

**Back Donor Project No (if any):**  
**Name of your Organisation: Norwegian Church Aid**  
**Local Partner(s):**

## **ABOUT THE EVALUATION**

**Evaluation year: 2006**

**Conducted by: Ingvar Theo Olsen, HeSo, Norway and Esnart Nwanga, Independent Consultant , Malawi**

**Country: Malawi**

**Region: Southern Africa**

**Theme/DAC sector: HIV/Aids and Health**

## **SUMMARY OF THE EVALUATION (maximum 2 pages)**

### **Title of Evaluation Report:**

NCA's Strategic Partnership Programme in Health and HIV and AIDS in Malawi.

### **Background:**

NCA started its work in Malawi in mid-2002 upon invitation by the Norwegian Embassy. Its focus was to collaborate with Faith Based Organizations (FBOs) in areas like HIV and AIDS, Health and Human Rights. NCA Norway has had a Frame Agreement with NORAD for a number of years and the Norwegian Government funded project portfolio in Malawi has been funded under this agreement. The Norwegian Embassy has taken over the portfolio and a *strategic partnership (SP)* was established between the Embassy and NCA in May 2005. This was the first in its kind, and covers Health (including water and sanitation), HIV and AIDS and Gender Based Violence. This initial agreement lasted for one year only, but was extended for another year in May 2006. The budget under the Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Embassy is NOK 15.6 million in 2006, or about 31% of total NCA budget. This review covers only the Strategic Partnership Agreement.

### **Purpose/Objective:**

The *Purpose* of the Review was:

To assess the relevance of the ongoing NCA projects in regards to the priority areas of Norway in Malawi. It is intended to inform the Norwegian Embassy if this support complements the Embassy's effort in its support to the government of Malawi in the specific areas of intervention. To examine NCA-Malawi's cooperation with the Embassy. The review will examine NCA's efficiency, its capacity to deliver a quality product. To assess NCA's ability to coordinate activities with its different partners in a way that brings about results

### **Methodology:**

This Review was carried out as a qualitative review in nature using a semi structured interview form/questionnaire as a starting point both for the interviews with key stakeholders and for document review. This was based on the Terms of Reference focusing on review of the ongoing projects as defined under the strategic partnership, and the organisational set up of NCA and relevant stakeholders. Prior to the review the Team made a list of specifications which were agreed to by the Embassy.

**Key Findings:**

The ongoing projects including NCA's activities are generally seen as relevant to the priority areas of Norway and the Norwegian Embassy in Health, HIV/AIDS and Gender-based violence. The working relations between the Embassy and NCA are regarded as good. NCA is recommended as a strategic partner to the Embassy. The coordination of faith-based partners is clearly a major achievement of NCA. The weaknesses are short term contracts, too many partners and insufficient collaboration with other donors and INGO's

**Recommendations:**

NCA needs to define its own role and contribution and activities we carries out ourselves as: capacity and organisational building, coordination, quality assurance, technical support, monitoring and evaluation advocacy etc. Strengthen internal organisation and capacity among staff in organisation development and monitoring and evaluation. Develop indicators to measure success of its own projects activities. Strengthen cooperation with other NGOs and INGO's

**Comments from Norwegian Church Aid:**

NCA Malawi has already made proposals and yearly plans for 2007 identifying own inputs and professional support to partners. Capacity building with staff is continuing including work on indicators and partners evaluation.

**Centre for Health and Social Development**

**Review of**

**NCA's Strategic Partnership Programme in Health and  
HIV/AIDS in Malawi**

**Ingvar Theo Olsen, HeSo, Norway**

**Esnart Nawanga, independent consultant, Malawi**

**December 2006**

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## Abbreviations

ACEM	Association of Christian Educators in Malawi
CHAM	Christian Health Association of Malawi
CR	Country Representative (of NCA)
DA	District Assembly
DMO	District Medical Officer
EAM	Evangelical Association of Malawi
ED	Country Representative
ELDS	Evangelical Lutheran Development Service
ECM	Episcopal Conference of Malawi
EHP	Essential Health Care Package
FBOs	Faith Based Organisations
GBV	Gender Based Violence
GFATM	Global Fund for AIDS, TB and Malaria
HEWASA	Health Water and Sanitation
MCC	Malawi Council of Churches
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MIAA	Malawi Interfaith Aids Association
NAC	National AIDS Commission
NCA	Norwegian Church Aid
NHP	National Health Plan
PFM	Prison Fellowship of Malawi
PLWAs	People living with AIDS
SP	Strategic Partnership in Health, HIV/AIDS and Gender Based Violence
SWAp	Sector Wide Approach Programme
VCT	Voluntary Counselling and Testing

QUADERIA (Moslem Association at national level)

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Last, but not least, we would also like to thank all the partner organisations for setting off time for us and for their willingness to share experiences and thoughts so openly.

## Executive Summary

NCA started its work in Malawi in mid-2002 upon invitation by the Norwegian Embassy. Its focus was to collaborate with Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) in areas like HIV/AIDS, Health and Human Rights. NCA Norway has had a Frame Agreement with Norad for a number of years and the Norwegian Government funded project portfolio in Malawi has been funded under this agreement. The Norwegian Embassy has taken over the portfolio and a *strategic partnership (SP)* was established between the Embassy and NCA in May 2005. This was the first in its kind, and covers Health (including W & S), HIV/AIDS and Gender Based Violence. This initial agreement lasted for one year only, but was extended for another year in May 2006. The budget under the Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Embassy is NOK 15.6 million in 2006, or about 31% of total NCA budget. This Review covers only the Strategic Partnership Agreement.

The *Purpose* of the Review was:

- To assess the relevance of the ongoing NCA projects in regards to the priority areas of Norway in Malawi. It is intended to inform the Norwegian Embassy if this support complements the Embassy's effort in its support to the government of Malawi in the specific areas of intervention.

- To examine NCA-Malawi's cooperation with the Embassy. The review will examine NCA's efficiency, its capacity to deliver a quality product

- To assess NCA's ability to coordinate activities with its different partners in a way that brings about results

As a tool a conceptual model was developed by the Review Team to sort out the different Strategic Partnership programme (see model in Report). NCA's partners cover a range of FBOs, including "*mother bodies*", and other "*umbrella organisations*" or "*affiliates*", often cross congregational or ecumenical, but also smaller partners. *Projects* are defined widely by NCA, and include a number of activities carried out by mother bodies, affiliates, other/smaller organisations, as well as NCA itself. The overall *programme* or *project portfolio* consists of all these activities. In its documentation to the Embassy, NCA has to a high degree left out its own activities or "projects" carried out by NCA.

The Embassy sees the Strategic Partnership as a type of assignment or *outsourcing* – whereas to NCA Malawi it is not entirely clear what the Strategic Partnership entails. Clear definition and guidelines are lacking.

The majority of the findings are linked to the lack of clarity in documentation to the Embassy on NCA's own role as well as not clearly distinguishing between partners' projects and own activities, but also to the lack of clear definition and guidelines about SP. In summary the *conclusions* are:

- 1           The NCA programme (including NCA's own activities and partners' projects) are generally relevant to the priority areas of Norway, as well as of Malawi Government, and thus generally relevant. It is also complementary to the Embassy's work.
- 2           The working relations between the Embassy and NCA is regarded as generally good,
- 3           The lack of a clear definition of NCA's own role, activities and products, combined with its strategic approach and long term focus on building organisational capacity as well as coordinating partners, appear as a weakness in relation to being efficient (and effective in short term). To determine the quality of the NCA product, the product needs to be defined clearly.
- 4           NCA has not sufficiently coordinated its own activities with those of other development partners, such as IFBOs, etc.
- 5           The coordination of national partners is clearly a major achievement of NCA, and has brought mother bodies and other FBOs together in a number of meetings, in a number of training sessions, etc.
- 6           NCA has also coordinated activities in a way that has promoted the awareness about gender inequities both in society as a whole and in the churches as such.

Recommendations have been given at three different levels: to NCA Malawi, to NCA Norway and to the Embassy/MFA. The major overall *recommendation* is:

*Based on the strong commitment, the unique relationship with national FBOs/churches and the way NCA's work complements the Embassy's other work, the Embassy should invite NCA to enter a long term agreement in the areas of health (including water and sanitation), HIV/AIDS and Good Governance (including development of civil*

society, gender based violence, etc.). This agreement could be in terms of SP, depending on clarifications from MFA on the concept and limitations, as well as guidelines.

## 1. Introduction and Purpose of the Review

NCA started its work in Malawi in mid-2002 upon invitation by the Norwegian Embassy. Its focus was to collaborate with Faith Based Organisations (FBOs) in areas of HIV/AIDS, Health and Human Rights. This was done in acknowledgement of the great role and responsibility FBOs have in promoting development and building democracy. The organisation has since established an office in Lilongwe with a nation-wide geographical focus, and is currently working in seven thematic areas, including; HIV/AIDS, Water & Sanitation, Health, Education for groups with special needs, Good Governance & Civil Society, Gender Based Violence and Emergency Preparedness. In 2006 the total budget is NOK 50 million.

NCA Head Quarters (Norway) in Norway has had a Frame Agreement with Norad for a number of years and the Norwegian Government funded project portfolio in Malawi has been funded under this agreement. After the reorganisation of Norad and MFA, the Norwegian Embassy has taken over the portfolio and a *strategic partnership (SP)* was established between the Embassy and NCA in May 2005. This was the first in its kind, and covers Health (including W & S), HIV/AIDS and Gender Based Violence. This initial agreement lasted for one year only, but was extended for another year in May 2006. In addition to this, another agreement was signed in October 2005 to cover the area of human resource development through expanding capacity and quality of Health Training Colleges in Malawi.

The budget under the Strategic Partnership Agreement with the Embassy is NOK 15.6 million in 2006, or about 31% of total NCA budget. NCA has a high number of partners working under the SP in Malawi, although it is currently being decreased from a high of about 30 partners. Today the office in Malawi is the second largest NCA has worldwide with a total of 22 staff.

This Review covers only the Strategic Partnership Agreement only, as the Health Training Colleges Agreement is a separate agreement. It could be argued that the two are relevant to be seen in connection as they have a similar type of agreement with the Embassy and cover the health sector from the same organisation, but it was explicitly decided to exclude this from the evaluation.

It should also be noted that NCA is working with a number of the same partners on other programmes than the SP, such as with CHAM also on the Health Training Colleges, but also others. This implies that at times it is difficult to identify exactly what relates to the SP as such, and what does not. This is expanded on further later in the Report.

