs as an integral part of the role they play in civil society. Using information as a key tool, it entails the ambition to change the course of human development by promoting equal power relationships in national arenas. Therefore, NGO advocacy is an act of organizing the strategic use of information to democratize unequal power relations. However, Edwards and Hulme (1995:4) emphasize actions related to influencing policy, especially public policy. NGO advocacy can very well be aimed at directly influencing

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<sup>3</sup> The willingness of NGOs to take on the state, while becoming permanently involved in the process of change through the state, has been described by a leader of WALHI, an NGO network in Indonesia, as acupuncture, or placing a needle into sensitive points of a sick system. (Julie Fisher, 1998:110)

reality rather than policy. The underlying function of advocacy is often to enhance the self respect of weaker communities, to improve their self-confidence, constitute integrity and promote mutual trust which is useful to develop a healthy community. Grounding NGO advocacy in democratizing power relations rightly puts up-front the fact that NGOs challenge the status quo. In general, advocacy NGOs reveal truths that are not liked by vested interests and power holders.

In the aspect of watch-dogging NGOs used monitoring as a strategy. This is applied simultaneously with advocacy. It is not of any relevance for someone or an organization or community to monitor policies, projects etc without advocating for change and justice. Therefore, Takirambudde (2001:12) argues that to avoid human rights becoming simply a largely empty discourse that all use and no one takes seriously, observers who want to improve the situation in a country must have the hard and detailed data on which to base their assessments. This information is important both in evaluating the behaviour of a government at any given point in time, but also in establishing a base line (as in satisfaction of conditionality arrangements) against which to judge subsequent behaviour. He argues further that with the factual foundation based on hard data, those pressing for reform of the human rights behaviour of governments can do so effectively.

### **2.1.2 Non Governmental Organisation (NGO)**

There is no commonly accepted definition of what constitutes NGOs (Edwards, 2001:2). However, there are three key features which are generally used to identify them: (i) their private nature (i.e. autonomy from the state/'self-governance'), (ii) their not-for-profit character, and (iii) some form of public benefit/interest derived from their activities (see Biekart, 1999: 38; Kane, 1990:14-15). This study locates NGOs within the broader theory of civil society. The definition of NGO is not very different from that of a civil society organization and, if anything, equally vague. Streeten defines an NGO as:

....private voluntary organizations [...]...non-profit seeking organizations; some religious, others secular; some indigenous, others foreign; some professional, other lay.



Their principal aim is to contribute to the reduction of human suffering and to development in poor countries (1997:194).

Biekart (1999:40) says that NGO is a 'container-concept'. These NGOs are often intermediate organizations positioned between the state and the market. A distinction which is often drawn in the NGO literature is that between proper NGOs and "Grass-Root Organizations" (GROs) (Edwards and Hulme, 1995:15). GROs are also referred to as community-based organizations (CBOs). Usually they are membership-based organizations. They do this in various ways, e.g. by funding projects, engaging in service provision and capacity building, contributing to awareness raising, promoting the self-organization of various groups. While mindful of this distinction, in this study we shall use the term "NGO" to designate both membership and non-membership based organizations with a focus only on those watchdog-oriented local NGOs.

## **2.2 Theoretical framework**

Since this study is based on watchdog NGOs involved in human rights, freedom and good governance, it will focus more on a theory namely the "democratic political culture and styles of behaviour".

The political culture which is formed by attitudes and styles of behaviour is seen as a relevant indicator for the stable establishment of a political system. Within the political system and space, donors, citizens, state and the watchdog NGOs interact. If certain aspect of behaviour are not built and practiced, there is a danger of the watch-dogging function not to function effectively. Each actor has got a role to play to ensure realization of articulation of good governance and human rights. The chance and possibility to participate in the political process is only given, when people are interested in, and informed about the main features of the political system. "Compared with citizens whose subjective competence is low, the self-confident citizen is likely to be the active citizen: to follow politics, to discuss politics, to be a more active partisan. He is also more likely to be satisfied with his role as a participant, and subject to certain exceptions, likely to be more favourably disposed towards the performance of his political system and to have a

generally more positive orientation on it” Almond and Verba as quoted by Lohmann (1997:27).

Multi-national organizations like World Bank and IMF emphasize the concept of good governance as a basis for on-going and fruitful cooperation. Good governance is synonymous to democratization. According to early World Bank definitions it is not a political concept, but an attempt to link the economic development to the administrative and political structures of a country. Each political community is based on a specific type of political culture, a set of values, notions, orientations and beliefs of individuals and groups inside the community. The political culture is seen as fundamental for the structure of the political system. This culture is already fostered in the school, family, job and other societal institutions. The learned styles of behaviour should mirror the specificities of the actual political system that is embedded in the political culture of a community.

Therefore, the use of this theory as a basis for analyzing this paper is justified on the premise that this theory advocates for the rooting deeply the styles of sustainability, legitimacy, cooperation, partnership and accountability. These concepts will be explained in the next section since they are the units of analysis in this study.

### **2.3 Analytical framework**

Based on the theory of democratic political culture and styles of behaviour, in this study, we shall therefore, build on the aspect of communication, sustainability, accountability, collaboration/cooperation, legitimacy and partnership in terms of determining some potential obstacles to effectiveness of watchdog role by NGOs in Malawi. These will be the units of analysis. They are meant to gauge the vibrancy of these watch-dog NGOs

### **2.3.1 Communication: Means of Information Sharing**

It helps an organization to plan site-related communication with the public, other stakeholders, and their colleagues. Good communication strategies can improve the interactive nature of communication and help organizations receive information from their target audiences<sup>4</sup>. A communication strategy provides a structure for identifying events (*e.g.*, issues, problems, and actions) that require outreach; considers potential messages and audiences; and develops vehicles to deliver information. Communication strategies maximize shared information and minimize misinterpretations. A communication strategy is the “why, what, who, when, where, and how” of relaying information. Further, it details the message, audience, potential vehicles, resources required, and feedback mechanisms. Communication strategies are blueprints for building a campaign to inform and to be informed by others. Communication strategies also can be used to expedite the flow of information in sudden, unfolding events.

### **2.3.2 Partnerships: Mutual Agreement**

A UK Audit Commission 1998 report defined a partnership as a joint working relationship where the partners ‘keep their independence and identity, agree to co-operate to achieve a common goal, create a new organisational structure or process to achieve this goal, plan and implement a joint programme and share relevant information, risks and rewards’ (UK Audit Commission 1998:8). The use of the term in this study is distinguished from the narrow legal definition of partnership, ‘which subsists between persons carrying on a business in common with a view to profit’ (Partnership Act 1978:5). The power and resources of each partner are unlikely to be equal, yet neither partner must dominate. In this study, being in partnership is taken to imply willingness to give up some decision-making power by each partner and adopting wider goals. Honesty, mutual respect and independence between the partners are essential.

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.epa.gov/superfund/tools/pdfs/3comstrats.pdf>

#### 2.3.4 Collaboration and Cooperation

The UNDP explains that 'collaboration' among parties is often driven by an immediate objective, the immediate intent being the resolution of the problem at hand. Farrington alludes to some NGOs strategies that are often "poorly coordinated...and driven by an excessive preoccupation with demonstrable action [to solve immediate problems faced by the poor]". This suggests that collaboration approached as a problem-solving mechanism can hardly promote sustainability and effectiveness (UNDP, 1993; 13, also see Clark 1991:59). Collaboration may also be intended 'to maximize specific benefits' such as "advancing...interests or enhancing...influence, vis-à-vis other parties" (UNDP, 1991; 9).

Research consistency indicates that a low degree of cooperation among NGOs is a pressing problem that impedes maturity in the sector (Robbinson, 1994:42). Although many scholars have endeavoured to understand this issue, there is much about cooperation which remains to be explored. The arguments advanced in this study are twofold. First, cooperation is possible only to the extent that there is contact, communication, and coordination among the actors. These are indicators by which this study assessed cooperation among the NGO studied. Second, and consequently, non-governmental organizations may reconsider the merit of joint operations at the domestic level. This study considered the extent to which aid has tended to or not to encourage cooperation among NGOs in Malawi

It has to be noted that the theory here is that cooperative instinct among a number of NGOs will increase when there has been or there is some sort of pre-existing links or ties among agencies to help generate familiarity with one another and develop norms that stress collaboration (Sikana, 2006:20). Further, Sikana argues that if there is a network or means within which information regarding threats and opportunities can be easily shared and quickly transmitted to others. Furthermore, if there is a willingness-based on incentives-to work together with others to meet the needs of the beneficiaries.

In contrast, cooperation will become much more difficult, if not prevented altogether, if NGOs do not overcome the disincentives to cooperate (Fowler, 1995) (i.e. competition

for publicity and funding) or if managers do not fully comprehend how the operations of another may complement their own and/or benefit the beneficiaries whom they are trying to serve.

### **2.3.5 Sustainability: A necessary requirement**

Gauging the vibrancy of NGOs this study will look into the traditional concept of sustainability, which is 'the ability of an organization to continue its operations without outside assistance' (Boughton, 2003:4). Although it is quite obvious that the sustainability of NGOs cannot be built on financial resources alone, a solid financial base is a necessary condition for sustainability. In this study I use financial availability and the willingness to volunteer as the two main indicators. For relatively larger but local NGOs that are highly dependent on external donor funding for their existence, complete financial independence is very difficult to achieve and one has to look at intermediate measures of financial sustainability. One measure is the diversity of the donor funding base (Sikana, 2006:19).

### **2.3.6 Accountability: A necessity**

In this study accountability shall be described as "the means by which individuals and organization report to a recognized authority (or authorities) and are held responsible for their actions" (Edwards & Hulme, 1996:967) or as "the process of holding actors responsible for actions" (Fox and Brown, 1998: 12). In regard to partnerships, it is the responsibility to provide evidence to stakeholders that a programme is effective and conforms to planned results, legal and fiscal requirements. In this study accountability is taken to mean the obligation for NGOs to provide a true and fair view of performance and the results of operations. This relates to the obligations to partners to fulfill their responsibilities, roles and performance towards other stakeholders, including (and especially) their constituencies. Here the concept is about being "held responsible" by external actors and about "taking responsibility" for oneself (Cornwall, Lucas, & Pasteur,

2000:3). This internal dimension of accountability is motivated by a felt responsibility as expressed through individual and organized mission (Fry, 1995:60)

Effective accountability requires a statement of goals, transparency of decision making and relationships, honest reporting of what resources have been received and use and what has been achieved, an appraisal process for the overseeing of authority to judge whether results are commensurate, and concrete mechanisms for holding to account (i.e. rewarding or penalizing) those responsible for performance (ODA, 1993). If we take this as our point of departure in discussing accountability among NGOs, then, crucially, we begin to see that NGOs have multiple accountabilities- “downwards” to their partners, beneficiaries, staff and supporters; and “upwards”: to their trustees, donors and host governments. This presents NGOs with problems, particularly the possibilities of having to “over account” (because of multiple demands), or being able to “under account” as each overseeing authority assumes that another authority is taking a close look at actions and results (Tandon, 1995:41). But of course equal accountability to all at all times is not possible

