



CISANET UPDATE

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Providing Space for Agricultural Policy Dialogue in Malawi

CISANET KICK STARTS ISSUE BASED CAMPAIGN

Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) in April held a meeting with its members and other stakeholders in agriculture sector to outline its plans on advocacy work. The organization sought views from its members on how the network can successfully improve its role in the sector.

The meeting which was held at Bingu International Convention Centre (BICC) in Lilongwe looked at the CISANET's calendar of events and how the network members can jointly work with the secretariat on the implementation of the outlined activities.



Some of the CISANET members engaging in group discussion

CISANET board chairperson, Rex Chapota, said there is need for strong and dedicated Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) in Malawi for the agriculture sector to shine. He said CISANET is the key for bright future for Malawi's agriculture sector.

Chapota said: "CISANET members should join hands and uplift the agricultural work in the country. The members should be proud to belong to this network because it's a hub for CSOs work in this sector." CISANET National Director, Pamela Kuwali said the secretariat will continue holding similar meetings because this refreshes the efforts of the network in as far as advocacy work in agriculture sector is concerned.

CISANET conducted the meeting in conjunction with Counterpart International with funding from USAID.

Councilors trained on gender sensitive budgeting

CISANET in conjunction with Actionaid Malawi early this year trained eight councilors in Rumphi and representatives of the district council in gender sensitive budgeting. As councils were busy formulating their budgets, such knowledge of gender sensitive budgeting was vital so as to engender the council budgets.

The two organisations also facilitated a radio program on community participation in council budget formulation processes. The radio program was aired on Zodiak radio station and drew panelists from Rumphi and Mchinji districts.

CISANET Director, of Programmes Alfred Kambwiri, said the meeting was very useful as it had enhanced transparency and accountability of council budgets as well as creating ownership of district stakeholders to council budgets.

These activities were part of the project called Enhancing Citizen Participation in Budget Tracking and Monitoring for Equitable and Sustainable Development in Malawi. The project overall objective is to contribute to improved transparency and accountability in public expenditure at national and district council levels. The project recognizes that prudent public financial management requires transparency and accountability and participatory mechanisms in all aspects of the budget planning, implementation and monitoring processes. At district level the project focusses on strengthening the institutional transparency and accountability mechanisms of district councils such as annual audit, quarterly expenditure reporting and promote citizen's participation in the budget tracking and expenditure processes.

The project strategy is to enhance the capacities of CSO, district councils, councillors and parliamentarians, media, and other relevant government line ministries in Nsanje, Phalombe, Mchinji and Rumphi to contribute to pro-poor budget planning and to monitor public spending.

The project is funded by the EU and CISANET is in consortium with ActionAid. The project runs up to 31st January, 2019.



Gender sensitive budget benefits both men and women

CSOs key for agricultural development - Govt

Government says Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) should work hand in hand with government for the sake of improved agricultural sector.

Principal Secretary in the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development, Gray Nyandule Phiri, said this in April when Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) held a policy engagement dinner meeting.

Nyandule Phiri said although government and CSOs are on the different sides of the coin, they both exist with the common purpose of improving agriculture in Malawi hence they should work together on policy and other agricultural issues.

Nyandule Phiri said: “Most of the times, the CSOs work as enemies of government. But this should not be the case; we need to open up to one another and walk together because the efforts from both sides will benefit Malawians.”

The policy engagement meeting was one of the activities that CISANET has lined up for 2018 as part of its Issue Based Advocacy Campaign on Agricultural Policy in Malawi.

CISANET National Director, Pamela Kuwali, said through the campaign, CISANET intends to promote an enhanced space for its members and stakeholders to collectively engage with decision makers in the Ministry of Agriculture and (the ministries that directly support it) on agricultural policy for the benefit of Malawians.

“The key objective of the Advocacy Campaign is to support Government of Malawi as it implements the National Agriculture Policy (NAP) and the National Agriculture Investment Plan by reinforcing mutual transparency and accountability among key stakeholders in the sector. The advocacy campaign will focus on a range of key agricultural policy issues in line with the NAP and the needs of members and stakeholders,” she said.



Nyandule-Phiri making his speech during the dinner meeting

Directors drilled on Food and Nutrition Bill

CISANET and Department of Nutrition today early this year drilled directors from various government ministries and agencies on the Food and Nutrition Bill.

The consultant who is working on the bill, Dr Redson Kapindu, also sought input from the participants. He said the inputs from various stakeholders will strengthen the bill.

