

**Mapping Solutions to Aid Coordination Challenges: The Impact of Information  
Sharing Through Multi-Donor Aid-Mapping in Malawi**

By  
Amy Schober

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Supervisor: Professor Sara Svensson

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### **Author's Declaration**

I, the undersigned Amy Schober hereby declare that I am the sole author of this thesis. To the best of my knowledge this thesis contains no material previously published by any other person except where due acknowledgement has been made. This thesis contains no material which has been accepted as part of the requirements of any other academic degree or non-degree program, in English or in any other language.

This is a true copy of the thesis, including final revisions.

Date:

30<sup>th</sup> May 2014

Name:

Amy Schober

## Abstract

Aid coordination is widely accepted as an important element of aid effectiveness. A new tool has been developed in Malawi, which displays recipient locations of programs and funding from development partners on an interactive online map. It has been theorized that this tool can help development partners improve coordination through the enhanced information sharing that comes through mapping, however this theory has not been tested. This thesis evaluates to what extent the aid-mapping tool is helping development partners to improve coordination efforts. The study involved a series of interviews in Malawi conducted less than a year after the introduction of the tool. The interviews uncovered the challenges to coordination, as well as development partner perspectives on the utility of the map. This thesis concludes that some donors are integrating information accessed through the map into developing strategic plans, yet this is still uncommon. Development partners are not passing on information about the tool to local development actors, and there is no indication of increased field level coordination. However, map utilization is expected to increase through improvements in the tool itself as well as through its integration into the development partner's planning processes. The thesis concludes with recommendations regarding these improvements.

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## List of Abbreviations

AMP-- Aid Management Platform

CCAPS-- Climate Change and African Political Stability

CSN-- Civil Society Network

DACU--Development Assistance Coordination Unit

DAD--Debt and Aid Management Division

DEC-- District Executive Committee

DM-- Development Partner Management

GIS-- Geographic Information System

GNI—Gross National Income

HLF-- High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness

INGO-- International Non-Governmental Organization

IO-- International Organizations

KW- Malawi Kwacha, currency

LA-- Local Development Actors

MoDPaC-- Ministry of Development Planning and Coordination (Malawi)

MoF-- Ministry of Finance (Malawi)

NGO-- Non-Governmental Organization

OECD-DAC-- Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development- Development Assistance Committee

SWG-- Sector Working Groups

UNDP-- United Nations Development Programme

UNICEF-- United Nations Children's Fund

USAID-- United States Agency for International Development

WFP-- World Food Programme



## 1. Introduction

This chapter will introduce the field of aid effectiveness to which this thesis contributes. I will provide an overview of the history of aid-mapping, an information sharing tool, which has informed the development of this research. This will lead into an overview of the study, including the research question and my intended contribution, as well as an outline of this thesis.

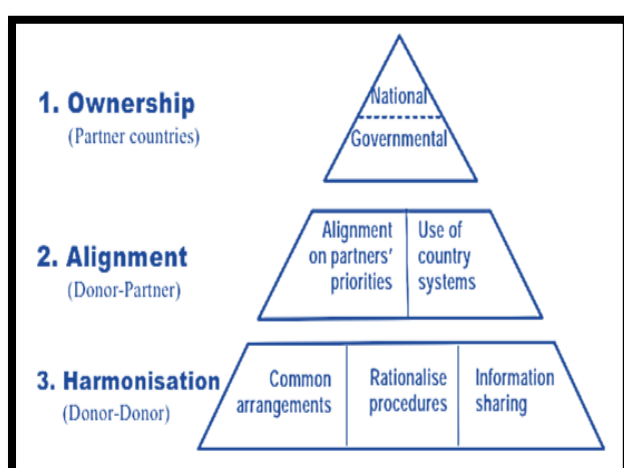
### *1.1 Aid Effectiveness through Coordination*

Aid coordination is widely recognized as one of the most important factors in aid effectiveness. While scholars have debated at length whether or not aid is or can be truly effective, this thesis is based upon the assumption that aid effectiveness is both desirable and achievable. As this assumption is shared widely in the aid community, aid coordination has become an explicit goal of development actors in order to achieve effectiveness.