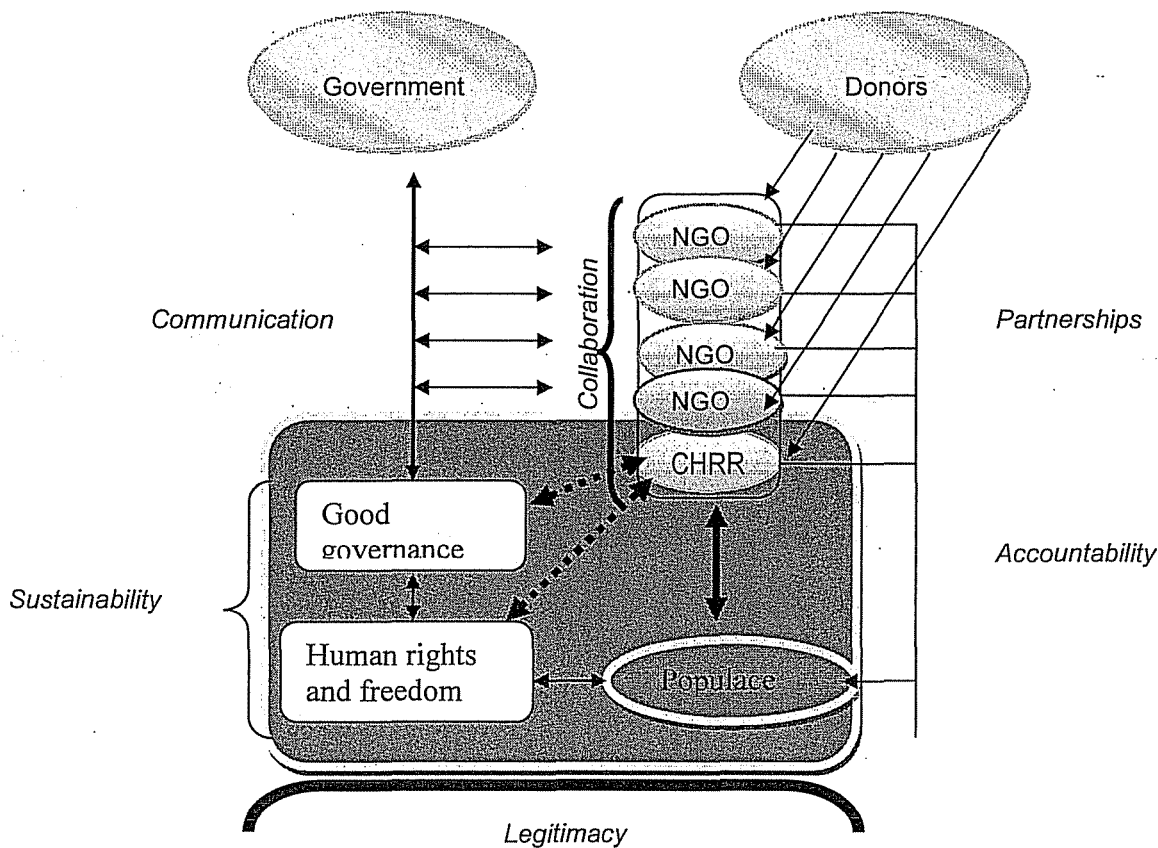
### **2.3.7 Legitimacy: A contested notion**

The oxford English dictionary defines legitimacy as the condition of being in accordance with law or principle...of sound origins, authenticity and clear identity. The last three criteria are particularly crucial indicators in our analysis of NGO legitimacy, since their distinguishing feature is voluntarism-the fact that they can only invite voluntary involvement in their activities and must therefore use discussion, bargaining, accommodation and persuasion in their dealings rather than bureaucratic control (Fowler, 1998, Upholf,1993,1995). Esman & Upholf (1984:15), and others have pointed out that popular local support and self financing provide a strong basis for legitimacy. This implies that NGOs, which have shallow roots in society and depend, for survival, on outside funding have a much weaker claim.

With this definition, the legitimacy of the NGO is not just the popularity of their current interventions. Rather, a substantial majority of the beneficiaries accepts the organization.

Identity, or organizational culture, is the sum of the shared meanings, understandings and shared sense-making (Smillie & Hailey, 2001:50) in an organization that expresses how the organization sees the world around it, what the organization stands for and what it actually does. Identity helps to make the organization clearly understandable to beneficiaries, donors and other stakeholders.

**Figure 1: Conceptual framework**



The figure above shows the link of communication, accountability, communication, sustainability, collaboration, partnership and legitimacy, affecting CHRR operations in watch-dogging function. For CHRR programmes to be sustained it requires legitimate support both at grassroots and national level and this is only possible if CHRR is accountable to them. Therefore proper communications' mechanisms amongst NGOs and government will lead to reduced tension hence create a better working environment. At the same time CHRR has to cooperate with other like minded NGOs as well as have a good working relationship with its donor partners.





## **Chapter Three: The Rise of civil society in Malawi**

### **3.0 Introduction**

Before explaining the role of watchdog NGOS in Malawi, it is important to give an account of the political context through which these NGOS emerged. The political situation is characterized by a process of transition from an authoritarian regime towards an open pluralistic and democratic order. Starting with a referendum in favour of multi-party system, followed by the first democratic elections, a repressive regime was overthrown and replaced by a democratic legitimated government. (Glagow & et al, 1997:13). This chapter gives insights as to why there has been a rise and growth of interest on watch-dogging among civil society organizations in Malawi.

### **3.1 CSOs during the colonial period**

It is undoubtedly to say that Malawi has a long and rich history of civil society development (Chirwa, 2000: 91-92, Mwalubunju, 2007:271) even though most Malawians tend to hold the mistaken view that institutions of civil society are new (Chirwa, 2000: 87). This is attributed to the fact that studies on civil society in Malawi are few (Chipeta, 1987:34-49; Simkonda, 1987: 297-348; Minnis, 1998).

There were some early pressure groups advancing non-tribal objectives soon after the British declared Nyasaland as a protectorate. This was towards the close of the 19th century. The 'new men of Nyasaland' (Glagow, 1997:134) comprising clerks, teachers, church leaders and small businessmen were making economic, social and political demands through the medium of organizations that were tribal in structure. These included native and tribal associations located across the country, with a particular concentration in the Northern Region of the protectorate. At the beginning of the 20th century, about 15 associations of educated Africans were created with the objective of representing the political, social (Malubunju 2007:272) and cultural interests of their members in the face of the colonial regime. These pressure groups later led to the

struggle for political independence for the country. Pachai (1973:292), states that this led into the formation of a broader political movement, the Nyasaland African Congress in 1943/44, a movement that subsequently lobbied for the granting of independence to Nyasaland.

### **3.1.1 CSOs during one party state**

After gaining independence in 1964, these pressure groups continued with their struggle since the environment was not conducive to the setting up and expanding of civil society groups. One-party state became suspicious of the potential influence that CSOs had on society. With the dominance of Malawi Congress Party (MCP) structures, there was very little room for the involvement of CSOs in the newly independent Malawi (Mwalubunju, 2007:272). Dr Hastings Banda, Malawi's President between 1964 and 1994, made it abundantly clear that his vision of Malawi did not have any space for CSOs' involvement in the development process. Mkandawire (2003:21) states that the Banda regime exploited certain weaknesses in Malawi culture. It exploited fear and sycophancy. Banda himself once described the political system in Malawi as "The Malawi style is that Kamuzu says it's that, and then it's finished. Whether anyone likes it or not, that is how it's going to be here. No nonsense, no nonsense. You can not have everybody deciding what to do" (Africa Watch Report 1990:4-5) As a result of this, the totalitarian regime resorted to violence and repression in order to keep the population in line and to prevent any form of self-organization (Chirwa, 1996, 2000: 93). In its bid to keep a tight rein on the public, the Government resorted to imposing very strict regulations and tight controls on CSOs. This meant that CSO activities were primarily directed towards charity work in health, education, rural development and social welfare. This so restricted the possibilities for political operations of CSOs that one commentator observed that 'in the period between 1964 and 1990, Malawi's civil society had invariably been an insignificant factor in the country's political process' (Chipeta 1992:38). Among the worst affected were advocacy CSOs which were not able to advocate on human rights issues and trade unions and were banned throughout the period of 1964 to 1992. International NGOs were also sent out of the country during this time.

### 3.1.2 CSOs in the first phase of Multi-party led government

It is important to note that Malawi's process of democratization started as a popular movement (Chirwa, 2000:89); a social protest against a political regime that failed to meet the expectations of its people (Ott, 2000:122). Chirwa (2000:89) argues that the struggle for a freer society with an equitable socioeconomic order was at the centre of the calls for democracy in the country. Due to their popular orientation, the institutions of civil society acted as vanguard forums and avenues for articulating and expressing this call for democracy (Mwalubunju, 2007:272). The political change that took place in Malawi can be understood within the framework of the wind of political change that was taking place in Africa after the collapse of the Soviet Union and the end of the Cold War in 1989. Most countries were changing from one-party systems to multiparty democratic ones. So, Malawi was not exceptional. This period saw the emergence of the political movements advocating for a multiparty regime. This can be called the transformation of public concerns into political protest<sup>5</sup>.

Malawi emerged from 30 years of authoritarian rule with weak and shredded civil society (Mkandawire, 2003:23). It was only towards the end of the regime that the country saw the emergence of 'pressure groups' and a more vocal church (Ross, 2003:131). The absolutely impressive role of the church during the third term debate testifies to the importance of a vital civil society. It is however notable to say that CSOs became the co-managers of the process of political transition between the referendum in 1993 and the general elections in 1994 (Chirwa, 2000:89). CSOs were gearing up to impart civil and voter education, participate in stakeholders' workshops with the donors and the Electoral Commission, the media and other institutions towards the first ever multiparty elections in three decades.

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5 Advocacy activities by the Church: e.g. the historical pastoral letter issued by the Catholic Bishops in 1992 criticized 'the growing gap between the rich and the poor', the authoritarianism of Banda, and violations of human rights under the Banda regime; Strike action: unorganized strikes during 1992 and 1993 which reflected workers' frustration and forced Government and Dr Banda to accept political change. Protests and strikes on Chancellor College campus by students and staff demanding for change;

After the political changes of the early 1990s in Malawi when one-party rule came to an end and people voted for multiparty democracy, the internal and external political framework provided a new landscape for the mushrooming of a variety of CSOs in the country (Mwalubunju, 2007:273). The formation of an elected Government and the adoption of a liberal Constitution in 1995 by Parliament gave civil society the space it needed to perform its role. For the first time in Malawi's post-independence history, CSOs could work in areas beyond charity and service delivery and begin to be active in the social and political arenas. Most of the trade unions, banned for nearly 30 years, emerged once again and workers regained the power of collective bargaining.

This opportunity for civil society to perform its proper role in society proved to be a challenge, particularly for NGOs as they had no experience and had to start from a scratch (Mwalubunju, 2007:274). This challenge was taken up by NGOs like the Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace (CCJP), Malawi Institute for Democratic and Economic Affairs (MIDEA) which made significant strides in the first five years along with others such as the Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation and the Malawi Centre for Education and Rights (Ott, 2000:126). While these NGOs were developing, PAC (Public Affairs Committee), the umbrella organization of churches, was the lead force and NGOs and PAC worked hand in hand. However, these NGOs, Chirwa (2000:89) argue that "due to their institutional weakness, poor strategies and the intransigence of the state, CSOs were relegated to the position of civic education providers, rather than partners in the governance process. Though CSOs acknowledged the social and economic plight of the majority, they failed to effectively engage the state and society in a dialogue leading to the pursuit and/or establishment of an equitable distributive socio-economic order, one that is both humane and egalitarian". It was reactive rather than proactive, happy to play a watchdog role rather than an active force in the governance process.

