



THE POPULARIZATION OF SADC PROTOCOL
ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT
PROJECT: AWARENESS RAISING THROUGH
COMMUNITY AND VILLAGE MEETINGS

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Submitted to

GENDER LINKS

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

Malawi through the NGO Gender Coordination Network has been an active participant of the process that led to the elevation of the SADC Declaration on Gender and Development to the current SADC Protocol. This was possible through its membership in the Southern Africa Alliance on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development, dating back to 2005.

While eleven Member States signed the Gender Protocol in August 2008 Summit at the Sandton International Conference Centre in Johannesburg, Malawi only signed the SADC protocol on October 19, 2009 in Blantyre. With such as a great leap towards recognition of women's rights, there remains further demonstration of government's commitment to actualizing the protocol.

Civil Society Organisations like NGOGCN recognise that a multi-sectoral approach to implementing the Gender Protocol is the most strategic route. This then calls for collaboration and action beyond talking and developing written policies. Furthermore the Malawian people need to appreciate and be knowledgeable about the protocol which is one of the major gender instruments that can help improve women's livelihood in SADC. If the communities themselves understand the Gender Protocol, they will be at least empowered to own the demand for their rights.

It was therefore with this understanding that NGOGCN in Partnership with Gender Links recognized the need of sensitizing rural masses about the protocol. While NGOGCN was the implementer in this arrangement, Gender Links supported the NGOGCN to undertake activities towards stimulating understanding of the protocol among communities. This has come at an opportune time and has given NGOGCN the opportunity to continue achieving its mandate as far as gender is concerned in Malawi. To this end, the NGOGCN sought to undertake the activities through its Women in Politics and Decision Making Permanent Committee which comprises seven NGOs (Society for Advancement of Women-SAW, Gender Support Programme-GSP, Centre for Human Rights and Rehabilitation-CHRR, National Elections Systems Trust-NEST, National Women's Lobby Group-NAWOLG, Association of Progress Women-APW, Civil Liberties Committee-CILIC) and a Partner namely Pan African Civic education Network (PACENET).

The financial and material support given by GL through the DFID GTF programme - *Empowering women to claim their rights* on taking the Gender Protocol to village level enabled NGOGCN reach out at least to two constituencies, in each of the 25 Districts targeted by this programme support.

Before commencing the holding of village workshops, NGOGCN and GL jointly conducted a Training of Trainers workshop to help equip implementing NGOs with skills and tools regarding how they can raise awareness about the SADC Gender Protocol using the 'how adults learn' approach, among other methods. This was again financially supported by GL through its GTF programme.

This therefore is a report of the activities as implemented by the aforementioned organisations as of March, 2010.

2.0 PROGRAMME OVERVIEW

2.1 Project goal

- To popularise the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development and 50/50 campaign on women participation in politics and decision making.

2.2 Project objectives

1. To provide background on the international and regional gender instruments with a particular focus on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development.
2. To raise awareness on the relevance of the instruments on the lives of women in the country and communities, the SADC protocol on Gender and Development in particular
3. To contribute to the creation of a conducive environment for election of women aspirants in the forth coming local government elections through advocacy and lobbying processes
4. To mobilise stakeholders support at community level for women aspiring for the forth coming local government elections.

2.3 Implementation Strategy

2.3.1 Community Meetings

Unlike in other SADC Countries where Village meetings would mean “Village”, the Malawi approach was a bit different; there is an understanding that, we can broaden our reach by capturing larger communities if existing structures are used. In this particular case, two approaches were used - opinion leaders and potential candidates in the elections were grouped in a classroom setting while the communities at large were invited for the open meetings. This gave a chance to get little more people than expected in the closed meetings.

Most people targeted were key stakeholders i.e. Chiefs, faith leaders, business community, political parties, teachers, students, civil servants and the general populace to raise the awareness on the SADC protocol. The meetings were designed to be participatory so as to allow community members to own the Knowledge about the protocol. The plenary sessions also provided a platform for discussing pertinent issues as are of concern when it comes to women’s rights. During the plenary sessions, the participants were able to rate their levels of understanding of the Protocol and other national and international instruments.

2.3.2 Attitude survey

This was designed to gauge attitudes/perspectives communities hold with regard to gender aspects. Also a questionnaire on the SADC protocol was administered. This had questions relating to the protocol as in helping to find out what is known about the protocol.

