

**Qualitative Impact Monitoring of the Poverty Alleviation
Policies and Programmes in Malawi**

A Presentation to
The Second Forum of Poverty Reduction Strategies

**Monitoring Policies and Services Delivery: Participatory and Quantitative
Approaches**

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1.0 Introduction

In this paper, I make a summarised and simplified presentation about the Qualitative Impact Monitoring (QUIM) of the Poverty Alleviation Policies and Programmes in Malawi which was commissioned by the National Economic Council (NEC) with technical and financial support from the German Agency for Technical Co-operation (GTZ). QUIM, which was conceptualised in Malawi in 1997, has been carried out twice in Malawi. The first round, commonly referred to as QUIM 1, was conducted in 1997/98. The second round commonly referred to as QUIM 2, was carried out in 2000 with a wider information and dissemination of results envisaged for 2001.

This paper starts with a brief background of QUIM. This is followed by a detailed presentation on the instrument focusing on the system of objectives, how it is applied and its general advantages. The paper concludes with the key lessons learned. The appendices to this paper present additional and relevant information on some aspects including system of objectives for QUIM 1 carried out in Malawi, the Step-Wise Approach for QUIM 2 and the QUIM 2 Organogramme. A quick clarification of the terms: Impact, Monitoring, and Qualitative Impact Monitoring is given in appendix 4.

2.0 Background

In 1994, the Government of Malawi showed strong commitment to reorient economic and social policy towards developing human and economic resources for reducing poverty in the country by inaugurating the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP). The Policy Framework paper for the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PFAP) produced in 1995 stipulated that the PAP would use participatory approaches where the poor would take the leading role in designing and implementing the poverty alleviation activities.

Following the inauguration of the PAP, in 1996, the Poverty Monitoring System (PMS) was conceptualised and launched. The key objective of the PMS was to serve a national wide information system that deals with poverty-oriented policies, issues and impacts. According to the PMS document, the performance of the policies, programmes and projects would be monitored in order to trace

- The implementation of the process of PAP
- The actual state of the affairs with regard to poverty alleviation
- Positive effects of the poverty oriented policies and programmes
- Negative side effects of such efforts, so as to counteract them by devising corrective measures

2.1 The Birth of QUIM in Malawi

According to the PMS concept, the multi-dimensional nature of poverty in Malawi requires an integrated approach of various methods of data collection and impact monitoring. Both

quantitative and qualitative research methods are required in order to gain a clear picture of the poverty situation and an understanding of how poverty might be reduced.

However, it was noted that surveys and analysis conducted within the PMS up to 1997 were quantitative in nature and mostly worked with statistical data which did not yield sufficient information on perceptions of the poor themselves regarding the policies and measures intended to benefit them.

Understanding the poor peoples' rationale was found to be essential for adequate "targeting" of supportive policies, programmes and measures. QUIM was therefore conceptualised in 1997 in Malawi.

2.2 QUIM System of Objectives

The system of objectives for QUIM guide the activities to generate specific outputs (results) which intend to serve an envisioned purpose. Above the purpose, is the overall vision or goal of the undertaking. However, the goal cannot be achieved by an individual undertaking alone, but only can be reached in conjunction with many other efforts. The following presents the system of objectives for QUIM 2 conducted in Malawi. The system of objectives presented below is the modification of the QUIM 1 system of objectives (see appendix 1)

The Goal of QUIM 2: In view of the decentralisation policy, QUIM supports policy and decision-makers at the national, district and community levels in developing effective poverty fighting policies, programmes and strategies that respond to the needs voiced by the poor, by providing the required information.

The goal statement presented above reflects that QUIM is not an end in itself, but is to serve the improvement of anti-poverty policies, programmes and strategies. Thus it aims towards the reduction of poverty in Malawi.

The Purpose: A suitable qualitative procedure to solicit people's perceptions of poverty and the effects of poverty-related policies, programmes and strategies is permanently set-up with a clear distribution and assignment of responsibilities between the national and district level, and so to maximise the input from and benefit to all levels involved.

The purpose statement reflects the intent to establish an institutional set-up for QUIM which is sustainable and which helps shape QUIM to be a useful tool for the district and the national level.