### **3.1.3 CSOs in the second phase of Multi-party system**

This period (1999-2004) was characterized by an increased tension and mistrust between CSOs and the state. The state visibly intimidated those CSOs and the media which were engaged in advocacy for good governance and made attempts to silence them. A vibrant civil society was emerging in Malawi, which was exemplified through its success in blocking the infamous presidential third/open term amendment bill being passed into law. Yet, it was also a period when the state enacted the repressive NGO Act of 2001 which meant to control the activities of NGOs even though these NGOs were to register with the Council of Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi (CONGOMA). It was also during the same period when advocacy institutions such as the Economic Association of Malawi (ECAMA), the Malawi Economic Justice Network (MEJN), the Human Rights Consultative Committee (HRCC), and others were either born, or they expanded their activities considerably. The emergence and expansion of advocacy CSOs was a reflection of the fact that the Malawian public wanted to play a more active role in the design and implementation of programmes for policy reform, poverty reduction and economic growth. CSO growth and diversification in this period was stimulated by the emergence of 'new' national and international concerns such as human rights; gender equality, HIV/AIDS epidemic, and protection of the environment. Funding for appropriate advocacy programmes in these areas was readily available from international NGOs or donors. While there was a high birth rate of CSOs (they numbered over 275 in 2004) and hundreds of CBOs, there was also the demise of numerous CSOs which had hoped to attract external funds but were unable to demonstrate their effectiveness or appropriate financial management (CFSC,2007).

### **3.2 CSOs Consolidating democracy and Constitutionalism**

It is without doubt that civil society in Malawi has played more of a watchdog role in the democratization process. However, this paper argues that though this is the case, civil society have tended to be 'event driven' (Chirwa, 2000: 88), than an initiator of policies or activities, and has thus been labeled as 'reactive' rather than 'proactive' (Mwalubunju,

2007: 286). Many of these watchdog NGOs and other CSOs concentrate on the national arena as opposed to the dynamics of the political role on the grassroots. There have been several attempts in the last decade to enhance the power of the Executive and thereby undermine the power of Parliament and other constitutionally established bodies. There were repeated attempts to amend vital sections of the Constitution to serve short-term personal gains at the risk of endangering democracy. Furthermore, attempts have been made to undermine the electoral process thereby undermining the democratization process. At such times CSOs have come out in the open and used all possible avenues to generate public awareness and support.

It has to be noted that the current inclusive attitude that seems to have developed has not been achieved without considerable struggle and perseverance by NGOs which continued to voice opposition to Government policies despite facing harassment and intimidation from Government. There have contentious issues that were hotly debated among watchdog NGOs in conjunction with other CSOs and the Government were the repeal of the recall provision, repeal of the senate provision, impeachment attempt of judges and the third term/open term amendment (See box 1 below). If there is anything that lacked national consensus and really shocked the fabric of Malawi society, it was the question of the third/open term constitutional amendment. It was hardly ten years since the country had gained its new

**Box 1: Instances of NGO watch-dogging in Malawi**

Section 64 was unilaterally repealed in 1995 by Parliament. It was one of the earliest serious amendments to the Constitution as it curtailed people's ability to hold MPs to account. According to supporters of the provision it would also have checked reckless 'crossing the floor' (changing parties) by MPs. Civil society kept the issue alive by repeatedly raising it every time MPs shifted loyalties or put national interests to one side for personal gains. The Church and Society Programme of the Livingstonia Synod carried out a programme to sensitize people to demand reinstatement of the provision into the Constitution but it was unsuccessful.

After repealing Section 64, Parliament again unilaterally repealed the section providing for the Senate in the Constitution. This provision was meant to ensure checks and balances on the legislative process in that bills passed by Parliament would have to go to the Senate for scrutiny before becoming laws. This provision would also have allowed representatives of various interest groups such as women, youth etc to be represented in the Senate to articulate their special concerns and needs, and, above all, enable them to participate in the democratization process. Civil society including the chiefs attempted to lobby Parliament for its retention but they were unsuccessful.

During the period of the second term of multiparty democracy, attempts were made to impeach three judges of the High Court for alleged incompetence and partisanship. However, popular feeling was that there were no grounds to these allegations and the attempts to impeach the judges were made because at times their rulings, though independent, were not in favour of the Government. The ruling party in Government was behind the move to impeach them and tried to get this passed by Parliament. But due to pressure from civil society, the impeachment motion was unsuccessful. Efforts employed by civil society included media advocacy, lobbying influential MPs, the donor community and the state President as the party leader of the UDF which was the architect of the motion to impeach the judges.

Source: Mwalubuni 2007:286

political dispensation. Having lived for 30 years under the dictatorship led by Dr Kamuzu Banda who served as 'Life President', Malawians had good reason to fear that the term extension might lead them back along the same road they had been forced to follow in the past. With that in mind, civil society mobilized itself to campaign against the amendment. Professional organizations, Christian churches, the Muslim clergy and other religious groups, students, trade unions, the academia and many others opposed the amendment. Ordinary people also showed their opposition through street demonstrations and intensive lobbying. Two attempts were made in Parliament to amend the article, but both attempts proved unsuccessful. This was largely due to the strong opposition to the amendment by civil society.

### 3.3 **The Bill of Rights in Malawi Constitution**

Since independence in 1964, Malawi has experienced three constitutional regimes (Kaliya, 2003:3). The first constitution was adopted in 1963 and it provided the basis for independence in 1964 (Kanyongolo, 2007:30). Among its key features were the Bill of Rights and the lean towards parliamentary democracy. In other words, the constitution enshrined the principle of parliamentary supremacy. Ironically, this constitution was very strong on human rights, the very rights that the colonial regime had vehemently denied the local people. In 1966, Malawi adopted a revised constitution upon which the republican status was attained (Kanyongolo, 2007:30). Unlike the previous one, the new constitution espoused a presidential model, thus virtually investing all power and authority of governance and administration into the presidency. It is in this regard that this constitution easily paved way to dictatorship and one-party state. In place of the Bill of Rights, the new constitution only noted that:

*'Malawi shall continue to recognize the sanctity of human rights as enshrined in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights' (UDHR).*

Following the 1993 national referendum and subsequent national elections in 1994, the new constitution was adopted in which the Bill of Rights was reintroduced (Chapter IV).

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As it stands, it is one of those constitutional provisions that can only be changed or amended through a national referendum.

The classical understanding of human rights is that human rights are the entitlements that every man, woman and child has by virtue of being human. These entitlements are part of what it takes to define a human person, and as such they are basic moral guarantees in ensuring that human life remains human (Chigona, 2006:56). The human rights tradition is premised on key concepts and principles. These are about the equality of all people, the universality, inalienability and indivisibility of these rights, as well as their interdependence and interrelatedness. The 1995 Constitution of the Republic of Malawi enshrines the 'Bill of Rights' (Chapter IV). And in 1994 the Supreme Court of Malawi defined human rights as:

"...Claims, which every individual has, or should have, upon the society in which e/she lives. To call them human rights suggests they are universal; they are the due of every human being in every human society. They do not differ with political or economic system or stage of development. They do not depend on gender or race, class or status. To call them 'rights' implies that the right' not merely appeals to grace, or, charity or brotherhood or love; they need not be earned or deserved, they are more than aspirations or assertions of 'the good' but claims of entitlement..." as Quoted by Kaliya, (2003:3)

This definition has received wide acceptance nationally and internationally. Rights provide not only what the state, organizations and individuals cannot do to people but also what they must do.

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### **3.4 A background of Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation**

The Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation (CHRR) is one of Malawi's leading non-governmental organizations (NGOs). It was founded in February 1995 as a non-profit, non-political organization under the Trustees Incorporation Act of 1962 (CHRR



2005:6). The organization was founded by former student exiles or returnees<sup>6</sup>, who returned home in 1994 to the promise of a new national beginning following the referendum of 1993 in which the Malawian people loudly echoed their wish for an end to three decades of one-party dictatorship and a return to multi-party democratic governance.

It is relevant to note that CHRR main mission at its inception was to ensure that the returned exiled people were well integrated and compensated accordingly by government. It is pleasing to note that CHRR contributed to the setting up of the National Compensation tribunal. CHRR's vision is to see one of a democratic Malawi nation which embraces human rights and the rule of law and whose citizens know their rights and can claim them (CHRR, 2006:1). In order to achieve this, CHRR is on a mission to contribute towards the protection, promotion and consolidation of good governance by empowering rural and urban communities in Malawi to increase their awareness of, and exercise, their rights, through research, education, advocacy and networking in order to realize human development. Therefore, CHRR contributes to the realization of its vision through various programmes carried out within the context of two core programmes, namely: community mobilization and empowerment, and human rights monitoring and training. Through these two core programmes, CHRR undertook numerous activities, namely: public awareness and community empowerment; civic and human rights education; training and research; advocacy; capacity building; good governance and networking. However, beginning 2006, CHRR has not been implementing its programme on human rights monitoring and documentation due to donor phasing out their support to this programme. As of 2007 CHRR is implementing the human rights programme in relation to HIV and Aids impact mitigation programme.

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<sup>6</sup> Ollen Mwakasungula together with his colleagues/co-founders of CHRR like Undule Mwakasungula (the current CHRR executive director), Khwauli Msiska, John Soo Phiri, were at one point confronted with The Malawi Young Pioneers and the Malawi Congress party youth leaguers during the Kamuzu Banda regime for refusing to buy the party card. This was also coupled with the fact that they had relatives living in exile hence were suspected of associating with rebels. They then fled the country to Tanzania, Uganda, USA and Soviet Union.

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The organisation objectives are: to empower rural and urban communities on issues of democracy, good governance, citizens' rights, roles, and responsibilities. They also strive to conduct research on specific human rights and public policy issues and disseminate the findings. Furthermore CHRR monitor, investigate and document human rights issues, with particular reference to violations of these. They aim to provide training for professional and special groups in communities related to democracy, good governance and human rights. Finally, the organisation seeks to enhance its organizational capacity for effective and efficient programme delivery (CHRR, 2005:6-7, 2006:1-2). The target groups and beneficiaries of CHRR's work include, but are not limited to rural and urban communities, the general public (men, women and the youth); opinion leaders and policy makers; law enforcers; community based organizations (CBOs) and NGO's; and the news media (CHRR, 2005:7).

## **Chapter Four: Findings and Analysis of Watch-Dog NGOs in Malawi**

### **4.0 Introduction**

This chapter discusses key factors that affect watchdog NGOs in Malawi using the frame of analysis developed in chapter 2. Since the units of analysis are interlinked, the findings of the research and the analysis will be combined. However, the findings will be presented in two fold. The first section will discuss specific challenges related to the case study CHRR. The next section shall discuss challenges that apply to general watchdogging NGOs, which amongst some of them affects CHRR operations.

### **4.1 Specific findings for CHRR as a case study**

#### **4.1.1 Limited grassroots contact and poor communication mechanisms**

It is interesting to note as revealed by the study that generally people have the knowledge of CHRR especially in the communities where it has impact. However, there is inadequate institutional presence of CHRR. The communities relate the activities more to the local facilitators known as CBEs than to CHRR management. This concern is to a large extent borne out by the reality on the ground where most beneficiaries only ever interact with one programme officer from CHRR and are neither aware of any management visits nor able to cite visits from the executive director or programme manager. Even though this may be an issue about scarcity of resources as claimed by CHRR management, this has a bearing on their claim to legitimacy since their contact with the community is limited and their visibility poor. Therefore, while this could be plausible when seen in the light of sustainability and ownership, still it affects the visibility of CHRR.

