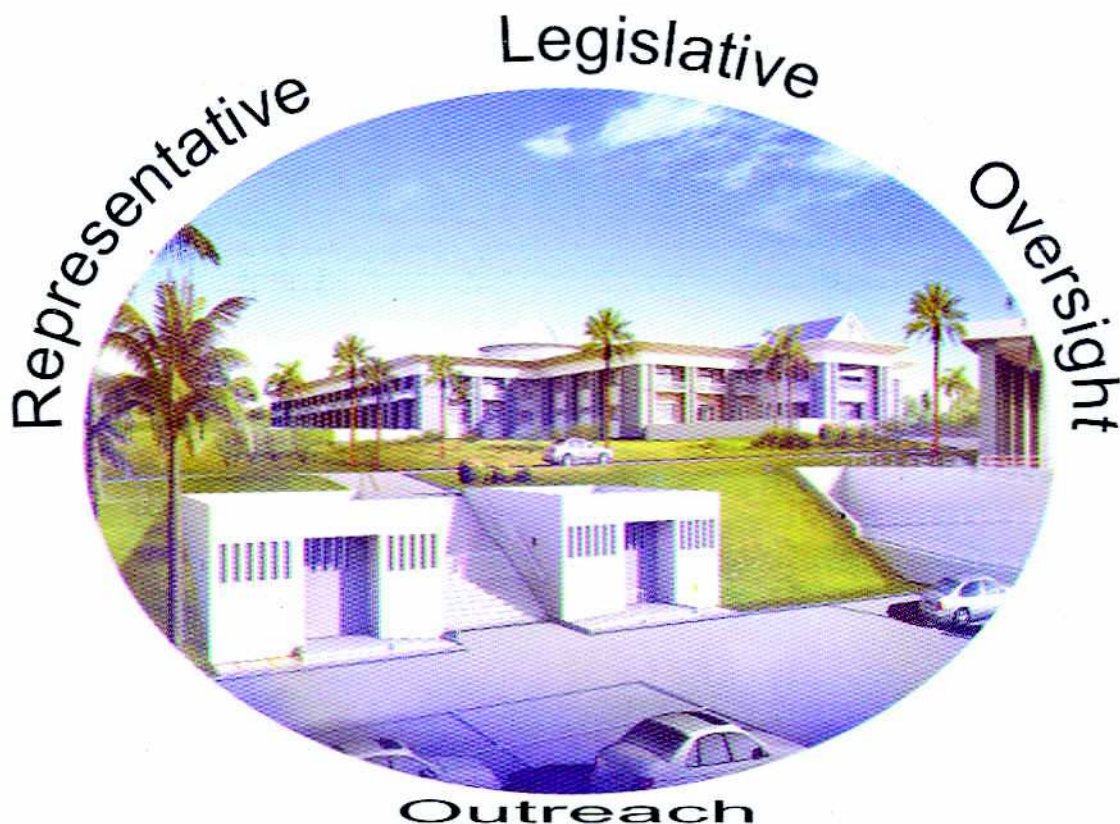




MALAWI NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



STRATEGIC PLAN 2010 - 2015



"Taking Parliament to the People"

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PREFACE

Malawi made a successful political transformation from a one party dictatorial political system to multiparty politics during 1993-1994. However, on the development front, the country has faced enormous challenges which have included erratic growth of the economy, pervasive poverty among the majority of our people, recurrent food shortages at household levels, unemployment, high mortality and mobility rates on account of HIV/AIDS, and other tropical diseases, a fast depleting environment, lack of access to safe water and sanitation, and other development challenges.

As representatives of the people who bear the negative impact of underdevelopment, Parliamentarians are very much in the frontline of the struggle against poverty as they are in a position to enable national discussions and forge necessary alliances with the Government, Civil Society, and Cooperating Partners in order to be responsive and vibrant partners in socio-economic development.

The main roles of Parliament are legislative, oversight and representational. Thus, the Malawi National Assembly Strategic Plan 2010-2015, focuses on the issue of creating a Parliament that seeks to deliver efficiently and effectively in these core functions in the face of the challenge of underdevelopment. In a fast technologically changing world, Parliament needs appropriate capacity in the form of skills, knowledge, attitudes, values, structures, financial resources, strategic focus and appropriate tools to enable it to deliver its mandate. To exercise the legislative, oversight and representative functions for the promotion of principles of good governance which reflect the aspirations, interests and welfare of the people of Malawi, the Malawi Parliament needs to enhance its institutional capacity to provide assistance to MPs in their duties and tasks; improve the legislative process in Parliament and the capacity of Parliament to provide effective oversight of the Executive. It has to strengthen the leadership and representative roles of MPs and increase the outreach of Parliament so as to bring the Parliament to the people of Malawi.

This Strategic Plan for 2010-2015, which builds on the strengths and successes of the 2006-2009 strategic plan, has thoroughly examined these issues and is designed to enhance the capacity of the institution of Parliament to deliver on behalf of the people of Malawi.

In order to realise the successful implementation of the National Assembly's Strategic Plan, the latter must be aligned with the key sectoral strategies and policies which are carefully detailed in the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS). Parliament draws its contribution to the MGDS under Theme V - Good Governance, which supports the achievement of all the growth and social objectives. The main tenets of good governance include good public sector management, absence of fraud and corruption, decentralization,

justice and the rule of law, security, good corporate governance and respect for human rights. The success of all the strategies in the MGDS depends to a large extent on the prevalence of good governance.

