

## **The case for improved governance as a tool for sustainable urban development in Malawi**

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### **Introduction**

Malawi is among the most rapidly urbanising countries in the world. According to a study released by the United Nations Centre for Human Settlements (UNCHS) in 2004, Malawi was in fact first among the most rapidly urbanising countries in the world, with an urban population growth rate of 6.3%. Statistics published by UN Habitat estimate that there were 1,101,000 people living in urban areas in Malawi in 1990. This figure is projected to grow to 2,691,000 people by 2010, representing a 144.4% increase in just 20 years. An unprecedented 25.1% of the national population (i.e. 4,188,000 people) is projected to live in urban areas by 2020 (UN-Habitat 2008)<sup>1</sup>. As Malawi's population increasingly becomes urbanised, a number of key policy challenges have emerged, and none could arguably be as pressing as the challenge to ensure that there are adequate structural frameworks in place to foster sustainable urban development. The phenomenon of rapid urbanisation has not escaped the attention of the country's key policy makers. The strategies adopted have embraced a variety of urban planning policy responses aimed at addressing the problem, such as slum upgrading, review of urban housing policies, urban land tenure reform, among others. It is logical for policy makers to look at strengthening the role of urban planning in addressing rapid urbanisation. However, urban planning policies that are articulated in an environment that is short on democratic participation at the grassroots level are bound to have no lasting imprint on the fabric of the societies they are purporting to serve. Mabogunje (1994, p. xxx) admonishes policy makers in post-colonial African cities that are experiencing unprecedented rates of urbanisation similar to Malawi's by warning that: "the governance of African cities has to be shorter on bureaucratic procedures and longer on democratic participation and accountability". On the other hand, multilateral agencies, such as the World Bank and UN-Habitat, have been advocating for the devolution of political, economic and managerial power from central government to local government to facilitate a culture of participatory democracy, which is crucial to the fostering of meaningful bottom-up approaches to addressing the problems emanating from Malawi's rapid rates of urbanisation. The importance of participatory democracy at the grassroots level in the rapidly expanding urban centres cannot be overemphasised.

### **The purpose of this paper**

The purpose of this paper is to examine the extent to which principles of good urban governance have been incorporated in Malawi's urban planning policy and practice as that nation grapples with the phenomenon of rapid urbanisation. This paper argues that unless the capacity of local civic institutions is strengthened to entrench a culture of participatory democracy at the local level in urban centres, none of the urban planning policy responses being posited by policy makers are to have a lasting impact.

### **A brief overview of urbanisation in Malawi**

For all the headlines it has attracted as one of the, if not the world's, most rapidly urbanising countries, Malawi remains a predominantly rural society. In 2008, only 15.3% of the population was classified as urban (UN-Habitat 2010). This is a small proportion by world standards. However, the phenomenal rates of urban population growth since political independence are a function of the fact that Malawi's urban population has grown from a historically low base. Urbanisation is widely seen as a colonial import in most of sub-

Saharan Africa, of which Malawi is a part. Throughout its colonial period, which spanned from 1891 to 1964, Malawi, then Nyasaland, experienced restricted urban growth due largely to the restrictive policies under British rule, which classified urban areas as primarily “white only” areas with African populations in areas primarily being regarded as transient and servile to the white urban settler populations (Kamete 2003). This trend was not restricted to Nyasaland. It was a British colonial legacy in most of sub-Saharan Africa under its rule (Christopher & Tarver 1994; Mabogunje 1994).

As a result of the restrictive policies on the migration of indigenous populations to urban areas, Malawi’s urban population after well over 70 years of the emergence of urban settlements was only 260,000 in 1966, when the first post-independence national census was conducted<sup>2</sup>. This represented only 6.4% of the total national population of 4,039,583 (Republic of Malawi 1987). However, the urban populations began to rapidly grow after independence, largely as a result of massive inflows of people from the rural areas. By 1977, Malawi’s urban population grew to 559,000, which represented 10.1% of the total national population of 5,547,460. Thus the urban population grew by 115% between 1966 and 1977, thus more than doubling within this ten-year period (Republic of Malawi 1987). Malawi’s third post-independence national population census was conducted in 1987 in line with government policy mandating the carrying out of a comprehensive census every ten years. There were 857,391 people living in urban areas in 1987 out of a national population of 7,988,507. This represents 10.7% of the national population and an increase of 53.4% over the 1977 urban population of 559,000. The 1998 census revealed that the urban population grew to 1,435,436 people, representing 14.4% of the national population of 9,933,868 and an increase of 67.4% over the 1987 urban population. The most recent national population census was conducted in 2008. There were 2,003,309 people enumerated as living in urban areas in 2008, representing 15.3% of the national population of 13,077,160 and an increase of 39.5% over the 1998 urban population<sup>3</sup>.