Further relating to this problem, almost all the respondents who either worked for, such as community based educators, other local partners in the districts raised the issue of communication as a problem. Emphasis was on no formal infrastructure for CHRR in the

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district where they are implementing programmes and the nature of correspondence. Many of the individuals and organizations at district level felt it was very difficult to communicate with CHRR, as they do not have an office or base in the district. Exceptional was mentioned of Salima district of having an office. However, this is an initiative of the district coordinator who pays monthly rent by himself which is a burden to the volunteer. Communicating to Lilongwe, these volunteers are forced to use their own money which forces them not to communicate promptly. Volunteers have been greatly let down by CHRR management to the fact that they never get any feedback to their concerns and issues raised in their activity reports they send per activity. Majority of them confirmed that they only get feedback if and only if the research department is conducting a monitoring activity in their area which more recently has been once a year.

Therefore, lack of communication undermines the potential of building the political civic culture. The grassroots through their CBEs have got limited role to play in ensuring that the watch-dogging function is rooted in the society. Since CHRR does not respond to most of the concerns channeled to them through these CBEs from the concerned citizens, chances are high for the community not to trust them since they do not see any results. The aspect of communication hinges upon the fact that one is informed. In this regard, CHRR is not well informed of issues at grassroots level, hence there is a possibility that they may end up implementing activities which are not in accordance with what the community would like to see. This problem will continue and it is not surprising to note that other quarters like the state and community concludes that they implement what the donors want them to do.

#### **4.1.2 Voluntarism and the challenge of low motivation**

The greatest challenge for CHRR and other watchdog NGOs in Malawi is that of the motivation of volunteers (CBEs). To successfully mobilize ordinary CBEs to act in support of human rights and good governance, without requiring payment, requires a deep understanding of the nature of power and patronage that has developed over generations. This study has established different and conflicting factors that motivate

CHRR volunteers. The main factor is that of material benefits. The poorly remunerated volunteers always suffer from low motivation in performing their duties. This raises the question as to whether voluntarism, as a method of working, is the most suitable for CHRR in as much as it is built on the principle of promoting sustainability. In Malawi a system of 'paternalism' has developed where previous government (that of Bakili Muluzi), political parties and other organizations are seen to be handing out material and financial benefits for attendance at meetings<sup>7</sup>.

In as much as this problem threatens CHRR watch-dogging sustainability and that in as much as CHRR already pays for their lunch and transport allowance, succumbing to their constant demands will not be sustained. It is well known that the money they pay to these CBEs is donor funded, therefore it is going to be a risk for CHRR to keep on increasing their payments because donor funding priorities change, and regular supply of donor funding cannot be maintained over long periods. Providing with non-financial incentives would lead to a sustained watch-dogging function.

#### **4.1.3 Participation vs tokenism**

Through desk review and field research, the study has established a layer of discontinuity between programming and implementation. Views expressed at the programming units do not tally adequately with reality at the community level. Again there is noticeable limited community participation in the programming process. Clearly, what appears to be participation, from CHRR's perspective, lacks depth and falls short of real engagement with the community. It is mere tokenism. Community involvement is restricted to attendance of a few programme meetings while being kept away from the deeper dialogue about prioritizing resources available for activities. For instance, the community does not know how much the community is to benefit from the programmes. This is with particular reference to CHRR budgeting. This is in view of the fact that CHRR source

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<sup>7</sup> CHRR volunteers are paid MK 1000 for lunch and transport allowance per activity. Though small, this benefit increases expectations, confusion, dissatisfaction and decreased motivation.

funding in the name of the community but the communities themselves do not know how much they are benefiting.

Building of a civic culture in part requires full participation and qualitative representation of the people. Watch-dog NGOs vibrancy is possible if citizens are free to pursue their interest without systematic exclusion by forces that claim to represent their interest through representative kind of participation mechanism. In this regard CHRR does not deliver the promise of being a force in building a civil society culture accommodative of 'alternative ideas and approaches'. It is therefore questionable then whether they can constitute to building of a vibrant civic culture.

With regard to governance of CHRR, terms of reference of the board members *vis-à-vis* their involvement in policy advocacy is not clear. Normally, board members are the ones who define the organization policies and over and above they are the ones who are expected to engage in policy dialogue and advocacy. For instance, during the 2007/08 national budget, it was the secretariat of CHRR that was involved in lobbying and advocating for the passing of the budget. Ordinarily, it would have been the board members, as a matter of policy. The secretariat is well placed to provide technical input in the process. CHRR mandate is not clear. The extent and limit of its mandate seem to be blurred and hazy. There might be need to focused on specific issues in order to avoid peddling external interests. This compromises its core function as a watchdog NGO.

#### **4.1.4 CHRR and the identity crisis**

The study has also established that the historical constitution and public image of CHRR is problematic to their watch-dogging role. Historically, CHRR was established and constituted as an organization of returnees. The concept implied in the name of the organization is still relevant, namely, rehabilitation. However, the practical side of this is not clear. For example, one would expect a section or unit within CHRR with the competence to provide counseling to the victims of human rights abuses. It is not enough

to provide legal services. Evidence and experience shows that the organisation does very little in rehabilitating affected individuals.

However, the most pressing issue as mentioned by majority of interviewees at national level is the perception that CHRR is an organization of people coming from Northern Malawi. This issue is not exactly surprising given the formation of CHRR and its history, and is an issue that CHRR management has clearly demonstrated an awareness of. It has to be noted here that this is a big issue outside CHRR more especially at government as well as other NGO sector levels. This was an issue 5yrs ago due to the predominance of individuals from the northern region of Malawi in the senior management. During this study most respondents still felt that CHRR was northern focused citing the heavy involvement of CHRR in the Kayelekera Uranium campaign in Karonga district, and that, 'if CHRR is to be taken seriously by all Malawians we have to see it has a mixture of people from all regions'. Yet others felt that CHRR was, 'overly northern', and that there was a 'need to open it up' and 'neutralize the playground' (Fitzgibbon, 2002:37). These above words were echoed 5 years ago when Andrew Fitzgibbon conducted a first evaluation exercise of CHRR and yet the same sentiments were stated during this research.

However, consideration must be taken on board that the origin of this organization is with friends and colleagues who were in exile during the Banda regime, of which the majority were northerners. Much as CHRR management has changed and recruited staff from all the regions, the perception is still the same that it is an organization of northerners. This therefore affects their advocacy and lobbying strategies since each time they comment on something affecting the northern region they are labeled as tribalists.

This issue is a challenge to CHRR since it has a serious impact on the perception of CHRR by people external to the organization which in a way questions the issue of representation as well as challenges legitimacy from their perspective. As stated above, CHRR's acceptability as a national player with a national agenda is severely threatened by this persistent label as a regional organization, forging a narrow political agenda hidden under the tag of human rights.

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#### 4.1.5 CHRR and the politics of credibility

The study also established another big challenge for CHRR: good governance and human rights issues are political in nature. Often these issues require taking a stance and challenging existing power bases without necessarily taking sides. The result is that CHRR is perceived as supporting the other whenever they take a different stance from that of government or opposition parties. This state of affairs has seriously compromised their credibility as a non-partisan institution without any political leanings. In the words of CHRR Programme Manager,

*"...Whenever you oppose the other political parties think you are siding with them and we are insulted in the media and receive threats as well. The watchdog function we do is very controversial to others. We are always being labeled as being partisan by opposition or ruling party when we advocate something which is not in favour of the other. We wonder how we can take two positions at once just to please them. For instance CHRR executive director was targeted when he commented on the Zimbabwe human rights violations when Malawi government invited Robert Mugabe and named the newly-constructed Midima road in Blantyre after him since there is a general feeling that he is not a good human rights protector. The next morning when the road sign post bearing Mugabe's name was removed from the road the then Minister of Information and Tourism Honorable, Patricia Kaliati, accused him on the national state TV and radio station that it was the CHRR ED who removed it, which is baseless." (24<sup>th</sup> August, 2007)*

Much as this challenge is faced by CHRR due to the nature of their work, this is also a big challenge for many other watchdog NGOs. This poses a major threat to CHRR watch-dog role due to the practice and means of communication between government and CHRR. Government has got an upper hand when discrediting CHRR on national TV and radio MBC which are state owned given the fact that many Malawians watch TV in urban areas and majority of them listen to radio MBC in rural areas where CHRR operates. CHRR does not have a better forum to defend itself accordingly in such scenarios. In the process CHRR is discredited wrongly by government officials and this affects its legitimacy in relation to the citizens it claims to be representing them.



#### 4.1.6 CHRR and the “hand-out” culture

The study discovered that in Malawi there is a culture of people led by their local chiefs to be demanding NGO working in their areas to give them “handouts”<sup>8</sup> as commonly known as illustrated by traditional leaders in a focus group discussion in TA Chiseka:

*“...Indeed as chiefs we do ask for ‘handouts’ since other NGOs who come and work here do give us. For instance ICOCA, Red Cross, IRAD Construction Road and Total Land Care. We are given fantas and yellow buns (bread) as well as money. Each time they take us to another place for a workshop they give us allowances why not when they visit us? We have other things to do in our villages but we leave those duties and attend their meetings and yet at the end of the day they don’t give us anything. Yet the ones conducting the meeting are given allowances which mean that these days there are no free things”. (8<sup>th</sup> August, 2007)*

CHRR management, CBEs and other watchdog NGOs interviewed indicated that they do have problems when carrying out activities in the districts due to the culture of people wanting handouts. They claim that this problem has been aggravated by NGOs themselves because of the competition of wanting to be accepted easily with programmes in the communities. However they admit that this handout problem is difficult to be dealt with due to different policies in NGOs. There is lack of synergy between NGOs i.e. relief agencies and human rights NGOs since by design relief NGOs brings in food stuffs etc than those NGOs involved in advocacy. However, the government officials have other explanations as to why this is a challenge both to watchdog NGOs as well as government. Lilongwe district commissioner had this to say:

*“...I have two perspectives on this issue. First of all during Kamuzu Banda era we used to have a special week called youth week where we used to build blocks, maintain roads etc. That was meant to foster and enhance self reliance spirit in communities as well as individuals. That was not Thangata system. However during the transition period of multiparty, due to political pressure and campaign strategy, the opposition criticized that system as oppressive. They were enriching themselves and gaining political mileage and not being concerned about our lives and the implications of their campaign strategies. The second perspective is that people are also tired of officers visiting them now*

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<sup>8</sup> Items particularly money in form of allowances to people attending a public function.

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*and again of different programmes and conducting participatory rural appraisals (PRAs). At the moment people are able to think and they know that the visiting officers after conducting their PRAs they write reports and get allowances. So villagers know that organizations give allowances to field workers and they complain when monies are given to villagers who are being distracted of the same story now and again by different organizations. As long as field officers benefit from their field visits villagers should also benefit out of the same meetings as well” (13<sup>th</sup> August, 2007)*

Much as there are different explanations as to why the problem exists, it has to be noted that this challenge has greater effects on CHRR operations. Sustainability of CHRR programmes at grassroots level is being undermined by this habit since CHRR does not have enough resources to give out. Even if CHRR had resources to do so it would not survive competing with political parties who does so. This in fact could escalate the problem at hand.