The Strategic Plan promises much needed improvements in the way Parliament functions. Parliament is fully aware that in order to generate confidence from Government and Development and Cooperating Partners, resources must be utilized efficiently and effectively. The Plan is therefore a clear manifestation that Parliament stands for transparency and accountability in public expenditure.

This Plan is a clear testimony of close collaboration among various stakeholders. I wish therefore, to thank the Parliamentary Service Commission, Leaders of political parties, academics and Civil Society Organisations who worked with us when developing this plan. In addition, the National Assembly is grateful for the continuing support and collaboration with UNDP who funded the development of the Strategic Plan and other initiatives. I am also grateful to the Secretariat of the National Assembly which, under the leadership of the Clerk of Parliament, worked tirelessly and provided support to the development of the Strategic Plan.

Last, but not least, throughout the development of the Plan, Parliament was conscious of the aspirations of the Executive arm of Government, Civil Society, all Development and Cooperating Partners and most importantly of all the aspirations of the people of Malawi who wish to see Parliament playing a central role in the democratic future of the country..

On behalf of colleagues in the Malawi National Assembly, it is an honour and a privilege to present the Malawi National Assembly Strategic Plan 2010-2015. I invite all the branches of Government, all Malawians, Civil Society organisations, the private sector and Development and Cooperating Partners to work in partnership with Parliament to achieve its objectives which are to support Government's efforts to further develop Malawi and to deepen democracy for the benefit of the people of Malawi.



Rt. Hon. H.F. Chimunthu Banda

SPEAKER OF THE NATIONAL ASSEMBLY



FOREWORD

The purpose of this Strategic Plan is to construct a medium-term strategy to make the Malawi National Assembly fit for its democratic purposes thereby making a meaningful contribution to Malawi's socio-economic development. The performance of the legislative, oversight and representational roles of the National Assembly needs to be undertaken with professionalism, impartiality, high ethical standards, accountability, probity and be result-orientated if it is to make a significant contribution to good governance and Malawi's growth and development objectives.

The Strategic Plan will therefore create a modern Parliament that will-

- (a) Be responsive to the needs and aspirations of the people of Malawi;
- (b) Be a strong partner with the President and the Government of Malawi;
- (c) Play a key role in the development of Malawi;
- (d) Be open to the representations and inputs of civil society;
- (e) Examine Government policies and actions to ensure their effectiveness and probity;
- (f) Ensure that new legislation meets the needs which it seeks to address; and
- (g) Provide an informed forum for national debate on all matters of national interest.

The Strategic Plan recognises that Parliament must meet regularly if Members of Parliament are to examine new legislation appropriately and adequately; ensure that government policies and actions are right and fair; constructively debate issues of national importance; watch out for corruption and, most importantly, make government accountable, through Parliament, to the people. In this regard, improvements to the legislative process and the parliamentary oversight functions as well as the representative role of the National Assembly are of paramount importance. Systematic staff training and induction and training programmes for Members of Parliament and the Parliamentary Service Commission, ongoing professional development and the development of manuals on representational, oversight and legislative processes shall be vital to the effective functioning of the Malawi National Assembly.

It is recognised that the work of any modern Parliament is greatly strengthened by the activities and scrutiny functions of other governance agencies. In this connection, Malawi has very important agencies such as the Anti-Corruption Bureau; the Law Commission, the Ombudsman and the Malawi Human Rights Commission, which act as instruments for the

entrenchment of democracy and the rule of law. The capacity of Committees of the National Assembly will be strengthened to enable their efficient and effective undertaking of oversight functions and, to this effect, the review of the Standing Orders and other relevant instruments including a Code of Conduct for MPs, shall enhance timely, efficient and effective handling and disposal of parliamentary business. This will also ensure that members lead by example by adhering to principles of transparency and accountability.

The Malawi National Assembly will reach out to the people of Malawi. Through the development of an ICT and Communication unit, the Parliament will strive to improve its public image and citizen access to parliamentary information through activities like outreach programmes, timely publication of the Official Report (Hansard), Committee Reports and other essential public information, education and communication materials for both MPs and the general public.

The National Assembly greatly appreciates the support and commitment shown by the Government and the Development and Cooperating Partners in ensuring that the National Assembly is adequately financed in order to move the Reforms Agenda forward. The successful implementation of the Strategic Plan requires adequate and systematic financial and technical support. It is the hope of the National Assembly that as the Plan is being implemented there will be adequate support from both the Government and the Development and Cooperating Partners.



Matilda Marcia Katopola (Mrs)

CLERK OF PARLIAMENT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Malawi National Assembly's Strategic Plan 2010-2015 has been developed as a sequel to the 2006-2009 Strategic Plan which the National Assembly developed in 2006. The 2006 Strategic Plan which was developed and implemented during the period 2006- 2009, was part of the reform package to strengthen the National Assembly to execute its legislative, oversight and representative role effectively and efficiently. Although various activities were not implemented by the end of the Plan period due to a number of challenges, it provided direction and focus for the Parliament, enhanced the capacity of both National Assembly staff and MPs to discharge their functions and enhanced expertise among the Parliament's staff. The capacity of the Malawi National Assembly was also enhanced through the procurement of material infrastructure such as IT equipment and vehicles. In addition, the strategic plan gave a focus to the development of a suitable organisational structure for Parliament and the recruitment of appropriate quality and quantity of staff to support the implementation of the Parliament's vision. Lessons learnt from the 2006-2009 plan have been instrumental in the development of the current Strategic Plan 2010-2015.

This Plan is divided into 5 sections. Section 1 provides a brief background context within which the Plan is developed.