The Purpose of the Review was:

To assess the relevance of the ongoing NCA projects in regards to the priority areas of Norway in Malawi. It is intended to inform the Norwegian Embassy if this support complements the Embassy's effort in its support to the government of Malawi in the specific areas of intervention.  
To examine NCA-Malawi's cooperation with the Embassy. The review will examine NCA's efficiency, its capacity to deliver a quality product  
To assess NCA's ability to coordinate activities with its different partners in a way that brings about results

## 2. Review Approach and Methodology

This Review was carried out as a qualitative review in nature using a semi structured interview form/questionnaire as a starting point both for the interviews with key stakeholders and for document review. This was based on the Terms of Reference (ToR, Annex 1), focusing on review of the ongoing projects as defined under the strategic partnership, and the organisational set up of NCA and relevant stakeholders. Prior to the review the Team made a list of specifications which were agreed to by the Embassy (see Annex 1).

Clearly, a review of this type should not be confused with a research project, and methodologically the two are very different. A review or evaluation of this type is carried out by consultants with a broad experience in the area, and although findings and conclusions clearly need to be documented the analysis will always have a degree of subjectivity. In addition the qualitative nature of the interviews implies that interpretation of these needs to be assessed according to *who* is interviewed, thus indirectly weighted differently by the consultants. Nevertheless, the Review Team has put emphasis on specifying sources as well as distinguishing this from its own analysis.

The Review was carried out in November 2006 over a period of three weeks in total, with two weeks of data collection in Malawi. The Review Team interviewed management and staff at NCA, staff/management from all the major partners, including the so called "mother bodies" and other affiliates/organisations, as well as some of the smaller partners to NCA.

The Review Team also had meetings with the Embassy during the process (in the beginning, middle as well as a debriefing meeting with the Embassy and NCA Manager in the end).

In addition the Review Team participated in the NCA Partners Meeting at Hippo View Lodge in Liwonde, and visited four different projects, located in Nkoma, Dedza, Likuni and Ntcheu districts.

A number of documents have been reviewed, such as overall programme description, plans, agreements, project proposals, project reports, budgets, accounts, and thematic reports and documentation.

## Conceptual Framework

The term Strategic Partnership appeared after the former Minister of Development, Hilde Frafjord Johnson opened for Norwegian NGOs to take up a more profound role in development cooperation due to their comparative advantages in working with civil society organisations (CSOs) of different types, such as FBOs. Norway has for a long time channelled a high proportion of its bilateral support through such voluntary organisations (about 3 billion NOK per year). However, no exact definition of strategic partnership as such was made; there are few guidelines available, and little experience to draw on to date. Reviewing the Strategic Partnership will thus need to be based on more subjective interpretations by the Review Team, but also to some degree interviewees. The more detailed issues listed in the ToR do not address this directly, but adds to an overall understanding of the concept.

A *partnership* entails a two-way or a multiple relationship where there is some degree of equality between the partners, as well as mutual roles, responsibilities, etc. NCA describes itself as a *partnership organisation*, implying that it has a partners in developing countries through which it works, supporting these in reaching *their* aim. This also implies that they do not see themselves as a regular donor as such, but seeks to have a closer relationship with the organisations it works with.

A strategy is the overall focus and directions an agency follows, which then feeds into a plan. In this evaluation the *strategic partnership* is understood as: *an agreement between two parties (NCA and the Embassy) where clear overall objectives, focus and area of work is stated for the two partners. This implies that they have some common goals, but work from different angles and with different projects or partners, to reach this goal.* In practical terms this implies that NCA Malawi complements the overall strategic work of the embassy, by focusing on (some of) the same thematic areas, but working with faith based organisations.

As a tool a conceptual model was developed by the Review Team to sort out the Strategic Partnership programme, including what projects it entails, partners, other stakeholders and relationships NCA has with these. As is evident, the NCA Malawi office reports both to NCA Norway in Oslo, and to the Norwegian Embassy, but only for the projects under the two agreements mentioned (“Strategic Partnership” and “Training Colleges”). Funding for the programmes go via NCA Norway.

The local partners include a range of FBOs, of which some are labelled “*mother bodies*”, meaning they function as umbrella organisations for a number of churches/congregations, including Islamic NCA relates to four such mother bodies, covering almost all individual churches and congregations in the country, Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM), Evangelical, Association of Malawi (EAM), Malawi Council of Churches (MCC) and the Moslem Association (QUADERIA).

There are also other “*umbrella organisations*” or “*affiliates*”, often cross congregational or ecumenical, covering thematic areas such as health (Christian Health Association of Malawi, CHAM), education (Association of Christian Educators in Malawi, ACEM) and HIV/AIDS (Malawi Interfaith Aids Association ,MIAA and Ecumenical Counselling Centre, ECC).

The ecumenical institutions are owned by the mother bodies: CHAM is owned by MCC and ECM;

ACEM by MCC and ECM; whereas MIAA and ECC are owned by MCC, ECM and EAM.

In addition NCA has a number of *other smaller partners*, which have not been specified in this illustration (e.g. Evangelical Lutheran Development Service, ELDS)

*Projects* are defined widely by NCA, and include a number of activities carried out by mother bodies, affiliates, other/smaller organisations, as well as NCA itself. The overall *programme* or *project portfolio* consists of all these activities. The mother bodies are implementing on national level and the churches on local level, e.g. nationwide projects for building capacity. This is stated in the proposals and reporting to the Embassy within the SP activities.

However, in its overview of activities and projects, NCA has to a high degree left out its own activities or “projects” carried out by NCA, particularly in its reporting to the Embassy. The format for reporting has been interpreted to focus on the activities/output of the partners. It should also be mentioned that reports to NCA Norway includes more details on NCA’s own activities, implying there is documented awareness of this. These activities may be seen as being at a different level from the other projects and entail a number of functions and were used by the Review Team to test out the actual functions of NCA.

*Affiliates/*

*others*

### 3. General findings

#### ***NCA Core Functions***

As illustrated above, NCA does not articulate its own contribution as opposed to that of its partners SP plans, proposals and reports. In the introductory meeting with NCA staff and the Director this was confirmed. A number of activities and core functions were discussed during this session, showing that there is considerable awareness about this, although these have not been seen as the projects or activities as such in relation to the SP. The functions or activities most clearly stated were:

- Policy dialogue

- Advocacy

- Capacity & organisational building

Coordination  
Quality assurance  
Technical support  
Monitoring & evaluation  
Networking

As these are not clearly stated, they are not reported on by NCA to the Embassy, which implies that a number of achievements in terms of output, outcome and impact at the very core of NCA work are never identified for the Embassy; indicators hardly exist at this level, and the roles and responsibilities of towards partners become unclear. This is a key finding with a bearing on most of the other findings in this Review. Although not entirely consistent, the Embassy confirmed that their main interest regarding reporting etc. lies mainly at this level

This review is *NOT a project review*, but a review of the *Strategic Partnership Programme* (Ref. ToR). The fact that NCA reports on the partners' projects does not imply that this review will do the same, as the focus is on the programme as such. In fact one of the major findings in the review is that this lack of clarity is the crucial factor in the Programme and has caused not only discussions between the Embassy and NCA, but also resulted in delays in reporting, allocation of funds, etc. which in the end has affected partners.

### *Strategic Partnership*

The strategic partnership between the Norwegian Embassy and NCA Malawi is the first in its kind ever for MFA, regardless of country and sector. The Embassy sees the Strategic Partnership as a type of assignment or *outsourcing* - to complement other Embassy activities, as well as filling holes or gaps identified.

To NCA Malawi it is not entirely clear what the Strategic Partnership entails and what makes this different from simply having a certain project portfolio funded by the Embassy. NCA points to the fact that the agreement so far has been only one year at the time, making it difficult to be strategic. Also the partnership as such seems to be more of an *assignment* than a mutual *partnership* between two parties.

Neither MFA nor NCA Norway have provided a clear definition of Strategic Partnership and no direct overall guidelines exist at this level. There are also few other types of guidelines to support the work on the Strategic Partnership.

There are also no clear guidelines from MFA/Embassy or NCA Norway that cover criteria for selecting national/local partners to work with in country, other than that they should be faith based. NCA Malawi has chosen to work with a high number of partners (FBOs), including Christian and Moslem organisations, regardless of the capacity of these. Although most of these were partners already prior to the SP (under the Norad agreement) guidelines could potentially have provided criteria in terms of number of partners, expected capacity of partners, etc. for the SP agreement.

The Health and HIV/AIDS programme of NCA covers a wider area than what is funded through the Strategic Partnership with the Embassy, although this is a major proportion. In addition NCA works in other thematic areas not covered by the Embassy. The total 2006 budget on Health and HIV/AIDS was NOK 18.8 mill and the SP was NOK15.6 million. Although the major part is under SP, it still implies that NCA has an identity and a focus which goes beyond that of the Embassy, just like the Embassy has a focus beyond that of NCA. It should also be mentioned that Health is not seen as a priority thematic area in NCA Norway.

In relation to the understanding of the concept of Strategic Partnership, the Review Team found that NCA may be seen as (at least to a certain degree) having got an *assignment* from the Embassy, rather than what has been discussed above as *partnership* as such. The assignment is clearly a strategic one, as it fills in gaps the Embassy does not cover itself. NCA has chosen to work broadly to cover a number of faith based umbrella organisations as well as other partners (FBOs). However, it is difficult to see what makes NCA a “partner” to the Embassy, and how this is different from the former agreement with Norad.

Although there have been some problems related to procedures, formats and level of detail for project proposals and reports in the Strategic Partnership programme, the relationship between NCA and Embassy has improved and is by both parties seen as good. There are bi-monthly meetings between the two, which helps clarifying issues along the way.

The more recent agreement on the Nursing College programme is reported to be working more smoothly than the Health & HIV/AIDS Strategic Partnership, apparently partly due to the fact that this is a programme initiated during the Embassy era as opposed to being inherited from Norad. There may be lessons to draw from this agreement which could also benefit the SP, e.g. that this programme has a five year contract and a five year plan and good staffing both on Norwegian and Malawian side.

In Norwegian development cooperation policies a number of cross cutting issues have been identified for all bi-lateral work. These have traditionally included issues like gender, environment, HIV/AIDS, good governance, etc. It is clearly difficult to communicate what cross cutting issues are to the partners, as this is easily confused with new projects. In principle there is also the question whether or to what degree relatively minor changes in Norwegian policies and priorities in development work should have a direct effect on local partner's projects, supported but not operated by Norway.

Procedures for development of proposals, funding of projects, as well as reporting follow Norad/NCA Norway procedures. This is partly due to the fact that these were earlier under the NCA – Norad framework agreement, building on the annual cycle of Norad (e.g. reporting in May/June, Sept. /Oct. and February (annual up to December)). However, these do not fit well with normal Embassy procedures, or with procedures of other donors or of the partners in country. The result of this is poor alignment with partner procedures and poor harmonisation with other donors, limiting the degree of collaboration with others.

NCA Malawi has discovered mismanagement of funds in one of its partner's projects. This has been reported to NCA Norway, and orally to the Embassy. The Embassy has not yet had a formal reporting from NCA on this, as

NCA Norway has its own formal procedures for reporting to MFA/Norad on such issues, which appears to be slow.

