

# The Quality of Agriculture and Food Security Policy Processes and Institutions

## Insights from Malawi on measurement over time

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# Context

- In Malawi, some strengthening in quality of policy processes around agriculture and food security over past decade
  - Broadening in range of stakeholders participating
  - Annual multi-stakeholder Joint Sector Reviews
  - Eight Technical Working Groups on sub-sectoral priorities
- Associated with:
  - Moderate growth in agriculture sector
  - Progress in policy reforms on paper; mixed to unclear results in the field
  - Continued significant public investment in agriculture
    - Most goes to large Farm Input Subsidy Program
  - Worrisome food security performance

# New Alliance Policy Acceleration Support: Malawi (NAPAS:Malawi) project

- Policy support project to realize commitments to agricultural policy reform of government of Malawi
  - Gov't commitments made under Malawi's engagement in G8's New Alliance for Food Security and Nutrition
  - USAID/Malawi funded the project in 2014 as an FSP Associate Award
    - Led by MSU, with IFPRI and UP participation; ended in November 2018
- Objective of strengthening agriculture & food security policy processes
  - Support to Ministry on sector and sub-sector policy and strategy formulation
  - Two senior staff based in Ministry of Agriculture
    - Engaged in both policy research and process facilitation

# Motivation for measuring quality of policy processes

- NAPAS: Malawi project monitoring indicators include two indices:
  1. On quality of the agriculture and food security policy processes
  2. On quality of institutional architecture within which those processes proceed
- Indices computed from opinion surveys of national level participants in these policy processes
  - Baseline round done in mid-2015
  - Endline round in late-2017 & early-2018

# Survey questionnaire

- Same questionnaires used for both rounds – three modules
  - A. Respondent information
  - B. Quality of agriculture and food security policy processes – 19 qstns
  - C. Quality of institutional architecture for these policy processes – 21 qstns
- All questions were statements to elicit a 4-level Likert score response
  - ‘Completely disagree’ (0 – value for analysis);
  - ‘Somewhat disagree’ (1); ‘Somewhat agree’ (2);
  - ‘Completely agree’ (3)

**Question: “Agreement with view that in policy processes on agriculture and food security issues in Malawi ....”**

Assessment categories (numerical value assigned): Completely disagree (0); Somewhat disagree (1); Somewhat agree (2); Completely agree (3)

Question B1 – There is general continuous dialogue between government and stakeholders as a whole

B2 – There is continuous dialogue between government and own institution

B3 – Stakeholder perspectives in general are considered closely by government

B4 – Perspectives of own institution are considered closely by government

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B17 – Evidence is frequently used in making policy decisions in the sector

B18 – Capacity for analysis and effectively engage with g

B19 – Capacity exists within M these issues (B19)

Question C1 – An effective Agriculture Sector Working Group (ASWG) exists

C2 – ASWG discussions are well-informed both in terms of issues under discussion and feasibility and strength of policy options being considered

C3 – ASWG makes clear decisions on policy and program design

C4 – ASWG communicates its decisions effectively to the country’s political leadership

C5 – Action is quickly taken on ASWG decisions on policy and program design

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C17 – After a policy decision on an issue is made, appropriate resources are committed and made available for effective implementation

C18 – An effective donor coordination forum exists for the agricultural sector in Malawi

C19 – Donors supporting the agricultural sector in Malawi make realistic and genuine commitments