Section 2 presents the vision, mission and values of the National Assembly. Central to this section is an attempt by the National Assembly to chart its strategic direction over the next five years as a model of an independent, reformed and development-oriented Parliament. Its mission is to exercise the legislative, oversight and representative functions for the promotion of principles of good governance to reflect the aspirations, interests and welfare of the people of Malawi.

Section 3 outlines five specific strategic objectives the National Assembly aims to achieve in the period 2010-2015 in order to realise its vision and mission. The first objective is **to strengthen the general institutional capacity of the National Assembly**, which is central to the achievement of the three key functions of the National Assembly. This will be achieved through various strategies such as staff development programmes, induction of new MPs, creating effective working mechanisms, capacitating the Parliamentary Service Commission to provide effective corporate governance, developing a code of ethics for MPs and enhancing the library and research services available to MPs.

Improving the legislative process is the second key objective of the Strategic Plan. During the period 2010-2015, this will be facilitated by developing a manual and training MPs on the legislative process, capacitating committees in the legislative process, creating an open and transparent legislative process through increased interaction with Civil Society Organisations and the public, and improving the communication and cooperation with the government on legislative issues.

The third objective is **to improve the capacity of Parliament to provide effective oversight** of the Government through developing a manual and training MPs on oversight

mechanisms in Parliament, improving the mechanisms for communicating and cooperating with government on oversight, enhancing research services for MPs, developing capacity for scrutinising public expenditure by MPs, improved budget analysis through the creation of a budget office and technical assistance for MPs.

The fourth objective is to **strengthen the leadership and representation roles of MPs**. This shall be achieved through developing a handbook and training for MPs on representation, providing assistance to MPs to build up increased links with local and national CSOs and strengthening the Women's Caucus in the Parliament.

The fifth objective is to **improve the Outreach work of the Malawi National Assembly and take Parliament to the people**. This will be achieved through a number of mechanisms including the creation of District Parliamentary Information Centres, the development of materials for distribution and undertaking grassroots outreach activities.

Section 4 of the Strategic Plan covers the issue of resource mobilisation for the implementation of the Plan. The Malawi National Assembly recognises that in order to deliver this ambitious Strategic Plan for the period 2010-2015, additional resources will need to be mobilised to finance the activities outlined and the additional technical expertise and capacity needed. The Malawi National Assembly recognises that this may be in the form of joint programmes, exchanges or direct financial assistance.

Over recent years the Malawi National Assembly has built up fruitful partnerships with organisations committed to assisting with the development of the Malawi National Assembly. In order to strengthen these partnership, and in order to outline to development partners the strategic vision and direction of the Malawi National Assembly, the Parliament will be holding meetings with Development and Cooperating Partners and other key stakeholders.

The final section of the Malawi National Assembly Strategic Plan 2010-2015, describes the way in which the Parliament will implement, monitor and evaluate the Strategic Plan. An implementation roadmap will outline a proposed outline timetable for the implementation of the activities outlined in this strategic plan. The overall responsibility for the implementation and delivery of this plan will lie with the Office of the Speaker and the Parliamentary Service Commission. Under the guidance of the Clerk of Parliament, the Directorate of Policy and Planning will develop annual implementation workplans and be responsible for day to day implementation of such plans.

BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

After three decades of dictatorial one party rule, Malawi witnessed a dramatic transition to a multiparty political system during the 1993-94 period. This was followed by the adoption of a new National Constitution in 1995. The Constitution created the National Assembly which is headed by the Speaker and assisted by two Deputy Speakers. The Speaker and the two Deputy Speakers are elected at the first sitting after a general election. It consists of 193 elected Members of Parliament (MPs) each of whom represents a constituency. Every MP is elected for a period of 5 years through direct universal suffrage by the people in each constituency.

Parliament is therefore accountable to the people when performing the powers and responsibilities entrusted by the Constitution and any Act of Parliament. All legislative powers of the Republic are vested in Parliament. According to section 48 (1) of the Constitution, Parliament is composed of the President as Head of State and the National Assembly (NA). The NA is mandated to strengthen democracy and good governance through its key functions which are:

- a) To enact legislation for the good of the nation
- b) To maintain oversight of the Executive on behalf of the people of Malawi
- c) To represent the interests and aspirations of the constituents for the promotion of democratic governance and achievement of sustainable development.

The responsibilities of the National Assembly are performed through the plenary and the committee meetings which are regulated by the National Assembly's Standing Orders. There are 14 Committees, each of which has the power and functions as assigned to it by the Standing Orders.

Out of the 14 committees, four of which are established by the Constitution, namely - the Public Appointments Committee, the Budget and Finance Committee, the Legal Affairs Committee and the Defence and Security Committee. The current Standing Orders require that all Bills be directed to relevant oversight Committees for consideration before being passed in plenary.

Section 66 of the Constitution sets out specific functions and powers of the National Assembly as follows:-

- to receive, amend, accept or reject Government Bills and Private Bills
- to initiate Private Member's Bills on the motion of any member and amend, accept or reject all Private Members' Bills
- to debate and vote motions in relation to any matter, including motions to indict and convict the President or Vice -President by impeachment
- to exercise such other functions and powers as are conferred on it by this Constitution or by an Act of Parliament
- to take all actions incidental to and necessary for the proper exercise of its functions.