### *Other Relevant Findings*

Critical voices both from within NCA and outside are asking whether NCA Norway is running too much after the money by rushing into strategic partnerships without being explicit about its own values/mission and limitations. They argue that this may be a danger for an NGO, and that being too closely associated with the Norwegian Government such as in SP, may be harmful in the longer run.

NCA does some networking with other donors and INGOs (including IFBOs), such as Danish Church Aid (monthly meetings on Gender based violence and HIV/AIDS), as well as being member in different forums, such as Council of NGOs in Malawi (CONGOMA), State Task Force for FBOs in National Aids Commission (NAC)). However, realising that there is a cost side to this, there is clearly a potential for increased collaboration with other INGOs and other donors in order to increase overall effectiveness and impact through reducing overlapping of efforts and enable dividing up of responsibility of different areas/partners. NCA is also member of ACT (Action by churches together, which is an international and national coalition. In Malawi ACT consist of 7 national and international faith based NGOs working closely together. This does not apply to SP but to other activities taken up by NCA Malawi and is vital for the collaboration with INGOs.

Being a key partner to the different church councils and associations in Malawi NCA continuously balances its role as a development partner and change maker with getting directly involved in the church politics in Malawi. In the past there are some examples where NCA (the former CR) has been seen to directly interfere in the church management as well as what some stakeholders see as church politics and overstepping what is seen as its limits. This has clearly provoked some of its partners.

Partners also clearly dislike what they see as NCA bypassing mother bodies and affiliates, “implementing directly”. The partners generally see the role of NCA to be more of a donor, but also as a partner, but not being an implementer. According to NCA there have been very few incidents where it has implemented directly, and this has not been under the SP, but with other funds. Obviously, this also relates to how implementation is defined, as some partners even see monitoring as implementation. What is sometimes carried out that may seem like implementation are some few pilot projects to learn from. Other incidents that may seem like implementation may be monitoring, which is sometimes carried out by NCA alone, but normally after repeatedly trying to get the partner organisation to join. Nevertheless, this *might* have caused some degree of confusion, but probably more annoyance.

A separate issue, which does not have anything to do with the above, is about the accounting and the depreciation rate for assets, and the international rules and regulations for this. NCA Malawi writes off assets 100% the first year. There is a need to explore whether this is considered good practice or whether different assets should follow different depreciation rates.

## **4. Findings Related to NCA Projects and Partners**

## *Project Portfolio*

NCA's overall programme under the Strategic Partnership in Malawi may be divided into three thematic areas:

1. Health (including water & sanitation)
2. HIV and AIDS (prevention, care & support, stigma & discrimination)
3. Gender Based Violence (and HIV/AIDS)

As already stated the project overview under the SP shows a high number of smaller and larger projects and has not sufficiently distinguished between types of projects (larger, smaller, operated by type of organisation, etc.) in their documentation and reporting to the Embassy. Projects are mainly being defined as activities (or parts of the activities) carried out by partners, supplemented by some very few implementation and monitoring activities by NCA. The Log-frame is built up around these activities or projects. There is also no clear distinguishing/classification between projects implemented by mother bodies, other partners/affiliates, projects implemented by NCA, other activities by NCA, etc.

NCA has a number of partners carrying out their work on individual projects within each of these areas. These are the *partner's projects*, and not the activities or "projects" of NCA as such. NCA has also identified a number of issues that are cross cutting, i.e. these are at a different level or dimension and serve as perspectives across different thematic areas:

- Gender
  - Organizational development and capacity building
  - Information and communication platforms
  - Human rights and rights based approach
- HIV/AIDS
- Advocacy
- Monitoring and evaluation

Projects are generally identified by the partners, proposals made accordingly to NCA, who passes this on to the Embassy. This "bottom-up" approach results in projects being defined as the activities carried out by partners, supplemented by some key activities carried out by NCA. Other major activities carried out by NCA, such as coordination between partners, capacity building, advocacy, quality assurance, policy dialogue, etc. are not sufficiently identified as projects/activities, and thus hardly reported on.

NCA is currently going through the process of reducing the number of projects through phasing out certain projects and minor partners.

NCA also has other projects in the area of health and HIV/AIDS that are not under the SP, although these tend to be relatively small. This implies that the NCA health and HIV/AIDS programme in Malawi does not equal the project portfolio under the SP, but is wider than this.

## *NCA's Partners and their Portfolio*

The following is a summary of NCA's major partners in the SP and their related portfolio. This is not meant to be exhaustive, but an illustration of profile and capacity.

### **Mother bodies:**

#### *Malawi Council of Churches (MCC)*

MCC was formerly called Christian Council of Malawi, established in 1942, was almost closing down in 2001 but is in the process of being rebuilt. MCC collaborates with NCA on Capacity Building for Church Leaders in HIV/AIDS under the Strategic Partnership. This is a 4 week programme (training of trainers) following a training manual developed for this purpose. In 2005 MCC received NOK 855 000, which was disbursed late, and MCC could not implement and spend sufficiently in such short time, resulting in budget reduced to 421 000 in 2006. The capacity of MCC is limited, as they have a huge constituency, but a small secretariat and one technical person and no regional structure. They feel overstretched at times, although NCA has supported in increasing the capacity. MCC also receives core funding outside SP. If NCA pulls out MCC says it would need more than one year to be able to sustain major activities.

#### *Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM)*

EAM has more than 40 years history, and there are currently 66 member churches under this association, as it accepts dual membership (i.e. MCC and EAM). The focus in the development work is on facilitation and coordination, building capacity of members, as well as doing pilot/satellite projects around the country. It collaborates with NCA in the area of HIV/AIDS, community based child health and water & sanitation. The funding under the SP was NOK 950 000 in 2005 and NOK 800 000 in 2006. In HIV/AIDS it works in prevention (e.g. sporting equipment and games), care and support and training of HBC providers. It has received capacity building support from NCA, e.g. through academic training of 2 – 3 people, and NCA also supports small projects through EAM under SP. EAM has a good structure, with quite a number in the secretariat, regional personnel, as well as grassroots structure in place. Their capacity is assessed as adequate or good by the Review Team.

#### *Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM)*

ECM has a very clearly defined structure. ECM has catholic health commissions in each dioceses with health secretaries (7 dioceses), Dioceses are free to enter into partnerships with donors. ECM collaborates with NCA in the areas of Gender, Health and Peace and justice, whereas under the SP it is concentrated at HIV/AIDS, such as in training in HBC, but also Gender Based Violence (e.g. radio programmes). Total funds under the SP were NOK 720 000 both in 2005 and in 2006, (although there are some additional funds for GBV, NOK 90 000). The overall capacity of ECM to carry out the activities under the SP seems to be adequate, at least in the secretariat. However, it has obviously not been possible for the Review Team to get into details of the competence and capacity of the lower levels of ECM.

### **Affiliates (major):**

#### *Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM)*

CHAM is an umbrella organisation of church owned health facilities in Malawi, covering 168 facilities (including 32 hospitals), 9 training schools, providing 37% of all health care services in Malawi. It is owned by MCC and ECM. The collaboration with NCA under the SP in 2006 is on clinic based HIV/AIDS (NOK 505 300), Health Programme (NOK 1,880, 000), W&S (NOK 4,000,000) and Competence & capacity building (NOK 1,266,000). The overall budget in the SP has been reduced from about NOK 10 million in 2005 to NOK 7.7 million in 2006. In addition NCA works with CHAM under the Training Colleges Programme, which is a separate agreement with the Embassy. The SP programme is concentrated around capacity building of CHAM Secretariat; Primary health care, supervision and referral, advocacy and HIV/. The capacity of CHAM is generally assessed as adequate for coordination and working at national level processes, but some interviewees state that CHAM also implements projects directly, which it does not have sufficient capacity to do. Major achievements include improvements in: transport and communication system, cooperation of stakeholders, access to care by communities, establishment of cluster system for delivery of PHC services (several health units working closely on selected issues), service agreements between health units and District Assemblies (DMO) signed. NCA is working with CHAM to strengthen adherence to agreed plans and budgets, but this is partly due to late arrival of funds; increasing community participation in PHC; as well as monitoring, which follows monitoring tool developed by NCA,

#### *Ecumenical Counselling Centre (ECC)*

ECC aims at building capacity and train the religious leaders in Malawi in counselling, especially related to HIV/AIDS. The centre is by many interviewees considered initiated by NCA, although it was formally established by the owners EAM, ECM and MCC after a series of workshops in 2002-03, supported by NCA. In addition it has CHAM and ACEM as associates, and MIAA participates. It mainly covers HIV/AIDS, but is also doing counselling beyond this. It covers areas like lay counsellors, clergy, health professionals, teachers, care takers, youth, HBC, etc. The staff generally consist of 3 key people, planning to expand. The funding from NCA under the SP was NOK 750 000 in 2005, as the only partner increasing to NOK 1,450,000 in 2006. It also has a number of other funding partners, such as Fredskorpset, close collaboration with Norwegian institutions, such as Modum Bad Nervesanatorium, the City Mission of Oslo, etc. and is likely to receive funds from NAC. In other words the institution is well resourced, has a relatively high capacity, but also in some people's view needs to perform better in terms of deliver more services. There is also a discussion going on whether ECC should establish its own laboratory for VCT or not. Acknowledging the benefits this may have in easing access to testing for church leaders, there is a need to weigh this against the costs, manpower needs, etc. (as there are laboratories in CHAM hospitals near by), as well as the church leaders being responsible role models to the general population by being visible also as HIV positive, thus reducing stigma. The Review Team realises this is not an easy trade off.

#### *Malawi Interfaith AIDS Association (MIAA)*

MIAA was established in 2003 and is an agency aiming at coordinating and facilitating a united commitment of faith communities in the struggle against HIV/AIDS. This is another agency that many people have considered an invention or baby of NCA, although owned by the mother bodies, CHAM and ACEM. Objectives are: capacity building of FBOs in different management areas, including proposal writing, monitoring, etc., provide institutional support for FBOs, database, identify best practices, information, collaborate with Government, NAC, etc. MIAA receives funds from NCA for the salaries for a programme officer, office equipment, vehicle, etc. This has been funded under the SP, but it is clearly the operations and programme activities that have received the major part. However, NAC is the major funder to MIAA (MK 47 million), followed by Dutch Oxfam (MK 22 million) and NCA (MK 8 million). Other NCA support includes technical support in training, etc. They have a total staff of 8 people, and seems to have an adequate capacity, although there is a gap in monitoring and evaluation, possibly also in advocacy.