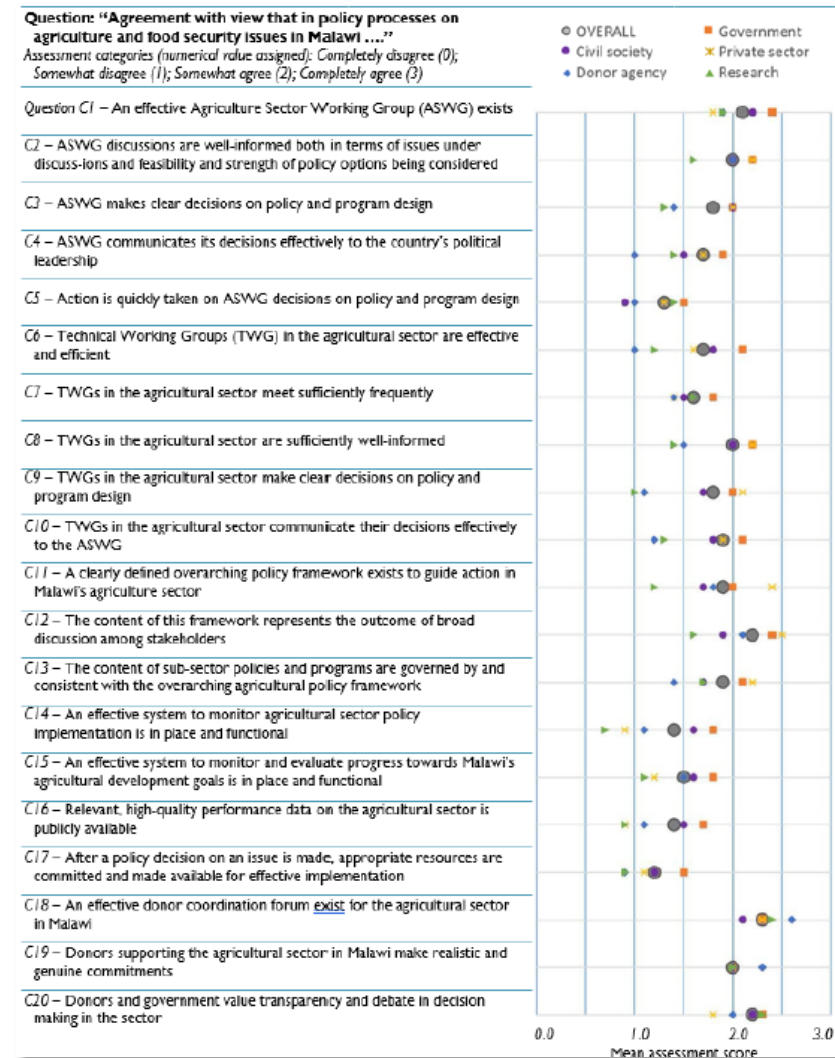
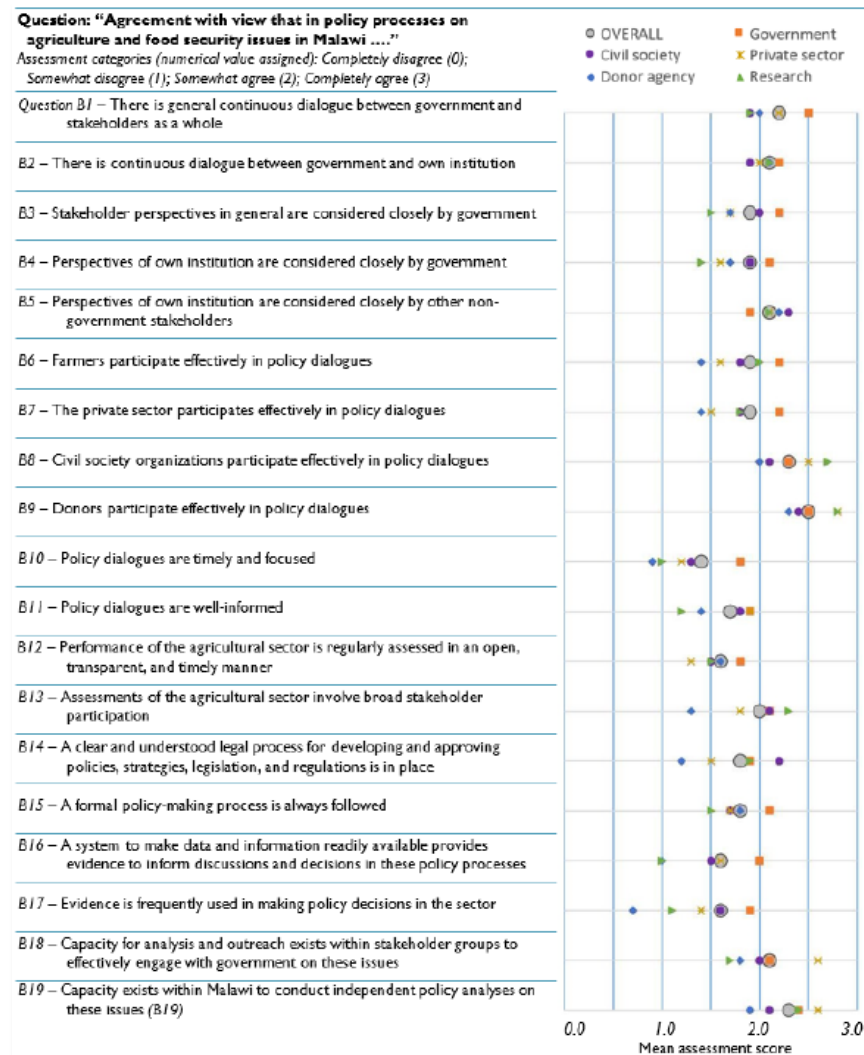
C20 – Donors and government value transparency and debate in decision making in the sector