The Parliamentary Service Act (No. 35 of 1998) established the Parliamentary Service as a separate and independent entity from the Civil Service, although still falling within the broader regulatory framework of the Public Service Act (No. 19 of 1994). The principle duties of the Parliamentary Service are to provide to the National Assembly and to Members of the National Assembly, such administrative support services as may be necessary and desirable to facilitate the successful operation or execution of the mandate of the National Assembly.

The functions of the Parliamentary Service are overseen by its corporate body, the Parliamentary Service Commission (PSC) which is presided over by the Speaker, with such number of other members of the National Assembly, not exceeding five, who are appointed, from time to time, by a resolution of the National Assembly. Among other functions, the PSC is responsible for the:

- Preparation of its own budget and the exercise of budgetary control over the Parliamentary Service;
- The determination of the size and organisation of the Parliamentary Service;
- Determination of the services to be provided by the Parliamentary Service;
- Establishment of such departments in the National Assembly as may be necessary for the efficient management of the National Assembly;
- Receipt and consideration of recommendations regarding conditions of services for Members of the National Assembly;
- The appointment of staff of the Parliamentary Service, including the power to confirm appointments, promotions, disciplinary matters and removal of persons from office.

The Clerk of Parliament is the Controlling Officer of the National Assembly and Secretary to the Parliamentary Service Commission. Among other duties, the Clerk of Parliament is responsible for policy implementation, monitoring and evaluation and provision of overall policy guidance for the day-to-day running of the National Assembly. In order for the Clerk of Parliament to fully discharge the mandate and ensure that the National Assembly enhances its efficiency and effectiveness in service delivery, there is need for a well established and integrated structure with a well trained, motivated and committed workforce. Overall, Parliament can function effectively and efficiently if it has a proper and capacitated institutional structure and systems in place to support the core mandate of the Parliament. It also needs an improved legislative process, an improved and properly functioning oversight service and effective leadership and representational role of MPs in their constituencies. All this calls for the availability of skills, knowledge, proper conduct of business by both secretariat staff on the one hand, and Parliamentary Service Commission and MPs on the other.

The first National Assembly Strategic Plan which was implemented for the period 2006-2009 was reviewed early in 2010. A number of achievements were noted. The capacity of the National Assembly was enhanced through training courses, workshops, study tours and attachments for staff and MPs, equipment and machinery acquisition and the restructuring

and recruitment of staff to support the mandate of the National Assembly. This is reflected in the impressive quality of performance by both staff and MPs in discharging their functions. However, there were a number of challenges which had slowed the achievement of planned activities and therefore the realisation of strategic goals. It was clear from the review that the political context of the time, the over-ambitious nature of the design of the plan, administrative bottlenecks, among other challenges, affected the implementation of the Plan. The major lesson emerging from the 2006-2009 Strategic Plan was that the next strategic plan be mandate-driven, strategic, focused, relevant and simple. The development of the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan needs to be understood with this background in mind.

VISION, MISSION & CORE VALUES

This strategic plan builds on the Parliament's strategic plan for 2006-2009. The vision, mission and core values of the Malawi National Assembly that were included in the previous strategic plan remain valid and appropriate. Therefore the vision of the Malawi National Assembly remains:

To be a model of an independent, reformed and development-orientated Parliament

The mission of the Malawi National Assembly is:

To exercise the legislative, oversight and representative functions for the promotion of principles of good governance to reflect the aspirations, interests and welfare of the people of Malawi.

In order to make progress towards achieving the vision and mission of the Parliament and to reach the four specific strategic objectives outlined in this strategic plan for the period 2010-2015, the Malawi National Assembly recognises that the legislature, both elected Members and Secretariat staff, must follow core values when working on behalf of the people of Malawi. These core values are:

- **Professionalism and Impartiality:** The Secretariat of the Malawi National Assembly will work professionally and with impartiality in the provision of advice and support services to the National Assembly, its Committees and Members;
- **Integrity:** The Malawi National Assembly will exhibit the highest ethical standards in the performance of duties;

- **Accountability and Probity:** The Malawi National Assembly will act to ensure accountability and probity in the utilisation of public resources;
- **Results Oriented:** The Malawi National Assembly will achieve results and management performance in delivering services;
- **Equality and Fairness:** The Malawi National Assembly will establish and update effective workplace policies that address gender equity and career development.

Strategic Objective 1 – Increase the institutional capacity of the Parliament to provide assistance to MPs in their duties and tasks

The Malawi National Assembly recognises that in order to deliver the agreed vision and mission of the legislature, the National Assembly needs an effective and efficient Parliament Secretariat to deliver practical support to Members in their duties. In order to implement The Strategic Plan and in order to ensure that the legislative, oversight and representation functions of the Parliament are achieved, the institutional capacity of the Parliament needs to be increased.

The Malawi National Assembly has recently undertaken a functional review of the Parliamentary Service and therefore ensuring the realisation of recommendations made in this review will be the basis on which to build the institutional capacity of the Parliament. During the period 2010-2015, the National Assembly will ensure that the effective functioning of the Parliamentary Service remains central to the development of the National Assembly.

Therefore, in light of the recognition that more effective administrative capacity will be needed in the legislature in order to attain the vision and mission of this strategic plan, the first strategic objective of the National Assembly strategic plan for the period 2010-2015 is to increase the institutional capacity of the National Assembly to ensure that MPs receive a high level of support and assistance.

1.1 Development of a staff training needs assessment and implementation plan

The National Assembly recognises that in order to develop effective support and administrative services for the Parliament, the professional development of staff in a systematic manner is of crucial importance. In line with the recently undertaken functional review, during the period 2010-2015, the National Assembly will move away from ad hoc staff training towards developing and implementing a systematic staff training programme which is focussed and practical. This move will be part of improved human resources planning, management and development.