#### *Association of Christian Educators of Malawi (ACEM)*

ACEM was founded in 1994 to facilitate co-ordination of education institutions of different churches, and is the “CHAM in education”, providing 60% of all education in Malawi. It is owned by MCC and ECM. The collaboration with NCA is in the area of increasing capacity of teachers in HIV/AIDS education. This is done through curriculum intervention /financed by NCA (“HIV/AIDS Education and Life Skills education”. These are user friendly reference materials for teachers. The role of NCA is described as a key development partner, and is providing about 35% of total funds. The SP related funds in 2005 were NOK 1,140,000 in 2005 and NOK 973,700 in 2006. ACEM is also supported by a number of other institutions, including ICCO (Dutch alliance of NGOs) and NAC. Nevertheless, ACEM says they do not have sufficient capacity to deliver as they feel needed.

#### *Evangelical Lutheran Development Services (ELDS)*

ELDS, formerly called ELDP, was started in 1989 as a relief programme for refugees from Mozambique. It is under the Lutheran World Foundation (LWF), and does fundraising on their own. ELDS does work in six districts throughout Malawi. The collaboration with NCA is limited to two smaller projects in HIV/AIDS in Dedza and Phalombe. These are mainly focusing on VCT, food supplements, orphans, etc. The contribution from NCA is minor (MK 3 million in 2005 and MK 2.75 million in 2006), whereas they have a number of other strong donors. Nevertheless, late disbursement of funds from NCA has strongly affected project staff as well as implementation. The capacity of this agency is mainly in implementation, although not country wide.

Other partners in the GBV and HIV/AIDS Programme include *Transworld Radio (TWR)* and *Chikwawa Justice and Peace Commission*. Main activities include capacity building, awareness of religious and cultural practices that promote GBV and HIV/AIDS; capacity building on knowledge and skills on activism; radio programmes, training on rights of women; and community debates and inter-religious rallies. This is a joint programme with ECM (see above). Some weaknesses highlighted are in reporting and adherence to contractual provisions; lack of link to other development frameworks, conventions and protocols (national, regional, global), and as for all other programmes, delays in disbursement of funds affecting activities. Other partners are CARD and Prison Fellowship.

#### *Muslim Association (QUADERIA)*

This association covers the QUADERIA-Moslems (the majority of the Moslems in Malawi). They have a Board of Trustees, Secretariat with a Director, as well as 2-3 newly recruited officers, as well as regional and district committees. The support from NCA under the SP was NOK 50 000 in 2005 and NOK 78 000 in 2006, focusing on “developing the lives of women” and sensitizing the public on HIV/AIDS. The capacity of QUADERIA is assessed by the Review Team to be at a very minimum, probably surviving mainly due to support by NCA, yet it may potentially cover a large minority of the population.

Finally, there are also partners working outside the SP agreement, but these are left out of this review.

## *Relevance, Efficiency and Effectiveness of the Programme*

Due to the fact that the agreement between NCA and the Embassy has been running on an annual basis (from signatory date), all projects supported under the SP agreement also run on an annual basis. One year contracts and unpredictable budgets affect strategies of NCA and partners' projects negatively making them less relevant in determining long term goals, effectiveness and sustainability. This is enhanced by the Norad/NCA Norway initiated procedures, which amongst others leaves a gap in funding for at least three-four months every year. Bridge funding (20% of last year's budget) is only obtainable from NCA Norway after the project proposal has been approved/signed, (or projects running for more than a year) and has till date not been granted. Certain project staffs (on individual projects as opposed to partner organisations) have according to partners thus either not been paid or they have been fired and activities have stopped completely for a large part of the year.

In principle Embassy priorities, including cross cutting issues determine what proposals can be accepted. This is only to be expected, but there is a drawback to this as there is no clear mechanism for addressing the needs as identified by the partner organisations, which may lead to lower degree of relevance of the programme to the perceived needs of Malawi. In addition, many integrated community programmes require a variety of interventions to have an impact, such as there is little impact on health or HIV/AIDS unless people have access to clean water and nutrition. This has already been a discussion between NCA and the Embassy, but the Review Team confirms that flexibility in these issues is absolutely key for development support to work.

The project portfolio by NCA and as well as its partners is clearly within Embassy priorities (*Health* (incl. W&S), *HIV/AIDS* and *Good governance*), and are thus generally seen as relevant to this. Although the addendum to the SP Agreement identifies some key concerns, such as lack of focus and too many partners, this does not imply they are not relevant. Certain projects were phased out when the Embassy took over the responsibility.

Health and HIV/AIDS are clearly priority areas for the Malawi Government as well, and the projects are thus seen as relevant to these priorities. Indications on this is that project partners, as well as NCA, are directly involved in a number of ongoing government led processes, including health sector reforms, SWAp, decentralisation, NAC, etc.

*Efficiency* of the NCA programme (again as opposed to partner's projects) relates to the *choice of partners* as well as the *methods* of working by NCA as well as the partners. Some aspects of this have already been identified, such as:

- The high number of partners and projects is seen as inefficient.

- The Norad and NCA proposal and reporting requirements are inefficient

- The relatively low degree of collaboration with other donor agencies and IFBOs *may* also be inefficient. It *may* also be seen as inefficient to fund only selected parts of a partner project, as opposed to the overall budget (or even pooling of funds, see later)

- Planning systems, proposals, budgeting and accounting system etc. are relatively inefficient to all involved, as these focus on the details of partner's activities, rather than the more strategic work of NCA. These are also seen as inefficient to the partners by not following the procedures of other stakeholders (see later).

*Effectiveness* of the programme is a *relative term* as it needs to be compared to something, and is related to the actual *output*.

Effectiveness of the project portfolio is difficult to determine broadly due to the lack of distinguishing between different types of projects, and thus different project goals. E.g. NCA has been effective in coordinating church umbrella organisations in the area of HIV/AIDS, but this has not been stated as a goal in the SP (only in the 5 year country plan).

There is also a need to distinguish between short, medium and long term effectiveness, as these may contradict each others. E.g. working with partner organisations with a strong capacity as opposed to building up capacity in some organisation to cover other important parts of civil society. This has been difficult with short term agreements.

NCA has been effective in: policy dialogue, networking and coordination of partners, organisational development,

The NCA office grew rapidly in terms of staff in its early stages. Total budget under the SP to partner projects has decreased from a high of NOK 18.8 million in 2005 to NOK 15.6 million in 2006, and an estimated NOK 10 million in 2007 (not confirmed). This implies a higher number of staff relative to the project portfolio and is an indication that both efficiency and effectiveness *may* have been reduced.

However, there are other factors that influence this, such as the type of activities should vary over time, as partners' capacity and projects develop, this requires different types of support.

The review was not asked about the cost-effectiveness of the programme. This relates directly to the effectiveness and is thus not easy to assess thoroughly. Most Malawians belong to a church (80%) or to a mosque (20%). This implies that NCA through its partners potentially covers almost the entire population of Malawi, due to the different mother bodies (church councils/associations, as well as Moslem association) under which almost all churches in Malawi are members. This implies that for a relatively modest amount there are potentials for direct or indirect impact on almost the entire population of Malawi which is highly cost-effective.

## *Impact of Projects*

As with relevance, efficiency and effectiveness, impact of the partners' projects on the ground vary and is not easily assessed. Indicators identified in the log frame address issues like total number trained, satisfaction with training, number of churches with support programmes, well functioning water and sanitation facilities in CHAM units, etc. According to reports a lot of this has been achieved, but many of these indicators are also affected by other factors, including activities by others. This is not a discredit to the NCA projects, but underlines the benefits of collaborating with other donors/INGOs.

The impact of *NCA's own activities* is at a different level and is generally not reported on to the Embassy, but important to acknowledge. Examples are:

- Strengthened capacity of the different mother bodies as well as affiliates like CHAM
- Bringing together these to coordinate and exchange experiences
- Mother bodies collaborate and are able to speak with one voice
- Bringing on board the Moslems association (QUADERIA)
- Supporting the establishment of institutions like MIAA and ECC

Gender brought on the agenda for the churches and becoming a core element in projects, programmes, plans, reports, etc.  
Higher awareness of HIV/AIDS in churches, including stigma and discrimination, prevention and counselling

Impact may also be assessed on a higher level, which is more related to the cross cutting issues as well as general development goals of MFA. This *macro level impact* includes:

Civil society has been strengthened through the support to and coordination of CHAM, mother bodies and the establishment of MIAA and ECC

Gender equity has been promoted and women are represented in a number of areas in the church, as well as in programmes

## *Sustainability of Projects*

It is generally acknowledged that projects and programmes within health and HIV/AIDS can hardly ever be expected to be financially sustainable in the sense of being *self sufficient*. They will always need a “donor”, either in the form of government paid (through taxes) or other types of support (foreign assistance)

*Financial sustainability* may also be defined as organisations/projects being able to raise sufficient funds to maintain activities through different mechanisms, including that of donors. Most of the NCA partners already have other donors contributing with a major proportion of the funds, (e.g. ELDS), whereas others are still funded almost entirely by NCA. It is not possible to have access to the complete budgets and accounts of these partners to be able to identify the proportion of funding from different sources. The main partners were asked about how large proportion NCA support is of total, but the picture is too varied to be generalised from.

NCA contribution to core funding for partners, is a *basis* for support from other donors. This funding is aimed at the secretariat/administration of each partner, and is thus different from projects, often carried out by their individual member churches, etc. Apart from CHAM this core funding is not Embassy funds but funded from NCA other sources, but a basis also for the Embassy funds to be efficiently used.

Sustainability may also be defined as *organisational capacity* to carry out activities. Capacity development and institutional building has been and is a major focus of NCA, and although some of the partners have too low capacity to build on (QUADERIA), others may already be sustainable or close to become sustainable (EAM, ECC, etc.). Some of the agencies have been partly initiated and built up through the support of NCA, implying that the organisational capacity and thus the sustainability has been strengthened with the support of NCA.

## *Opportunities and Challenges for Sustainability of Projects*

It is clearly an opportunity as well as a challenge that development agencies/donors are likely to be more attracted to support projects and programmes carried out by agencies with a high organisational capacity, than those with a lower. Implications may be that those with a stronger need of capacity building may receive less, as

short term outcomes or results are often sought. This is confirmed by some of NCA's partners to be a problem if NCA was to rapidly withdraw.

Exit strategies from projects have generally not been developed by NCA, implying that sustainability of the activities has not received sufficient attention. Intrinsic to this is the lack of clear benchmarking for partners' capacity development.

As much as the organisational development of partner agencies is an important element in NCA strategy, this has not been clearly stated in the project and programme under SP. NCA has commissioned a consultancy to develop a capacity building strategy to be used internally as a guidance for implementing and screening capacity building proposals from its partner organisations. This suggests three broad strategies and options for capacity building, including: *training and technical assistance based on empowerment strategies; grant funding and organisational development*. One of several elements suggested is project proposal development, and this is repeatedly mentioned by partners as a priority area for training. As much as this shows the reality of their situation, it is also unfortunate that it is seen as a key capacity.

As discussed above, short term results (outcome and impact) at project level may undermine the long term sustainability of organisations, in that the focus is skewed towards what can be obtained rapidly at the expense of slowly building up capacity. The short term nature of the contracts is clearly a threat to sustainability.