## **4.2 General findings for NGO watching in Malawi**

### **4.2.1 Watchdog NGOs and the state relationship**

Through field and desk research, this study has established that the state and NGOs' relationship poses another setback to the watch-dogging role. Malawian state is one that has been shaped by the historical factors stemming right from the colonial era. The post-colonial ruling elites inherited the colonial political, social and economic administration structures and institutions without any alterations. The form of political leadership of dominated and offered by the state has been that of 'one man show' with the president being the charismatic leader, the patron, the head of state, the most powerful and wealthy man. The state stands out as the cause of all the social and economic ills of the society while on the other hand watchdog NGOs considers themselves as having the right to challenge the state on the way it governs and distributes resources. Watch-dog NGOs considers themselves to be having the moral legitimacy to demand for good governance, constitutional and political reforms and distribution of economic and political goods. The state on the other hand considers watch-dog NGOs to be lacking the legitimacy and to be renegade and representing partisan interest of foreign donors, specific ethnic

communities, even individual and indeed opposition parties at times (Interview, Kalemba, 13/08/2007). The state views itself as the legitimate body that can deliver protection, fair judgement having been convened by the 'will of the people' via elections. As such the government has been more reluctant to engage in dialogue and debate with watchdog NGOs dismissing them almost as non-existent and 'petty bourgeoisie' who lack loyalty and patriotism.

Therefore, relations between the state and civil society in Malawi can be described as being suspicious of the other. The Government has not yet learnt how to accommodate civil society as a partner in the governance process (Mwalubunju, 2007:278). The United Democratic Front (UDF)-led government made no secret of its intolerance to its critics, especially NGOs involved in governance issues, and unsuccessfully attempted several times to silence them through restrictive laws which it pushed through Parliament. To this end, no one was surprised when the Government tabled a bill in 2001 to control NGO activities, especially governance and human rights activism (this became the NGOs Act of 2001). It is pertinent to note that negotiations with Government over an NGO bill<sup>9</sup> had been going on for several years. However, in 2001, without consultation with the NGOs, the Government suddenly rushed through the NGO bill through Parliament and succeeded in passing it despite vehement protest from civil society. The enactment of this law came notably in the wake of allegations by the then ruling party that, during the general elections of 1999, members of the Church/NGO Consortium, a network of human rights NGOs and Church groups, which was involved in voter education and election monitoring, had, in fact, campaigned against the ruling party.

Among others, one of the provisions critical to NGO Bill states that an NGO that is 'involved in politicking and electioneering could result in an NGO's permit to operate being withdrawn and the organization concerned being de-registered by the NGO Board. Under the NGO law, the minister responsible for NGO affairs is empowered to have any NGO de-registered. In 2004, the NGO board demonstrated a level of intolerance to NGOs by issuing an ultimatum to organizations that had not yet done so, to register with

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<sup>9</sup> <http://malawi-tourism-association.org.mw/ngo/bill-2000/index.html>

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the board by the end of December or face action – despite the fact that the NGO Act does not, in fact, empower the NGO Board to issue such decrees. This antagonism and mutual distrust is however linked to power and economic resources and not based on ideology. The watch-dog NGOs are fully funded by donor and as such represents donors' agenda. They are supply driven. The donor organizations pump a lot of money into NGOs who they consider to be more accountable than the state. Therefore with scarce economic resources the state then frustrates watchdog NGOs and tries to control their activities in their operation. However, this kind of state-civil society relationship has continued up to date even in the present DPP ruling party. Trust between the state and civil society has been eroded.

#### **4.2.2 Watchdog NGOs and the founding syndrome (Middle class factor)**

Watchdog NGOs in Malawi, have the usual phenomenon of the 'founding syndrome'<sup>10</sup>. In the case of Malawi, Mkandawire (2003:24) likens this syndrome to the old regime of the late Dr Kamuzu Banda and he argues that "...Many of our NGOs are replicas of the old MCP with their own little Ngwazis<sup>11</sup> and clear rules of their eventual replacement of someone else. If they are accountable at all, it is to the donors since most of them are not membership organizations. Some are no more than briefcase institutions". This continues to erode the possibility of institutional independency. The image and vested interests of the founders tend to be dominant. Decision-making tend to be personalized and so too are material and financial resources. The reluctance of most of the founders to relinquish their positions is partly due to economic survival interests. Nevertheless, this promotes lack of shared vision in these NGOs. This constrains internal democracy, institutional development and even the potential of building a vibrant civic culture.

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The spirit behind the founding syndrome is related with the concept of elitism. Ngethe (1992) wrote that 'what is believed about NGOs (and Civil Society groups) frequently

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<sup>10</sup> It's a syndrome that occurs when, an organisation operates primarily according to the personality of a prominent person in the organisation, i.e. founder, rather than working towards the overall mission. The syndrome is primarily an organisational problem and not a problem of the person in the prominent position.

<sup>11</sup> Ngwazi means giant and someone who knows everything. The late Dr Kamuzu Banda called himself this name

obscures what is known about them' (cited in Otieno: 1999: 66). This warning holds in Malawi a situation where the conceptual understanding of the civil society is weighted in favor of the elites and the moneyed income class. Their level of sophistication, education and orientation explains the reason for elite domination in civil society. The emergent civil society organizations in the 1990s are initiatives of this category of social class. These initiatives are urban based, 'English-speaking' sophisticated and located in the 'Democracy and human rights' sector of the civil society. The problem of elite domination in civil society is that the elites claim to be the 'voice of the voiceless'. The truth however is that they speak for their own interests. These middle class founding NGOs in Malawi spends more time with donors, presenting sophisticated proposals for funding and dominating the liberal media at the expense of spending time with the proletariat whom they fervently claim to represent. The problem gendered in the middle class factor in the watchdog NGOs is that they claim to have a constituency, which is the proletariat. Their initiatives are problematic in that their political and operation language is that they exist to protect the ordinary citizen. The realities however is that these middle class initiatives have no popular base, no proletariat constituency. While they claim to protect the common citizens, their interactions with the people is wanting, they do not speak of the same language that is the language of the proletariat and further being urban based and located in the 'bourgeois section' they have ideological and social political relationship with people outside that class.

This same founding syndrome has also got a bearing on the governance of these watchdog NGOs. The study has established that the executive boards very rare do they have real power. There are many reasons for this. The founder syndrome we have talked about earlier is one of them. Where this is strong, the boards are in most cases merely ceremonial. This is due to the fact that most of the board members are founders or relatives to the management of the organizations. Other problems concern the terms of reference and qualifications of the board members themselves. Only in few cases are they well qualified to deliver on their terms of reference. Due to this deficit, the executive boards do sometimes operate like management teams themselves instead of focusing on matters of policy. The continuation of a founder syndrome or founding member of an

NGO as its director several years after its creation is common in the NGO community as well as in Malawi as identified in the previous chapter. Few NGO directors had actually founded their respective NGOs. These are sometimes referred to as “secular NGOs” to distinguish them from faith-based NGOs created by church bodies like PAC which they are now leading them. The presence of this may be a further indication of a lack of professionalism of Malawian NGOs. This issue may not be emphasized further since it is one of the many reasons which government tend to constantly discredit watchdog NGOs as being run by family members even when the issue being lobbied by watchdog NGOs is valid and necessary.

#### **4.2.3 Watchdog NGOs and state accountability**

The study also established that the watchdog function by NGOs is problematic partly due to the practice of state accountability. This state was a transplant, and not an expression of the people’s political self understanding and expression. Instead it was invented and superimposed on the existing local political formations. Its primary function was not to serve the people, but the extraction and expropriation of natural resources, labour and profit. Therefore, historically and institutional wise, this state was and is inherently unaccountable. The challenge that has always been posed since independence is to do with the reconstruction of the culture associated with this state so that it can transform into a political entity that is accountable. This is an objective that watchdog NGOs could pursue.

One important question to consider is why is the issue of accountability a challenge to watchdog NGOs in the present situation? The role of watch dogging is generally a problem in Africa and Malawi inclusive due to the originality of the state. Accountability in European context is different from the Malawian case because the state in European countries was the result of self understanding and political expression of the people. Therefore, as a mechanism, the state through government machinery is meant to be accountable to its people while in Malawi, the coming in of colonialists, the state was not the result of people’s expression. It alienated itself from the people.

Another crucial finding which is linked with the above mentioned problem is that of historical aspect of the state. This is the function under colonial period. For a long time under colonial rule the state was serving the colonial rule hence it was not accountable to the people. Therefore during the decolonization and independence period as a state, the leaders did not deconstruct and reconstruct the structure. They inherited the colonial way of its oppressiveness in nature. Therefore the psychological of the state was essentially oppressive. This continued during the independence era whereby the government and the state were not accountable to the people. It was centralized. Power did not come from the people. The 'four corner stones' (unity, loyalty, obedience and discipline) created by the first president of the Republic of Malawi, the late Dr Kamuzu Banda, was the epitome of conservatism. The current scenario reflects on the model of power that was centralized and was never questioned anyhow. Power was understood to be inherent in the leaders. Up to date this is rooted in people's minds. Therefore, during the current democratization period, as much as we have democratized, the nature and history of the colonial state still remains problematic to the watch dogging role. The political consciousness of the people at grassroots level to be Malawians is not there and not deeply rooted hence watch-dogging is a challenge to take off.

Related to this issue of state accountability is the issue of lack of social contract between the society and those who are duty bearers. In human rights discourse, we are accustomed to the language of "demand for one's rights". The idea of the social contract legitimizes the language of demand especially with reference to government. The idea of the social contract is not known by the majority of the population. This creates difficulties for the watch-dog function and accountability. It is also important to note that a culture of 'demand' is not intrinsic to Malawian society. This is yet to be established and nurtured.

#### **4.2.4 Politics of accountability within watchdog NGOs**

Corruption and lack of financial accountability in the watchdog NGOs of the 1990s which runs through up to date remains one of its greatest weaknesses. Corruption has cultural and moral connotations (Tambulasi & Kayuni 2005:3). As a result corruption

like many other forms of behavior... proves to be an illusive and complex phenomenon (so that) the more one studies it, the more difficult it becomes to separate corruption from other forms of social exchange' (Theobald, 1990:1) Like many concepts, especially in the social sciences, corruption has been interpreted differently and accorded various meanings by scholars. Despite differences in the definitions and interpretations, in essence corruption entails the abuse or misuse of public office for selfish and personal gain. It involves the illegal transfer of public resources from public to private use. Corruption is manifested by demands for bribes by public officials from members of the public in search of services, payment of commissions by business people to public officials as facilitation fees, distortion in dispensing of justice, nepotism and patronage. Kibwana (2001:14) defines corruption as "an act of omission perpetrated by an individual or group of individuals which goes against the legitimate expectation and hence the interests of society. Such acts of omission take place in all spheres of human endeavor; in government offices, corporate bodies, and private institutions". In this study corruption is explained first and for most by the available donor funds.

In Malawi, cases of NGO embezzling funds meant for programmes remains a challenge (CSFC, 2007). This has had a consequence on advocacy NGOs in sustaining their credibility from public, government and communities. Second, most of these organizations have weak institution and organization structure. Third, the emergent watchdog NGOs because of nepotism and ethnic favoritism often recruit ill-trained personnel and have no institutionalized accountability mechanism. As much as watchdog NGOs do not agree to this fact, it is evidently clear as most individual and organizations interviewed during the study expressed concern that this habit is common. It is incumbent upon civil society, especially the so-called NGOs, to take a critical look at itself and put its house in order if its criticism of others is to acquire moral force and credibility. Self regulation is also the best way of keeping government interference a bay.