1.2 Induction and Orientation Programme for MPs

Following an election to Parliament, there is often a significant percentage of new Members of Parliament elected. The National Assembly recognises its duty to ensure that newly elected Members receive a comprehensive induction course on the roles, duties and responsibilities of Members of Parliament. Following previous elections, the National Assembly has organised some basic information sessions for MPs but recognise that this has

been deficient in terms of fully capacitating and equipping MPs with the skills to engage in effective legislation, oversight and representation. The National Assembly will develop a training course for all MPs on the way that Parliament works and the work that MPs undertake. In addition, a full induction orientation programme will be prepared by the Parliament for implementation following the next general election.

1.3 On-going professional development programme

The National Assembly recognises that, in addition to initial orientation, Members of Parliament require assistance from the National Assembly administration in order to increase their capacity and stay abreast of developments both in Parliament and in terms of general policy developments and issues. Therefore, the National Assembly will develop a rolling programme of professional development support and assistance for Members of Parliament. The programme will include, but not be confined to:

- a) Regular briefings for MPs on policy issues;
- b) Rolling a programme of training for MPs on issues such as:
 - I. General roles and duties of MPs;
 - II. Scrutinising, drafting and amending legislation;
 - III. Effective Oversight;
 - IV. MDGs and Poverty Reduction Policy issues;
 - V. Gender Mainstreaming in Legislative and Oversight work;
 - VI. Mainstreaming HIV / AIDS in the work place;
 - VII. How to work in constituencies and with civil society.

1.4 Increasing use of ICT in the Parliament

The Malawi National Assembly recognises the need to increase ICT use in Parliament. The National Assembly believes that increased use of ICT will not only provide important assistance to Members in their work individually but can also facilitate improved communication between the National Assembly Secretariat and Members of Parliament through the distribution of electronic documentation. The National Assembly is therefore committed to providing each Member with a laptop computer and will provide ongoing ICT training courses for Members and staff to ensure that the potential use of ICT in the Malawi National Assembly is maximised.

1.5 Creating effective working mechanisms in Parliament

Processes and procedures in the National Assembly are guided by the rules outlining the working processes in the Parliament. The Parliament's Standing Orders create the framework within which MPs operate in implementing their legislative, oversight and representation functions. The National Assembly is committed to reviewing the Standing Orders. In addition, the Parliament will develop and deliver briefing sessions for MPs to outline the content of the revised Standing Orders.

1.6 Training for the Parliamentary Service Commission in corporate governance

The Parliamentary Service Commission is the body charged with responsibility for the general running of the National Assembly including ensuring that the Parliament is in a position to respond to the requirements of serving MPs effectively and making progress towards implementing the strategic vision of the institution. Therefore, capacity building measures, including the sharing of best practices and training sessions, are needed for the PSC to allow them to fulfil this role.

1.7 A Code of Ethics for MPs

The National Assembly recognises that in order to deliver the mission statement, namely, *'to exercise the legislative, oversight and representative functions for the promotion of principles of good governance'*, the National Assembly itself must lead on the issue of good governance. Therefore, during the period 2010-2015 the National Assembly will develop and introduce a Code of Ethics for Members of Parliament. The Code of Ethics will specify the public duties of Members of Parliament, and the personal conduct expected of them in public and in the Parliament.

1.8 Library and Research and information

The National Assembly library is an important resource for Members of Parliament to assist them with their legislative, oversight and representation duties and responsibilities. The National Assembly is committed to improving the library service in the Parliament by increasing the number of resources available and providing research assistance to Members. The Parliament further recognises that electronic documents are becoming increasingly important and the National Assembly will focus on development of the library on providing an effective e-library of up to date documents and resources for Members. The National Assembly commits itself to train staff and Members of Parliament in using these new resources.

1.9 Gender Mainstreaming within Parliament

Gender training undertaken in the Parliament will target female and male MPs, staff, as well as all the Parliamentary Committees, in order to ensure that gender is seen as a cross-cutting issue that affects the whole of society and is everyone's responsibility and not only women's. In addition, the Parliament has a specific role to play in terms of its oversight and legislative functions with regard to gender mainstreaming in all policy areas, and activities falling under all strategic objectives will take this into consideration when being implemented.

Strategic Objective 2 - Improve the legislative process in Parliament

One of the key functions of any legislature is the legislative function. The legislative process is central to the work of the National Assembly. The National Assembly has the constitutional power under Section 66 of the Malawi Constitution, to initiate, amend and approve or reject bills. Therefore, a key objective for the period 2010-2015 will be to improve the legislative capacity of the National Assembly. This will include strengthening the capacity of MPs to initiate and amend legislation and strengthening the mechanisms available to MPs to effectively scrutinise draft laws.

2.1 Manual and training on the legislative process for all MPs

In addition to developing improved mechanisms within the Parliament for scrutiny of legislation, the National Assembly is committed to providing increased information and support to all Members of Parliament during the legislative process. Parliament will arrange for training of MPs on how the legislative process works and how to propose and amend draft laws. The National Assembly will work towards arranging workshops and information sharing sessions for Members on key policy issues and the drafting of legislation and will utilise the expertise of both Government Ministries and Civil Society Organisations during these sessions. The training will be supplemented by a practical and focussed handbook on the legislative process in the National Assembly.