There is a difference between effectiveness of the NCA partners and their *legitimacy*. Both are required in order to secure long term sustainability. A strong and well-managed organisation may have a high level of effectiveness, but not the trust and credibility of its stakeholders, such as the mother bodies. On the other hand, respected and highly credible organisations may be weak from a management point of view.

### *How Programme fits with Health SWAp*

NCA health programme under the Strategic Partnership Agreement generally comprises its collaboration with the umbrella organisation Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM). It is widely known that CHAM provides 37% of health services in Malawi, or 80% of the health services in rural Malawi, and is the key Government partner. NCA is an important partner to CHAM in the area of HIV/AIDS, PHC (4 clusters of 14 health units), supervision and referral, water & sanitation, as well as cross cutting issues. Outside the SP NCA supports the Nursing Colleges and also provides core programme support. CHAM is a signatory to the Sector Wide Approach programme (SWAp) process, as well as central in other health sector reforms, such as decentralisation, the Essential Health Care Package (EHP), Central Medical Stores reforms, as well as Hospital Autonomy,

A major achievement lately has been to get in place Service Agreements between Districts Assemblies/DMOs and individual CHAM units, securing funding of services from the district health budget. At this stage there are about 19 agreements signed, and these cover only maternal and child health services, but are intended to be

expanded to cover a wider range of services. Implications are that CHAM units which currently charge user fees are able to provide services free of charge to the user.

### *How Programme fits with NAC*

A recent mid-term evaluation of the implementation of the Malawi HIV/AIDS strategic management plan (2003-2008) addresses the different partnerships and roles of institutions *vis a vis* National Aids Commission. This report fails to address civil society as a major stakeholder to the processes in NAC. Nevertheless, several of NCA's partners in the area of HIV/AIDS are currently receiving funds to support their activities in this area. Although the activities are numerous as are the partners in this area, NCA work in relation to HIV/AIDS is seen as in line with NAC. This may also be illustrated by the following:

- NCA is a member of the State Task Force of FBOs for NAC

- NCA is a member INGO Forum meeting with NAC

- NCA partners (mother bodies and affiliates) are identified by NAC and GFATM as key partners.

### *Possibilities of NCA to Access Future Funding from SWAp or NAC*

NCA as such cannot access funding under SWAp. The Sector Wide Approach programme (SWAp) in Malawi implies Government and partners agreeing on supporting one and the same strategic plan and priorities in health. This is in itself not a financing mechanism, but includes different mechanisms and sources of funding, including direct project funding, programme funding, and pooling of funds ("basket funding"). These funds cover government health programmes (defined as the delivery essential health care package) including service delivery by Government and CHAM health units, which after decentralisation is controlled by District Assemblies.

As already discussed, NCA's partner in health, CHAM including CHAM units already have access to such funds, directly (funding under service agreements) or indirectly (salaries of staff, free drugs and vaccines, etc.). NCA support to CHAM capacity in this area is seen as crucial, although the capacity still needs strengthening.

It is clear that NCA as an international NGO will not be able to access NAC funds in Malawi, neither from the Global Funds to fight Aids, TB and Malaria (GFATM), nor from other similar arrangements. Nevertheless, NCA partners are already accessing NAC funds (e.g. MIAA 60% of total budget, ECC (from 2007), CHAM, etc.). The mother bodies and others working on HIV/AIDS can also access funds from NAC.

NCA should see its role also to support its partners in accessing such funds, through supporting their capacity building, advocacy, information, etc., which implies that training may not always be the way to move forward.

### *Performance of the Programme Portfolio*

As has been mentioned and discussed repeatedly, NCA has a wide definition of projects, a wide range of projects, as well as very limited reporting on its own activities and projects. This has an influence on what is meant by performance as well as what this may be measured by.

Performance may be understood as “ability to do” and not only have strong ideas and principles, or a vocal leadership speaking loud about NGO identity and core values. The implementation and the ability to carry through the good intentions may be defined as performance. This consists of *perceived relevance*, *effectiveness* in reaching targets (e.g. as defined in annual work plans), and different aspects of *sustainability* (activities can be sustained without outside staff, increasing level of other donor support, etc.)

This implies that a number of these factors have been presented and discussed above. However, this may be summarised as:

The overall programme is perceived as relevant by most of the stakeholders, both in relation to country needs, the Government priorities and the Embassy priorities.

The fact that contracts are limited to fund smaller parts of larger projects, as well as short term (only one year) make them less relevant and less effective.

NCA has been effective in coordinating church umbrella organisations in the area of HIV/AIDS, but this has not been stated as a goal.

It is seen as relevant to build up institutions like ECC, MIAA and QUADERIA, but in short term this is not effective, an example of how long term effectiveness may contradict short term effectiveness.

NCA has been effective in: policy dialogue, networking and coordination of partners, organisational development.

Many of the partners have been able to attract also other donors to take over part of the funding requirements, making them more financial sustainable

The organisational capacity of many of the partners is still weak, whereas others are able to function without much external technical or administrative support.

Some of the organisations have not managed to move much from the stage of establishing itself as an organisation and have problems carrying out activities and delivering results, and are not seen to be performing very well. There is a danger of becoming donor dependent while focusing on capacity development and training in itself without producing.

## 5. Findings Related to Organisation

### *Structure*

The NCA organisational chart shows clear lines of responsibility and reporting, and the structure is consistent with the current strategy and programme activities. All roles have associated dedicated positions; some individuals have clearly defined core roles to be filled, as well as area of discretion with room for individual initiative in order to make a difference in the programme. However, core roles are defined in terms of *activities* rather than end products and services from the NCA point of view, such as their support role. The flat and “broad” organisational structure results in a high number of people reporting directly to the Country Representative (CR). This results in the CR continuously having to shift focus by concentrating on smaller and bigger issues, coming from five (or more) departments instead of (or in addition to) concentrating on strategic issues that affect the organisation.

The organisational chart shows gaps in terms of high-level managerial positions with high capacities and abilities to make policy decisions and give strategic direction to the organisation, together with the CR. Staff has

high dependency on the Country Representative in terms of decision making, although they are continuously encouraged to make own decisions. The current managerial positions on the organisational chart, e.g. HIV/AIDS Manager, Health manager are actually technical people rather than managers and are much more directly involved in technical issues in their programmes. In terms of providing strategic direction to the organisation, it seems this has been the responsibility of one person, the CR. This makes the organisation rather vulnerable and reduces sustainability. In addition, the overall workload for the CR becomes too high, when she has to participate and make decisions for the different levels, considering that she deals with issues from five sections and at the same time provides direction to the organisation. NCA should consider recruiting a Director of Programmes and a Director of Finance & Administration which could deputize the Country Representative. This is in line with the thinking of the CR.

### *Professional and Administrative Capacity*

Capacity may be seen as a multi-faceted term, which is built up by *individual capacity*, *programme capacity* and *organisational capacity*. The individual technical and administrative competences and capacity is one level. Programme capacity, such as for a health programme within the organisation, also includes technical and administrative aspects, as does the overall organisational capacity as such. The capacity of an organisation may be seen as a comprehensive set of abilities, including *ability to be* (maintain identity reflecting values, strategies and leadership); *ability to organise* (effective managerial system, human and financial resources); *ability to do* (provide relevant services); and *ability to relate* (respond and adapt to new demands and changing needs, retain standing amongst stakeholders) (Kruse, 1999)<sup>[1]</sup>.

As discussed above, NCA has a number of different roles: It is a strategic partner to the Embassy, it is a partner organisation to a number of national organisations (FBOs), and it is a professional organisation in its own self.

To start with the latter, NCA is assessed as a *professional organisation* in its self and has a number of individuals with strong professional skills within their technical areas. Without implying there are any clear weaknesses NCA may want to review carefully its capacity within each of the areas described as NCA core functions (policy dialogue, advocacy, monitoring, etc.), in order for it to identify gaps in its capacity. One area where there is room for improvement is in relating to INGOs/IFBOs, where there are potential gains in efficiency and effectiveness.

The capacities needed to be a *partner organisation* includes a certain level of technical skills of individuals within the health programme, HIV/AIDS and GBV. NCA is assessed to have sufficient technical ability at individual and programme level *to do*, as well as *to adapt*. The *ability to organise* is at the organisational level, and the ability seems to be in place, but there is also a need carry out some organisational changes. This is clearly acknowledged by NCA itself, and includes certain organisational changes to become more relevant as a partner that has the ability to relate to new demands and changing needs as their partners develop.

This is the basis for NCA as a *Strategic Partner* to the Embassy, but another key ability in this role is the *ability to be*. This implies that NCA needs to be clear about its own limitations, what it wants to achieve as an organisation, its own identity, including values, etc. within the SP. This is a capacity building process that needs to be initiated by NCA Norway and include NCA Malawi.

NCA's partners, when asked to articulate what they see to be the *main role of NCA*, indicated that it is a development partner that should contribute to building their capacity to a higher level. *Capacity building and monitoring and evaluation* are areas which are essential and vital to produce quality services.

Staff at NCA is drawn from diverse backgrounds and experiences, and bring a broad range of skills to the organisation. Individual staff are generally capable and committed to the mission and strategy, eager to learn

and develop and assume increased responsibility. The team has significant experience working with not for profit organisations/FBOs and is professional. The NCA team is able to handle the current project portfolio though sometimes staff have to stretch themselves to meet the job demands. In terms of staffing level, NCA has 22 staff in total and most of these were recruited before NCA had clearly defined its role, making it difficult for NCA to articulate the capacities, skills and competencies required to fulfil its mandate. A skills mapping for the staff and relocation of staff to positions according to their skills and competencies is needed.

NCA might consider recruiting an Organization Development specialist and Monitoring and Evaluation specialist who would concentrate on building organisational capacities of partner organisations and enhance NCA's quality of services to its partners respectively.

## ***Method of Choice of Partners***

NCA Malawi selects partners which are faith based organisations and are working within one of the organisation's thematic areas of health, HIV/AIDS, good governance and gender-based violence. NCA does not have any guidelines/criteria in terms of level of NGO's capacity in place to become a partner. The only major guiding factor is thus being a faith based organisation. Partners get funding from NCA after submitting a proposal which must follow NCA's guidelines and meet NCA's proposal requirements. The assessment has also indicated that NCA has a certain category of partners that do not follow in any of its thematic areas, e.g. Prison Fellowship of Malawi. The consultants learnt that this category is funded by other sources than Strategic Partnership and NCA headquarters.

NCA has also been active in support of establishment of new organisations/institutions where there have been gaps. Examples are ECC and MIAA. This is generally done in collaboration with the mother bodies, and the degree of initiative as well as general role of NCA has varied. Also the perception on this role has been discussed amongst the partners. Some indicate that NCA has taken too much initiative which affects the feeling of ownership amongst the mother bodies/churches, whereas others either think this has been necessary for the institutions to be established or think that NCA has not had this type of a role, but rather supporting the process.