The problem of accountability in this study has been identified in threefold. First is that of the state of not being accountable to society due to the fact that never in the first place during colonial period was accountable to citizens. The second one is the multiple



accountability nexus within watchdog NGOs themselves towards donors, beneficiaries and staff. The last one is that of other duty bearers like religious and traditional leaders problematic platform for citizens to hold them accountable due to the fact that they are never elected by people. The concept of accountability is a fundamental factor in making claims to legitimacy. It is not illusional to imagine that there are NGOs that are perfectly accountable. There is, however, a level at which the skewed accountability begins to make the possibility of illegitimate actions by NGOs much more probable.

Many of the concerns expressed about the non-accountability of NGOs relate to the difficulties they face in prioritizing and reconciling these multiple accountabilities. This is another aspect of shifting identities among NGOs in Malawi today. Their dilemma is that with the increase in their dependence on donor aid, clearly their accountability has been skewed to the most powerful constituency, the donors. Should they (the NGOs) be identifying themselves more with the grassroots, whose welfare they claim to stand for, or should they be identified more with the sources of resources, whose agenda they implement? Many NGOs in theory indicate that they are accountable to their beneficiaries but in reality their accountability in this study points to the fact donor funding to NGOs has reoriented their accountability upward, away from the grassroots, beneficiaries and staff.

#### **4.2.5 Watchdog NGOs and competing power models**

There has also been established the existence of competing power models and the implication this has on the doctrines of legitimacy, representation and accountability. The legitimacy behind the claim for accountability finds strong foundations where power is understood to be residual in the population and where the elected function only in a representative capacity and upon sustained trust from the people. However, this becomes problematic with regard to religious and traditional leadership structures that exert equal claim to the doctrine of representation, and yet lack clear premises upon which accountability can be demanded of them as one member of a male focus group discussion member echoed:

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*“... We are able to approach some members of parliament...and demand an explanation on some projects and they are more willing to explain to us because they fear that if they do not give us answers we can fire them by not voting for them unlike chiefs and traditional leaders who we can not ask fearing that they can chase us out of this village...” (12<sup>th</sup> August, 2007)*

This compromises a comprehensive approach to the watchdog function by NGOs. What this means is that the parameters that can be useful say in the western world in assessing the watch-dog function of NGOs might not be as useful in a context with the above characteristics.

#### **4.2.6 Watchdog NGO operations and donor dependency**

Inadequate skills and relevant knowledge is another challenge that the study managed to establish through this research. Watch-dog NGOs tend to get involved in matters of governance in an ad hoc manner. This is both at individual and institutional level. This deficit is aggravated by the common practice among international NGOs to recruit qualified and experienced personnel from the local NGOs.<sup>12</sup> In situations where resources are meager, it is natural for competition to ensue among stakeholders. There is heavy competition for donor funding among NGOs in Malawi. This has in turn compromised the sharing of synergy as well as the spirit of coordination and networking. Coupled with this is the increased duplicity in terms of interventions. The duplication of activities is manifest in many seminars and workshops that are organized in posh hotels. Duplication then comes in where one NGO would conduct training on the very same topic and content that another NGO would have handled and some times on the very same people. This leads to the recycling of the ideas and people. What this implies lack of coordination and networking and even more compelling is the fact that these NGOs exist in praxis as competitors and not partners. This duplication of activities especially in the area of awareness creation brings about confusion, misinformation and often misinterpretation of what good governance and human rights entails. Duplication of activities is also expensive and time consuming, even redundant. This has led to creation of ‘rented

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<sup>12</sup> However, CHRR was able to appreciate the role that international donors like HIVOS and NCA play in supporting institutional capacity building.

audience”<sup>13</sup> The donors are not immune from this problem. On their part, they are also in competition. New entrants would like to make quick impression in a country. To do so, they recruit well qualified personnel either from existing NGOs or the public sector, over and above the offering of impressive and competitive support. All this makes coordination amongst the donor agencies problematic as well.

A crucial dimension of NGO strength is their ability to work together and share information to promote development. National coalitions of NGOs can provide a valuable means of information sharing and a common base for dialogue with donors. Indistinct organizational identity is a key factor in the failure of many NGOs in Malawi to cluster with like-minded counterparts. But another reason contributing to weak linkages with beneficiaries is continued mistrust of NGOs in some communities and poverty induced public apathy. At the moment in Malawi, competition for financial resources, personnel and popular support are obstacles to effective communication and collaboration between NGOs often working in the same or neighbouring communities. No NGO can survive in isolation from other actors in advocacy and watch-dogging whether other NGOs, government structures or donor organizations. The relationships that Malawi watchdog NGOs form with other actors as well as donors, undoubtedly impact on their ability to achieve their watchdog functional role.

Relationship between local watchdog NGOs in Malawi are not strong and does not provide considerable mutual support. The majority of local watchdog organizations interviewed mentioned international organizations first when asked the groups or organizations that best support them and at the same time they partner with. This support is in terms of material aspect. However, most regular networking and strong relationships are most pronounced among watchdog NGOs when there is an issue at national level affecting the nation. Often an example was being referred to of the 2007/8 national

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<sup>13</sup> Rented audience is a group of people who are famous for attending civil society organized civic education in which they have mastered and perfected the art of asking ‘right’ questions especially when donor representatives are in attendance and giving good evaluation report on the way such civic education has been beneficial

budget crisis which was happening during the period of this research. They said that their built links for this event added strength of numbers to their advocacy activities

In this study, just like other similar studies, it was established that practically all watchdog NGOs operate on aid from external donors' resources. This raises the serious question of sustainability. In the absence of a diversified resource base, not only is CHRR at the mercy of its sole funder, but also its neutrality comes under question. In addition, it became clear while talking to the NGOs that as the donor pressure for them to spend the money and meet targets increased, the time and space for reflection and innovation were reduced, such that NGOs felt reduced to contractors for donors. Thus with more aid, the NGOs have been forced to bid farewell to innovation, resorting to "cut-and -paste" interventions often gorged down their throats by donors in the name of 'best practice examples'.

For every organization to survive it needs vibrant institutional capacity. However, there is another area of contestation which is that of weak institutional capacity especially in democracy and human rights NGOs. Such NGOs lack human resources and inadequate funding in order to sustain the task ahead of them. Lack of resources avails problems in the areas of coordination, networking and internal democracy. Even more compelling is the fact that most watchdog NGOs are characterized by the competition for resources as opposed to cooperation and partnership

Lack of financial sources has hampered their function. Local NGOs in Malawi are stereotyped as living hand to mouth, the majority of those considered in this study were consistently indicating that they had limited financial support (Interviews with Phiri, Mwakasungula, Kuppens, 2007). They face difficulties in obtaining funding from time to time, for particular projects or aspects of their programming. For some of them they had been able to secure core funding for their organizational expenditures. Furthermore it is a potentially important trend, when considering the challenges of Malawian NGOs, that some of them have achieved some degree of financial security. The ability to seize or create opportunities for internal income generation is one characteristic of an NGO in the

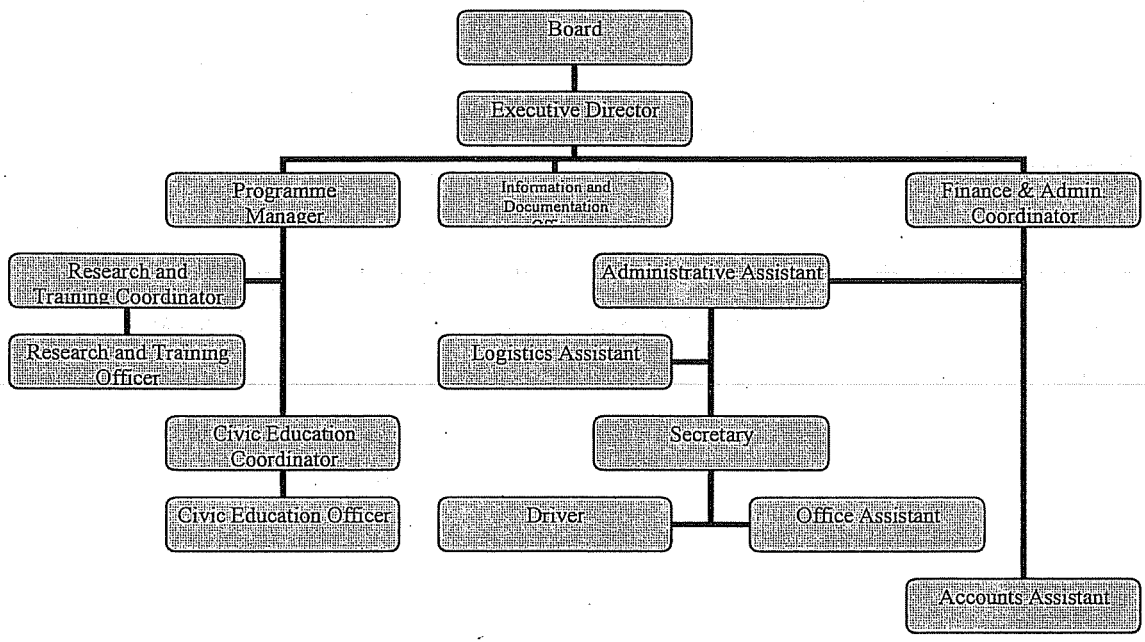
direction of survival in times of donor funding drought some day. Yet almost many of the local watchdog NGOs appears to be able to generate financial resources for themselves. Local NGOs should put much effort in developing strategies and capitalize on opportunities for sustainable internal income generation. These opportunities are varied and include undertaking research and consultancy work for donors and international organizations; conducting training sessions for government and the private sector; renting out parts of NGO premises for workshops and conferences. The financial independence from donors if promoted by these kinds of income generating activities can increase the ability of local NGOs to determine and follow their own priorities. Creating such opportunities should be the primary goal of many Malawian NGOs. Many of them have been talking of going in this direction but these ideas are not taking off. It has become a daily talk and no action has been taken so far.

Turning to the case study CHRR, a particularly commendable achievement was recorded in 2005 when CHRR concluded the process of acquiring the premises which it has occupied since late 2002. With financial assistance from the Norwegian Government, through the Norwegian Church Aid (NCA), CHRR became the first local NGO to have ownership of its own real estate property. CHRR has managed to have an identifiable presence which, in a way, serves to affirm the organization's confidence in a sustainable future. This development is seen by CHRR itself as a mark of the confidence that the Norwegian government, through NCA, has in the stability of CHRR and duration of its programmes for the foreseeable future.

Strong human resource of watchdog NGOs is another key to NGO sustainability. Moyo and Katerere (1992:2) quoted in Michael Sarah (2004:53) claim that 'the single greatest constraint to NGO effectiveness is their inability to attract and retain the right calibre of staff'. Therefore, the greatest challenge has been the majority of local NGOs struggle to attract high qualified and experienced staff. This can be a genuine difficulty for local NGOs since the salaries they are able to offer are significantly lower than those offered by international development agencies or the private sector. CHRR has been a victim of such practice where by in 2005 alone 4 employees resigned from the organization within

the same month for greener pasture. Therefore, in order to foster a local NGO community that can make an effective contribution to sustainable development, adequate support to institutional capacity of NGOs is vital. Institutional capacity encompasses many different capabilities. Key dimensions for NGOs carrying our programmes include planning, management and technical capability. They need to be able to plan, implement and monitor and evaluate their activities effectively. It is important that the NGOs develop adequate managerial, financial management and monitoring and evaluation systems. To do this requires time and money for overheads. Unfortunately, it is common practice in Malawi that funding earmarked for human rights, good governance should not be spent on institutional capacity strengthening and administrative costs but on programme delivery so that more of the funding should reach the needy. This is based on a fallacious donor orthodoxy that the NGOs applying for funding already have the institutional capacity to deliver. It may well be argued that tying funds to programme delivery only is, in a way, institutionalizing mediocrity.

