



Examining the Inclusion of Environmental Policies in the Existing Policy Framework of Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi

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Abstract There is increased number of non-governmental organizations in Malawi fighting for poverty reduction through different initiatives. The increased numbers are due to high poverty levels that has placed Malawi as the poorest country with reference to the annual GDP. Operation of these organizations follows their policies that are believed to be in line with the Malawi government guidelines and laws for sustainable development. One of the provisions by the government towards non-governmental organization is the inclusion of environmental policies to guide organization's conduct towards environmental management. This study aimed at investigating the status of environmental policy integration in organization's policies as a guide towards environmental management. Data was collected using a semi structured questionnaire through stakeholder interviews which targeted key informants which were purposively sampled. The results showed that most NGOs do not have environmental policies being integrated in their organizations policies. However, environmental management practices are only incorporated at program levels as required by the funders. Despite the findings that some organization have not yet mainstreamed the environment policy, the study suggest that government should monitor the actions of NGOs and ensure that their policy framework have incorporated the environmental principles required. More importantly, government should provide awareness and technical assistance to the NGOs on relevance of inclusion of the environmental policy in their policy framework.

Keywords Environmental policy, NGOs, Policy framework, Environmental management

Introduction

Environmental policy has been defined by many scholars as a statement about a country's or organizations environmental position and values. In Malawi the National Environmental Action Plan, 1994 marked the beginning of the reform programme and the Republic of Malawi Constitution, 1994 introduced democratic reforms in Malawi consolidating the policy statement in the National Environmental Action Plan (NEAP) making it the first time for the Constitution to provide for responsible environmental management section 13 (d) [1]. Since then organizations have been encouraged to develop their own policies regarding the environment to guide their activities towards environmental protection. In Malawi and some other countries, inclusion of Environmental policy in organization's policy framework is mandatory as it has been stipulated in section 1(1) of the Environmental Management Act such that it is the duty of every person (includes all organizations) to take all necessary and appropriate measures to protect and manage the environment and to conserve natural resources and to promote sustainable utilization of natural resources in accordance with this Act and any other written law relating to the protection and management of the environment or the conservation and sustainable utilization of natural resources [2]. Furthermore, the Malawian Constitution in section 13 (d) stipulates that government shall promote and implement policies and legislation to prevent degradation of the environment



provide a healthy living and working environment for the people of Malawi and accord recognition to rights of future generation by means of environment protection and sustainable development of natural resources [3]. The government has done this by formulating several environmental policies that are expected to be adopted all citizens starting with organizations that are operational in Malawi. Environmental policy instruments are regarded as a tool that is relevant in the protection of the environment [1]. Environmental policies are significant in protecting and enhancing the state of the environment [4]. The Malawi Outlook report states that Malawi's economic development and the livelihoods of its population are largely dependent on natural resources hence the need to conserve its valuable environmental resources [5].

Despite the significant environmental law and policy development in the nation, the majority of environmental issues remain at the stage of policy and debate rather than implementation for most organizations. Most of these policies and programs are not fully implemented and enforced both at national and institutional level, for the reason that most of its actors have not yet integrated these laws into their institutional existing policy framework. Hence this research paper will critically analyze the integration of environmental policy in nine organizations' existing policy framework.

Objectives and method

The study was conducted to investigate the integration of environmental policy in organization's existing policy framework as a tool to direct environmental management activities of the organization. The study consulted 9 non-governmental organizations in Malawi and respondents were randomly sampled ranging from directors, field officers and other key informants for personal interviews using a semi structured questionnaire (organizations names were held synonymous basing on consent). Interviews captured data on organization key environmental principles, environmental management activities, management commitment, challenges and opportunities that exist in the organization in relation to environmental management. Being qualitative in nature, data was analyzed using thematic analysis where responses were transcribed for reporting.

