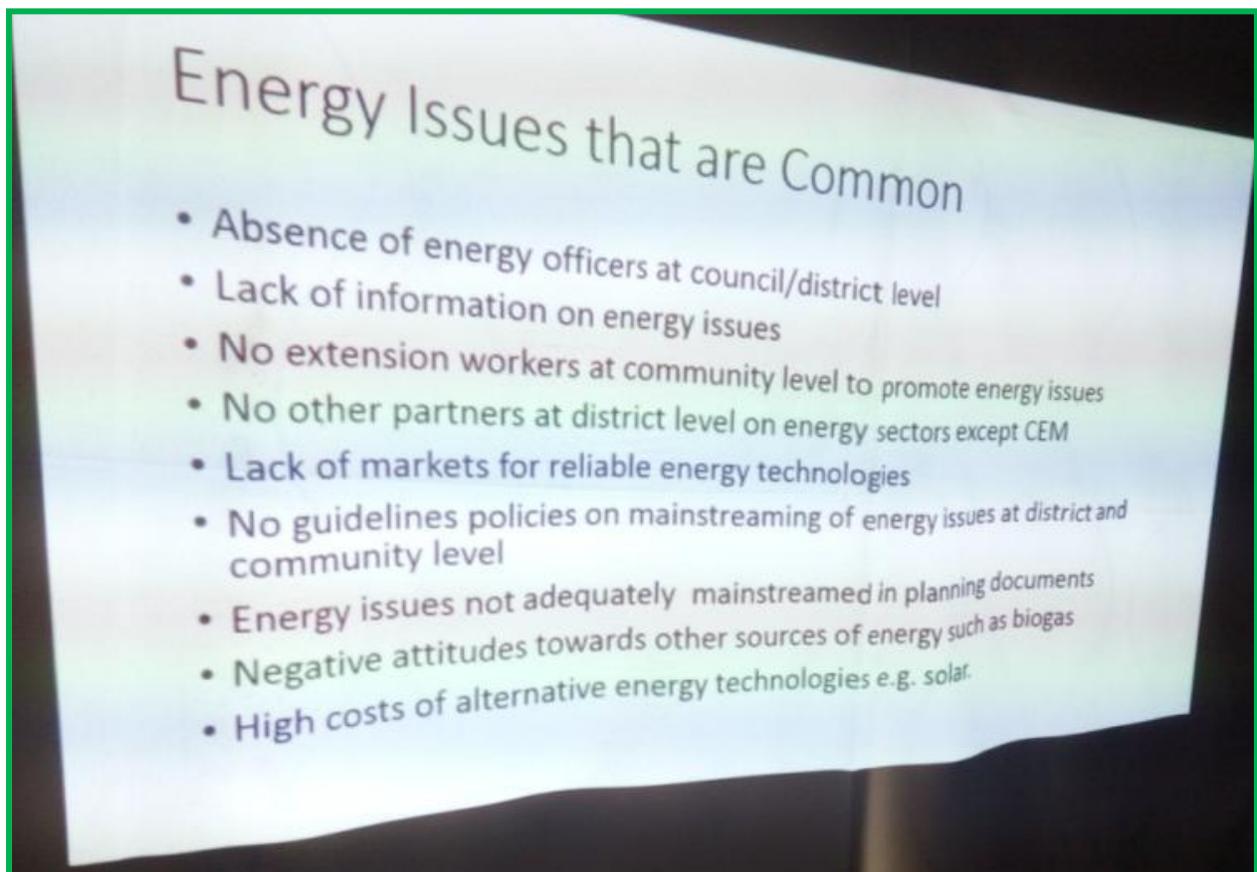


MAINSTREAMING ENERGY IN VAP PROCESS

Guidelines for incorporating energy issues in the VAP
Process



Produced by: Community Energy Malawi (CEM), Lilongwe Malawi
Contract Number: Go Green 1014076
Date: September 2017



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Cover photo: by Grace Kalichelo- A PowerPoint slide depicting results of group discussions on key issues coming from communities on energy during a workshop on Developing Guidelines of mainstreaming Energy in Village Action

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Partner Organization:

HIVOS is an international organization that seeks new solutions to persistent global issues. With smart projects in the right places, Hivos opposes discrimination, inequality, abuse of power and the unsustainable use of our planet's resources. Counterbalance alone, however, is not enough. Hivos's primary focus is achieving structural change. This is why Hivos cooperates with innovative businesses, citizens and their organizations-sharing a dream with those organizations of sustainable economics and inclusive societies.