2.2 Training for MPs on initiating legislation

All Members of Parliament have the right to submit draft legislation for consideration by the legislature. However, the National Assembly recognises that over recent years only a minimal amount of legislation considered by the Parliament has been tabled by backbench Members of Parliament rather than proposed by the Government. Therefore, the National Assembly will provide specific support and drafting services to Members of Parliament in this field by developing a rolling programme of training for Members on how to draft and submit legislation for consideration by the Parliament.

2.3 Capacitating Committees in the Legislative Process

The National Assembly recognises that Parliamentary Committees should be developed to ensure that they are in a position to play a key role in the legislative process in the Parliament. It is more effective for in-depth examination of legislation to occur in the Committees in addition to the full plenary session although for this task to be executed effectively the capacity of the Parliamentary Committees needs to be increased. The Parliament is committed to providing training for Committee Staff and Researchers, providing additional Technical Assistance to Committees and developing guidance for Committees to ensure increased use of consultation by Committees during the legislative process.

2.4 An open and transparent legislative process

The National Assembly recognises the need for the legislative process in the Parliament to be as open and transparent as possible and recognises that Civil Society Organisations (CSOs) can provide Members of Parliament with useful information during the legislative process. Parliament is committed to creating systems which allow Members to interact and receive information from civil society and the general public during legislative deliberations. Specifically, the National Assembly will develop a good practice guide on engaging civil society in the legislative process for use by Parliamentary Committees charged with scrutinising legislation. Further, the National Assembly will ensure that information on the legislative process, including Committee meetings times and work programmes, and draft laws under consideration is widely disseminated to civil society and the general public through the Parliament website and the media.

2.5. Communication and Cooperation with the Government on Legislative issues

The National Assembly recognises that the majority of legislation considered by the Parliament is initiated by the Government. The National Assembly will work towards the development of new procedures for cooperation and communication between the National Assembly and the Government so that the National Assembly is aware which legislation the Government intends to propose and when. In addition, the National Assembly is committed to conducting briefing sessions and seminars for both Parliament staff and Civil Servants tasked with developing legislation to ensure that there is widespread understanding of the legislative process and the confines in which the National Assembly operates.

Strategic Objective 3 - Improve the capacity of Parliament to provide effective oversight of the Government

In addition to legislating, another key function of the National Assembly is oversight of the Executive branch of Government. The Government of Malawi is accountable to the National Assembly and therefore the National Assembly needs to ensure that it oversees the Executive in an efficient manner through utilising effective mechanisms. Oversight covers not only the scrutiny of public expenditure but also overseeing the impact and effectiveness of the implementation of policy and legislation. The National Assembly is committed to building on current procedures and practices in place in the legislature to improve the capacity of the National Assembly to provide effective oversight of the Government.

3.1 Manual and Training on oversight mechanisms in Parliament

There are a number of mechanisms currently in place in the Malawi National Assembly that allow Members to provide oversight of the Executive including written and oral questions to Ministers and the initiation of debates and motions in the House on issues of public importance. The National Assembly is committed to providing support to Members of Parliament to improve their capacity to utilise these mechanisms effectively. Therefore, the National Assembly will arrange a rolling programme of training and workshops for Members of Parliament on how to table effective oral and written questions and on ways to obtain information directly from sources.

3.2. Oversight through Committees

Effective Parliamentary Committees can become the key vehicles for effective oversight of the Government. Training for Committee staff and technical assistance will be provided to Committees in order to develop realistic and achievable Committee work plans with an emphasis on the oversight function of the Committee. These work plans should include a timetable of when Ministers will be called before the Committee to answer questions and an outline of which Government policies or strategies the Committees will investigate during the course of the year. The National Assembly recognises that oversight through Committees could allow opportunities for participation by Civil Society Organisations in the oversight process. The National Assembly is also committed to providing Members of Committees with training on their oversight roles and responsibilities, training Committee Chairs on the most effective way of undertaking investigations, training Committee staff and providing the Committees with expert advice and assistance. In order to ensure the sustainability of such training measures, the training sessions will be complimented by a Handbook for MPs focussing on oversight through Committees.

3.3 Communication and Cooperation with the Government on Oversight

Whilst the National Assembly can develop the capacity of Members to hold the Executive to account and can provide more effective mechanisms for such oversight to occur, there remains a need for the development of working processes and procedures with the Government in order for Members to obtain information in a timely and practical manner. The National Assembly will therefore engage with Government in order to develop an agreement on the most effective way for the Government to provide information to the National Assembly and effective workflow systems between Parliament and the Government.

3.4 Research services

In addition, the Malawi National Assembly recognises that in order to increase the capacity of Members to hold the Executive to account, the National Assembly administration needs to provide Members with increased and improved research services. These research experts will work with MPs and Committees and provide Members with briefings on key issues of importance under scrutiny by the National Assembly.

3.5 Scrutinising Public Expenditure

The capacity of the Public Accounts Committee (PAC) to provide effective oversight of public finances is key to ensuring good governance in Malawi and combating corruption. The National Assembly commits itself to ensuring that the effectiveness of this Committee continues to increase in the period 2010-2015. In order to increase the openness, transparency and effectiveness of the Public Accounts Committee, the Malawi National Assembly is committed to:

- I. Developing and publishing detailed annual work plans for the Committee and ensuring that work plans are effectively implemented
- II. Implementing a rolling programme of training for Committee Members with intensive induction programmes for new Members when appointed
- III. Developing a Handbook for PAC Members on their roles, duties and responsibilities

Further, the National Assembly notes its desire to move towards providing the PAC with expert staff assistance and advice to facilitate improved scrutiny of public finances.

