

Research Agenda for Malawi Priorities Project

Background

Malawi Priorities is a collaborative effort by the National Planning Commission (NPC), the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP), and the Copenhagen Consensus Center (CCC) to identify and promote effective interventions that address Malawi's developmental challenges using a cost-benefit analysis framework. As detailed during the presentation to the Reference Group, the cost-benefit analysis will focus on 20 to 30 research questions which are of national importance in Malawi.

The project's research agenda takes its starting point from NPC's existing research agenda which is structured around **six thematic areas** namely: i) Sustainable Agriculture, ii) Sustainable Economic Development, iii) Human Capital and Social Development, iv) Sustainable Environment, v) Demography, and vi) Governance, Peace, and Security.

NPC's research agenda was developed by the commission in September 2019 after extensive consultation with academics, think tanks, the private sector and government. Accordingly, the commission's research agenda, prima facie, contains questions of national importance.

The research questions being considered by Malawi Priorities in the cost-benefit analysis directly derive from the six thematic areas of NPC's research agenda. The project also makes an inclusion of additional research questions based on input from NPC, an Academic Advisory Group (AAG), and existing literature, particularly previous cost-benefit analyses conducted by the Copenhagen Consensus Center.

Your Role

Your role comprises two primary tasks:

1. For every proposed research question, assess how important the research question is to Malawi (on a 5 point scale from most important to least important). **For this task, please give a rating for each research question.**
2. Suggest interventions that we should research further that are relevant to each research question. These interventions should be in your estimation, either prominent (i.e. part of a government flagship program, a policy with significant funding or backed by political will) and/or likely to be highly effective. **For this task, respond to as many research questions as you can. If you cannot answer all questions, focus on those that fit within your area of expertise.**

Example

Question: "What are the most effective ways to address the high burden of neonatal, child and maternal mortality in the country?"

Potential interventions could include:

- ✓ Scale up basic emergency obstetric and newborn care

- ✓ Post-natal home visits by community health workers
- ✓ Calcium supplementation during pregnancy to address low birth weight

This document provides 38 suggested research questions. Note that the number of research questions we will actually end up analyzing is between 20 and 30, due to time and resource constraints. **Your input will help us prioritize which questions to research.**

Previous research on effective interventions

Some of the research questions were suggested because they address important problems in the country and a large body of evidence indicates that interventions in these areas are likely to generate large benefits relative to costs. Given the aim of this project, it is important to note the following areas where previous literature – including from almost 15 years of Copenhagen Consensus research covering 500+ analyses – has shown outsized benefits to costs. These include:

- Nutrition, particularly interventions that address stunting
- Malaria, particularly vector control
- Maternal, neonatal and child health
- Family planning
- Early childhood development
- Improving the quality of primary schooling
- Land tilting

Returning this form

Please return completed form to Salim Mapila via email on smapila@npc.mw or Salim@copenhagenconsensus.com. Alternatively, you can also WhatsApp on +265884098669. We look forward to receiving a completed copy of the questionnaire by **Friday 19 June 2020**

Respondent Information

What is your name, title and affiliation?

Which of the thematic areas fit within your area of expertise? (circle or highlight all that apply)

- ✓ Sustainable Agriculture

- ✓ Sustainable Economy

- ✓ Human Capital and Social Development (Health)

- ✓ Human Capital and Social Development (Education)

- ✓ Sustainable Environment

- ✓ Demography

- ✓ Governance, Peace and Security

Theme: Sustainable Agriculture

Question	Reason for inclusion in Malawi Priorities research agenda	<i>In your opinion, how important is this question for Malawi? (tick one answer in the given box)</i>				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Most important				Least important
1. How does Malawi most effectively create access to formal markets for smallholder farmers?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
2. Which higher-value crops are suitable to be grown in Malawi and are demanded by countries that have relatively low-cost transport links?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
3. What are the most effective mechanisms to convince and enable farmers to adopt higher-yield and more resistant seeds?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
4. What are the most effective ways to increase irrigation uptake in areas that have abundant water supply, for example on the shores of Lake Malawi or along the Shire River?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

Question	Reason for inclusion in Malawi Priorities research agenda	<i>In your opinion, how important is this question for Malawi? (circle one answer)</i>				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Most important				Least important
5. What are the most effective ways to ensure people who want to go into farming have access to farmable land? And how can we make sure that women and men have equal opportunities in farming??	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
6. Which inclusive agribusiness models are most effective; for what kind of value chains; under which conditions; for which types of smallholder farmers?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
7. What are the investment priorities for agriculture including crops, livestock and fisheries?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
8. What interventions might deliver sustained food and nutrition security, as well as greater dietary diversity within sustainable farming models?	Suggested by project team, U5 stunting prevalence is 37%, 24 th highest prevalence in the world					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

Theme: Sustainable Economy

Question	Reason for inclusion in Malawi Priorities research agenda	<i>In your opinion, how important is this question for Malawi? (tick one answer in the given box)</i>				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Most important				Least important
9. What regulations can be simplified (and how so) to enhance Malawi's business-friendliness?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
10. How can the provision of utilities be made more reliable to enhance Malawi's business-friendliness?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
11. Which policies can effectively address youth unemployment and underemployment?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
12. Where should Malawi focus its resources to achieve industrialization? ¹	From NPC research agenda and project team input					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

¹ (Related sub-questions: How does the country address weak domestic integration resulting in weak inter-sectoral and inter-industry linkages? What lessons can be drawn from other countries with regard to successful industrialization strategies that can be adapted to Malawi? Is public sector active involvement still important for revamping a strong manufacturing base and if so, what level of involvement and modality should it take?)