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ADC – Area Development Committee
ADFO – Assistant District Forest Officer
DCDO – District Community Development Officer
DEC – District Executive Committee
DFO – District Forestry Officer
DoE – Director of Energy
DPD – Director of Planning and Development
EDO – Environment District Officer
ESCOM – Electricity Supply Commission Of Malawi
SE4ALL – Sustainable Energy 4 All
VNRMC – Village Natural Resources Management Committee

Acknowledgements

This work has been made possible by the generous support of the Dutch Government through the Green and Inclusive Energy Partnership with HIVOS. CEM is also implementing this project in close collaboration with other GIE partners in Malawi namely, RENAMA, Malawi Health Equity

Network (MEHN), Youth Network and Counseling (YONECO) and National Association of Business Women (NABW). We are also indebted to the Government of Malawi through the Department of Energy for the support on our work. Being Policy holders, their advice and guidance is always valuable.

The three district councils of Balaka, Chitipa and Ntchisi are sincerely thanked for letting CEM pilot this good work in their districts. The respective District Executive Committees (DECs) gave CEM the mandate to freely operate in the districts and also fill the vacuum that currently exists of absence of District energy Officers. The following officers from the different councils and stakeholders participated in the workshop leading on to this seminal work and to them too, we are grateful:

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The CEM Malawi GLIDE team of Memory Suwedi, Louis Yona, Chawezi Gondwe, Edgar Kapiza and indeed the entire CEM from the board of directors to staff were extremely effective contributors to this work.

This is a living document and all stakeholders are welcome to critique it for the betterment of our Malawi nation. As SE4All Initiative says, we too do not want to Leave eney one behind! Active citizenship in energy is way to go!

1 Introduction

CEM is with support from HIVOS implementing a project titled Malawi for Green, Localized Inclusive and Decentralized Energy (MALAWI GLIDE) in Balaka, Chitipa and Ntchisi Districts. The Project aims to help in facilitating the mainstreaming of energy in the decentralized development planning and implementation processes as one way of building community awareness and capacity in energy. The ancillary purpose of the project is to utilize the evidence so generated to influence the adoption of green and inclusive energy policies at both local and national government levels in Malawi.

As one way to achieving this, the project proposed to devise a way of utilizing the Renewable Energy Toolkit for Malawi in Community Energy Planning within the already existing framework of Village Action Planning (VAP) Process. The aim is to ensure the adequate planning of energy in nexus with other development priorities. Eventually this will result in energy being featured in the village and district level development and budgetary processes.

As part of this process CEM In conjunction with the District Councils of Balaka, Chitipa and Ntchisi had a workshop to strategize on how best to implement the process considering the paucity in knowledge on energy by development workers who facilitate this process. These guidelines are one step towards addressing this challenge. This step complements government's efforts in promotion of decentralized energy services. It is a step in the right direction as Department of Energy is finalizing plans to decentralize.

1.1 Why these guidelines

These guidelines have been developed to help development workers mainstream issues of energy during the VAP process. They are to be used to initiate discussion and inform an inclusive process where energy is planned in nexus with other development priorities. It is anticipated this process will result in a robust and active citizenship in energy.