## ***NCA's Procedures for Monitoring and Evaluation***

NCA has developed monitoring and evaluation tools which are used to monitor and evaluate *partners' projects*. The tools are comprehensive and capture most of the required information on projects. NCA's programme staff master the tools. NCA staff directly monitor some of the partners' projects through field visits and joint reviews with partners. During the assessment NCA's partners had different views in terms of how they perceive monitoring and evaluation of projects by NCA. One group indicated that NCA does monitor and evaluate their projects; a second group felt that NCA does monitor and evaluate partners' projects sporadically or not at all; and there was still another group that perceived NCA's monitoring and evaluation of partners' projects as something beyond NCA's limitations. In terms of the number of partners, NCA has reduced its partners by more than 50 percent which meant that NCA may have become more effective in monitoring and evaluation of partners' projects.

Monitoring and evaluation of *NCA's own projects* and activities is not taking place in a systematic manner, because the activities are neither properly documented nor reported on. Success indicators for NCA's own activities have never been developed. This shows that NCA's success or achievement is dependent on the success of partners' projects.

## *Partners' own Monitoring Activities*

NCA's partners are at different levels in terms of capacity and ability to handle issues of monitoring and evaluation. In the case of the mother bodies (EAM, ECM and MCC) and the big partners (CHAM, ACEM, MIAA and ECC), in general terms most of these have monitoring systems in place and have trained their implementing partners in the systems. However, monitoring and evaluation of projects by these big partners cannot be described as effective for the following reasons:

- Partners' overall catchments areas are big, almost covering the whole nation and the secretariats do not have adequate staff to do monitoring, e.g. CHAM
- Some of the partners' projects lack well defined targets and quantifiable outputs, which makes evaluation difficult
- Due to large catchments area partners have challenges in terms of transportation and other resources to go for evaluation and monitoring of projects
- Lack of capacity at grassroots level to monitor and follow up issues as they arise

In the case of the five small NCA partners, the assessment indicates that some of these do hardly have any capacity and are at the stage of start up, e.g. QUADERIA. And in their case, monitoring and evaluation is a non-starter. However, according to NCA there are strong reasons for keeping an organisation like QUADERIA in the portfolio, as it targets a major share of the Moslem population.

## *NCA's Formalized Collaboration with Partners*

NCA has to a great extent effectively built and leveraged some key relationships with most of its partners and this collaboration is seen to be deeply anchored as stable, long-term, and mutually beneficial to involved parties. NCA collaborates formally with its partners through:

- Monthly meetings with selected (most) partners
- Partners meetings which take place twice a year
- Bi monthly meetings
- Joint supervision with partners

The above meetings are characterized as having an agenda and are mostly follow up on the progress of the projects. In addition to this, partners submit narrative and financial reports three times a year (June, October and February). On the reporting system, most partners expressed concern that NCA's reporting system is different from other donors. Most donors' reporting system cover January to June (reporting in July) and then July to December, and in most cases partners write consolidated reports and send to all donors, without making separate reports to individual donors. However, in the case of NCA, partners are obliged to write separate reports three times a year during the periods when actual implementation is to take place for the other donors. In addition to that the assessment indicates that the first reports to NCA covering the period January to May have nothing to cover, because of the late funding from NCA's side for the past two years (2005 and 2006), which has been characterized by almost zero implementation during these months of the year.

During consultations with different partners, there were repetitive statements indicating that there is a slack in the formalized meetings with NCA. Partners indicated that NCA tends to be too busy and postpone the meetings, while NCA indicated that this has been the case also from the partners' side. Regular feedback is the only way to keep both sides updated and strengthened collaboration between NCA and partners would enhance coordination and communication which would result in quality services. Monthly meetings is considered too frequent for many of the partners, taking too much of their time.

## *NCA's Capacity Building of Partners*

One of the roles that NCA partners perceive NCA to be having is supporting capacity building of the partners. This has clearly been one of the major achievements of NCA activities, although not always sufficiently reported on under the SP. NCA has been sending individual staff members of different partner organisations to school to upgrade themselves. They have been organizing workshops on selected topics for different partners to attend to, building partner's capacity in a certain area. NCA has been supporting many of its partners with finances to procure physical infrastructure e.g. office equipment which is also considered part of the capacity building.

According to this assessment NCA is concentrating more on building the capacity of individual staff in partner organisations than concentrating on building the capacity of actual organisations, although the two are linked. NCA would consider helping its partner organisations in areas like clear and shared vision and mission, empowering and respect leadership, engaged governance, clarity and consistency of values for behaviour, healthy relationships, teams and culture, strategy development, developing systems for planning, monitoring, evaluation, reporting, administration, human resource management, financial management, appropriate structure, staff, fundraising, and development of networks with other stakeholders. When these areas are fully developed, an organisation should have a relatively high capacity in place which results in high probability of sustainability. Recruiting (i.e. short term assignment) of an Organizational Development Specialist would be highly recommended to look into issues of organisational development of partners.

## *Existence of Indicators to Measure Success*

As mentioned above, the assessment indicates that NCA does not have indicators in place to measure its own success. Indicators available are those of partners which are not well suited to measure NCA's success or achievements. NCA Malawi does have a vision but the vision has not sufficiently been translated into a set of concrete goals and objectives, apart from some more general goals and objectives, which tend to be inconsistent and imprecise. Additionally, the goals were not specified by concrete criterion to measure success with well defined time frames for attainment of goals. Revising the strategic plan would be highly recommended so as to give opportunity to NCA Malawi to go through the process again. Apparently this process is already decided on. After reviewing the strategic plan, NCA should sensitize its staff on the goals and consistently use them to direct actions and set priorities.

During the assessment, the consultants noted that some of the partners' indicators are also not clearly defined to be able to measure success. Some of the targets were not quantifiable and are mainly focusing on "inputs" (things to do right) rather than on output/outcome (i.e. results of doing things right). Most targets lack milestones/benchmarks and neither are they adopted by most of the staff nor used to guide the work.

### *Implementation capacity and competences of partners*

The capacity of the partners differs greatly. As already mentioned, some do not have any capacity what so ever, others have low capacity and still others have high capacity to implement the projects. The three mother bodies (MCC, EAM and ECM) and other big partners e.g. CHAM, ECC, ACEM and MIAA generally have competent staff at secretariat level to coordinate the activities and also have structures all over the country at grassroots level. However, some of these partners are tempted to start implementing the activities directly at local level, instead of facilitating local member churches to do so, which becomes a big challenge in terms of the workload.

Another evident challenge was the shortage or complete lack of sufficiently competent staff as well as general shortage of personnel at grassroots level, which results in too high workload and poor service delivery. An example is Mikoke Health Centre under CHAM, which the consultants visited. This health centre has a number of different departments operating with very few staff, affecting the services negatively in terms of quality.

### *Coordination/communication between NCA, mother bodies and individual organisations*

NCA's collaboration with mother bodies (EAM, ECM and MCC) has generally been at a higher level (policy and coordination level) supporting the advocacy for issues affecting the FBOs, facilitating coordination and empowering them in order for to speak with "one voice" on major issues, e.g. versus the Government. This has also contributed to help them come up with solutions to pertinent issues affecting FBOs in general, and brought a number of key issues to their attention, particularly the issue of Gender.

A direct result of NCA's collaboration with mother bodies is increased coordination between them, unity and togetherness. NCA's collaboration with mother bodies has also contributed to the birth of ECC and MIAA that bridged the gaps between them and within each organisation terms of counselling and coordination of HIV/AIDS activities.

As a matter of principle, direct involvement of IFBOs in church politics as such is considered by many to be unacceptable. During the assessment some partners mentioned incidences where by NCA was considered to go beyond its boundaries in its involvement with the mother bodies, getting directly involved in issues such as whom to hire and fire or other internal issues of mother bodies, sometimes seen as church politics. Some partners indicate that although the continuous focus on gender by NCA has been generally positive, it has in certain incidences gone too far, resulting in a feeling that NCA is interfering too much without being sensitive about the need for a process over time.

Other issues included an incidence of directly undermining one of the partners by NCA recruiting a staff member from the partner. Partners also indicated situations where NCA in its thrive for quick results have pushed issues too fast or bypassed generally accepted procedures or bureaucratic “rules” within or between the partner organisations, including the processes at community level. Additionally, the issue of NCA bypassing mother bodies dealing directly with implementing partner can not be overlooked. However, NCA indicates that it deals directly with partners only when the partner is implementing a *pilot project* and wants to use it as example or to gain experience in an area.

## ***NCA’s Collaboration with International NGOs and Other Stakeholders***

NCA in Malawi is reasonably well known amongst the INGOs and in the donor community, and perceived as open and responsive to community needs. NCA considers networking and collaboration with other INGO and stakeholders to be useful, but its activities in this area are assessed not to be sufficiently explored. There is clearly a need to develop this further.

NCA does some networking with other donors and INGOs, such as Danish Church Aid (monthly meetings in the area of Gender based violence and HIV/AIDS), as well as being member in different forums, such as Council of NGOs in Malawi (CONGOMA), ACT, State Task Force for FBOs in National Aids Commission (NAC). Realising that there is a cost side to this, there is clearly a potential for increased collaboration with other INGOs and other donors in order to increase overall effectiveness and impact through reducing overlapping of efforts and enable sharing of and dividing up responsibility for different areas or even partners.

In terms of influencing policy at national level, NCA has a potential for pro-actively and reactively influencing policy making, such as by being member of different forums e.g. state task force for FBOs in NAC and CONGOMA. As this is a rather vast and complex area which the ToR does not explicitly cover, this has not been assessed further during this review.

## ***Role and Input of NCA Norway in the Programme***

The Review Team is of the impression that NCA Norway may have gone into the strategic partnership arrangement without sufficiently defining what this implies for the organisation itself, how it affects NCA as an independent NGO, what the limitations should be to what NCA could get involved in and how, what role NCA should have in relation to partners and the Embassy, etc. Clearly, SP as a new type of collaboration between an NGO and an Embassy will need time to develop into a well functioning and clearly defined arrangement, but NCA Norway should from its own interest be expected to take a lead in this work, following up the Malawi office closely, learn from the experiences, as well as supporting the process.

According to the desk officer in NCA Norway, due to the complexity of the matter she has had to spend almost her entire time the past year on following up the Nursing Colleges Programme, leaving little time for other projects and other type of support. According to NCA Malawi the office in Norway (including other technical

officers) has not provided technical support, only financial, generally leaving NCA Malawi as their second largest office alone with a new country representative, which was recruited externally for the work.

When the office in Malawi this past year discovered a situation with mismanagement of funds in one of its projects, this was reported to NCA Norway. However, according to NCA Malawi it took about two months before they had a proper reply, leaving the office in a limbo. The Embassy still has not received a formal report on this from NCA. There are indications that NCA Malawi on many instances gets technical and moral support from the Embassy.