Chart 1 on the next page illustrates the trend of urbanisation in Malawi from 1966 to 2008. As discussed above, it shows a steep increase in urban population in the first ten years after independence, from 1966 to 1977. The trend stabilised somewhat from 1977 to 1988, but increased even more sharply between 1988 and 1998. This steep increase mainly occurred between 1994 -1998, during the first four years of Malawi’s return to multiparty democracy. As some commentators have observed, these were the early years of Muluzi’s *laissez faire* approach to urban planning, which resulted in massive rural-urban migration (Manda 2005, cited in Chilinde et al. 2008, pp. 207, 208). There was a stabilisation in the rates of rural-urban migration between 2004 and 2008 with a commensurate stabilisation in the rates of urbanisation, which coincided with the ascendancy of the more cautious Mutharika regime.

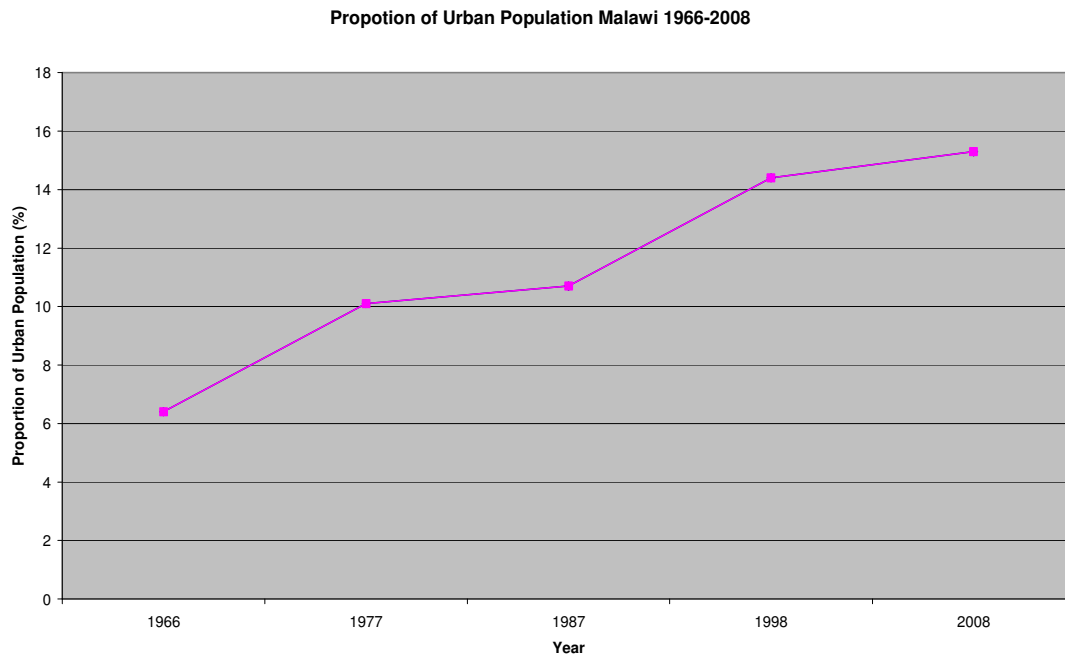
Table 1 below summarises the statistics for trends in urban population growth versus national population growth, intercensal urban population increases, and rates of urbanisation between 1966 and 2008.

**Table 1. Post-independence urban population growth in Malawi: 1966-2008**

Year	Total National Population	Total Urban Population	Intercensal Urban Population Increase (%)	Proportion of Urban Population (%)
1966	4,039,583	260,000	n/a	6.4%
1977	5,547,460	559,000	115%	10.1%
1987	7,988,507	857,391	53.4%	10.7%
1998	9,933,868	1,435,436	67.4%	14.4%
2008	13,077,160	2,003,309	39.5%	15.3%

Sources: Compiled from Republic of Malawi (1987) and UN-Habitat (2010).