1.2 How to use the guidelines

These guidelines have not re-written the VAP process or change them in any way. The VAP steps are as they were except that suggestions have been made on how best to include issues of energy in those steps. The guidelines should thus be used in complementary to the Village Action Planning Handbook (VAPH). The idea of these guidelines is to ensure the adequate incorporation and reflection of energy issues in the decentralized process. It is therefore strongly advised that Development workers should make reference to the Renewable Energy Toolkit for Malawi to properly guide the inclusion of energy. The toolkit, which contains information on renewable energy technologies, planning and implementation of energy projects is a must reference material in this process. It can also be found and downloaded free of charge in English at <http://www.communityenergymw.org/case%20studies/Renewable%20Energy%20Toolkit-English.pdf> or Chichewa at <http://www.communityenergymw.org/case%20studies/Renewable%20Energy%20Toolkit%20-Chichewa.pdf>

1.3 Notes to Facilitators

Facilitators of the VAP process should make sure that they make adequate preparations for the process to ensure adequate reflection of energy issues. This is very important due to the uniqueness of energy issues and technologies that can inform people's decision making on adoption. The need to read the Renewable Energy Toolkit for Malawi and indeed any other literature on technologies cannot be over emphasized.

Good preparations are the beginning of a successful VAP Process. The Process demands that a proper sensitization is done to the people concerned about the process and that it is done in the most appropriate and inclusive way possible. It is therefore important for facilitators to take charge of the process to guarantee effective participation of the people concerned as well as adequate mainstreaming of issues. Energy cannot be planned in a vacuum hence there is need for facilitators to guide the process ensuring that communities are able to appreciate role of energy in the household, community social services and economic activities.

2 Recap on VAP Process

2.1 What is VAP

A Village Action Plan (VAP) is a collection of projects identified by the village development committee (VDC) through the village action participatory planning process. It contains details description of projects and their corresponding budgets. The village action plan is prepared for the duration of three years in line with the district development plan (DDP).it is revised annually during its life span to feed into the annual investment plans of the assemblies

2.2 Why VAP?

The VAP Process is one effective tool of ensuring the participatory democracy in line with Malawi's constitution and Decentralization Policy which aims thus:

- a. to create a democratic environment and institutions in Malawi for governance and development, at the local level which will facilitate the participation of the grassroots in decision-making;
- b. To eliminate dual administrations (field administration and local government) at the district level with the aim of making public service more efficient, more economical and cost effective;
- c. To promote accountability and good governance at the local level in order to help Government reduce poverty; and
- d. To mobilize the masses for socio-economic development at the local level

VAP is therefore a means of ensuring effective participation of people where participation shall imply involvement of people in a way that empowers them towards achieving full control and responsibility over their own destiny within a framework of their cultural and social-economic realities that involves planning, implementation, sharing of benefits and evaluation of based on awareness creation and organizational building.

It is important for people to participate in their development planning and implementation because:

- a. They have the information on what is important to them how best to plan initiatives
- b. It motivates the people involved and encourages cooperation and responsibility sharing
- c. It is their democratic right to participate
- d. Most of the developmental challenges are best solved on collective basis/approach

The VAP process therefore has several benefits to the people concerned that include the below:

- a. It brings together the residents, business people and others to share ideas and work together on issues that are important to every one
- b. It improves information collection. It builds partnership both within and outside the village thereby encouraging creative thinking
- c. It helps a village or community identify its strength and evaluate its own resources
- d. It helps to turn community concerns into action It creates a sense of commitment and ownership VAP helps the District Council, CSOs, NGOs to better understand the priorities of the communities

VAP is the guaranteed tool in which the development aspirations of the people are reflected and presented to the respective duty bearers. Through VAP, development and cooperating partners are informed of the development priorities of the masses and this shapes the local and national government's development agenda.

2.3 Who participates in the process

The Area Executive Committee (AEC) members are responsible for facilitating and managing the village action planning process.

Since the VDC is composed of a number of villages, it is important that each village be represented at the VDC during the VAP process. The Village Development Committee is composed of

- Two elected person from each village
- Special interest group
- Two representative of the youth (both sexes) selected from all villages

It is important that the representation in the VDC is as inclusive as possible ensuring that all interest groups are represented. Furthermore, the VDC representatives must be reminded of the need to consult their respective villages adequately on the development issues before coming to the VAP Process.

3 The VAP Process and how to mainstream energy

Under this section, the VAP Process will be outlined and some guide provided on how energy issues can be mainstreamed. Once again a facilitator is required to have the Renewable Energy Toolkit at hand for references where necessary.

