

NGO REGULATORY AUTHORITY



2023 NGO DAY SUMMARY REPORT



Registering and Regulating Operations of NGOs in Malawi

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Executive Summary

The NGO Regulatory Authority was established by the Act of Parliament (2001) with the mandate of registering and regulating the operations of NGOs in Malawi. The Act provides for all registered NGOs to submit to the Authority annual reports as a way of being accountable to the Government for the resources they mobilize in the name of Malawians.

With a responsibility of promoting donor and public confidence in the NGO sector, NGORA in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender (the policy holder) and CONGOMA (Coordinator of NGOs) organized an NGO day as a platform for NGOs to showcase their interventions and to launch the 2023 NGO sector report which summarized key issues noted in the annual reports submitted by the NGOs in 2023. The guest of honor for the event was His Excellency the President of Malawi Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera who was accompanied by the Vice President Dr. Saulos Klaus Chilima and other Government Officials.



During the day, the president appreciated the work NGOs are doing in the country by inspecting selected pavilions where NGOs showcased their work.

In the evening, State President hosted the NGOs to a dinner at state house where the best performing NGOs in the year were awarded.

Later during the day, the president launched the 2023 NGO Sector report which summarized key interventions by the NGO Sector implemented in the 2021/22 financial year.

Background

The roots of Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi trace back to the period before the country's independence in 1964. Charitable and Missionary groups were some of the earliest NGOs operating in the country and helped in the provision of education, healthcare, and social services. In the early 1990s, NGOs played a crucial role in the promotion of human rights, civic education, and good governance. The coming in of multiparty democracy saw the tremendous growth of NGOs operating in diverse sectors including health, education, agriculture, environmental conservation, women empowerment and poverty alleviation.

Though the NGO sector in Malawi continues to evolve, and adapt to the changing needs of the citizenry; there is still mixed opinions on the contributions of NGOs to the development of the country. This is possibly due to the unavailability of platforms where NGOs can showcase their work and proper profiling of NGO work for public access. To help resolve some of the challenges and profile the NGO sector's contributions towards national development, NGORA has since 2020 been producing an annual NGO sector report which summarizes NGO's significant contributions to various sectors. This however has not been enough as the report does not include all the interventions by NGOs.

NGORA's vision is to have an NGO sector that maximizes public benefit and help sustainability of development interventions at national and community levels. With a total of 965 NGOs in its registry, and in order to attain its vision, the Authority in collaboration with the Ministry of Gender and CONGOMA had for the first time organized an NGO Day, which was held on the 14th December, 2023 at the Bingu International Convention Center in Lilongwe under the theme: ***“A Strong and Vibrant NGO Sector Towards Accelerated Implementation for SDGs and Malawi 2063”***.

Background

Aim

The NGO day was aimed at promoting donor and public confidence in the NGO sector. The event was organized within the concept of peer-to-peer learning and capacity building for the NGOs.

Key Objectives:

1. Showcase the work of NGOs in the Malawi;
2. Provide a learning platform for NGOs; and
3. Launch the 2023 NGO sector report

Methodology:

The event was held using a combination of platforms and approaches as follows.

- i. **Physical:** launch was held at BICC, in Lilongwe
- ii. **Media platforms:** media was invited, and with a live broadcast to ensure the event was broadcasted nationwide and other participants and the general public watched through TV (MBC TV, Mibawa TV and Zodiak) and NGORA's Facebook page.

Budget and Sources of income

The event's total budget amounted to **K54,590,688.25** which was paid through payments from the exhibitors and sponsorships by NGOs and private institutions as per the breakdown below;

1. **90 NGOs with exhibitions contributed a total of K27,000,000 (49% of the budget)**
2. **NGO contributions towards the budget K18,490,162.00 (34% of the budget)**
3. **6 private partners contributed K6,500,000 (12% of the budget)**
4. **shortfall of K2,600,526.25 was paid by NGORA (5% of the budget)**

Limitation:

With the presence of almost 100 pavilions, the state president failed to inspect each and every pavilion but rather a selected number that in general represented key sectors were inspected.