**Chart 1: Proportion of urban population in Malawi: 1966-2008**



*Sources: Compiled from Republic of Malawi 1987; National Statistical Office 2008*

Whilst remaining one of the least urbanised countries in the world, Malawi's urban growth rates are among the highest in the world. By 2004, Malawi's urban population was considered to have grown at a rate of 6.3% per annum, which was three times the global rate and nearly twice the Africa rate of 3.5% per annum (UN Malawi 2010)<sup>4</sup>. Although this has slowed down to 5.19% per annum between 2005 and 2010, it remains one of the highest rates of urban growth per annum in the world. One of the most pressing challenges facing Malawi is how the rapid rates of urbanisation can be sustainably managed. Unfortunately, rapid urbanisation in Malawi has not been commensurate with economic growth and effective redistributive measures aimed at poverty reduction. Malawi remains a poor country with a 2007 GDP per capita of US\$800, and is ranked 166 out of 177 countries in the UNDP Human Development Index (UN-Habitat 2010). The result is what has been referred to as the "urbanisation of poverty". In these urban settlements, physical as well as social infrastructure such as roads, electricity, health, education, water and sanitation, are either lacking or in severely degraded states (UN Malawi 2010). Urban slums have grown at a rate that is comparable to the urban population growth rate – 3.9% per annum in 2005 compared to 5.19% urban population growth rate per annum between 2005 and 2010. In 2005, 1.86 million people, representing close to 90% of the urban population, were estimated to be living under slum conditions in Malawian cities (UN-Habitat 2010). This figure has come down to 66% in 2008 (Government of Malawi 2009), still a staggering figure by international standards, with profound policy implications.

The population of each of the major urban centres in Malawi as extracted from the 2008 national census data (calculated on a de facto basis) is contained in Table 2 below. The table shows that Malawi's capital city, Lilongwe, has emerged as the biggest city in the country by population size, after playing second fiddle to Blantyre since it was established as Malawi's capital in 1974. This is remarkable, given that Lilongwe is a new city compared to Blantyre,

which was established in colonial time in 1876. It is easy to state that most of the urbanisation in the country has occurred in Lilongwe.

**Table 2: Population Size of each of the Major Urban Centres in Malawi (2008 de facto)**

<b>Major Urban centre</b>	<b>Population Size</b>
Lilongwe	674,448
Blantyre	661,256
Mzuzu	133,968
Zomba	88,314
<b>Total population in major urban centres</b>	<b>1,557,986</b>

Source: National Statistical Office 2008, *Statistical Tables*( [www.nsomalawi.net](http://www.nsomalawi.net))

On the next page is a map of Malawi (Map 1) showing the main urban centres of Lilongwe (capital city), Blantyre, Mzuzu and Zomba; as well as smaller district centres throughout the country.

### **Examining the notions of urban governance and sustainable urban development**

The notions of urban governance and sustainable development have been posited in normative terms to argue for a better way in which cities world-wide are to be governed to foster sustainable urban development. There is no single definition for each of the two terms *urban governance* and *sustainable development*. The definitions are as varied as are the theoretical and structural frameworks within which they are examined.

#### **Urban governance**

Kamete (2003) prefers to analyse the definition of the term *urban governance* using a systematic approach which starts with an examination of the term *governance* as a basis for understanding *urban governance*. This seems to be a logical approach to the definition of a term which is after all a composite one, comprising two distinct words. This article adopts Kamete's approach. International multilateral agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the World Bank, UN-Habitat, among others, are concerned with governance in the developing world due to the global aspects of their work.

When appropriated into the urban arena, *governance* takes on a localised contextual hue that is distinct from the national and regional contexts – it becomes *urban governance* – a reference to the context in which the act of *governance* is exercised.