3.1 Stage 1: Community Meetings

Community meetings are a critical step in the VAP process because it is where grassroots consultations take place. This is where VDC representatives collect issues from their villages for presentation at VDC. The Representatives meet the village members to discuss and outline issues from their villages to be presented at the VDC. It is a stage which most often is neglected (at least from experience). Representatives must be advised and encouraged to consult and not pick development issues from their heads.

How to mainstream energy

Where time and resources allow, this is a proper forum where AEC members can sensitize community members about renewable energy technologies and how they help to solve every day challenges. The dangers of over reliance on biomass, the health and environmental hazards associated with open fires for cooking and sensitization on available technologies can be discussed at this level to inform decision making. Most of the communities think of energy as in just firewood and grid electricity. Solar is the other most mentioned technology but there is more.

AEC members are encouraged to make use of any forum to sensitize community members about renewable energy even if it is just for a few minutes e.g. VNRMC meetings, school meetings, village meetings, church gatherings or even political meetings.

Refer to the Toolkit on Chapter 1: Pages 9 and 10 (Introduction to Energy and Introduction to Renewable Energy) as well as Chapter 3 Pages 23-27 (How Access to Energy can impact on health care, health care facilities, education, and other sectors). Make sure that the Renewable Energy Toolkit is well understood so you can ably answer any questions that people might ask at this stage.

The Development worker is advised to collect some baseline data on energy needs and sources of energy for various uses.

3.2 Stage 2: VDC meeting

This is a meeting where representatives from all villages under the VDC meet to prioritize their development issues. Representatives from the villages (as discussed in Section 2.3) come to discuss and prioritize their development projects. The process is facilitated by AEC members drawn from any of the departments of Community Dev, Agric, VDC.

This is a process that involves several activities as outline in the steps below and guide is provided on how best to utilize the activity in mainstreaming energy:

3.2.1.1 Step 1: Climate Setting

This is an essential part of the exercise in setting the environment and for preparing the participants for the activities to follow. This process is guided by the prevailing local practice and it is important to respect this. In this session the participants are made to understand fully the objective of the village action planning exercise. The climate setting starts with welcoming remarks by the facilitators introducing themselves

How to mainstream energy

The AEC members facilitating the process can take advantage of this to introduce the topic of renewable energy and how the same can help to meet growing energy challenges. Using knowledge of some of the baseline information collected, the AEC members can draw the attention of the participants to real life examples on how absence of clean energy affects the community. It could be, how lack of electricity at the health centre compromises service delivery, how use of open fires is depleting the forests as well as exposing women to bronchial problems, how a simple solar lantern can be cheap as compared to paraffin or candle on top of providing better lighting, how lack of potable water is exacerbated by absence of technologies like solar water pumping, how farmers lose milk or perishable crops for lack of refrigeration facilities etc. The facilitators can also draw on some available data and facts like the high number of deaths of children as a result of inhaling smoke. Using examples from the toolkit, the facilitators can as well share some examples of renewable energy technologies. This can be done with reference to chapter 1, which covers introduction to energy and introduction to renewable energy (pages 9 – 10).

3.2.1.2 Step 2: Identification of Issues

At this stage, community members air out issues or challenges that they encounter in their day to day lives in the community. Members are not limited to any issues at this point and everyone is encouraged to participate so that real and pressing issues are identified.

How to mainstream energy

Facilitators should guide the process ensuring that people understand the cross cutting nature of energy in the various development issues raised. For example, a good school can attract qualified teachers if it has electricity and water or farmers can increase their profits if they are able to stock pile produce like tomato by keeping them in cool facilities. A key question at this stage could be how does energy come in, in all these issues? It is important to emphasize to the people that just as they plan other developments, they can also plan energy projects meant to help them meet their lighting, heating and cooking needs. Refer to Chapter 1: Pages 9 and 10 (Introduction to Energy and Introduction to Renewable Energy) as well as Chapter 3 Pages 23-27 (How Access to Energy can impact on health care, health care facilities, education, and other sectors). If need be

allow people to ask questions on renewable energy technologies and refer to the toolkit to explain the available options.