QUIM 2 Results:

1. QUIM results provide complementary and new information to on-going statistical surveys and other poverty monitoring initiatives
2. The capacity of district staff is built to carry out QUIM as an impact monitoring tool which supports improved district planning

3. The poverty situation and the impact of specific policies and programmes on poverty are assessed in selected urban and rural areas
4. Action-oriented recommendations are developed for the specific policies and programmes investigations and are presented to decision makers involved
5. Poverty discussions such as those surrounding the PRSP are pro-actively influenced by the QUIM findings.

The activities are undertaken in an iterative and step-wise approach (see appendix 2 for the detailed activities).

2.2 Qualitative and Quantitative Data

Critics of qualitative data argue that it misses statistical ‘representativeness’ and ‘significance’. However, qualitative data intends to make the people’s voice heard. In the case of QUIM, the intention is to generate peoples views, perceptions and aspirations on poverty issues, which then are factored, into policy debate at higher levels.

Nevertheless, this is not the issue of, which is better between qualitative and quantitative methods to gather information. The two approaches simply generate different types of information, which complement each other and only together provide an adequate information basis for policy makers and managers of development programmes to form their decisions.

The qualitative character of QUIM is reflected in three different ways

- The use of qualitative methods – as opposed to quantitative or rather participatory methods in gathering information, mainly in semi-structured interviews and applying various Participatory Rapid/Rural Appraisal (P/RRA) techniques and tools.
- The object of investigation, which is the villagers’ holistic situation in all its complexity
- The results, which is a presentation of the villagers’ subjective assessment of their own situation and of changes experienced over time

It should be also be emphasised here that QUIM employs participatory methods for monitoring policies and programmes because policy-making is a process in which discussion plays a pivotal role. Using participatory methods for monitoring and investigating impact allows marginalised perspectives to be heard in the policy-making process.

3.0 How is QUIM Applied?

QUIM is applied in four major Phases:

- The first one is the Preparation and Policy Analysis.

The preparation involves the development of the concept with clear system of objectives.

The policy analysis aims at answering five questions:

1. What are the leading policies and programme in each sector?
2. How poverty focused are the policies and programmes?
3. Are the sector's policies coherent with the macro policies (PFPAP, DEVPOL, Vision 2020, and PRSP)?
4. What is the expected impact of the programmes and policies on the intended beneficiaries?
5. What are the strategies for implementation and how far has the implementation process proceeded?

These questions are answered through review of policy and programme documents and discussions with relevant officers in the government, NGOs and donor agencies from both the national and district level.

- The policy analysis is followed by the Field Phase. The results of the policy analysis phase contribute to the formulation of research questions for investigation during the field phase. During the field phase multidisciplinary research teams are deployed into various districts and thereafter into communities where they stay for a number of days (4 - 6 days) discussing and soliciting people's views on their poverty, changes in their poverty situation and the impact of various policies and programmes. The research teams comprise officers from sector ministries and NGOs at national, district and even community levels (see appendix 3 for the QUIM organisation structure). Individual research teams develop district specific reports and recommendations based on findings from individual study communities.
- After both elements of Policy Analysis and Field Phase, the results are analysed and brought together at national level. This is followed by the production of the final report.
- The final phase is devoted to information sharing and dissemination to stakeholders at various levels (including Sector ministries, donors, NGOs and Districts) in order to jointly develop recommendations for the policy and political level.

4.0 The Evolution of QUIM in Malawi

As indicated earlier, QUIM has been carried out twice in Malawi. The first was in 1997/98 and recently in 2000. The QUIM 1 produced what is considered the best information on the poverty situation in Malawi (NEC 1998). However, through a process analysis and a follow up study (Lobb-Rabe and Gomonda, 1999) for the QUIM 1, potential improvements were identified.

