



SEA, Disaster Risk Management and Climate Change in Malawi

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Abstract: Current work on the SEA of the Shire River Basin, promoted by the World Bank, highlights rapid population growth, environmental degradation, and climatic variability linked with poor institutional governance. These are deemed the principal causes of continuing poverty for large sectors of the population who depend on agriculture and natural resources for their livelihoods, in the southern region of Malawi. The Shire River and its tributaries are vital to the economy, providing 95% of the country's power supplies from hydroelectric plants, water for major urban and rural areas, irrigation supplies, navigation and maintenance of the ecological reserve for internationally important wetlands. Long-term river flows are affected by global climatic and tectonic events, while seasonal droughts and floods within the catchment cause serious food shortages, severe health risks, loss of transport, property and human life.

Natural variations in climate give rise to many of these problems, but there is evidence of increasing frequency and severity of drought and flood disasters linked with climate change. At the same time human activities have aggravated the situation through reduction in the size of agricultural small-holdings and destruction of forests, which has led to widespread environmental degradation, soil erosion, and loss of soil fertility. The role of the SEA is to examine institutional and capacity issues linked with this complex interaction of natural and human processes, and to consider the role and efforts of the government, international community (donors and NGOs) private sector, and civil society. This can be completed by analyzing a wide range of policies, plans and programs that are being implemented or proposed within the basin, including a 12 year World Bank Watershed Management Project. This presentation will discuss the preliminary conclusions of the SEA that are still subject to further discussion with stakeholders and the Government of Malawi.

Summary: This presentation will summarize conclusions of the SEA, for the Shire River Basin, and describe what is needed to integrate a wide range of policies, plans, and programs – instituted by the central government, international community, and others – relating to economic development, climate change adaptation, disaster risk management and watershed management.