3.2.1.3 Step 3: Prioritization of issues

Prioritization of issues entails picking the most critical ones that affects the community. It is not a process of just picking and throwing issues. It also involves identifying issues that are similar as to be addressed in a combo. Facilitator is supposed to use a number of approaches and observe the participants to avoid influence from others. This process is meant to streamline issues rocking a community to inform solution generation. Not all problems can be dealt at once hence the need to prioritize.

How to mainstream energy

Facilitators are required at this stage to guide the process ensuring that participants are able to relate the development issues to energy. The idea is not to have energy issues come in isolation but for them to be reflected in nexus with other development priorities. Once again, be reminded that energy does not operate in a vacuum, it is a cross cutting issue that affects every day activities. In prioritization it is best to link energy to a need .e.g. solar PV for irrigation, biogas for cooking of Mary’s meal phala, lighting for school, etc.

3.2.1.4 Step 4: Development of Village Planning Framework

The village planning framework is a guide for development within the VDC. This framework captures all issues identified and sets objectives and strategies of overcoming the issues

How to mainstream energy

Facilitator should guide the process to ensure that energy is properly captured and linked to particular needs. This is critical in attracting investment e.g.

A general template is used that captures issues, objectives and strategies

Issue	Cause	Objectives			Strategies
		Short term	Medium term	Long term	
Drudgery	long distance to boreholes	To reduce drudgery in women	To reduce distance travelled to a water point by 2km	To reduce drudgery in women to 500m	Convert Afridev hand Pumps to solar water pumps and install supply taps within 500m radius

3.2.1.5 Step 5: Identification of Projects

To identify projects, the participants are asked about what should be done to turn strategies in the VPF into actions. In the above VPF example, the strategy for reducing long distance to boreholes/ wells is to install solar water pumps and put water taps within 500m radius .This

means that installation of solar water pumps within the village X will be the project. This must be done for all the strategies for that particular cause.

How to mainstream energy

Building on what has already been discussed on energy in nexus with other priorities, facilities are still required to guide the process ensuring that energy issues are linked to particular community needs. Facilitator must continue sensitising people on how energy impacts all sectors e.g. for community services i.e. how access to energy can impact on health care, energy supply options for health care facilities, how access to energy can impact on education, energy supply options for education facilities, and how access to energy can impact other sectors e.g. agriculture, communication e.t.c. this can be referenced from chapter 3 of the renewable energy toolkit (pages 22-27).

Under the same, it is important for the facilitator to highlight on the various energy technologies for cooking, heating and lighting. This can be cover with reference from chapters 4 and 5 of the Renewable energy toolkit (pages 29 – 96).

3.2.1.6 Step 6: Prioritization of Projects

After prioritizing issues on step 3, VDC members select issues that will be translated into projects for their area. At this stage, the VDC selects a particular manageable number of the top ranking issues that may be financed as projects

How to mainstream energy

As regards energy, it is important to know that Energy is a crosscutting issue and therefore it can be mainstreamed in other themes like health, agriculture and Education. The Development workers need to furnish the VDC members and other stakeholders with the linkages between energy and other themes affecting community members. The linkages come at the back of sensitization meetings that Development workers may hold with community members. Page 23-27 of the Renewable Energy toolkit illustrates how energy affects the community services.

3.2.1.7 Step 7: Project Formulation

Having prioritized the projects, this step entails conceptualizing the project interventions. It is the time to list project interventions and provide corresponding details that include objectives and costs. At this stage care must be taken by facilitators by trying to be as realistic as possible. It is not good to use guess work especially in coming up with budgets. At the same time it is important not to be scared of figures if projects interventions being targeted require substantial sums. It is not harm to seek the input of qualified people in the particular field before costs for example are made.

How to mainstream energy

Facilitator is advised to liaise with those on the industry especially on costs of energy components. Community Energy Malawi can be contacted and is ready to provide technical backstopping in such matters.