**Figure 2: CHRR Organization Structure**



The figure above indicates that two most important positions in the programme management namely, Research and Training coordinator and Civic education Coordinator have not been filled up to present.

#### **4.3. Conclusion**

The factors that affect the watch-dogging function of CHRR are more external than internal. This does not necessarily mean that CHRR does not have internal problems but it's the gravity of the external challenges since most of CHRR internal problems may easily be solved. This therefore indicates that the greater part of CHRR watch-dogging ineffectiveness is not of their own making but rather due to circumstances beyond their control. The general challenges established by this research are a great threat to this NGO sector and CHRR as well.





## **Chapter Five: Conclusions and recommendations**

### **5.1 Main Conclusions**

#### **5.1.1 Watchdog as a popular function at grassroots level**

Watchdog NGOs, who most of them were pressure groups, played a crucial role during the transition period from authoritarian regime to multiparty government system in Malawi. This was a success story due to the fact that watch-dogging was a new phenomenon in Africa in the 1990s which Malawi embraced too in the name of consolidating democracy and promoting good governance. However, in the late 2000s, watch-dogging is not a popular function at grassroots level and among NGOs in Malawi. More of NGOs present focus more on development than watch-dogging. However with the few watch-dog NGOs present in the sector, the trend at the moment is that the number of them is growing, and that they are expanding in terms of geographical representation and functional scope.

Watch-dogging function at the grassroots level needs a stronger support base than presently exists. The study revealed that activities or sensitization campaigns by the NGOs at grassroots level are less realized. Most of the watchdog function is vibrant at national level. This can be concluded that the watchdog function is more urban oriented. However, their efforts at improving and holding office bearers accountable at national level have been very significant. These watchdog NGOs should stretch wider to the rural area where the bulk of the population live for the purpose of holding office bearers accountable. When these structures are strengthened and empowered, it is possible that the rural population will be able to adequately participate and execute the watch-dogging function in defense and promotion of their rights.

Questionable however is how urban and rural watch-dogging can be addressed and fixed so that the two can be articulated and advocate for democratic changes and even consolidate the gains already achieved. The question of networking, coordination and

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building of organizational and institutional capacity needs to be reviewed. The urban based groups need to network with the rural ones and articulate human rights and good governance issues. There is need for 'collective anger' (Monga. 1995) by the watch-dog sector of NGOs to create more elements against the state and not on each other. The rural-urban gap can be conquered through increased networking, capacity building, organization and institutionalization of work, network and coordination. Clearly therefore there is urgency in addressing the gap if watchdog NGOs are to be the midwife of democracy in Malawi.

### **5.1.2 External vs internal factors**

Most of the factors that militate against CHRR's watchdog function are external rather than internal to it. Several constraints have been identified, some of which lie outside and some inside the sector itself. Some political leaders still perceive watch-dog organizations including CHRR as a threat to their power hence they intimidate them. Second, probably out of fears from the past regime of Kamuzu Banda, people are not inclined to get involved in controversial political and economic issues in the country. Further, some watchdog NGOs lack a solid constituency as they are not rooted in the Malawian society since they focus their functions at national level than at grassroots level. Fourth, the majority of these watchdog NGOs lack organizational skills and maintain a pool of unqualified staff since they are unable to attract qualified staff. Lastly, almost all NGOs including CHRR have a weak financial base, as they are not able to generate resources locally, and thus are too dependent on donor funding and agendas.

### **5.1.3 Ample room for institutional capacity**

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Despite the challenges, there is ample room for CHRR to grow in the watch-dogging function. As much as there are no simple methods that can quickly transform the institutional capacity of local organizations, capacity building is a real challenge for most Malawian watchdog NGOs which includes CHRR and that need is great, but both

watchdog NGOs and their donors ought to realize that institution-strengthening takes a great deal of time, effort and commitment.

## **5.2 Recommendations**

### **5.2.1 Internal re-organization**

CHRR has to seriously take into consideration the aspect of improving on internal reorganization and more of external analysis to find their niche. A greatest obstacle to their functioning is the low motivation of volunteers as well as their public image. Much as the concept of volunteering is meant to foster ownership and sustainability, some fundamental principles need to be met. There is need to improve on the means of communication as well as transportation for these community based educators who are entrusted with the responsibility of civic educating the grassroots who in return will be better participants in the realization of watch-dogging function. With no proper means of transport to accessing the areas, surely, these volunteers may eventually drop out from the function. Related to internal re-organization is the challenge of image building. Even though it is difficult to deal with people's perceptions, however, these perceptions have a great bearing on the effectiveness of CHRR watch-dogging. The problem being highlighted here is that of founding syndrome and regionalism.

It would be of great value should CHRR strive towards identifying their niche within the scope of watch-dogging. More seriously is the aspect of proximity to beneficiaries. Everything in Malawi can be justified in terms of need. CHRR needs to make choices so that it can focus, and ensure that it does one thing well, rather than taking on too many roles, and doing none of them well. Further to this is that there is need of CHRR to conduct an analysis of problems at a village level in terms of governance and identify key issues unlike being donor and event driven

### **5.2.2 Diversifying resource base**

This tackles the issue of sustainability and legitimacy. Much as it has been discovered that CHRR depends heavily on donor funding; this has compromised the scope of programmes they are implementing in supporting good governance and protecting and promoting human rights. Therefore it will be of good benefit should CHRR and other watchdog NGOs diversify their resource base so that there are much more independent in order to avoid being seen as implementing and championing donor agendas. Since watchdog function is political in nature and where many of them are being accused of benefiting and advancing foreign agendas, having internal means of sourcing funds would silence their accusers and the grassroots will begin to appreciate their role they play as being having their agendas advanced. This will also ensure that CHRR attracts more experienced and qualified staff since they will be able to meet the needs and demands of their staff, in so doing there will be continuity of programme implementation than the present situation

### **5.2.3 Re-conceptualizing the Watchdog NGO Networking**

In the aspect where it has been established that the state and watchdog organizations relationship is a threat to watch-dogging function, there is a need for watch-dog NGOs to improve on networking so as to ensure the state does not hinder their functions. Watchdog NGOs in Malawi should proactively seek to create alliances among themselves. The instinct for partnerships provides the glue to hold NGO action together and prepare the ground for grassroots organizations to function effectively. These alliances not only shield NGOs from undue influence from the state but they also provide a reliable mechanism for checks and balances among NGOs. There is high possibility for these NGOs to protect themselves from donors influence. Those NGOs that act collectively will increase their chances of being heard. Such NGOs also are better positioned to negotiate better terms with donors. On the other hand, the weaker ones are further fragmented by competition.

In conclusion, essentially the role and mandate of CHRR continues to be highly relevant and important in Malawi. The gains that have been made with education and awareness-raising in the past years should be built on to mobilize communities to demand accountability and good governance. This is essential to make democracy work from a village to the national level. This would enable CHRR to stick to its role of championing human rights and good governance while focusing on empowering communities to mobilize, organize and advocate for their democratic and constitutional rights.



## **Interviews**

Chiseka Focus group discussion, 4 traditional leaders, Lilongwe: 8 August, 2007.

Chitala Focus group discussion, 5 Males, Salima: 12 August, 2007

Kalembe, C. Lilongwe District Assembly, District Commissioner, Lilongwe: 13 August, 2007

Kamanga-Njikho, V. CHRR, Programme Manager, Lilongwe: 24 August, 2007

Kuppens, J. CHRR Board Member, Lilongwe: 16 August, 2007

Mwakasungula, U. CHRR, Executive Director, Lilongwe: 17 August 2007

Phiri, R. PAC, Executive Director, Lilongwe: 23 August, 2007





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### Annex I. List of Key Informants Interviewed in Organizations

	Name of Respondent	Title of Respondent	Name of institution	District
1	Mr. Undule Mwakasungula	Executive Director	CHRR	Lilongwe
2	Veronica Kamanga Njikho	Programme Manager	CHRR	Lilongwe
3	Levi Mvula	Civic education officer	CHRR	Lilongwe
4	Orison Chaponda	Project manager	NICE	Lilongwe
5	Robert M. Phiri	Executive Director	PAC	Lilongwe
6	Ollen Mwalubunju	Commissioner	MHRC	Lilongwe
7	Charles Kalemba	District Commissioner	Lilongwe District Assembly	Lilongwe
8	Felix Mkandawire	Former District Commissioner	Karonga District Assembly	Birmingham (UK)
9	Father J. Kuppens	CHRR Board member	Center for Social Concern	Lilongwe
10	Dr Gerard Chigona	Human Rights, Good Governance and Gender Programme Manager	NCA	Lilongwe

### Annex 1.2: Names of Focus group discussion members and key respondents For Lilongwe Rural District (interviews were conducted separately)

Name of Respondent	Title of Respondent	Traditional Authority
J.E. Chakwawa-	DC	Lilongwe Rural
Elijah H. Kufandiko-	CBE	Kalolo
Loyter Kafotoka	CBE	Kalolo
Stain Kalolo	CBE	Kalolo
Mfumu Kadzandila	-	Kalolo
Mfumu Katsalira	-	Kalolo
Mr. Malata Gibson	-	Kalolo
Mr. S.J Chitukula	-	Kalolo
Mr. Enock Tambala	-	Kalolo
Mr. Pisanthumba Pelete	-	Kalolo
Miss Zione Kafoteka	-	Kalolo
Msauka Tachokele	-	Kalolo
Adinas Malua	-	Kalolo
Natsoko Nkhomola	-	Kalolo
Ketelina Henock	-	Kalolo
Zelina Nkhomola	-	Kalolo
Salayi Chetelani	-	Kalolo
Ana Tambala	-	Kalolo
Marita Malata	-	Kalolo

Gidion Jamiton	-	Chiseka
Chiundileni Andisen	-	Chiseka
Lackison Katema	-	Chiseka
Midisoni M.V.S. Mpata	-	Chiseka
Bleshe Kachigong'o	-	Chiseka
Josephy Chakudima	-	Chiseka
Damitoni Siwoya	-	Chiseka
Joseph Mpata	-	Chiseka
Lawrent Samuel	-	Chiseka
Eliya Henry	-	Chiseka
Madalisto Mwanza	-	Chiseka
James Maluwa	-	Chiseka
Mandaaliponse Azele	-	Chiseka
Austin Kadzani	-	Chiseka
Unike Samu	-	Chiseka
Lutifa Samu	-	Chiseka
Grace Mwase	-	Chiseka
Namaloko Fled	-	Chiseka
Belezita Sikwenda	-	Chiseka
Dida Jolodani	-	Chiseka
Nasuwande Fled	-	Chiseka
Dina Mlozi	-	Chiseka
Sostern Sanga	-	Chiseka
Aida Kachewo	-	Chiseka
Fenia Jamitoni	-	Chiseka
Efelo Kachingwe	-	Chiseka
Mdziwenji Maazi	-	Chiseka
Filiyana Kuphunda	-	Chiseka
Selina Kanyama	-	Chiseka
NampuzeniLainesi	-	Chiseka
Chikumbutso Phiri	-	Chiseka
Mai Makwenda	-	Chiseka
Mai Velonika	-	Chiseka
Amai Agnesi	-	Chiseka
Loness Tomasi	-	Chiseka
Selita Shoti	-	Chiseka
Mercy Nabanda	-	Chiseka
Joyss July	-	Chiseka
Malifa Kalumbe	-	Chiseka
Laika Petulo	-	Chiseka
Mai Gwazeni	-	Chiseka
Namachingitsa Braford	-	Chiseka
Emmanuel Sala	GVH Mulongoti	Chiseka
Bisayi Rabson	VH Mtavu	Chiseka
Jubeki Chikatugadu Jeremani	VH Jowola	Chiseka
Besitala Mafikeni	VH Makwendakunsi	Chiseka
Wilesi Tsitsi	CBE	Chiseka
Joseph Misiyasi	CBE	Chiseka
Benjamin Chimbalanga	CBE	Chiseka
Yusuf Alisa	CBE	Chiseka