3.6 Improved budgeting and budget analysis

In addition to post-expenditure scrutiny, it is the responsibility of the National Assembly to scrutinise annual public expenditure budgets and ensure that the financial commitments made by Government reflect the policy programme of the country. In order to ensure increased budget scrutiny during the period 2010-2015, the Malawi National Assembly will strengthen its Policy and Planning office which will give technical assistance to MPs and Committees on budget issues. In addition, the National Assembly will provide pro-poor budgeting and gender budgeting.

Strategic Objective 4 - Strengthen the leadership and representative roles of MPs

Aside from their legislative and oversight responsibilities, Members of Parliament are important leaders both in their constituencies and nationally. The National Assembly is committed to supporting Members in their general duties and specifically in their leadership and representative roles. The National Assembly therefore aims to increase the general capacity of Members through increased support in specific representational areas.

4.1 Training and a Handbook for MPs on Representation

The National Assembly will produce a Handbook/Manual for MPs on what 'representation' means and mechanisms they can use to better represent constituents, which will include a specific component on how to liaise with and represent female constituents. The National Assembly will provide training for MPs on their outreach and representation functions and develop mechanisms they can use to better represent and communicate with constituents.

4.2 Developing Interaction with Civil Society Organisations

The National Assembly is aware of the developing Civil Society sector in Malawi and believes that increased interaction between Members of Parliament and civil society will be of mutual benefit. Specifically the Malawi National Assembly will develop a subject based database of CSOs both at national level and for each constituency in order to ensure that Members are aware of which CSOs are operating in each policy and geographical area and improve information sharing between Members and CSOs.

4.3 Increased Capacity of the Women's Caucus

The National Assembly Women's Caucus is an important mechanism within the Parliament to support the work of Women MPs. The National Assembly will provide administrative and technical support to the Women's Caucus to ensure that it functions effectively during the period 2010-2015. This includes developing terms of reference or a constitution for the caucus, a strategic plan for the caucus and developing the work of the caucus in order to ensure that it is not only in a position to provide support for Women MPs but is also a body that can become a focal point in the Parliament for relevant policy development.

4.4 Addressing the issue of Constituency Offices for Members

The National Assembly remains committed to the long term concept of ensuring that in each and every parliamentary electoral constituency that a Parliamentary constituency office is available for Members to use when undertaking their duties as a Member of Parliament. The vision of the National Assembly is to ensure that these offices are managed

by the National Assembly and are used only for official non-partisan constituency work by MPs, and are not used for party political related activities. However, the National Assembly is also aware of the significant resources that will be needed to establish and run 193 and the careful consideration that needs to be given to ensuring the effective rolling out of a programme to establish such offices. Therefore, during the period 2010-2015, the National Assembly is committed to undertaking a feasibility study to develop plans on how this vision can be implemented in a systematic and sustainable manner and how the development of these parliamentary constituency offices for use by Members complements the Constituency Development Funds that are currently administered by the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development. In addition, the Parliament will consider the most effective way of utilising constituency offices in order to bring Parliament to the people as part of its outreach programmes.

Strategic Objective 5 – Increase the Outreach work of Parliament in order to bring Parliament to the People

The National Assembly is also committed to increasing and improving communication between the legislature and the citizens of Malawi. The National Assembly has an educational role in terms of communicating with citizens on the role of the legislature within the governance structures of the country and an informational role in terms of keeping citizens informed of the latest developments and activities in Parliament. This strategic objective builds on the Parliament's Communication policy and the implementation of these activities will be coordinated by the National Assembly's ICT and Communication section. The aim of the National Assembly during the period 2010-2015 is to bring the Parliament to the people of Malawi.

5.1 Developing District Parliamentary Information Centres

The National Assembly reiterates its aim of bringing Parliament to the people in the period 2010-2015. Therefore, during the period of this Strategic Plan, the National Assembly will open Parliamentary Information Centres in every district. The main aim of these District Parliamentary Information Centres will be to serve as outreach points for the National Assembly and to provide information to the public and CSOs in the district on the functions of Parliament and the work that is being undertaken by the Parliament. In addition, in the short term and until specific Parliamentary Constituency Offices are developed, these centres will also be available to Members of Parliament whose constituencies fall within the district to conduct non-partisan constituency work such as surgeries, meetings and other activities relating to their duties as Members of Parliament.

5.2 Grassroots activities

The National Assembly is aware that the most effective strategy to take Parliament to the people is to work at a grassroots level in villages and towns throughout the country. The Parliament's ICT and Communication section will develop a programme of work aimed at targeting the grassroots in the outreach campaign.

5.3 Materials, Newsletters / E-newsletters

The National Assembly is aware of the lack of non-academic information material available to members of the public on the legislature and its work. The National Assembly is therefore committed to developing information facts sheets on the work of the National Assembly and will also develop a monthly Parliament newsletter. Such information

materials will be distributed to key stakeholders, be available for distribution in the District Parliamentary Information Centres and electronic versions will be available for downloading from the Parliament website.

5.4 Children and Youth

The National Assembly recognises that it has a key role to play in terms of civic education and ensuring that the citizens of Malawi understand the role of Parliament within the country's governance structures. A key area for the dissemination of information is through children and youth. During 2010-2015, the National Assembly will therefore develop specific materials and activities focussing on children in schools. In addition, the National Assembly is committed to developing the Malawi Children's Parliament into a Youth Parliament and the National Assembly aims to take ownership of the development of the Youth Parliament and commits itself to providing support for this important body.