CISANET is supporting consultations on the Food and Nutrition Bill as part of its two-year project titled *Civil Society Policy and Advocacy towards Right to Food in Malawi*.

The project is funded by Flanders International through UNDP One Window on the Right to Food, advocating for a framework law on the right to adequate food and nutrition. Presently the project is working with the Department of Nutrition to review the draft Food and Nutrition Bill and advocate for its enactment.



Photos: The directors meeting in progress



Dairy farmers challenge NGOs on sustainability

Dairy farmers under Mpasa Milk Bulking Group (MBG) at Nambuma in Dowa district have challenged Civil Society Agriculture Network (CISANET) that they will continue with commercialized dairy farming even if CISANET and its development partners move out of the area.

The farmers said this in February when CISANET officials held an interactive meeting with about 90 dairy farmers who are part of 265 members of Mpasa MBG.

The meeting was part of the project titled the Central Dairy Scale-Up Project (CDSP) which is being implemented by Heifer International, CISANET, and Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM) with funding from UK Department for International Development (DfID)

Speaking on behalf of his fellow dairy farmers, Felix Chimwala, said the dairy farmers in the group are united and share knowledge and skills on how to productively take care of their dairy cows.

Chimwala said: “We hail the Heifer International for giving us 100 dairy cows which have helped us to be economically stronger than before. We sell the raw milk to processing companies hence we are able to support our children to go to school. We also benefit from organic manure and milk for food from these cows. Although this project will come to an end in the near future, on behalf of my colleagues, I challenge CISANET that, we have gained experience and we are ready to continue with this practice even if the project ends.”

The farmers pass on the calf to another farmer as a multiplication strategy. In August 2017, they passed on 18 calves to new dairy farmers. This March 2018, they are expected to pass on 28 calves .

CISANET Director of Programmes, Alfred Kambwiri, said the goal of the project is to improve the Malawi dairy sector productivity, efficiency and sustainability by improving the livelihoods of 5,000 small holder dairy farmers’ households in the Central Region of Malawi.

He expressed CISANET’s happiness that the dairy farmers at Nambuma have acquired the essential expertise in dairy farming.

“Furthermore, it is encouraging that these dairy farmers are now taking this farming as business. This is a great indicator that there will be sustainability of their dairy farming even in absence of this project,” said Kambwiri.

Initially, the project was supposed to take 35 months, from November 1, 2014 to December 1, 2016, but it was extended with 16 months, from January 1, 2017 to April 31, 2018.



One of the dairy farmers speaking to his fellow farmers

CISANET trains farmer organisations on MBS specifications

CISANET has trained representatives from 8 farmer organizations from Lilongwe (under CADECOM Lilongwe) and Mchinji (under CARD) on MS21 of Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS).

The farmer organizations are involved in the production and processing of peanut butter, soybean flour and cooking oil. The representatives were trained in 2 Malawi Standards: MS21 (Food and Food Processing Units: Code of Hygienic conditions and MS554 (Peanut Butter Specification).

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Some of the participants at the training workshop



MBS official facilitating the training workshop

One of the participants, Vitumbiko Jere, said the meeting was important for the farmer organisations. Jere who works with CARD in Mchinji urged farmers to use the information to improve on their work.

The meeting also discussed possible ways of making agricultural cooperatives sustainable. The meeting was held with financial support from Oxfam through the project titled 'Promoting Access to Agriculture Markets for Smallholder Farmers in Malawi'.

Citizens demand accountability from councils

Malawian citizens say district councils should always be transparent and accountable to the citizens. This was expressed by different citizens who phoned in the live radio programme that CISANET held on Times Radio. During the radio programme, councilors and members of Area Development Committees from Phalombe and Nsanje discussed the process of budget planning at district level.

The programme gave chance to radio listeners to ask questions or make recommendations in as far as budget planning is concerned. One of the radio listener, Gabriel

Lingani, said the resources that councils use belong to citizens hence it is important that all council officials should be accountable and “The councils should ensure that they update us about every stage of the budget process at district level. Furthermore, the council should always get our input when they are formulating the budget,” said Lingani who phoned from Mulanje.

The radio programme was part of a project titled ‘Enhancing Citizen Participation in Budget Tracking and Monitoring for Equitable and Sustainable Development in Malawi’ which CISANET is implementing in conjunction with Actionaid Malawi with funding from European Union.



The panelists during the radio programme on Times Radio

This News update is produced by CISANET to reflect its work during the first four months of the year 2018

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