Jordan Kamonjora	CBE	Chiseka
Mrs. Thinda (Estina Yesaya)	CBE	Chiseks

**Annex 1.3: Names of Focus group discussion members and key respondents  
For Lilongwe Urban District (interviews were conducted separately)**

Name of Respondent	Title of Respondent	Traditional Authority
Santhe	GVH	Tsabango
Zilewa	VH	Tsabango
Mkatonza	VH	Tsabango
Ngowani	VH	Tsabango
Mr. Veleson Chasukuluka	-	Tsabango
Mr. Gosoni Thakadzo	-	Tsabango
Getrude Chikawonda	-	Tsabango
Mr. Lito Isekt	-	Tsabango
Mrs. Elina Mkwakwa	-	Tsabango
Mrs. Denis Chasukuluka	-	Tsabango
Pemphelo Banda	-	Tsabango
Mrs. Zayipa	-	Tsabango
Mr. Peterson V. Phiri	-	Tsabango
Mr. Levison Silvester Phiri	-	Tsabango
Mr. Kingsley Chimwaye	-	Tsabango
Mr. Bisayi Laveson	-	Tsabango
Felia Namilazi	CBE	Tsabango
Victoria Mulongeni	CBE	Tsabango
Sinthani Masankhula	CBE	Tsabango
Ekiton Banda	CBE	Tsabango
Jeston Ng'ombe	CBE	Tsabango
Bob Lwazi	CBE	Tsabango
Jimmy Mlilima	CBE	Tsabango
Humphress Majamanda	DC	Lilongwe Urban
Mr. Kuliyani	VH	Chitukula
Alison Kuchilikiza	-	Chitukula
Lameck Samalani	-	Chitukula
Amos Shawa	-	Chitukula
Limbikani Kalonga	-	Chitukula
Alena Kachilikiza	-	Chitukula
Mrs. Biziwik Banda	-	Chitukula
Evelesi Kalanga	-	Chitukula
Lucia Kabanga	-	Chitukula
Mrs. C. Manda	-	Chitukula
Jean Ndalama	CBE	Chitukula
Leston Mtangandira	CBE	Chitukula
Emmie Ndovie	CBE	Chitukula
Tabitha Chimtengo	CBE	Chitukula

**Annex 1.4: Names of Focus group discussion members and key respondents  
For Salima District (Interviews were conducted separately)**

<b>Name of Respondent</b>	<b>Title of Respondent</b>	<b>Traditional Authority</b>
Mr Nkhwali	GVH	Khombedza
Mr Kumwala	GVH	Khombedza
Christina Gama	-	Khombedza
Lofina Ulaya	-	Khombedza
Peter Kamenya	-	Khombedza
Pius Bester	-	Khombedza
Jafari Uledi	-	Khombedza
Marita Che Iweni	-	Khombedza
Beatrice Mbemba	CC	Khombedza
Chipiliro Malango	CBE	Khombedza
Flora Mbemba	CBE	Khombedza
Violet Chikusa	CBE	Khombedza
Mr. Mtonga	GVH	Kalonga
Chapalapata (woman Chief)	VH	Kalonga
Kachepa	VH	Kalonga
Chadabwa	VH	Kalonga
John Mwantisi	-	Tigwirane Manja Youth Club Kalonga
Moses Mwale	-	Kalonga
Mrs. Asinta Kuziva	-	Kalonga
Mrs. Nsaleka Kalinda	-	Kalonga
Mrs. Lunesi Banda	-	Kalonga
Mrs. Gilina Betemani	-	Kalonga
Mrs. Jesina Yokoniya	-	Kalonga
Mrs. Mainesi Boby	-	Kalonga
Joseph Chilangwe Phiri	DC	Both Kalonga and Khombedza
Willy Chavi	CC	Kalonga
Janet Jaki	CBE	Kalonga
Rixina Nyamayasauka	CBE	Kalonga



## **Annex II: Interview guide**

### **2.1 Questions for Head of Organisations/Institutions (Including CHRR)**

- What is the vision and mission of your organisation (CHRR)?
- What are the organisation guiding values?
- On what areas does your organisation (CHRR) focus?
- What programmes does your organisation implement?
- In your understanding what is watch-dogging?
- What specific programmes do you implement of good governance, human rights and freedom and in view of your being as a watchdog NGO?
- In your opinion, what are the pertinent issues that need watch-dogging in Malawi and how have you engaged yourselves?
- What skills do you have in your organisation to support or implement your watch-dogging role?
- What kinds of strategies are used in implementing these programmes?
- Who are your target, and what set of criteria was used to select them?
- Who else works in partnership with your organisation at national as well as local level?
- How does your organisation coordinate with other local NGOS the activities of governance and human rights watching both at national and the local level?
- To what extent does this networking enhance your role as watchdog NGO?
- How does partnership affect your capacity to perform the watchdog function in Malawi?
- What successes have been registered so far on watch-dogging?
- What are the experiences, challenges and lessons learnt so far from watch-dogging function?
- Since the foundation of your organisation has the organisation' mission, objective, programmes shifted?
- If yes, what necessitated that shift
- Has it been due to donor interest or not?
- How does your organisation programme activities for watch-dogging i.e. monitoring, investigation and advocacy?
- What capacities have been built by your organisation for empowering the local people in monitoring/watching over good governance, human rights and freedom abuses?

## **2.2 Questions for Organisation Implementing /programme officers**

- What specific activities programmes do you implement on watch-dogging?
- What other actors carry out their watch-dogging role/activities in your implementing sites?
- What challenges are you experiencing in implementing watchdog activities?
- How do you understand watch-dogging?
- In your case what skills do you have that assist you in implementing the watch-dogging activities?
- Why is it necessary for your organisation to assume the role of watch-dogging?
- Who watchdogs your organisation?
- How accountable are you to your beneficiary, donors and internal accountability to the institutional values?
- How does your organisation plan activities?
- How do you involve the community? Do you incorporate views expressed by the communities as well as district assemblies

## **2.3 Questions for community members where CHRR implements its activities**

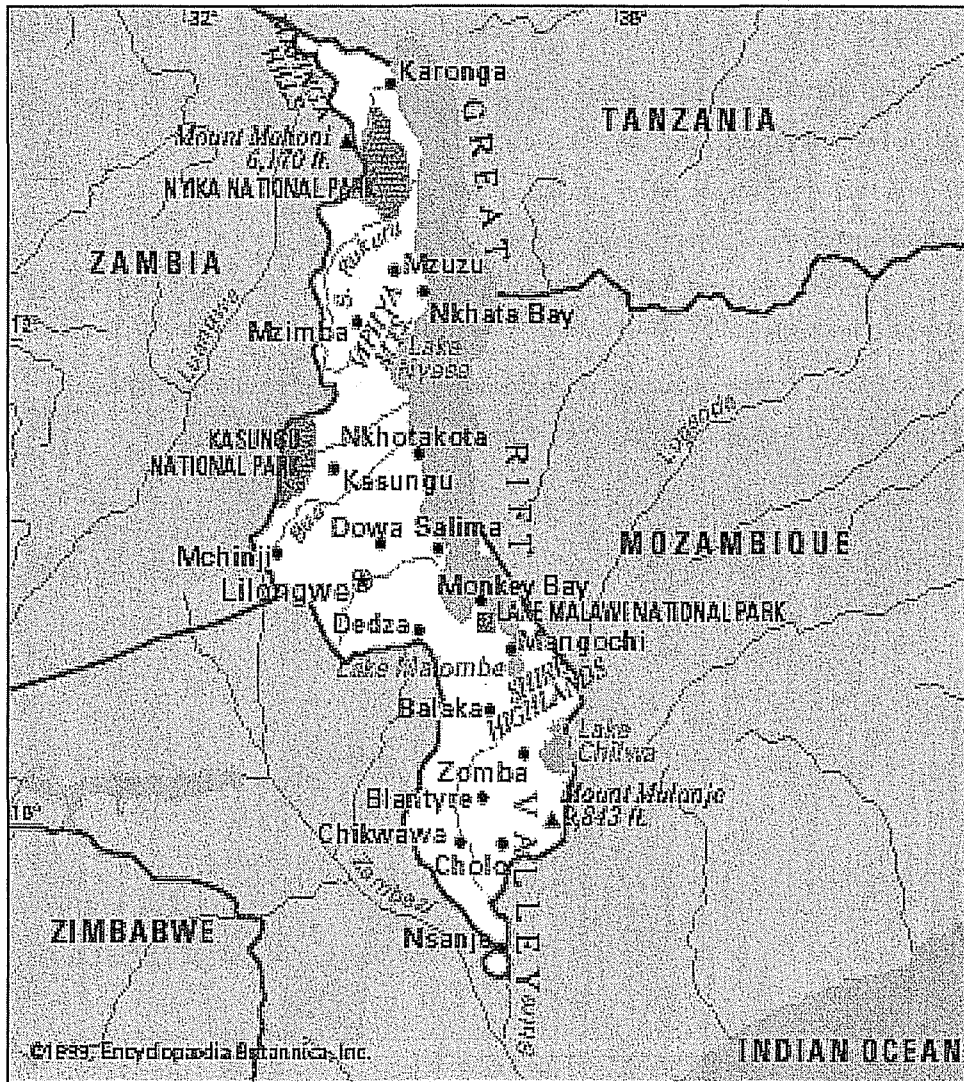
- What do you know about CHRR and how did you know?
- What does CHRR do in this area?
- When did CHRR start working in this area?
- What difference has it made since CHRR started implementing their activities?(good and bad issues)
- As CHRR implements its activities here, what role do this community/ you play in their implemented activities?
- As a community, have you been trained in anyway with regards to watching over good governance, human rights and freedom in this area? Explain
- What have you been able to do on your own in demanding your rights as a result of CHRR interventions in this community?
- What challenges or experiences have you had as a community while watching over good governance, human rights and freedom issues in this area?
- If CHRR was to pull out today would you feel a loss as a community or not? If yes why, if not why not?
- Are you satisfied with what CHRR is implementing here or you would have liked if CHRR was to do something else?

- As a community do you foresee continuing what you have learnt from CHRR?
- Which other organisations works in this area and how do you see CHRR' work towards these others?

#### **2.4 Questions for Board members**

- How were you elected into this position?
- What are your terms of reference?
- What is your role vis a' vis secretariat, government and donors?
- How do you understand watch-dogging?
- What are the challenges that CHRR encounter while implementing their activities as a watchdog NGO in Malawi
- What are you doing in view of the day when donors will no longer be funding CHRR?
- Are you satisfied with the secretariat in executing their role of watch-dogging?

**Annex III: Map of Malawi showing location of Lilongwe (Urban and Rural) and Salima Districts where the study was conducted**



Source of Malawi Map: [http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/rcc/outdoor/malawi/malawi\\_map.gif](http://www.union.ic.ac.uk/rcc/outdoor/malawi/malawi_map.gif)