Event Outcome

The event was graced by speeches from a number of key stakeholders including the NGORA CEO, CONGOMA chairperson and the UN resident coordinator among others who all agreed on the important role the NGOs play in the development of Malawi. The speakers also commended the organization of the NGO day which they said had given the NGOs a chance to show the public the important work they are doing and a platform for collaboration as well as learning from each other.

In his remarks, CONGOMA Chairperson, said that collaborations and partnerships are catalysts towards the synergy that creates meaningful impact and greater efficiency. He indicated that through collaborations, we maximize positive outcomes of collective efforts, this is why CONGOMA calls for collaborations between NGOs, Government, and the public sector to develop Malawi.

Chairperson for the Foundation for Civic Education and Social Empowerment, who is also the Chairperson of Local Government Organizations, John Bamusi called on the government to empower NGOs to enable them to complement government initiatives and contribute effectively to national development.

In his remarks, NGORA CEO summarized the contents of the 2023 NGO Sector Report and some of the key challenges the Sector is facing such as collaboration and partnership that leaves capacity gaps in the sector and low impact in NGO interventions as well as duplication of efforts.

The CEO indicated that the year under review, only 61% of the expected 706 active NGOs complied with the NGO law and amongst these a total income of MWK589 billion was recorded. The report has also indicated some inequalities in the spatial distributions of interventions per sector with most NGOs implementing activities in the southern and central region leaving the hard to reach unserved. He indicated that this is where NGORA will come in to promote the issue of capacity, partnership and coordination of NGO work so that every Malawian is served and the projects being implemented are sustainable and aligned to the country's development agenda.



Figure 1: NGORA CEO, Edward Chileka-Banda giving his remarks

Event Outcome



Representing the donor community, the UN Resident coordinator thanked NGORA, Ministry of Gender and CONGOMA for organizing the event which gives a platform for the NGOs to learn and showcase their work.

She further thanked NGORA for the thorough engagement and consultations in the development of regulations and giving the development partners a chance to input in these regulations and looks forward to further collaborations.

Figure 2: The UN Resident Coordinator Rebecca Adda-Dontoh giving her remarks on behalf of development partners

In her remarks, the Minister of Gender Hon. Jean Sendeza MP. recognized the interventions NGOs are doing in the betterment of the lives of Malawians and acknowledged that the NGO sector is a necessity for the improvement of the livelihood of Malawians. The Minister urged all local authorities to make sure they work with only registered and compliant NGOs as this is the only way that would help Government to ensure accountability of all the resources channeled through the NGO Sector.

She further highlighted that the sector is one of the major contributors to the country's forex reserves as in the year under review over 80% of the sector's income was received in foreign currency. However, the Ministry through NGORA has faced challenges in properly profiling the contributions of the sector's forex to the economy of the country.

On the issue of attaining the sustainable development goals and MIP-1, the minister indicated that in collaboration with the Ministry of Local Government developed a standard MOU which NGOs and district councils should sign in order to improve the alignment of NGO work to the national development agenda.



Figure 3: Hon. Jean Sendeza MP. giving her remarks

Event Outcome

Lastly, the minister acknowledged the challenges the NGOs are facing in their operations such as funding constraints, capacity, climate change, environmental and health crises and poor road infrastructure that limit the accessibility to hard-to-reach areas. The Minister assured the NGO sector that the government through her ministry will seriously look into the provision of incentives to those NGOs working in hard-to-reach areas cushion the challenges encountered during the implementation of their activities.

Speaking during the event, His Excellency the President Dr. Lazarus McCarthy Chakwera urged the NGOs to design impactful programs aligned with Malawi's developmental goals and the Malawi 2063 vision. The president asked for programs that will be blueprints for future funding rather than programs that merely drain resources to keep people busy.

He further highlighted the importance of partnerships between the government and NGOs in addressing issues that affect Malawi. He indicated that Government-NGO partnership has saved thousands of Malawians, hence thanked the sector for the effort it took in defending Malawi when the president called during Operation Tigwirane Manja.