NCA as such follows a number of procedures developed to suit the *Norad framework agreement*, which are not compatible with those of other donors. The Embassy, on the other hand, is relatively flexible in their approach, but as long as NCA Norway does not have a system for project proposals, funding, follow up and reporting that better suits partners and other donors, alignment with partner's procedures becomes difficult and harmonisation with other donors equally difficult to do. An example of this is the reporting procedures, which requires project reports in May/June, September/October, as well as December (by February). This is clearly an example of procedures made to fit in with the Norad planning cycle and *not with those of partners*. Other agencies ask for reports in July and January, commonly accepting the general overall report from the partner, which then means they can coordinate amongst each others without requiring separate reports, putting less demand on partner capacity. This is clearly an issue that NCA needs to consider in depth not only for Malawi, but for also for other country offices.

### *Independent NGO and Strategic Partner: a Contradiction?*

It was not found much evidence that NCA Malawi has felt that there is a contradiction between being an independent NGO and a strategic partner, although it is commonly acknowledged that there is a *potential* contradiction in this.

The fact that NCA has other sources of funding apart from the Embassy, and that the project portfolio goes beyond the one defined as the Strategic Partnership has to a certain degree indirectly contributed to reducing this contradiction, although the level of awareness in NCA Malawi on this is limited. The clear definition of the role and limits of NCA in a SP, as well as identifying potentials and threats of the arrangement in Malawi is strongly needed.

As SP is limited to certain thematic areas, whereas NCA in many instances sees itself as working with more integrated types of projects is a limiting factor, but not so much linked to the SP as such, more to being dependent on a donor.

## **6. Conclusions**

*To assess the relevance of ongoing NCA projects in regards to the priority areas of Norway in Malawi. It is intended to inform the Norwegian Embassy if this support complements the Embassy's effort in its support to the government of Malawi in the specific areas of intervention.*

1 The ongoing NCA projects (including NCA's own activities and partners' projects) are generally seen as relevant to the priority areas of Norway, determined by the Norwegian Embassy to be in the area of Health, HIV/AIDS and Gender based violence. Both Health and HIV/AIDS are priority areas of Malawi Government, and thus generally relevant.

2 There are major weaknesses in the programme, to a certain degree reducing its relevance to Malawi, but also its general effectiveness. These include:

- Short term contracts both with the Embassy and with partners;
- Under this SP the Embassy is funding only projects and not larger programmes or partners as such<sup>[2]</sup>;
- High number of partners and projects reduces close focus;
- Insufficient collaboration with other donors and INGOs

3. The Norwegian Embassy has heavy involvement in the area of Health, HIV/AIDS and Good governance, mainly working with the Government or public sector on these issues. NCA's close collaboration with FBOs, which directly or indirectly covers almost the entire population in Malawi clearly complements the Embassy's effort, and together the two cover the two most relevant sectors for these thematic areas. The remaining sector is the private for-profit sector.

*To examine NCA-Malawi's cooperation with the Embassy. The review will examine NCA's efficiency, its capacity to deliver a quality product*

4. The working relations between the Embassy and NCA is regarded as generally good, although there has been a number of issues that have had to be solved along the way, such as the level of detail in reporting, procedures, etc.

5. NCA has a difficult task working with a high number of partners with different types of capacity. As NCA generally is not implementing projects, but working through partners, it is sometimes seen to be inefficient. In general NCA has the technical capacity within each thematic area, whereas its competence and capacity in its own contribution/role does have certain gaps, such as in organisational development, networking amongst development partners, coordinated support with these, pooling of resources, policy dialogue, etc.

6. The lack of a clear definition of NCA's own role, activities and products, combined with its strategic approach and long term focus on building organisational capacity as well as coordinating partners, appear as a weakness in relation to being efficient (and effective in short term). To determine the quality of the NCA product, the product needs to be defined clearly. The capacity to analyse own role and capacities required need to be embedded in the organisation as such.

*To assess NCA's ability to coordinate activities with its different partners in a way that brings about results.*

7. Judging from NCA proposals, plans and reports on the SP to the Embassy, the organisation has not specified coordination of own activities with those of other development partners, nor of partners' activities as an objective of the SP.

8. However, the coordination of partners is clearly a major achievement of NCA. NCA has coordinated and brought mother bodies and other FBOs together in a number of meetings, in a number of training sessions, etc. with an agenda of improving technical work in Health and HIV/AIDS, but also contributing to the empowerment of the FBOs to speak with one voice.

9. NCA has also coordinated activities in a way that has promoted the awareness about gender inequities both in society as a whole and in the churches as such.

10. Although NCA most of the time has balanced its role as a donor/development partner to that of involving itself too closely in internal church politics or management of churches (mother bodies), it has in a few instances in the past overstepped what is considered acceptable by the partners, especially the mother bodies.

## 7. Recommendations

### *Recommendations to NCA Malawi*

1. In order to obtain a better focus and a stronger basis for strategic work, NCA Malawi should classify the different types of projects carried out by the different types of partners. The following serves as an example:

- A. Projects implemented by Mother bodies and affiliates (e.g. training by type, capacity building of member churches, coordination, advocacy, project implementation, etc.)
- B. Projects implemented by other partners (e.g. training and technical skills development, operation of projects, etc.)
- C. Projects implemented by NCA (e.g. pilot projects, direct support at project level)
- D. Activities carried out by NCA (e.g. policy dialogue, advocacy, capacity and organisational building, coordination, quality assurance, technical support)

- E. Macro level projects by NCA (e.g. supporting civil society development, democracy, improving equity, poverty reduction)

2. NCA needs to define its own role and contribution and the activities or “projects” NCA carries out itself. Amongst other these include:

- ☐ Policy dialogue
- ☐ Advocacy
- ☐ Capacity & organisational building
- ☐ Coordination
- ☐ Quality assurance
- ☐ Technical support
- ☐ Monitoring & evaluation
- ☐ Networking

3. NCA needs to further reduce its number of partners by phasing out some existing partners and smaller projects that do not serve a direct purpose strategically. It is proposed that the following are included as future partners:

*Mother bodies:*

1. Malawi Council of Churches (MCC)
2. Evangelical Association of Malawi (EAM)
3. Episcopal Conference of Malawi (ECM)

*Affiliates:*

4. Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM)
5. Ecumenical Counselling Centre (ECC) *(Leave out if sufficiently supported by others)*
6. Malawi Interfaith AIDS Association (MIAA)
7. Moslem Association (QUADERIA) *(May be left out)*

8. Association of Christian Educators of Malawi (ACEM) (*May be left out*)

4. Overall project descriptions, goals/objectives, etc. should be built up around partners and NCA's own contribution, using the log frame from this level. Individual project details need to be available, but the focus and the reporting should be above this.

5. NCA Malawi should enhance networking closely with other donors or INGOs with the aim of coordinating efforts, possibly also joining forces, share responsibilities, etc.

6. NCA should consider revising the organisational structure and establish key posts as Director of Programmes and Director of Finance and Administration to act as a link between technical staff and the CR. NCA also needs to define core roles of staff in terms of end-products and services rather than activities.

7. In terms of professional and administrative capacity most of NCA staff were recruited when NCA had not clearly defined its role and it was difficult for NCA to articulate the capacities, skills and competencies required to fulfil its mandate. A skills mapping for the staff and relocation of staff to positions according to their skills and competencies is needed. Since this assessment has indicated that capacity building and monitoring and evaluation are some of the core functions for NCA, recruiting an Organization Development and Monitoring and Evaluation specialists would enhance NCA's quality of services to its partners.

8. Regarding NCA's cooperation with partners and method of selection of partners NCA needs to develop criteria and guidelines for such selection. NCA needs focus partnership with only those organisations that are linked to NCA's overall mission, vision, goals and thematic areas.

9. In terms of building the capacity of partners NCA needs to focus on developing the capacity of actual partner organisations rather than that of individuals, although this may also be necessary at times. NCA should consider helping its partner organisations in developing capacities in areas such as *clear and shared vision and mission, management, etc.* In general recruiting or linking up with an Organizational Development Specialist would be useful to look into issues of organisational development of partners.

10. NCA needs to develop indicators to measure success of its own projects/activities. NCA needs to translate its vision and strategy into concrete goals, objectives and activities which NCA itself will be committed to do, leading into the development of an operational plan with success indicators/benchmarks, well defined time frames and means of verification. Revising NCA's strategic plan should be the starting point and is highly recommended so as to give opportunity to NCA Malawi to go through the process again. After reviewing the strategic plan, NCA should sensitize its staff on the goals and NCA must consistently use them to direct actions and set priorities.

11. NCA should start developing exit strategies from the different partners/projects it works with. Benchmarking, or developing indicators for when to withdraw and how, as well as communicate this to partners are useful in would also provide clarity about what to expect in the future.

12. In terms of NCA's collaboration and communication with partners, NCA needs to develop/revise the terms of reference (or memorandum of understanding) with every partner describing each party's roles and responsibilities. This will guide the work and collaboration and will also clarify expectations on each side.

### *Recommendations to NCA Norway*

13. NCA Norway should clearly define what Strategic Partnership means to them including what NCA as an organisation would like to achieve from this, its limitations, etc., and communicate this to the different offices where this is relevant. This should include what role the local NCA office should have, NCA Norway and what procedures and mechanisms need to be in place for this to function smoothly.

14. There is clearly a need to develop guidelines for supporting country offices in their day to day work on Strategic Partnership.

15. NCA Norway also needs to follow up NCA Malawi more closely, both to support the office in strategic decisions, but also technical as well as administrative issues, and to draw lessons from this first Strategic Partnership.

16. NCA Norway needs to reconsider its project cycle in the countries where there is a Strategic Partnerships (possibly also in others), to be more streamlined with those of other donors, as well as country partners. This implies. Longer term projects, semi-annual reporting in July and January, look at potentials for pooling funds with other donors in countries.

### *Recommendations to the Embassy/MFA*

17. Based on the strong commitment, the unique relationship with national FBOs/churches and the way NCA's work complements the Embassy's other work, the Embassy should invite NCA to enter a long term agreement in the areas of health (including water and sanitation), HIV/AIDS and Good Governance (including development of civil society, gender based violence, etc.). This agreement *could* be in terms of SP, depending on clarifications from MFA on the concept and limitations, as well as guidelines.

18. The Embassy/MFA need to clearly define what Strategic Partnership implies, recognising the importance of retaining the nature of an NGO as an independent organisation which is different from the public sector actors.

18. MFA needs to develop clear guidelines and procedures as well as formats for working in Strategic Partnerships.

19. Strategic Partnership should not simply be a list projects handled by an NGO on behalf of the Embassy, but should acknowledge the comparative advantages the NGO has in the area, as well as define what degree of details in reporting and control should be built in to the system, as opposed to outsourcing the responsibilities to the NGO.