# Baseline sample – mid-2015

- Purposively selected from participants in national policy discussions
  - 99 people initially contacted
    - Identified using participant lists for two large national agricultural policy consultations
    - To define sampling frame, used 2013 mapping of institutional architecture of these policy processes in Malawi – by Africa-LEAD and the EAT project
  - Five sample sub-categories:
    - Government; Civil society and non-governmental organizations; Private sector; Donor agencies; and Researchers
- Administered survey online, with face-to-face follow-up with non-responders
- 86 respondents, 38 of whom were from government

# Baseline results

- Plotted mean Likert response scores
  - Overall and by sub-sample
- Assessed significance of differences in scores between sub-samples

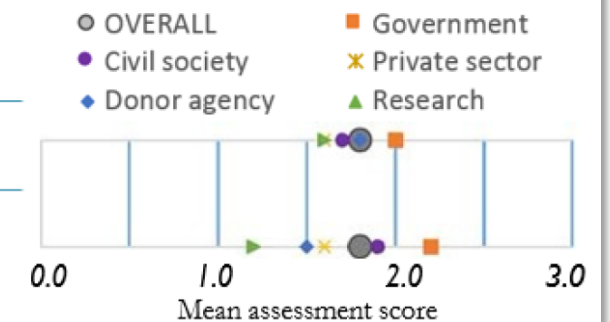


# Baseline indices - NAPAS:Malawi monitoring

- Computed two indices
  - Single question response for quality of policy processes index
  - Combined several responses for quality of institutions index

Index score on level of satisfaction with overall quality of policy reform processes on agricultural and food security issues

Index score on level of satisfaction with overall quality of the institutional architecture for agriculture and food security policy processes



Source: Analysis of survey questions C21 (first index) and C1, C6, C11, and C14 (second index)

Note: The mean assessment score is the average of four assessment levels, assigning a score of 0 to 'Completely disagree', 1 to 'Somewhat disagree', 2 to 'Somewhat agree', and 3 to 'Completely agree'.

- At baseline, respondents “somewhat” satisfied
  - Mean score for both indices of 1.8
    - On scale of 0.0 to 3.0
  - But more variance in assessment of quality of institutional architecture

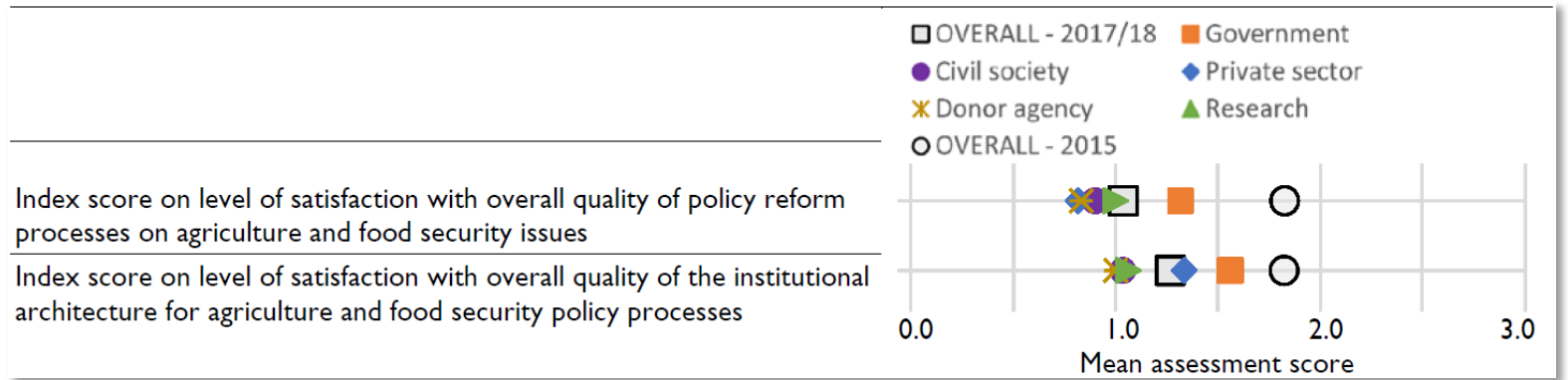


# Endline survey – late-2017, early 2018

- Used 86-member baseline analytical sample as basis for endline sample
- Replacements
  - For baseline respondents who are no longer working in sector
  - For endline, interviewed new holders of the positions previously held by those baseline respondents no longer available – 12 replacements in endline sample
- 55 persons in analytical sample for endline
- Significant sample attrition – 36% reduction
  - Compared mean baseline responses for the 43 members of baseline sample who did not participate in endline with those of the 43 who did
  - Only 3 of the 40 questions showed significant differences between the two groups – conclude that limited bias introduced due to this attrition