The most important of these was the need to shift QUIM's "centre of gravity" to the district with co-ordination at central level. These are summarised in the table below.

| What should QUIM Become | Why | How |
|---|---|-----------------------------------|
| 1. Properly institutionalised at national level | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Co-ordination ▪ Capacity | Use existing system and structure |
| 2. More participatory | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Empowerment | Adopt Participatory Learning |

| | | |
|---|--|-----------------------------|
| | ▪ Decentralisation process | and Action (PLA) techniques |
| 3. An instrument applied by district officers | ▪ Quality of information ▪ Decentralisation process | Use existing structure |

QUIM 2 sought to institutionalise and build capacity at district level through stronger involvement of district officers at national level as well as district and community level (see appendix 3 for QUIM 2 Organogramme). District officers from other district were given an opportunity to participate in field activities in other districts. The stronger involvement of the district at policy analysis stage led to the inclusion of Security as an additional sector beside Agriculture, Education, Health and Civic Education predetermined by the QUIM 2 Task Force.

The district administrations have been assigned with the leading role in the current efforts to decentralise development decision-making and planning. However, the monitoring and information available at district level was found to be limited to the implementation of individual projects and end upon project completion, hence the need for QUIM. However, there is need for proper co-ordination from the national level. There is also need to build the district officers capacity as far as analysis is concerned from the national level.

4.0 Examples of the Key Results of QUIM So Far

Apart from highlighting the villagers perceptions on various policies and programmes implemented by the government and supported by the NGO and donors efforts, the results of QUIM help in matching programmes and policies according to the priorities of the beneficiaries.

⇒ One example is that housing was always perceived by villagers as one of the main indicators of poverty along side food and water. But the government has not shown that housing is given a priority. Programmes and projects on housing are implemented on ad hoc basis without a coherent housing policy.

The results also help to reassess the definition and causes of poverty by policy makers

⇒ On the causes of poverty, laziness came out strongly as one of the major causes of poverty in Malawi. However, the conceptual framework of the causes of poverty never mentioned laziness as causing poverty in Malawi.

The field findings of QUIM also exposed discrepancies between the planning and implementation levels

⇒ At the **national level**, much is planned and known, at **district level**, some policies and programmes are known and implemented but at **village level**, the impact is felt incidentally. Implementation of programmes and projects is rather ad hoc and not widespread.

5.0 Additional Advantages of QUIM

QUIM creates horizontal and vertical partnerships to keep a poverty focus in policy-making and programme implementation.

- The horizontal partnership is mainly created at national level involving the NEC, sector ministries, NGOs as well as donors. NEC initiates the policy analysis and consults with other stakeholders (sector ministries, NGOs and donors). These consultations make stakeholders reflect on their current and future policies as well as programmes
- The horizontal partnership is also created at district level where different staff members from line ministries and NGOs are brought together and work in different teams.
- The vertical partnership involves the three levels (national, district, and community). This provides for rational decision-making at various levels and it creates feedback between these three levels.
- Further, the composition of the QUIM Teams (which are drawn from various institutions at different levels) allows sharing of experiences and best practices

QUIM is also a good model for other policy advice initiatives for various reasons

- It is flexible and can easily be adapted in different situations
- It allows for a quick and timely response (the preliminary report for QUIM 2 was produced barely 3 weeks after the field phase to contribute to the on-going PRSP in Malawi)
- It is easy to manage and can be easily institutionalised in existing structures
- It is fairly inexpensive

6.0 General Lessons Learned

The general lessons learned in Malawi after the implementation of the first round of QUIM are as follows:

- QUIM needs be institutionalised at district level with proper co-ordination at national level
- The research teams should be heterogeneous in profession and institutional background
- The community stays should be designed in a more participatory and problem solving manner
- The bring the line ministries and NGOs on board, the consultations and later presentation of results have to directly address their policies, programmes and strategies.

APPENDICES

- Appendix 1 System of Objectives for the First Round of QUIM
- Appendix 2 Step-Wise Approach for the Second Round of QUIM
- Appendix 3 Organogramme for Second Round of QUIM
- Appendix 4 Clarification of Terms

Appendix 1: System of Objectives for the First Round of QUIM

The Goal of QUIM: To contribute to an information base which allows policy makers and planners of development programmes to better address poor and vulnerable groups in Malawi. To identify entry points to make the planning process and programmes more participatory.

The Purpose: A suitable procedure for monitoring the impact of poverty-oriented policies and programmes is developed, tested and adjusted.