3.0 MAPPING OF IMPLEMENTERS

After the holding of a planning meeting, the members agreed to undertake activities as per the mapping here below:

	Name of Organization	District	Region
1	CILIC	Kasungu	Centre
		Balaka	South
		Mulanje	South
2	APW	Rumphi	North
		Mwanza	South
		Neno	South
		Nsanje	South

3	GSP	Dowa	Centre
		Dedza	Centre
		Phalombe	South
4	NAWOLG	Nkhatabay	Centre
		Mchinji	Centre
		Zomba	South
5	CHRR	Chitipa	North
		Karonga	North
		Mangochi	South
6	NEST	Nkhotakota	Centre
		Ntcheu	Centre
		Blantyre	South
7	SAW	Mzimba	North
		Ntchisi	Centre
		Lilongwe	centre
8	PACENET	Machinga	South
		Chiradzulu	South
		Chikhwawa	South
		Thyolo	South

Summary:

Number of implementing Organisations	Number of Districts	Number of Regions	Districts Per region	
			North	4
8	26	3	South	13
			Centre	9

4.0 THE ACTIVITIES

4.1 PRINTING OF TRANSLATION OF LEAFLET ON SADC PROTOCOL ON GENDER AND DEVELOPMENT

Information is always crucial when it comes to raising awareness. Taking into consideration of this a process of translating the leaflet that summarises the provisions of the SADC Protocol was extremely important. As such NGOGCN facilitated the translation of this leaflet into Chichewa, one of the local vernaculars. A total of 5,000 copies were made. These were later handed out

to implementing organizations that used them in their community meetings to facilitate the easy trickling down of information as far as the provisions of the protocol are concerned.

These leaflets proved important as they made it easier for facilitators to refer to content easily while also allowing participants a chance of having handy information. These leaflets were also left with the participants as tools that would help them appreciate what the protocol has and thereby also facilitate the much needed change in their communities through demanding what the protocol provides for them from duty bearers.

Further to that, the NGOGCN through its member NGO-Malawi Human Rights Resource Centre where I work as Programme Manager with funding from Royal Norwegian Embassy also translated the whole Protocol into Chichewa, while the English version has also been reprinted in bulk and distributed widely across the Country. These copies were not just distributed but they were given out during properly structured training workshops that were organized as part of the ongoing programmes of MHRRC on Gender and GBV. However, let me mention that while it is true that some communities have received the protocol, we still have a larger group that need such materials and it is our sincere wish to reach out to more communities especially, now that we are preparing for the Local Elections that have been confirmed to take place in November 2010.

4.2 COMMUNITY WORKSHOPS

As held in various settings, the workshops proved instrumental in bringing to light the SADC protocol to the grassroots. At the centre of community awareness is raising consciousness among people so that by the end of the day they own



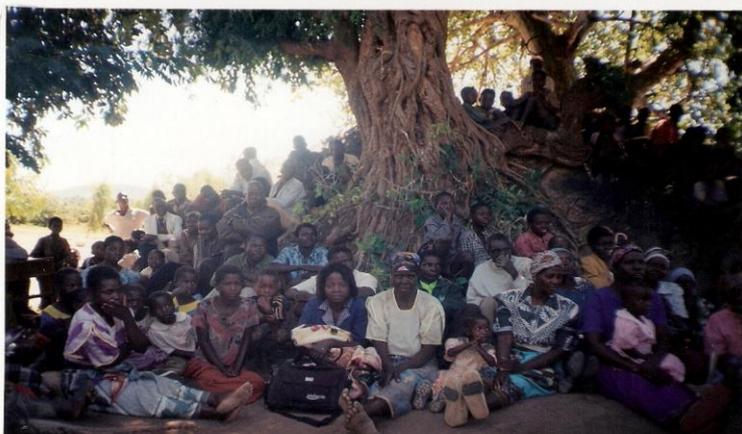
knowledge and empowerment to act accordingly. The sensitization through these village level meetings was helpful as they brought together custodians of power and culture to deliberate on issues of gender and women rights.

As such the community meetings provided a platform of voicing out concerns, sharing of knowledge on provisions of the protocol and also mapping the way forward in terms of community action. A number of activities were done alongside the meetings and these include poem recitals, drama. All these carried gender related aspects while highlighting what the SADC Protocol is about.