Findings

The results from the study noted the organization had no environmental policies towards environmental management as required by Malawi government. However it was noted that the organizations incorporate environmental protection principles at program levels as required by funding agencies and not as a day to day conduct for their activities. According to the director for the organizations, the key environmental principles they have are basing on the current programs include community participation environmental protection activities (tree planting and waste management), accountability in the use of resources in the environment, good governance, and gender consideration as the major victims of environmental degradation are women and girls. Program based activities for environmental protection include policy tracking through avocation for environmental act and policies, community activities in waste management and tree planting. Commitment of the organizations to comply with government provision for inclusion has proved to be a challenge by the organization interviewed by the study. It was noted with there is low commitment towards uptake of environmental guidelines provided by government into their organizations policy framework. The lack of commitment was reported to be attributed due to lack of push factors from Government in regards to environmental protection.

The study pointed that weak policy guidance from government on environmental management remains the main challenge for the organization to seriously mainstream environmental policy in their guiding policy framework. This has been proved as a result of poor coordination in implementing policy planned activities. Being working with the Youth, it was reported that lack of commitment by the Youth to continue environmental protection initiatives after the program remains a major challenge in long term implementation of environmental protection activities as planned by the organization strategies. This is where the youth shows activeness during the time when the project is in progress and after the project they leave the activities they learnt due to lack of motivation factors like incentives.