13. What are the most effective ways to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and restart the economy?	Suggested by project team, in light of the current challenges surrounding COVID-19.					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

Theme: Human Capital and Social Development (Health)

Question	Reason for inclusion in Malawi Priorities research agenda	<i>In your opinion, how important is this question for Malawi? (tick one answer in the given box)</i>				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Most important				Least important
14. How does Malawi most effectively address the burden of HIV / AIDS? How can we control HIV infection in HIV negative persons whose professions pose a greater risk of HIV infection?	From NPC research agenda and project team, HIV/AIDS is the largest source of death and disease as measured by disability adjusted life years in Malawi.					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
15. How does Malawi most effectively reduce high rates of neonatal, child and maternal mortality?	The neonatal aspect is from the NPC research agenda. ²					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
16. What interventions can effectively address smoking and excessive drinking in view of the health hazards associated with these practices?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

² The child and maternal mortality components were added by the project team because interventions that support neonatal mortality can also improve maternal and child health outcomes. MNCH is an area where interventions show large benefits to costs.

17. How can service delivery accommodate for special needs and other vulnerable groups?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
18. How can the government regulate and control faith healing practices in view of the established health service provision mechanisms, without disavowing the potential benefits that traditional carers have in places that are not provided with modern medical facilities?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
19. What are the most effective ways to improve surveillance of existing and emergent disease in Malawi?	Suggested by project team, in light of the current challenges surrounding COVID-19.					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
20. How does Malawi most effectively address child stunting and other nutrition challenges?	Suggested by project team, U5 stunting prevalence is 37%, one of the highest in the world. Nutrition interventions have been shown to be some of the most effective in LMICs.					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

<p>21. What are the most cost-effective ways to address the burden of malaria?</p>	<p>Suggested by project team, Malaria is the 4th largest cause of death and disease in Malawi as measured by disability adjusted life years.</p> <p>Malaria interventions are some of the most cost-effective across all sectors.</p>					
<p>What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?</p>						

Theme: Human Capital and Social Development (Education)

Question	Reason for inclusion in Malawi Priorities research agenda	<i>In your opinion, how important is this question for Malawi? (tick one answer in the given box)</i>				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Most important				Least important
22. How does Malawi effectively expand and improve early childhood development (ECD)?	Suggested by the project team. Only 45% of children attend pre-school. ECD is typically the most cost-effective part of the education system.					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
23. How does Malawi most effectively improve the quality of education in primary schooling?	Suggested by project team, Malawi has low learning achievement with for example 83% of 1 st grade students unable to read a single syllable and 92% unable to read a single word. Pupil teacher ratios in 1 st grade are very high.					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
24. How does Malawi most effectively address large drop out rates in secondary school, particularly of girls?	Suggested by project team, the largest drop out in schooling occurs during the transition from primary to secondary school and disproportionately affects girls.					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

Theme: Sustainable Environment

Question	Reason for inclusion in Malawi Priorities research agenda	<i>In your opinion, how important is this question for Malawi? (tick one answer in the given box)</i>				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Most important				Least important
25. Would there be benefit from having extension workers in disaster risk management?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
26. What are the most effective measures to improve disaster preparedness, reduce disaster risk and mitigate the effects of climate change?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
27. What kind of environmental management practices will effectively minimize intensity and frequency of disasters, including those exacerbated by climate change?	Suggested by project team					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
28. What are the most cost-effective ways to maintain environmental biodiversity so that people benefit from ecosystem services?	Suggested by project team					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

<p>29. What are the most effective ways to address household use of biomass and other unclean sources of energy?</p>	<p>Suggested by project team, household air pollution is the 5th largest risk factor for death and disease in Malawi, and cooking with biomass exacerbates deforestation.</p>					
<p>What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?</p>						
<p>30. How can national resources best contribute to wealth creation? What institutional structures best deliver the returns on investment in national resource management?</p>	<p>Suggested by project team</p>					
<p>What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?</p>						

Theme: Demography

Question	Reason for inclusion in Malawi Priorities research agenda	<i>In your opinion, how important is this question for Malawi? (tick one answer in the given box)</i>				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Most important				Least important
31. What are the most effective ways of reducing unmet need for contraception among rural communities and youth?	Adapted from NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
32. What interventions and strategies are most effective at addressing the issues affecting youth (e.g. drawing from experiences in National Youth Policy, Strategic Plan and the Youth SITAN (through the Youth TWG)?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
33. What are effective strategies for managed urban population growth so that it is a catalyst for sustained economic growth, is at pace with growth of basic and social services and ensures rural areas are not left behind in economic transformation?	Suggested by project team					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