In the discussion within the meetings, the following elements were gathered as sentiments from participants:

1. Eliminating a number of social practices and cultural traditions that limit women's ability to participate in politics and decision making structures.
2. Combating various forms of domestic and gender-based violence, which are often condoned by cultural leaders and these puts fear in women thereby suppressing them further when it comes power sharing in the community
3. Promotion of women's rights is crucial as far as the realization of gender equality and equity
4. Increase sensitizing the communities on the SADC Protocol on Gender and Development so that it is translated into domestic use
5. Government should continue to demonstrate its commitment towards implementing the SADC protocol in areas such as ending GBV and empowering women to take up political and decision making positions
6. The understanding of gender is important for communities to accept some provisions the protocol advances. This was noted as some communities acknowledged that gender was wrongly resented to them such that men became hostile and were not willing to offer a pleasing space for women on issues of leadership among others

7. Men should be highly involved in gender issues so that they should offer the much needed support to women. This is because at times them men do not allow the women (wives) to participate in community activities such as taking leadership roles in village level structures



Participants at Kachere,T/A Zilakoma, Nkhata Bay

NOTE: Since these meetings drew stakeholders from various sectors i.e. the traditional/cultural leaders who were being blamed at a point to have been condoning some

forms of Gender Based Violence, therefore, during plenary we employed dialogue, as these meetings were not intended to apportion blame, but instead to foster a culture of cooperation, self-review, self-criticism and ownership of a process that will yield fresh and innovative strategies and commitments to social change, through change of people's mind set.

4.2.1 DELIVERABLES

- A total of 33 communities mobilized for the workshops
- 66 Constituency workshops conducted
- 5000 copies of the Protocol Leaflets distributed
- 100 copies of Chichewa Translated /English versions of the comprehensive SADC Protocol distributed.

4.3 ATTITUDE SURVEY

The attitude survey centered on determining the knowledge several gender elements such a decision making at family level, participation of women in economic activity, just to mention a few. Community participants were asked to either agree, disagree on some statements.

Also a questionnaire was circulated to determine the knowledge of the community members with regard to the SADC Protocol on gender and Develop. The questions sought to find out what they know regarding some of the following; when the protocol was adopted and whether their country, Malawi in this case, signed the protocol.

General Observations:

- Not many know much about the protocol and its aim
- Most communities still fail to appreciate what gender is, they think it is about women only
- Some people in the communities still think decision making power are only with men and such that they should be the final voice on any matter in a family



A facilitator emphasises a point while a member distributes pamphlets on SADC Protocol in local language during a meeting in Ntchisi district

5.0 CHALLENGES

Among others the following challenges were noted

- Deep - rooted cultural norms are still hampering full participation of potential women in politics and decision making processes. These usually instill fear in women and as such many women shy from participating
- The electoral system not responsive to women aspiring for political positions in the country.
- Irregularities in the manner in which primary elections are conducted which drain resources of women aspirants i.e. numerous postponements of the elections.

- The more women aspirants championing similar wards thereby giving men an upper hand of winning. It would be ideal to let the women help each and give one another room
- Delay of certain electoral processes by stakeholders/government derails women commitment and resources.

6.0 LESSONS LEARNT AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Through the community and village level meetings the following lessons have been learnt as follows:

- Malawians have now moved from just awareness to action on issues that affect them i.e. the demand to see government implementing the Gender protocol and local government elections was overwhelming after sensitization. As such further sensitization needs to be undertaken
- Stakeholders especially men are taking keen interest to support women aspirants as evidenced by their commitment to support the women in the previous election and the forthcoming local government elections. It would therefore be crucial to continue involving men so that they should continue supporting women by giving them room into decision making positions
- Political parties are able to impose male candidates to the electorates due to late commencement of gender awareness campaigns for women aspirants. Political parties should be lobbied to make gender sensitive manifestos that will enable women participation
- Female leadership development needs to be turned into a long-term programme to enhance sustainability of this intervention and thereby completely transform the mindset of the communities/electorates.



A participant files a question during a meeting in Ntchisi while others refer to a SADC protocol pamphlet

- Women aspirants require not only moral support but more capacity building to strengthen their campaign skills, economic capabilities, among others, therefore deliberate programmes should be carried out to build their (women's) capacity.
- Communities are eager to learn and as such there should be various modes used such as Information Education and Communication materials to effectively sensitize them on the SADC protocol and related issues.
- Women should be encouraged to support one another
- Women should be encouraged to value education so that they can equally and confidently compete with men

7.0 CONCLUSION

Overall, the awareness facilitated through the community and village meetings was a success in terms of imparting the required skills and creating desired attitudes and perceptions of the communities regarding the SADC Protocol on Gender and development. At this stage, it is important to continue engaging the people at grassroots in continuous awareness and seek greater involvement of traditional leaders, faith-based leaders and political parties who could shape the behavior and attitudes of their people towards women empowerment.

As NGOGCN continues to engage the communities, more resources are needed. On the other hand it would also be helpful to continue lobbying government to translate the signing into tangible implementation of activities that will actualize the aim of the protocol by allocating resources that would respond to the requirement therein.



Participants get ready for a session in Mwanza District