#### **Good urban governance**

Kamete (2003, p.50) argues that “the debate on urban governance has assumed normative overtones through the search for “good” urban governance”. This search has resulted in some authorities offering prescriptive criteria for determining good urban governance. Attributes similar to Mehta's, such as transparency, popular accountability, efficiency, participation, reciprocity, legitimacy, respect for human rights and the rule of law, among others, have been put forward by various authors as well as agencies (Kamete 2003, p. 50). The multilateral agencies within the United Nations body – chief among them being UN-Habitat – are the main proponents in this regard. The UN-Habitat sees good urban governance as a means to an end in its campaign to eradicate poverty around the world. The agency argues for good urban governance worldwide as the global trend of urbanisation continues to escalate, resulting in a shift which has seen half of humanity now living in cities. The agency seeks to make cities more inclusive by campaigning for participatory urban democracy, arguing that good urban governance is the *sine qua non* for sustainable human settlements development, and that “it is neither money, nor technology, nor even expertise,

but good urban governance that means the difference between a well-managed and Inclusive City and one that is poorly managed and exclusive” (UN-Habitat 2002, p. 13).

**Map 1: Malawi showing the major urban centres and some of the smaller urban centres**

*Source: Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) [www.masaf.org](http://www.masaf.org)*



UN-Habitat began its global campaign on urban governance in 2000, when it developed a tool called the Urban Governance Index, to assist cities and countries in monitoring the quality of urban governance. The core aim of the global campaign is “to increase the capacity of local governments and other stakeholders to practice good urban governance and to raise awareness of and advocate for good urban governance around the world” (UN-Habitat 2002, p. 5). The guiding principles of the campaign are inclusiveness and decentralisation.

The agency’s definition of *good urban governance* is long and descriptive (UN-Habitat 2002, p. 14):

“Urban governance is the sum of the many ways individuals and institutions, public and private, plan and manage the common affairs of the city. It is a continuing process through which conflicting or diverse interests may be accommodated and cooperative action can be taken. It includes formal institutions as well as informal arrangements and the social capital of citizens.

Urban governance is inextricably linked to the welfare of the citizenry. Good urban governance must enable women and men to access the benefits of urban citizenship. Good urban governance, based on the principle of urban citizenship, affirms that no man, woman or child can be denied access to the necessities of urban life, including adequate shelter, security of tenure, safe water, sanitation, a clean environment, health, education and nutrition, employment and public safety and mobility. Through good urban governance, citizens are provided with the platform which will allow them to use their talents to the full to improve their social and economic conditions.”

### ***The norms of good urban governance***

Encapsulated in the above definition are some of the norms of good urban governance that the agency develops and seeks to implement in its global campaign to promote good urban governance. These norms have been enforced by the agency in its campaign for good urban governance in Malawi in programmes funded by the agency. The campaign proposes the following principles of good urban governance, which it considers to be interdependent and mutually exclusive: *Sustainability; Subsidiarity; Equity; Efficiency; Transparency and accountability; Civic engagement and citizenship; and Security.*

Two of these principles will be discussed here as they are relevant to the discussion on the practice of urban governance in Malawi. The principle of *sustainability* is captured in the above definition when it asserts good urban governance as “a continuing process”, in other words an enduring process that is part of the culture within which the city is managed. Sustainability must be embraced in all dimensions of urban development – the social, economic and environmental needs of present and future generations must be balanced, with a clear commitment to urban poverty reduction. Stakeholder consultation and citizen participation in the formulation of local urban planning policies are some of the practical means of realising this principle (UN-Habitat 2002, p. 20).

The principle of *subsidiarity* is of vital interest to this paper. It calls for the delegation of responsibilities and attendant powers and resources in the governance and management of the city from the national level to the city level; and from the city level to the lowest possible level. Inherent in this principle are the notions of decentralisation and grassroots democracy, aimed at empowering citizens to participate in the process of urban governance. It will be seen later in this paper that this principle is encapsulated in the reforms which culminated in the enactment of the *Local Government Act 1998* in Malawi.

### ***Sustainable urban development***

Sustainable development has been defined in various ways, often with a focus on the social, economic and environmental dimensions of human endeavour. There is no better authority on the question of sustainable development than the seminal work contained in the report

published in 1987 by the World Commission on Environment and Development (WCED), otherwise called the Brundtland Report. The Brundtland Report was the culmination of collaborative efforts made under the commission of the United Nations General Assembly, principally aimed at proposing long term environmental strategies to achieve sustainable development at a global scale.