21. The Embassy should focus attention, including proposals and reporting on NCA contribution to its key partners, rather than the NCA's partners' projects, as NCA as a strategic partner should have delegated responsibility for the lower levels.

20. The Embassy should be open and flexible to the linkages between different types of interventions within one project partner's activities, such as Health, HIV/AIDS and Water & Sanitation or Nutrition. It should also be open for potentials of providing global budget support for certain NCA partners, including pooling of funds with other partners to cover one overall plan.

## **Annex 1: Terms of Reference**

**NORWEGIAN CHURCH AID MALAWI (NCA-MALAWI)**

**DRAFT TERMS OF REFERENCES**

**For**

**Review of NCA's Strategic Partnership Programme in Malawi**

## **1.0 BACKGROUND**

### **1.1 NCA - Malawi**

Norwegian Church Aid started working in Malawi mid-2002 upon invitation by the Norwegian Embassy. Its focus was to collaborate with the Faith-Based Organisations (FBOs) in areas like HIV/AIDS, health and human right. This was done in acknowledgement of the historic great role and responsibility FBOs have in promoting development and building democracy.

NCA Malawi has since established an office with professional staff. It has a nation-wide geographical focus and has chosen to work in seven thematic areas namely: HIV/AIDS, Water and Sanitation, Health, Education for specially disadvantaged groups, Good Governance and Civil Society, Gender Based Violence and Emergency preparedness.

NCA Malawi has a great number of partners in Malawi mainly chosen within the churches and faith-based community both at individual organisations and mother bodies' level.

The Norwegian Embassy has been funding NCA Malawi since May 2005 under the new facility of strategic partnership through two contracts. The first contract to support and strengthen churches and faith-based organisations in their work in the areas of Good governance, Health and HIV/AIDS was signed in May 2005 for one year and extended for another year in May 2006. This first partnership will be the subject of this review. The second contract signed in October 2005, is a contribution to expand capacity and improve the quality of Health Training Colleges in Malawi as a response to the Human Resource crisis in Health in Malawi.

### **1.2 Rational of the review**

The Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Norway entered into a Strategic Partnership with NCA-Malawi in May 2005 for one year initially, based on a portfolio transferred from NORAD. The Norwegian Embassy did not make its own assessment locally, as the programme had been assessed by Norad. It is therefore necessary to examine the relevance of the programme within the context of a strategic partnership.

This anticipated review was the basis for entering into only a one year extension of the programme.

## **2.0 Terms of reference for NCA review**

### **2.1 Purpose of the review**

- To assess the relevance of the ongoing NCA projects in regards to the priority areas of Norway in Malawi. It is intended to inform the Norwegian Embassy if this support complements the Embassy's effort in its support to the government of Malawi in the specific areas of intervention.
- To examine NCA-Malawi's cooperation with the Embassy. The review will examine NCA's efficiency, its capacity to deliver a quality product
- To assess NCA's ability to coordinate activities with its different partners in a way that brings about results

### **2.2 Scope of the work**

#### **2.2.1. Review of ongoing NCA projects**

The review shall limit its focus on the ongoing activities in Health and HIV/AIDS in Malawi started under NORAD funding and taken over by the Embassy.

The review shall:

- Provide an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the projects in the first partnership.
- Examine how the programme fits in the context of the Health SWAP and the NAC, and the possibilities of NCA to access future funding from the two.

- Assess the projects' organisation and identify opportunities and challenges for the sustainability of the different projects
- Propose recommendations on scope and modalities for continued support of the projects under the strategic partnership arrangement.
- Make a broad assessment of the performance of the programme portfolio

#### 2.2.2. Review of NCA-Malawi organisation

The review shall only focus at NCA-Malawi, but can also make reference to the institutional review being carried out in Oslo for the entire NCA organisation, if there are relevant information regarding NCA-Malawi.

The review shall focus on studying and analysing NCA-Malawi and its local partners (Mother bodies and member FBOs).

The review shall:

- Assess NCA-Malawi's structure and its professional and administrative capacity to manage the project portfolio.
- Describe and assess the NCA's cooperation with its local partners (method of choice of partners, procedures for monitoring and evaluation, formalised dialogue/collaboration with partners, capacity building of partners, existence of indicators to measure success...etc)
- Assess the implementation capacity and competence of NCA's local partners
- Assess the coordination/communication between NCA, mother bodies and member/individual organisations
- Establish the role and input of NCA headquarter in the programme
- Is there a contradiction in being an independent NGO and a strategic partner to the Norwegian Embassy (Norwegian Government)?

### 2.3 Reporting

#### 2.4.1 Debriefing

After completing the field work, a presentation shall be made to the Norwegian Embassy containing the major findings and recommendations.

#### 2.4.2 Final report

The final report shall be presented to the Embassy by.....and based on the following tentative report structure:

- i) Executive summary
- ii) Introduction and purpose of the review
- iii) Review approach and methodology
- iv) Findings
- v) Conclusion and recommendations

### **3.0 Team, time schedule and budget**

#### **3.1 Review team**

The team leader shall be recruited from Norad and he/she will team up with 3 Malawian consultants. The team leader will be responsible for finalising the report.

#### **3.2 Time schedule**

The work for the review shall be completed in three weeks. It should commence week 41, and the final reports should be presented to the Norwegian Embassy in Lilongwe no later than five weeks after commencement of the review.

#### ***Specifications to the ToR made by the Review Team and Confirmed by the Embassy***

1. It is stated that there should be an assessment of the relevance, effectiveness, efficiency, impact and sustainability of the projects in the first partnership. As an economist I have a very specific

and technical interpretation of what effectiveness and efficiency means. However, I think this requires very detailed and accurate quantifiable data on input, output, costs, as well as baseline data from before the interventions started, etc., which is rarely found in this type of projects, which is based on partnerships with national/local organisations/churches, etc.

2. Equally, the above is also linked to the understanding of impact, as if understood in a similar way requires clear and concise data on relationship between the input by NCA (time, money, etc.) and not only the output of the partner organisation, but also the actual impact this has. Obviously, there is a vast number of factors influencing on almost anything (especially in the area of health and HIV/AIDS status and people's abilities accordingly), and these types of correlations need to be handled with great caution.
3. I would suggest that the focus on effectiveness, efficiency and impact become less technical, and that the interpretation of should be a more qualitative one, without expecting to provide scientific types of data, but rather discussing different aspects of these, as well as an analysis of input, process, output and indications on potential impact this may have had.
4. On sustainability, I suggest that one may discuss and analyse not only the financial sustainability, but also the sustainability in broader terms, including the organisational capacity, context and the output/services provided.
5. How the programme fits into the context of the NAC, I assume means the strategic and programme framework of the National Aids Commission?
6. The possibilities of NCA to access future funding from SWAp (shouldn't it be the basket fund?) and NAC: I would think it could be more relevant that the partner agencies receive funds from these, as NCA is funded through its own sources in Norway.
7. "Assessing the projects' organisation and opportunity and challenges for the sustainability of the different projects" clearly requires a definition of type of sustainability one wants to assess (financial or organisational) as well as sustaining what (the project or the output/outcome).
8. I am not sure how many partners NCA has in the country, but if this is a high number, there is a need to make a selection among these to be able to assess the capacity and competence of these.
9. On the debriefing one should consider pros and cons of having NCA represented in addition to the Embassy.

## Annex 2: List of Interviewees

	<b>Date</b>	<b>Name</b>	<b>Position</b>
1	07/11/06	Canaan Phiri	General Secretary
2	07/11/06	Howard Kasiya	Programme Manager
3	07/11/06	Bria Mlowoka	M and E manager
4	07/11/06	Franklin Yonamu	Resources Mobilization
5	07/11/06	Francis Mkandawire	General Secretary
6	07/11/06	Ruth Mwandira	Director General
7	07/11/06	Desiree Mhango	Director of Health Promotion
8	07/11/06	Father Joseph Mpinganjira	Secretary general
9	08/11/06	Reverend Msuku	Project Officer
10	08/11/06	Dr Linden	Medical Director
11	08/11/06	Mr Salema	Co-ordinator-Referral
12	08/11/06	Mr Arcado	Principal-Nursing supervisor
13	08/11/06	Mr Soko	Administrative officer
14	09/11/06	Mr Mbutuka	HIV/AIDS Coordinator
15	09/11/06	Mrs Bonongwe	Matron
16	09/11/06	Mr Ngwira	Administrator
17	09/11/06	Mr Wanje	Laboratory Assistant
18	09/11/06	Sister Bhima	Hospital Incharge
19	09/11/06	Mrs Mpinganjira	Nurse/Midwife
20	10/11/06	Mr Ndalama	Country Representative
21	10/11/06	Selina Sakani	Chief Education Officer
22	10/11/06	Mr Chimbiya	Programmes Coordinator
23	10/11/06	Sheik Sanudi	General Secretary
24	10/11/06	Ivy Katenga	Administrative Secretary
25	10/11/06	Mr Chunga	Project Coordinator
26	10/11/06	Mr Mbendera	Program Coordinator
27	10/11/06	Reverend Ngongonda	Acting Deputy Director
28	10/11/06	Judith Jere	Director
29	10/11/06	Prisca Kamanga	Finance Officer
30	13/11/06	Lloyd Simwaka	Country Representative
31	13/11/06	Georgina Chinula	Programme Manager
32	13/11/06	Joanna Nkhoma	Finance and Administration
33	13/11/06	Agnes Kiromera	Programme Officer
34	13/11/06	Leif Sauvik	Counsellor
35	14/11/06	Charles Nyekanyeka	Accountant
36	14/11/06	Robert Mwaungulu	Director
37	14/11/06	Elsa Doehlie	Country Representative

## Annex 3: Programme for the Review

Date	Time	Activity
6/11/06	0800	Meeting with Norwegian Embassy staff
	0900	Desk review
	1330	Meeting with NCA staff
7/11/06	0800	Consultation with MCC
	1000	Consultation with EAM
	1400	Consultation with CHAM
	1630	Consultation with ECM
8/11/06	1000	Field visit with ELDS
	1330	Field visit with Nkhoma hospital
9/11/06	0800	Field visit with Likuni VCT
	1400	Field visit to Mtonda
		Field visit to Mikoke
10/11/06	0930	Consultation with ACEM
	1100	Consultation with Quadria
	1500	Consultation with ELDS
11/11/06		Desk review
12/11/06		Desk review
13/11/06	0800	Consultation with MIAA
	1000	Consultation with NCA staff
	1330	Consultation with Norwegian Embassy
14/11/06	0800	Desk review
	1400	Departure for Partners Meeting
15/11/06	0930	Meeting with ECC
	1300	Consultation with NCA Country Representative
16/11/06	0800	Isolation of findings
	1330	Debriefing
17/11/06-27/11/06		Report writing, draft report

<sup>[1]</sup> Kruse, S.E. *How to assess NGO capacity*. Bistandsnemnda 1999