Theme: Governance, Peace and Security

Question	Reason for inclusion in Malawi Priorities research agenda	<i>In your opinion, how important is this question for Malawi? (tick one answer in the given box)</i>				
		5	4	3	2	1
		Most important				Least important
34. How can the public sector be reformed to most effectively improve service delivery? How can technocratic and political incentives be aligned?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
35. What are the context-relevant good practices in instituting and sustaining accountability mechanisms for implementation of development plans and policies?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
36. What are the most effective ways to improve implementation in government?	From NPC research agenda					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						
37. How can peace and security be harnessed most effectively to strengthen Malawi's development agenda?	Suggested by project team					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

38. How do non-state sector institutions shape incentives for reforms and achieve socially desirable outcomes?	Suggested by project team					
What interventions would you suggest for the above research question?						

Last question: Are there any other research questions (which you would have categorized as most important) that you think we should include in the Malawi Priorities project? Is there anything else you want to let us know about the research agenda or the interventions you have suggested?

APPENDIX: Consolidated List of Research Questions by Theme

Sustainable Agriculture

1. How does Malawi most effectively create access to formal markets for smallholder farmers?
2. Which higher-value crops are suitable to be grown in Malawi and are demanded by countries that have relatively low-cost transport links?
3. What are the most effective mechanisms to convince and enable farmers to adopt higher-yield and more resistant seeds?
4. What are the most effective ways to increase irrigation uptake in areas that have abundant water supply, for example on the shores of Lake Malawi or along the Shire River?
5. What are the most effective ways to ensure people who want to go into farming have access to farmable land? And how can we make sure that women and men have equal opportunities in farming?
6. Which inclusive agribusiness models are most effective; for what kind of value chains; under which conditions; for which types of smallholder farmers?
7. What are the investment priorities for agriculture including crops, livestock and fisheries?
8. What interventions might deliver sustained food and nutrition security, as well as greater dietary diversity within sustainable farming models?

Sustainable Economy

9. What regulations can be simplified (and how) to enhance Malawi's business-friendliness?
10. How can the provision of utilities be made more reliable to enhance Malawi's business-friendliness?
11. Which policies can effectively address youth unemployment and underemployment?
12. Where should Malawi focus its resources to achieve industrialization?
13. What are the most effective ways to mitigate the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic and restart the economy?

Human Capital and Social Development (Health)

14. How does Malawi most effectively address the burden of HIV / AIDS? How can we control HIV infection in HIV negative persons whose professions pose a greater risk of HIV infection?
15. How does Malawi most effectively reduce high rates of neonatal child and maternal mortality?
16. What interventions can effectively address smoking and excessive drinking in view of the health hazards associated with these practices?
17. How can service delivery accommodate for special needs and other vulnerable groups?
18. How can the government regulate and control faith healing practices in view of the established health service provision mechanisms, without disavowing the potential benefits that traditional carers have in places that are not provided with modern medical facilities?
19. What are the most effective ways to improve surveillance of existing and emergent disease in Malawi?
20. How does Malawi most effectively address child stunting and other nutrition challenges?
21. What are the most cost-effective ways to address the burden of malaria?

Human Capital and Social Development (Education)

22. How does Malawi effectively expand and improve early childhood development (ECD)?
23. How does Malawi most effectively improve the quality of education in primary schooling?
24. How does Malawi most effectively address large drop out rates in secondary school, particularly of girls?

Sustainable Environment

25. Would there be benefit from having extension workers in disaster risk management?
26. What are the most effective measures to improve disaster preparedness, reduce disaster risk and mitigate the effects of climate change?
27. What kind of environmental management practices will effectively minimize intensity and frequency of disasters, including those exacerbated by climate change?

28. What is the most cost-effective way to maintain environmental biodiversity so that people benefit from ecosystem services?
29. What are the most effective ways to address household use of biomass and other unclean sources of energy?
30. How can national resources best contribute to wealth creation? What institutional structures best deliver the returns on investment in national resource management?

Demography

31. What are the most effective ways of reducing unmet need for contraception among rural communities and youth?
32. What interventions and strategies are most effective at addressing the issues affecting youth (e.g. drawing from experiences in National Youth Policy, Strategic Plan and the Youth SITAN (through the Youth TWG)?
33. What are effective strategies for managed urban population growth so that it is a catalyst for sustained economic growth, is at pace with growth of basic and social services and ensures rural areas are not left behind in economic transformation?

Governance, Peace and Security

34. How can the public sector be reformed to most effectively improve service delivery? How can technocratic and political incentives be aligned?
35. What are the context-relevant good practices in instituting and sustaining accountability mechanisms for implementation of development plans and policies?
36. What are the most effective ways to improve implementation in government?
37. How can peace and security be harnessed most effectively to strengthen Malawi's development agenda?
38. How do non-state sector institutions shape incentives for reforms and achieve socially desirable outcomes?