# Endline results

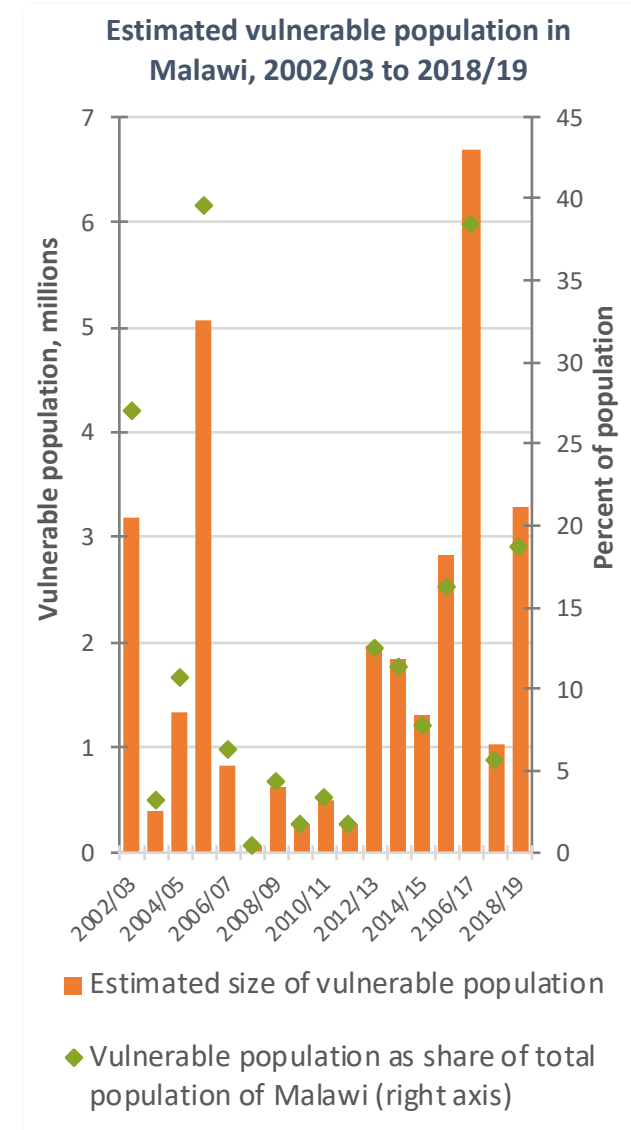
- Sharp decline from 2015 in satisfaction across all groups across both indices



- Mean score for indices:
  - Endline index of quality of policy processes: 1.0
  - Endline index of quality of institutions: 1.3
- Statistically significant drop in satisfaction level for 31 of 40 questions
- Differences between groups less significant than at baseline – some convergence in opinions – negatively, unfortunately
  - Government respondents still view quality as higher, on average, than do other respondents, but differences between respondent groups are not as wide as at baseline

# Explaining endline results

- Unexpected result, as significant policy formulation progress between baseline and endline surveys
  - National Agriculture Policy adopted in late-2016
  - National Agricultural Investment Plan launched early-2018
- However, Malawi experienced widespread food insecurity crises over the period
  - Evident that implementation does not meet aspirations of policies and strategies emerging from the policy processes
- Added factor was transition to a new policy framework
  - Due to limited bridging resources, some breakdown in processes and in engagement of institutions involved



# Are measures useful for monitoring quality of policy processes?

- Approach assumed that quality of policy processes could be assessed independently of their implementation
  - But find it very difficult to separate the two
- Closer attention to distinguishing elements of policy design from those of implementation possibly would result in a more focused assessment
  - However, any assessment of the quality of policy processes is likely of limited value if it does not also consider the quality of implementation
  - Future research on this topic should ensure that both dimensions are examined

## Are measures useful? (cont.)

- As performance monitoring indicators, indices not sufficiently stable
  - Decline in the two indices between baseline and endline does not accurately reflect the quality of engagement of NAPAS:Malawi (IMHO)
- Better seen as indicators of confidence in the short to medium-term value of the policy processes
  - Context within which policies are developed and programs implemented changes
    - This context has several dynamic dimensions – food crises, leadership, political currents, etc.
  - Level of confidence in making any achievements shifts in consequence
- Similar baseline surveys done in several countries in which FSP works
  - As their endline surveys are done, will explore where common patterns are seen both across countries and across time, controlling for changing contextual factors