5.5 Website

The website of the National Assembly will be upgraded and the staff trained to ensure that it is kept updated. The redesign of the Parliament's official website will create new sections and pages for publication of general information about the National Assembly and with new sections and pages for publication of information about Legislation, Plenary, Committees, Budget, Oversight activities and Gender Equality within the National Assembly.

5.6 Communication links with the media

In order to provide information to citizens on the work being undertaken in Parliament, the National Assembly of Malawi recognises the important role that the media in Malawi plays. Therefore, the National Assembly will arrange briefing workshops for the media to provide information on the way that the National Assembly operates and the systems and structures in place .

5.7 Developing Interaction with Civil Society organisations

Whilst the National Assembly is committed to assisting Members to build their links with civil society, the Parliament itself as an institution will seek to improve interaction and engagement with CSOs. In order for the National Assembly to become a more open and transparent institution, it is important that CSOs are aware of the role that the National Assembly plays, the way Parliament operates and the work being undertaken by Parliament. The Malawi National Assembly will conduct workshops for CSOs in order to increase their capacity to engage with Parliament.

Resource Mobilisation

The National Assembly recognises that in order to deliver this ambitious Strategic Plan for the period 2010-2015, additional resources will need to be mobilised to fund the activities outlined and the additional technical expertise and capacity needed. The National Assembly recognises that this may be in the form of joint programmes, exchanges or direct financial assistance.

Over recent years the National Assembly has built fruitful partnerships with organisations committed to assisting with the development of the Malawi National Assembly. Such partnerships have strengthened the legislature within the governance structures of Malawi and have improved the legislative, oversight and representation functions of the Parliament.

In order to develop these partnerships, and in order to outline to development partners the strategic vision and direction of the National Assembly, the Parliament will hold a meeting with development partners in order to present the agreed Strategic Plan for 2010-2015 and in order to develop a resource mobilisation plan. The National Assembly is confident that development partners will continue to support the important work that Parliament is undertaking and support the specific efforts of the National Assembly in implementing The Strategic Plan which will lead to the development of a more effective, efficient and relevant legislature for the citizens of Malawi.

The National Assembly is also optimistic that development partners will be able to implement Malawi's commitments made in the 2005 Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness to streamline development programmes and to make aid more effective by reducing the bureaucratic burden on beneficiaries. Whilst welcoming moves in recent years to work with numerous development partners, the National Assembly is very aware of the increased level of administrative capacity needed by Parliament when cooperating with a large number of development partners.

The National Assembly reiterates its hope that development partners will in the future move towards direct budget support for the National Assembly or at the very least consider the creation and implementation of a basket fund for parliamentary development in the country. The creation of such a basket fund would increase the resources available for activities to strengthen the legislative, oversight and representation functions of the Malawi National Assembly.

Implementation, Monitoring and Evaluation

The five year strategic plan outlines the vision, mission and core values of the Malawi National Assembly. In addition, the plan highlights priority areas in the form of strategic objectives and lists activities that will contribute towards the attainment of the strategic objectives.

The National Assembly is committed to developing a realistic implementation roadmap that will accompany The strategic plan and that will assist the National Assembly Secretariat in developing annual workplans and delivering the strategic plan. The implementation roadmap will outline a proposed timetable for the implementation of the activities proposed in The strategic plan. The National Assembly is fully aware that long term implementation planning in a legislative setting can be challenging due to the unpredictable nature of events in this environment and that the implementation roadmap will need to be a flexible document that will be seen as a guide which can be amended to better overcome any challenges that may arise in the period 2010-2015.

The National Assembly will also produce an annual work plan that will reflect the strategic objectives outlined in this strategic plan and the activities outlined in the implementation roadmap. The annual work plans will build on the content provided in the implementation roadmap and will, in effect, be the detailed yearly implementation plans for The strategic plan.

The annual work plan will include specific indicators of success for actual activities but within the context of this strategic plan, the indicators of success for the outlined strategic objectives would be:

Strategic Objective 1: Capacity of the Secretariat to assist Members in their legislative, oversight and representation functions is increased.

Strategic Objective 2: The Legislative process in the Parliament is more open, transparent, effective and efficient.

Strategic Objective 3: Information obtained by Parliament on Executive activities increased and use of Parliamentary mechanisms for oversight increased.

Strategic Objective 4: Capacity of Members to represent constituents increased and increasing number of constituents raise constituency issues with their MPs.

Strategic Objective 5: Increased numbers of citizens understand the role of the Parliament and the work being undertaken by the Parliament.

Overall responsibility for the implementation and delivery of the strategic plan will lie with the Office of the Speaker and the Parliamentary Service Commission. Under the guidance of the Clerk of Parliament, the Policy and Planning Division will develop annual implementation plans and be responsible for monitoring and evaluating the implementation

of such plans. The Policy and Planning Division will provide a monthly update report to the Clerk of Parliament on progress made. The Clerk of Parliament will provide written updates to the Office of the Speaker and the Parliamentary Service Commission every three months. When undertaking this monitoring and evaluation process, the National Assembly will use international best practice to measure actual performance against envisaged outputs and objectives, identify causes for delays or implementation failures and propose relevant measures to remove any barriers to successful implementation.

An annual written report outlining progress made in implementing the 2010-2015 Strategic Plan will be written by the Parliamentary Service Commission and distributed to all MPs and made available to the public on the Parliament's website.

Furthermore, the National Assembly is committed to undertaking a final evaluation of this Strategic Plan in 2015 and developing a new strategic plan that will reflect the developing requirements of the National Assembly and Malawi as a country at that time.