QUIM 2 Results:

1. The information gap between decision-makers and villagers is reduced by making non-statistical information available
2. Communication gap between stakeholders involved in planning and designing poverty-oriented policies and programmes are identified
3. The capacity of the Poverty Monitoring Unit - Staff , the staff of planning Units in Line Ministries and NGO staff is built up to do QUIM
4. Macro- and sector policies towards poverty-orientation are analysed

The policies to be monitored included macro-levels policies such as the Statement of Development Policies (DEVPOL), Vision 2020, The Poverty Alleviation Framework, Public Sector Investment Programme, as well as policies of line ministries.

When QUIM was being conceptualised, the PMU was the Poverty Monitoring Unit of the Poverty and Social Policy Division of NEC

Appendix 2 Step-Wise Approach for the Second Round of QUIM

The Preparatory and Policy Analysis Phase

- Step 1: Development of the QUIM 2 Concept Document
- Step 2: Review of previous research and preliminary identification of sectors
- Step 3: Selection of districts
- Step 4: Presentation of the QUIM 2 Concept to TWC
- Step 5: Initiating the involvement of the selected districts
- Step 6: Selection of Policy Analysis Teams
- Step 7: National level policy analysis: Consulting stakeholders and reviewing documents
- Step 8: Selection of national Field Teams
- Step 9: Design of analysis guidelines and formats for the analysis and reports in the field
- Step 10: Selection of teams to carry out workshops at the districts
- Step 11: District workshops for policy analysis and preparation of field phase
- Step 12: Additional policy analysis to support district research areas (if needed)
- Step 13: Training of the National Field Team
- Step 14: Discussion of the results of the policy analysis and development of the national hypothesis, checklist and documentation sheets
- Step 15: Publicity meeting

The Field Phase

- Step 16: Training sessions for the field teams in the districts
- Step 17: Informing the traditional leaders in the sites to be visited
- Step 18: Introduction of the research teams in the communities
- Step 19: Data collection at community level
- Step 20: Daily analysis of data
- Step 21: Feedback session/data verification/problem solving workshop in the community
- Step 22: Analysis at district level
- Step 23: Feedback session/ data verification at district level
- Step 24: Developing recommendations at the district level

The Analysis Phase

- Step 25: Preparation of site reports
- Step 26: Preparation of the district reports
- Step 27: Analysis of the district findings and data verification at national level