3.3 Prioritization at ADC

The ADC consolidates and prioritizes all the issues from different VDCs. These priorities are taken up to the district council for inclusion in DDP after further scrutiny at council level. During this meeting, the ADC meeting sees the strategies developed in step 4 being refining project. Some issues from VDCs might similar across the board hence at this level the ADC might change strategies to fit the situation.

How to mainstream energy

AEC members are advised to critically analyze priority issues by among others establishing their linkage to energy and identify an appropriate renewable energy technology. For example, if the community key issue is potable water, efforts should be made to see how energy can come in. probably solar water pumping can be employed to ensure more and equitable access. Probably an issue could maternal and neonatal deaths as a result of poor service delivery at the health Centre, this call for energy for lighting. Sometimes it could be that vaccinations are not properly administered, this could be solved by equipping the under 5 clinic in the village with a solar fridge etc.

A=During prioritization at ADC, efforts should be made to link up with expertise in energy for proper backstopping and guidance, These days of mobile technology and WhatsApp, it is easier to contact someone who can provide the necessary guidance.

3.4 Beyond ADC (VAP-DDP) Linkage

Once VAP has been finalized, the facilitator should let participants understand how it is linked to the District Development Plan (DDP). It is a tool for allowing communities to contribute towards projects for the entire ADC. ADC consolidates all projects submitted by the VDC with assistance from the Community Development Extension worker. Consolidated list of projects is then submitted to District Executive Committee for inclusion into the DDP

According to dictates of decentralization, stakeholders like NGOs are supposed to pick projects from the DDP. The DDP is the blue print of development. If energy issues are adequately mainstreamed and featured it will be easy for players to come and help. With the Sustainable Energy for All (SE4All) initiative and also the Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) 7 on energy, it is imperative that energy receives prominence in development blue prints like DDPs. Organizations like CEM are available to provide the technical backstopping in this process as government works on decentralizing the department of Energy.

How to mainstream energy

DEC is supposed to come up with a district structure and sub structures on energy. For example creating the District Subcommittee on Energy is one step in the right direction. There might not

be a Directorate on energy at the district (presently), but creating this structure sends a signal on the seriousness of the districts in mainstreaming energy. With the SE4All initiative for example and the increasing awareness on renewable energy technologies as a means for climate change mitigation and adaptation, the energy sector is registering new players every day. These could be the first players to support the establishment of the energy structures. Through this structure, the district councils will be able to have some technical backstopping when it comes to contextualizing and conceptualizing energy plans and projects to be featured in the DDP.

More importantly various directorates at the council know the importance of energy in their sectors. Agriculture needs energy for irrigation and agro-processing, health requires energy to power clinics and attract qualified personnel in remote places, the same goes for education, the reduction in use of open fires has an impact on reducing deforestation and thus making Forestry Department spend less on enforcement, by interrogating how these sectors link to energy, the DEC will be able to frame appropriate energy plans and budgets to be reflected in the DDP.

4 Caveats

During the entire process, it is imperative to ensure the following:

- a. To make participants or community representatives aware of the entire VAP process and how it is linked to District Development Planning and Budgetary Process. This would help to manage expectations
- b. Community members should know that development is a shared responsibility. They should not think by making and submitting VAPs to the District then they have sit *Phwii* and just wait for things to come like manna. They also have to take an active role in mobilizing local resources as well as linking with other funders.
- c. At every stage of the process, it is imperative to give the community feedback. Feedback is very important. Sometimes issues that were a priority in one VDC might not feature highly at ADC. Probably at ADC with some expert advice other developments may arise that change the scope and initial plans for projects in VDCs, all these need to be communicated to the relevant stakeholders.
- d. Development workers are just facilitators of the process and not experts of what people want. As facilitator, your role is just to moderate the process, providing insight where necessary and ensure proper direction of deliberation. Hand over the stick always!
- e. AEC and DEC members ought to invest some time to appreciate the cross cutting nature of energy and how decentralized renewable energy projects can be initiated. They need to know electricity beyond ESCOM or national grid. This will help to effectively plan