Sustainable development is defined in the Brundtland Report as “development that meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs” (UN General Assembly 1987, p. 54).

The global debate on sustainable development has been extended to emphasise on the sustainable development of urban settlements. Since 2007, half of the world’s population has been residing in cities for the first time in human history. This has occurred as a result of unprecedented rates of urbanisation, especially in the developing world. The focus on sustainable urban development has gained prominence within the UN organisation. For example, the UN-Habitat is tasked with the mission of promoting socially and environmentally sustainable urban development. In fulfilment of its mission, UN-Habitat has embarked on a global campaign on good urban governance. This campaign is of special interest to this paper and is discussed in reference to Malawi.

### **Institutional frameworks for good urban governance and sustainable urban development in Malawi**

The regulation of urban development in Malawi has its roots in the British colonial administration which enacted the first legislation regulating the development of land in urban areas in 1948 under the *Town and Country Planning Act*. The 1948 Act remained in force into the post-independence era up to 1988, when it was replaced by the *Town and Country Planning Act 1988*. The notion of public participation in the formulation of urban planning policies has been a part of Malawi’s planning legislation since the 1948 Act. However, during the colonial times, such participation was of course limited to the white elite who dominated both state and local urban governments. Whilst a form of urban governance existed through a framework of periodical local government elections, the contests only featured white colonial settlers. This means that the disenfranchised black communities which occupied the marginalised urban lands within the traditional housing areas as well as squatter settlements had no say in the way their areas were managed and serviced, a factor which gave rise to the earlier forms of urban slums in Malawi.

The *Town and Country Planning Act 1988* introduced a system of integrated planning within the overall framework of national development policy. In addition, it brought into law the policy of decentralised planning sought by the Banda government to distribute the benefits of national development via the diffusion of urbanisation in a hierarchical order of settlements throughout the country. The legislation was enacted to give effect to the policy recommendations within the UNDP-sponsored National Physical Development Plan, which called for a new urbanisation policy that, among other things, advocated for spatially balanced development through a hierarchy of urban and rural service centres in a decentralised pattern (Republic of Malawi 1987a).

To meaningfully achieve the broad national policy of decentralised urban development, the 1988 Act sought to provide for increased local participation in the decision making process on urban planning and development issues. However, as others have observed, whilst grassroots participation in the decision making process was intended, “there has been little opportunity for local people and other stakeholders, including government departments and parastatals, to be involved in any meaningful way” (UN-Habitat 2010, p.11).

### ***The emergence of multiparty democracy in Malawi and its implications on urban governance***

In 1993, Malawi changed its constitution to provide for multiparty democracy for the first time since its proscription by the Banda regime a few years after independence. The first multiparty general elections since 1964 were conducted in May 1994. This marked a significant step in the democratisation of Malawi. For the first time, people from various political parties could contest for local government elections and grassroots representation on city governments, based on genuine democratic principles, could be realised. The potential implications on urban governance and sustainable urban development are profound. The new Malawi Constitution confers a number of powers on local government authorities. Chapter XIV Section 146(2) of the Constitution stipulates that local government authorities shall be responsible for the representation of the people over whom they have jurisdiction; and will be responsible for the consolidation of local democratic institutions and democratic participation.

The constitutional reforms of 1994 were followed by the enactment of the *Local Government Act* 1998. Democratic principles and participatory decision-making are enshrined in the Act. In line with the national government's Decentralisation Policy of 1996, the Act provides for the handing over of powers to prepare local planning instruments and regulate urban development from central government to local urban governments. It also calls for the establishment of assemblies within local government areas, consisting of elected representatives (councillors) with voting powers and non-voting members comprising traditional authorities, local members of parliament and five members each representing special interest groups. The assemblies are charged with a number of functions, notable of which are functions to make policies and decisions on local governance and development.

