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ISSUES PAPER DOWA DISTRICT

BACKGROUND

*Insert a background to the activity, **outlining the project objectives (CISANET will fill in this information)**, and details of the issues scoping meeting. This will include the date and time of the meeting, number of participants and areas of focus which they represent (farmers, Government technical staff, traders, agro-dealers, traditional leaders etc.).*

CONTEXTUAL/SITUATIONAL ANALYSIS

*Dowa District has **291,266.66** ha available land comprised of **250,991.00** ha of cultivatable land representing **68%**, **34,952** ha of irrigable customary representing **12%**, **34,737** ha of Estate sector representing 5% and 43,690 ha of forestry reserve representing **15%**. The District has a total of **236,065** farm households. Of these, **169,639** are male headed households, **66098** are female headed and **328** are child headed respectively*

The main crops grown in the district are: maize, tobacco, cotton, cassava, sweet potatoes, groundnuts, soybeans, and other pulses. Dominant livestock include: cattle, goats, pigs, sheep, poultry, rabbits and guinea fowls.

*Currently, about **77%** of the cultivable land is under use both by Estates and Small holders farmers. Most of the commercial agriculture is mainly done by small holder farmers through contract farming with companies.*

However, high cost of farm inputs, inadequate extension workers, erratic rainfall, low commodity market price and lack of capital have been detrimental to achieving desirable successes in agricultural production. Currently, the Government is trying to increase farmers' access to inputs through Affordable Input Program (AIP).

The district agriculture office's objective is to increase agriculture production through intensification of soil fertility management, livestock and crop diversification and promote organized produce marketing system for improved and sustainable food security and incomes at household level.

(Source : Dowa Social Economic Profile 2021)

ISSUES, RECOMMENDATIONS

Production and Productivity

Issue 1 Extension Services

- *Lack of extension service to farmers due to reduced number of extension workers.*

- *High extension worker ratio against the increased population of smallholder farmers.*

Recommendation

- *lobby to the district council and central government to fill all Agriculture establishments in the district*
- *Provide good mode of transport (through loan scheme) such as motorcycle to extension workers to enable them to reach more farmers.*
- *Recruit more extension workers to reduce the extension worker: farmer ratio.*

Responsibility

- *CSOs*
- *District council*
- *Ministry of Agriculture*

Issue 2 Mechanization

- *Farm mechanization use is too low due to the fact that most of the farmers can not afford to hire Agricultural farm equipments at DADOs office because it is expensive*
- *Few machinery in strategic places in Malawi*

Recommendation

- *Encourage farmers to be in cooperatives and Associations so that they can hire equipments as a group*
- *Lobby for the district council to purchase agricultural farm equipments for hiring and place them at EPAs*

Responsibility

- *District council*
- *CSOs*
- *Ministry of Trade*
- *Ministry of Agriculture*

Issue 3 Coordination

- *Working in isolation among smallholder farmers and implementing partners.*
- *Uncoordinated communication channels from implementing partners to smallholder farmers and vice versa.*

Recommendation

- *Joint planning meetings involving smallholder farmers and implementing partners.*

Responsibility

- *DAECC, ASP and DAC*

Access to Markets

Issue 1

- *Poor road network to transport farm produce to the markets*
- *Unrealistic markets in terms of prices offered by buyers on local markets.*
- *Lack of reliable markets which force smallholder farmers to sell their commodities at low prices.*
- *Poor quality and quantity of produce offered by smallholder farmers due to lack of knowledge.*
- *Lack of good mode of transport of produce from field to market due to poor road network.*
- *Poor organization of smallholder farmers to sell their produce collectively.*
- *Price fluctuation of commodities offered by buyers on the market.*
- *Market liberalization, it seems there is no controlling*

Recommendation

- *Build and strengthen the capacity of cooperatives and Association so that they are organised and be able to secure markets and bargain collectively*
- *Advocate for favourable market policies*
- *Set minimum prices both on crops and livestock all year round and reinforce them.*
- *Introduce warehouse receipt system for all produce buyers in EPAs.*
- *Smallholder farmers to improve on warehousing, good grading and marketing.*
- *Government to support value addition for the commodities through farmer organization*

Responsibility

- *District reinforcement agencies ie Malawi police service, community policing, local leaders*
- *District council*
- *Ministry of Trade*
- *Ministry of Agriculture*
- *CSO Network*

Issue 2 Financing

- *Lack of capital to buy farm input.*
- *Increased loan interest rate which prohibits smallholder farmers to access agricultural loans*
- *Lack an agriculture bank to support smallholder farmers through provision of soft loans.*

Recommendation

- *Lobby for the establishment of Agriculture bank to support smallholder farmers on credit facility*
- *Lower loan interest rates for smallholder farmers*

Responsibility

- *Central Government*
- *Micro-finance institution*
- *CSOs*

Issue: RESILIENCE

- *Climate change disrupt food availability reduces access to food and affect food quality. Extreme weather events and reductions in water availability may result in agricultural productivity.*
- *The lockdown due to covid 19 pandemic affected export of farmers commodities which resulted into commodities fetching lower prices on the local market*
- *Pest and disease affected yield of crops, they reduce the quality of crops, cause damage which affect productivity.*
- *High cost of farm inputs because of higher transportation costs, labour, raw materials resulted putting the burden on smallholders.*

Recommendation

- *Introduce fertiliser making plants in strategic regions across the country.*
- *Promote organic farming across the country*
- *Promote modern Agriculture technologies*

Responsibility

- *Ministry of Agriculture*
- *Ministry of Trade*
- *Ministry of industry*