

Preparation of Community Exchange and Knowledge Fair for MASAF III Launch

During the period from 20th October to 31st October 2003, Siddhartha Prakash from the World Bank IK Program assisted in the preparation of a knowledge fair and community exchange program in Malawi, as part of the launch of the third phase of the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF III).

Community Knowledge Fair



The community knowledge fair took place in the village of Katuli near Mangochi, as part of the MASAF III Project Launch. The fair brought together communities from different parts of Malawi that had benefited from MASAF projects, including AIDS orphans and people with disabilities. It also showcased the work being done by CBOs, NGOs, donor agencies and public-private partnerships involved in the implementation of MASAF programs. These included the World Bank, UNICEF, DFID, Malawi Industrial Research and Technology Development Centre and Technical, Entrepreneurial Education and Vocational Training Authority (TVETA).



We set up 10 knowledge booths that showcased best practices and success stories from MASAF to the Presidents of Malawi and Tanzania, official dignitaries and local development practitioners. The Fair provided a platform for local communities and development partners to share and exchange experiences and create opportunities for networking. The Fair helped

strengthen partnerships between different stakeholders to work together and jointly implement MASAF III.

Outcome and Follow up:

- The Pavilions constructed for the knowledge booths will be used by the communities as a market place and forum for future exchanges.
- They will also serve as a model for community based knowledge sharing to be replicated into the MASAF structure.

Community-to-Community Exchange



The Knowledge Fair was followed by a one and a half day community-to-community exchange program among seven different communities from all over Malawi. The exchange brought together 40 participants comprising local authority officials, project beneficiaries, MASAF staff, NGOs, CBOs and project management committees. The program aimed at sharing MASAF implementation experiences across the country and developing an action plan to incorporate the lessons learnt to date into MASAF III.

The communities stated that they had gained new knowledge from their peers. They provided an account of the lessons they learned from each other, as a result of a series of group interactions. These include:

- How to request assistance for a project and manage its successful implementation
- How to resolve problems that could result in project failure
- Ways of looking after orphans
- How to engage in projects that would be sustainable without MASAF assistance
- How people with disabilities can become self reliant with vocational skills and train others.

The communities also raised a number of issues that they wanted MASAF III to address related to:

- Delayed disbursements and payment in tranches
- Delayed and low PWP wages
- Retaining any funds remaining after the completion of a project
- Training non-orphaned children at a fee so they can acquire vocational skills

These issues were addressed by Mrs. Ida Manjolo from MASAF, who also provided the communities with a brief introduction to the core components of MASAF III. The participants were trained to serve as community resource persons on social funds.

Each of the seven communities developed an action plan outlining key activities that they would undertake over the next six months and identifying the kind of support they needed from MASAF. These ranged from following the MASAF guidelines to initiate new projects such as the construction of new school blocks and roads, to starting new income generation activities and providing vocational skills training to other members of the community. The detailed action plans for each community and their key observations are attached.

Outcome and follow up:

- It is expected that the community-to-community exchange process will be institutionalized into MASAF III to facilitate future knowledge sharing and learning.
- As a follow up to this initiative, MASAF agreed to develop a proposal that would involve local communities from MASAF and TASAF to visit South Asia to learn about their social action funds and related projects. The proposal would be funded mainly by the projects, with additional support from the IK Program. It would build on the pilot study tour between East Africa and South Asia organized in September 2002 and involve partnering with the South Asia region of the Bank.