At the time that the decentralisation reforms were being enacted into the *Local Government Act* of 1998, Malawi's urban population had grown astronomically by 67.4% between 1987 and 1998 to record a total urban population of 1,435,436. However, this rapid urban population growth occurred at a time when Malawi was facing a steady decline in its macro-economic performance. The consequences of rapid urbanisation against the backdrop of a steadily declining Gross Domestic Product (GDP) between 1973 and 2004, severely affected the livelihoods of the urban poor. A combination of factors gave rise to the steady decline in Malawi's GDP during this time. These factors included the civil war in neighbouring Mozambique which resulted in the shutting down of a hitherto cost-effective trade route to landlocked Malawi from the Indian Ocean; persistent droughts; the crippling economic effects of the austerity measures imposed by the World Bank and other multilateral agencies on the Malawi economy; as well as poor macro-economic management policies of the new government in the early multi-party era from 1994 to 2004. This resulted in a sharp rise in basic commodities and a decline in government expenditure on basic urban services such as infrastructure for urban housing to accommodate the increasingly growing urban populations. The provision of basic urban services such as sanitation, transportation, health and education services suffered significant setbacks (Chilinde et al. 2008, p.180). As a consequence, Malawi's urban areas have become centres of poverty and squalor, a phenomenon which commentators have referred to as the urbanisation of poverty (see UN-Habitat 2010, p.5).

Decentralisation provides for a framework within which grassroots participation in the formulation of pro-poor urban planning policies can be articulated. The UN-Habitat (2002, p.14) sees the decentralisation of responsibilities and resources to local authorities based on the principles of *subsidiarity* and *accountability* as characterising the "enabling approach" to participatory strategic planning for the poor, marginalised urban masses.



In reality, what has happened on the ground even in the context of such constitutional and statutory reforms in the multi-party dispensation is a sad example of policy failure and lost opportunity. Local government elections were delayed for six years since the country's return to multi-party democracy in 1994, with the first and so far the only, local government elections being held in 2000. However, when they were finally held, they were undermined by a very low voter turnout of 17% (Dulani 2004, p.9). This reflected voter apathy, a significant blow to efforts being made to consolidate democratic processes at the local level under the Bakili Muluzi regime<sup>5</sup>. Ever since the 2000 local government elections, successive governments have found all sorts of excuses to postpone local government elections. The 2004 general elections were planned to be tripartite elections, with local government elections being held in parallel to the parliamentary and presidential elections. However, due to the inefficiency of the Malawi Electoral Commission, local government elections were postponed although the parliamentary and presidential elections went ahead (Dulani 2004). This missed opportunity to hold local government elections was repeated in the general elections of May 2009. The Malawi Constitution dictates that local government elections are held one year after parliamentary and presidential elections. However, this dictate has never been adhered to since Malawi's reversion to multiparty democracy in 1994. Since 2005, Malawian cities have been running without mayors and councillors. There has been strong discontent voiced against the central government's reluctance to hold local government elections from civil society and the non-governmental sector in Malawi. Many have questioned its commitment to the devolution of political, economic and managerial power to the grassroots levels of governance. It is reported that the government has indicated that it would conduct the next local government elections in November 2010, after the initial date of May 2010 as set down in the Constitution has yet again passed (Mdaka 2010).

With such a chequered history of grassroots empowerment through local government representation in Malawi, the existing quality of urban governance structures is questionable, and the extent to which the poor urban masses are being mobilised for sustainable urban development in the face of rapid urbanisation is equally questionable. Whilst in theory the Malawi Decentralisation Policy and subsequent provisions in the *Local Government Act 1998* provide for grassroots participation in the initiation of projects and articulation of city-wide policies for the improvement of urban environments, in practice the government has denied the grassroots the opportunity for genuine participation through political representation at that level. It is unlikely that genuine grassroots democracy can be attained outside of bona fide grassroots political power. The absence of political representation on local assemblies runs contrary to the principle of *subsidiarity* – the devolution of political authority to the closest appropriate level – as prescribed by UN-Habitat.

Thus, despite the legal and structural reforms towards decentralisation of power to local urban authorities, no evidence exists of a serious attempt to improve urban governance and achieve sustainable urban development by any of the multi-party era governments in Malawi.