He further urged the Ministry of Gender, NGORA and CONGOMA to consult key players in developing the capacity building programs in order to create a vibrant NGO Sector.

The president urged the NGO sector to always raise specific issues whenever they have concerns against Government policy so that they can be addressed rather than ambushing an entire process to serve a narrow interest. This was spoken in relation with the amendment of the NGO law which faced resistance due to concerns that some articles in the amendment would shrink civic space.

On the issue of government not properly accounting for forex received through the NGO Sector, the president directed the Ministry of Finance and the Ministry of Gender to jointly engage NGORA and the reserve bank in insuring that all forex received in the NGO Sector comes through regulated systems. At the end of his speech, the president officially declared the 2023 NGO Sector report launched.



Figure 4: Symbolic presentation of the 2023 NGO Sector Report by the State President to the Minister of Gender Community Development and Social Welfare

The NGO Dinner

In the evening, the state president hosted the NGOs to a dinner where he wanted to celebrate with them on the commendable work, they are doing in improving the lives of Malawians. During the dinner, the president awarded the best performing NGOs in different categories that did well in the year as follows;

- 1. Best Complying NGO(s) for the past two consecutive years (based on reports submitted to NGORA):**
 - a. Family Health International (FHI 360)
 - b. Self Help Africa
 - c. Life Concern Organization
 - d. Alimohamad Trust
- 2. NGO(s) with Highest Funding for the past 3 years (based on reports submitted to NGORA):**
 - a. Local – Mai Aisha Trust
 - b. International – World Vision International
- 3. NGO with wide Geographic Coverage (based on reports submitted to NGORA):**
 - a. Mary’s Meals Malawi
- 4. NGO with significant investment in hard-to-reach area (based on reports submitted to NGORA):**
 - a. Partners in Health
- 5. Best cyclone Freddy response (based on nominations from district councils)**
 - a. Save the Children International
 - b. World Vision International
 - c. Self Help Africa
 - d. Plan International
 - e. Oxfam
 - f. Eagles Relief Organization
 - g. Farmers Union of Malawi
 - h. Youth for Development and Productivity
 - i. Episcopal Conference of Malawi
 - j. Churches Action in Relief and Development (CARD)
- 6. Most Friendly Donor to NGOs (based on nominations from local NGOs):**
 - a. Trocaire
- 7. NGO Veteran(s) (based on nominations from CONGOMA):**
 - a. Dr. Vera Chirwa
 - b. Mr. Ted Nandolo
 - c. Mr. Ollen Mwalubunju
 - d. H.E. Dr. Joyce Banda

Award Presentation

Below is a pictorial focus of the NGO leaders/representatives that received awards from the state president during the NGO Dinner.



Figure 5: Some of the awardees for the best compliant NGOs



Figure 6: Awardees for the category of highest funded NGOs



Figure 7: Some of the awardees for the best response to cyclone Freddy



Figure 8: Representatives for the awardees for the NGO veteran category

Recommendations

Both events turned out successful and based on the responses from the assessment forms shared with the NGOs, there is common understanding that the NGO day is a good platform for the NGOs to showcase their work and share ideas. Based on the event, the following recommendations were made;

1. The event should be an annual event;
2. This should be a two-day event where there should be a full day of exhibition of NGO work where members of parliament and the general public can inspect the pavilions then the following day the president inspect and launch the NGO Sector report;
3. Should not be done during the rainy season
4. There is need to engage more partners who would cover the budget costs
5. Share our annual event plan with potential partners for their planning.
6. Limit the number of exhibitors

Conclusion

The NGO day and dinner was organized with the aim of improving donor and public confidence in the sector and celebrate the best performing NGOs in the year. The day also stood as a platform for the NGOs to showcase their work as well as to share ideas. The state president who was the guest of honor at the event took the opportunity to thank the NGOs for the good work they are doing in the country and advised them implement projects that are for the benefit of the country and are aligned to the national development agenda.

In the evening, the president hosted a dinner which celebrated the best performing NGOs in the year as well as some of the veterans that played a key role in the growth of the NGO sector.