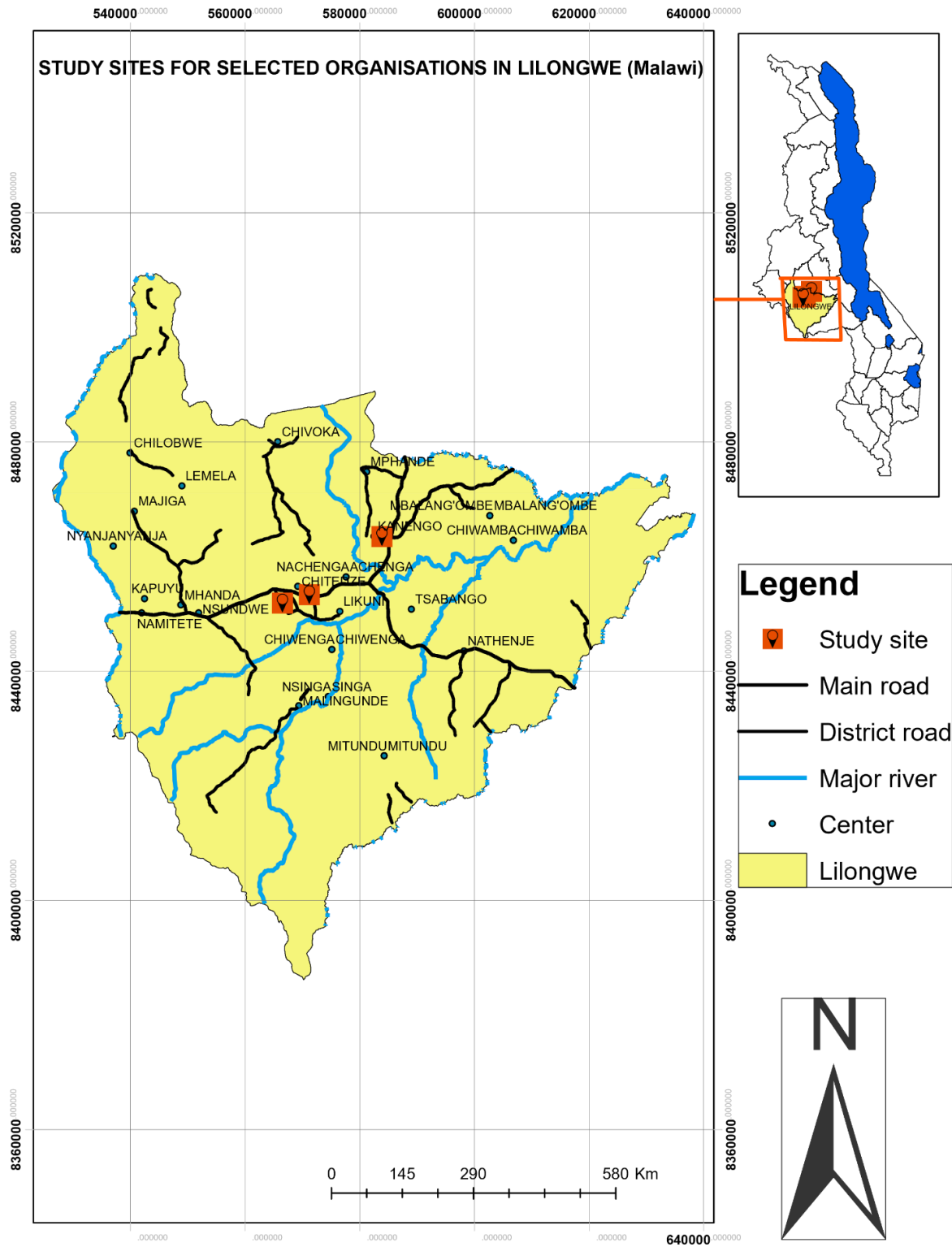


Figure 1: Map of Malawi and Lilongwe showing the study sites (NGO locations)

Results of the study revealed that the organizations have many opportunities that can be utilized to advance green agenda including political willingness, enough land for environmental management practices like tree growing, growing interest of collaborating organizations in environment management initiatives, and availability of young people willing to take up various roles in environmental protection initiatives. These opportunities were found to be at the base of the organizations but they are not exploited as the organizations

have no environment policy being mainstreamed in their organizational goals. Indirectly, the study reported that the organizations are working with the Youth to be involved in tree planting on the available land which is considered as a strategy for exploiting the available opportunity of more land that can be reforested. In addition, it has been established that the organizations are in the process of reviewing its policies to incorporate principles of environmental management as a mandatory component as outlined by the provision by the Environmental Management Act of Malawi.

Conclusion

The study concludes that environment policy has not been fully mainstreamed in policy framework for most of the organizations assessed for the study. This is due to lack of enforcement and monitoring by the Environmental regulatory bodies of the country. Principles for environmental protection are not adopted as specified by the present program under implementation of the organizations which put the environment on the risk of degradation. Meanwhile these organizations are willing to incorporate environmental protection principles in their policy framework if the Government can provide technical advice for policy mainstreaming in their policy agenda.

Recommendations

The study recommends that non-governmental organizations (NGO) should consult government on how best they can include principles of environment protection in their policy framework. In addition, the Government of Malawi should assess and monitor NGOs in Malawi if they have environment policy being incorporated in their policy framework and whether stipulated environment protection activities are being implemented. There is also need for NGOs and Government to strengthen their collaboration so that activities implement should be in line with the requirements of the government strategic goals for sustainable development agendas.

References

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Annex 1: Questionnaire

THE UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI



CHANCELLOR COLLEGE

Questionnaire on organization environmental policy inclusion

Greetings, I am a student at Chancellor College and am here to find out from you relevant information that will assist in understanding the inclusion of environmental policies and guidelines among organizations in Malawi. The information given will help in understanding the role of organizations in environmental management. All information given will be treated with confidentiality.



Do you consent to the interview?

Yes (Thank the respondent and begin the interview) No (Thank respondent and go to the next prospective organization)

SECTION 1: ORGANISATION BACKGROUND

- 1 Name of the organization? _____
- 2 Name of the respondent _____
- 3 Position of the respondent at the organization _____
- 4 4 What is the vision, and mission statement of the organization?

SECTION 2: ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY INCLUSION

- 5 Do you have an environmental policy/guidelines for environmental management?
a) Yes b) No
- 6 If yes, what does it state? (Can you share a copy of that section?)

- 7 What are the environmental principles at your organization in regards to the environmental management?

- 8 What are the activities that your organization conducts in managing the environment in relation to the organization environmental policy and guidelines?

SECTION 3: ORGANISATION COMMITMENT TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

- 9 Is your organization committed towards the environmental management initiatives?
a) Yes b) No
- 10 If yes, how can you rate your commitment?
a) Poor b) Good c) Very good d) Excellent
- 11 If no, why is your organization not committed in environmental management activities?

SECTION 4: OPPORTUNITIES AND CHALLENGES TOWARDS ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT

- 12 What opportunities are available for your organization in relation to environmental management?

13 What strategies have you put in place to exploit the available opportunities in advancing the green agenda in Malawi?

14 What challenges is your organization facing in managing the environment?