### **Constraints to improved urban governance and sustainable urban development in Malawi**

Whilst it is acknowledged that the legal and structural reforms which have occurred since 1998 have paved the way for the devolution of administrative and political authority to local authorities, political constraints to improved urban governance constitute one significant single factor hindering the march towards good urban governance in Malawi. The absence of elected members of local assemblies since 2005 is a significant structural hurdle to the delivery of effective urban governance and sustainable urban development in Malawi (UN-Habitat 2008). For all its flaws, electoral democracy at civic level is a potent framework within which bottom-up strategies aimed at eradicating urban poverty, and improving the living conditions of the urban masses, can be meaningfully realised. Researchers have already identified serious problems in the World Bank-sponsored community driven development

projects underway in the peri-urban areas of Lilongwe, which in part arise from the unavailability of bona fide elected grassroots leaders within the target communities (Chilinde et al. 2008). It is acknowledged that the brief period of grassroots representation in local government between 2000 and 2005 was marred by political interference and factional disputes among councillors belonging to different political parties. In addition, there was a perception that local councillors struggled to absorb the complex issues facing their constituents and articulate them into meaningful policies<sup>6</sup>.

A related constraint has something to do with the weak institutional capacity at the local authority level hindering efforts to deliver good urban governance and development at the local level (UN-Habitat 2008). There are a number of factors which have given rise to this problem. Firstly, the reluctance on the part of the central government to implement its decentralisation policies and devolve genuine power to the assemblies through the election of an independent lower tier political structure has profoundly eroded the confidence of local governments. Deprived of a political machinery capable of bringing grassroots matters to the fore on the higher courts of political power (i.e. the advocacy role), local governments are being run almost entirely by bureaucrats, with no political representation. This has a significant impact on service delivery. Secondly, local government institutions in Malawi are bedevilled by a weak human resource capacity (UN-Habitat 2008). There is an overdependence on expensive consulting work delivered by external experts. This means that in some cases, a substantial cut of the funding provided for urban improvement projects goes to expert consultants, leaving significantly reduced funding available for the actual implementation of the projects.

## **Conclusion**

Urbanisation in Malawi risks being unsustainable if the current unsatisfactory levels of political commitment to the empowerment of citizens through the periodic and timely holding of local government elections are to continue. Despite instituting a number of reforms through the 1996 Decentralisation Policy, the Malawi government does not seem to take the issue of local government elections seriously. Local urban assemblies have been without mayors or councillors since 2005. This has significant implications on urban governance and grassroots participation in the articulation of pro-poor planning policies. The lack of political representation within local assemblies raises serious questions as to whether the local assemblies can achieve the goals of good urban governance and sustainable urban development, which are crucial to the meaningful management of the issues brought about by Malawi's rapid urbanisation. Currently, the NGO sector and multilateral agencies such as UN-Habitat and the World Bank have been involved in programmes that seek to encourage grassroots participation in demanding and planning for urban poverty alleviation programmes as well as squatter upgrade projects in the peri-urban areas of the major cities. The sustainability of these programmes in the absence of local political representation is questionable. The case for improved urban governance as a tool for sustainable development in Malawi is a serious one and needs to be addressed if the adverse effects of rapid urbanisation are to be meaningfully managed.

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<sup>1</sup> These figures were collated from the UN-Habitat Global Urban Indicators Information portal at <http://www.devinfo.info/urbaninfo/devinfoapp.aspx?cl=DAT> accessed on 13/10/2008.

<sup>2</sup> Malawi became independent from British colonial rule in 1964 and became a Republic in 1966.

<sup>3</sup> These figures differ from the figures published by UN-Habitat on its Global Urban Indicators Information portal at <http://www.devinfo.info/urbaninfo/devinfoapp.aspx?cl=DAT> for two reasons. Firstly, they relate to slightly different years upon which the figures were compiled; and secondly, the UN-Habitat figures are based on projections, whereas the Malawi Government census figures are based on actual enumerations for the years 1966, 1977, 1987, 1998 and 2008.

<sup>4</sup> UN Malawi at <http://www.unmalawi.org/agencies/unhabitat.html> quoting GEO 3, 2004. [www.unhabitat.org/habrdd/statannexes](http://www.unhabitat.org/habrdd/statannexes).

<sup>5</sup> Bakili Muluzi was the Malawi president who held office during the first ten years of the multi-party democracy era from 1994 to 2004.

<sup>6</sup> These views emanated from a personal communication with a senior bureaucrat within one of Malawi's major city assemblies (via email communication dated 15/04/10). The identity of that bureaucrat will remain anonymous to protect their privacy.