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**MINUTES OF MASP COVI-19 BRAINSTORMING DIGITAL MEETING HELD ON 30/04/2020.**

**30TH APRIL 2020**

1. MEETING OBJECTIVES
* To discuss the effects of Coronavirus (Covid-19) on how the disease has affected our day to day programming (by sharing the challenges, experiences and lessons learned)
* To discuss the contingency and Business continuity plans set aside if the if the status quo is maintained for a longer period than anticipated.

# 2.0 OPENING REMARKS FROM MaSP CEO Mrs. Vera Kamtukule

The Chief Executive Officer of Malawi Scotland Partnership Mrs. Vera Kamtukule welcomed everyone to the digital meeting and asked them to participate fully so that at the end we have more ideas that will guide us in our day to day work.

She explained that the past six weeks our way of working has changed, at first we thought that it will only be Private sector that will be affected but it has also heavily affected the civil society organizations.

In her opening remarks she indicated what most organizations have put providing preventive as measures to continue working like, placing hand washing facilities at their office premises, working in shifts and also working from home. She observed that, these measures are only enabling organizations work to move but the continuity of working with communities where projects are being implemented has greatly been affected by the measures set aside by government like social distancing and less number of people per gathering.

She highlighted that the MaSP digital meeting has been organized so that organizations share experiences and what they are doing as an institution so that others can learn from and also discuss their contingency and business plans if the situation will remain the same for a longer period of time.

She further said that this Pandemic has affected everyone and we need to jointly work together.

1. **EFFECTS OF CORONAVIRUS ON PROGRAMMING**
	1. **Negative effects**
* Most programs have been put on hold and this will affect timeliness and resources of the programs.
* Restriction of movement and less number of people per gathering has affected total number of people to be reached in some projects, for example the screened for cancer at Nkhoma hospital, they indicated that in some areas there is total cancellation because people are not forth coming to be screened.
* The re-allocation of resources to other activities not on the budget line has affected implementation of the programmes. An example is the re-allocation of PPEs meant for cancer screening to the main hospital at Nkhoma.
* Working from home is a challenge for most organisations as it requires adequate resources for internet and phone calls
* Internet budget is increasing as more data is needed due to working from home and online meetings.
* Resource mobilization is affected as most donors are thinking of Coronavirus hence other interventions affected.
* M&E programs put on hold as you cannot move due to Government measures put in place
* School projects cancelled for now due to school closures and hence affecting projects directly working with schools like CYD.
* Challenges of mobility to project areas due to government restrictions
* Maintaining staff by paying them using activity budget lines which affects implementation of the project
* The closure of schools in Scotland has affected fundraising since Scottish students cannot meet to fundraise hence halting of building and renovating schools in Malawi which will result to poor learning environment by Malawian students when schools open an example of Classrooms for Malawi.
* The postponement of trips by Scottish Schools to Malawi due to inadequate funds because they have not fundraised have resulted to most service supplies to be out of business which will affect them economicaly.Service providers like contractors, travel agencies,hotels,motels and many others will not be given business.
* The environment is heavily affected as alternatives to charcoal are not being made like Briquettes and efficient energy stoves as well as making paper bags a substitute to banned plastic bags due to restriction of movement and social distancing.
* Budget implications as most services are costly this time like public transport has doubled, most materials scarce on the market and when available are costly than normal price.
* Difficult to find reliable markets which has affected marketability of the produced commodities.
* Livelihood projects that supports winter cropping of the crops has been affected as the inputs are costly and rarely available which will results to food insecurity. Economic empowerment is affected as market prices are affected.
* Project impact assessments will not be done due to restrictions of movement hence lessons learnt from the project will be difficult to generate.
* Fear of closure of civil society organizations and laying off staff if the situation will prolong for so long as most funds shall have been depleted.
* St John Ambulance, have been affected as they are not able to give first aid services due to transport challenges and availability of PPE materials.
* Dilemma in conducting of exams as schools are closed and uncertainty in the opening dates
* New staff cannot be recruited due to the current situation and hence high rate of un employment

 **2.2 Positive effects**

* It has diversified our way of doing things like working from home and having online meetings like via zoom, Skype and Whatsapp.
* Conducting online trainings.
* Serving as a learning opportunity as other organizations are trying technological means to train their members
* It has resulted for schools to use Google schooling where learning materials are uploaded and students get online lessons though the only challenge is majority do not have reliable internet and also gadgets to use.
* The ability to engage few members during online meetings and disseminating the message to a wider group thereafter.
* It has been an awakening call for organisations to build reserve accounts, two organisations indicated to have a reserve account. One of the organisations mentioned that to build the reserve account they conduct fund raising activities, revise their working conditions for example they are paid as consultants and not full time employees.
1. **CONTINGENCY AND BUSINESS CONTINUITY PLANS**
* Use of Financial reserves that can be stretched out for a period of 6-8 months
* Deviating of funds for projects that are on hold to help sustain staff
* Reduce travel so that funds are reserved
* Using of existing staff to cover up for more than two projects so that funds are reserved and cover for welfare of the staff.
* Using the available resources wisely by minimizing frequencies of doing the activities.
* Intensify resource mobilization so that more projects come and resulting to more funds to the organization.
* There will be pay cuts and even retrenching staff after the reserve account if the situation continues for more than 6 months.
* Encouragement of staff to explore other forms of sustaining themselves like indulging in income generating activities.
* Developing and use of locally made PPE materials like masks, gowns and aprons.
* Supporting the staff to prevent themselves from Covid-19 by providing them with health preventive measures like sanitizers and making them work from home.
1. **ADDITIONAL COMMENTS FROM MEMBERS/QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS FROM MEMBERS**
* MaSP and SMP should amplify activities done by members for donor organisations to appreciate their work even in the time of Covid 19
* Shoot videos and post on SMP and MaSP website to amplify member visibility
* **Comment:** James Gondwe of CYD said MASP has an important role of highlighting Covid-19 responses that members are implementing at various levels segregated by strands and then these can be shared with the donor community and Government of Malawi as one of MaSP’s coordinated response to Covid-19. We are at a stage where the Gov and the donor community is looking for solutions and the only way of presenting these to them is through a coordinate and integrated response by a network such as MASP.
* **Response:** David Hope-Jones, SMP: Responding to James - absolutely, the SMP and MaSP will work closely to represent our members’ interests and priorities to government. The SMP can also offer space on our website for ‘Perspectives from Malawi’ (https://www.scotland-malawipartnership.org/covid-19/member-perspectives/). Anyone can email your snapshots from Malawi, summarising how you are impacted locally by Covid-19, to david@scotland-malawipartnership.org and we will upload to this webpage. Can be written (up to 500 words), video and/or photos.

**5.0 BRAINSTORMING MEETING FEEDBACK FROM MEMBERS**

The members rated the meeting to be good as it helped them to share experiences and share lessons on the way programs are being done during this time of the Covid-19 pandemic.

**6.0 CLOSING REMARKS**

Malawi Scotland Partnership CEO thanked the members for their active participation to the brainstorming session and assured them that their contributions have been taken and will be put to use.