Step 28: The National Report

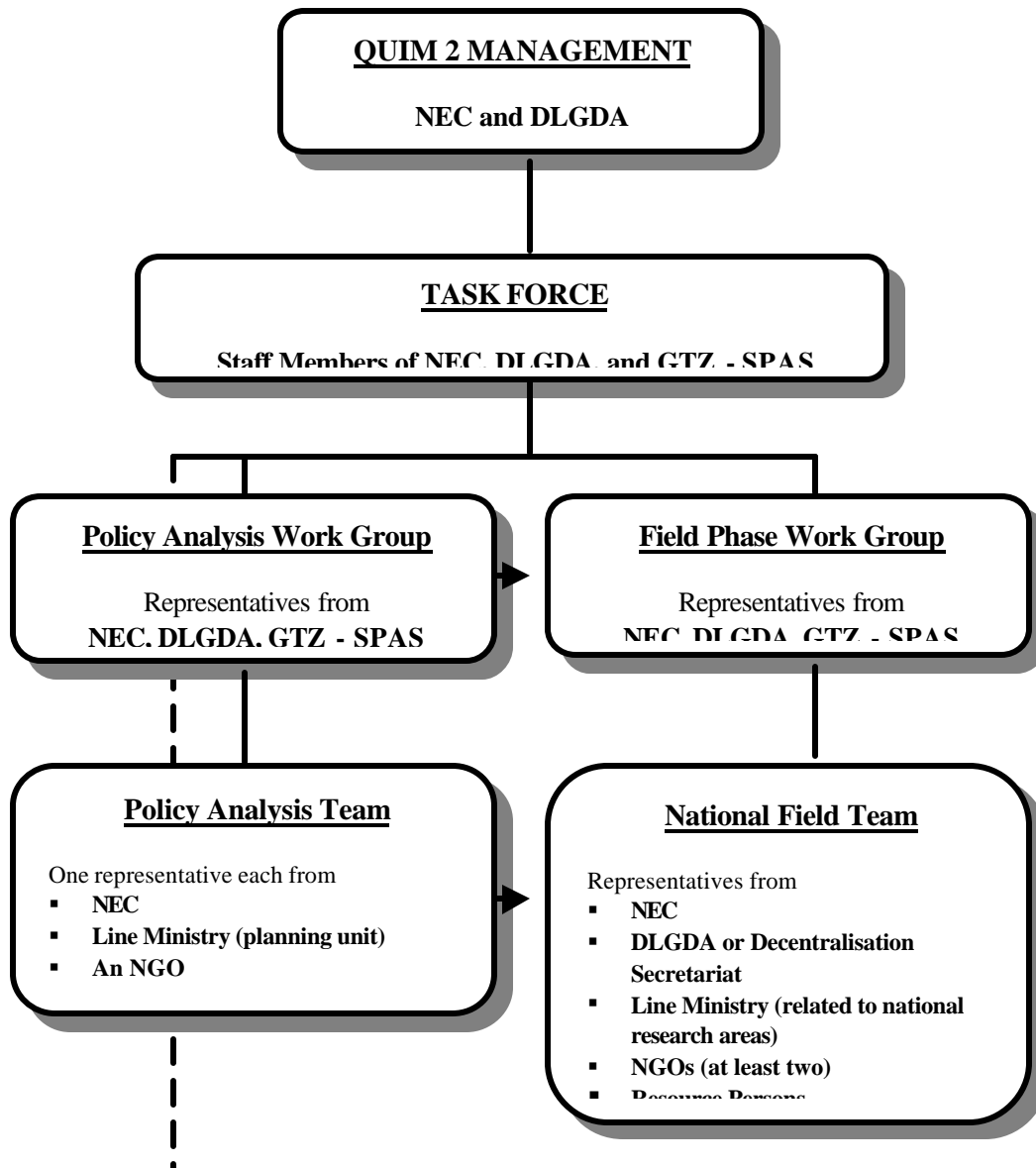
Presentation and Dissemination Phase

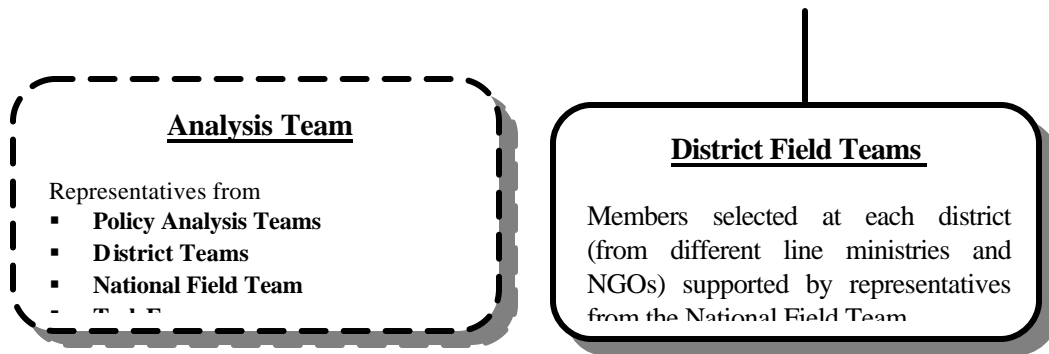
Step 29: Workshop to prepare national-level recommendations and design the presentation and dissemination of the results and recommendations

Step 30: Presentation and dissemination of the results and recommendation to stakeholders

TWC is the Technical Working Committee of the Poverty Alleviation Programmes and it comprises heads of line ministries, NGOs and University

Appendix 3 Organogramme for Second Round of QUIM





DLGDA: Department of local Government and District Administration
 NEC: National Economic Council
 GTZ – SPAS: German Agency for Technical Co-operation – Social Policy Advisory Service Project

Appendix 4 Clarification of Terms

- *Impact* refers to effects of poverty-oriented policies in terms of economic, social, cultural, political or environmental changes, including unintended effects
- *Monitoring* provides regular information to policy makers, planners of programmes and project managers regarding progress made and its consistency with objectives and plans
- *Qualitative Impact Monitoring* (QUIM) aims at assessing the effects of policies and programmes on the “target groups” i.e. their short, medium and long term impact on the poor.