Though the idea of aid coordination has existed since the post WWII rehabilitation period (Lalonde 2009), it has only come to the forefront of the discourse surrounding aid in recent years. The first time the concept gained wide attention (though it was called harmonization rather than coordination) was through the Rome Declaration on Harmonization the result of the first High Level Forum on Aid Effectiveness (HLF) in 2003, in which donors “committed to reforming their policies, procedures and practices to facilitate harmonization, reduce duplicatory missions, simplify and harmonize reporting requirements and streamline conditionalities.” This was the first of a series of four HLFs from 2003-2011 which have highlighted the importance of this goal by focusing on issues of coordination, harmonization, and mutual accountability. The second HLF, The Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness in 2005, has been considered the most influential of the HLFs and committed donors to five key principles and introduced targeted and measurable results which signaled a turning point for the international aid community (Lalonde 2009, 33). They determined that harmonization was the base upon which all other principles could be built and defined harmonization through three objectives: common arrangements (joint

analysis and operations), simplification of procedures, and sharing of information (Lalonde 2009, 35). Figure 1 illustrates the relationship of these elements and principles. The third and fourth HLFs served largely as opportunities to check on the progress made of the Paris Declaration.

**Figure 1: Conceptualization of Aid Effectiveness Principles from the Paris Declaration**



*Source: Paris Declaration on Aid Effectiveness, 2005*

The HLFs clearly began to focus more explicitly on coordination as the importance of this principle became increasingly apparent. Coordination failures lead to the waste, misuse, or at least suboptimal allocation of development resources. While start-up costs incurred during the initial phase of coordination may cause a short term increase in demand of donor resources, over time these costs decrease as transactions costs decrease and aid can be properly allocated leading to long-term savings (Lalonde 2009). Coordination, therefore, increases efficiency, but it can also increase effectiveness and equity. According to Fengler and Kharas, without large scale coordination efforts, “the overall system will remain fragmented, resulting in sectoral and geographic misallocations of aid” (2011,6). It is of paramount importance that aid funds are appropriately addressing needs, which requires an understanding of what the needs are for which people, and where the needs are exhibited. This understanding is fostered through coordination.

## ***1.2 Aid-Mapping***

One of the first single donor aid-mapping efforts was Mapping for Results, a platform developed in 2010 within the World Bank, which assigned geographic coordinates to many of the Bank's projects and allowed for the visualization of this data in an interactive online map format (Dodds et al. 2013). The success of this effort quickly led to a number of donor agencies emulating the World Bank's work (Weaver et al. 2013). However, the maps were not only popular among donors but among governments as well. A number of countries and multilateral organizations approached Development Gateway for assistance in developing similar tools (Weaver et al. 2013). While donor maps were useful to each individual donor, it became clear that the functionality of information sharing would improve through the inclusion of multiple donors. Such maps were theorized to allow for "donor division of labor, to better assess aid allocation patterns, and to identify gaps in service delivery" (Weaver et al. 2013, 7).

In early 2011, representatives of the University of Texas at Austin's Climate Change and African Political Stability (CCAPS) program forged an agreement with the government of Malawi to undertake a pilot geocoding program to map existing donor programs related to the area of climate change (Weaver et al. 2013). Their program, which involved independently coding the activities of all relevant partners (including former, completed projects), was completed in the Fall of 2012.

Impressed by the utility of the map, CCAPS and Development Gateway along with Open Aid Partnership began to meet with stakeholders in Malawi to discuss expanding the project and integrating aid-mapping into the Aid Management Platform (AMP) in March 2013 (Dodds et al., 13). The AMP, produced by Development Gateway and used in over 20 countries, is a software application that allows governments to track, manage, and monitor aid money from external donors. In the first version of AMP, information was made available to the government in a

format similar to Figure 2. Development Gateway released a 2.0 version of their software in 2012 which featured an aid-mapping tool. Donors in Malawi have been uploading aid information to the system since 2008, but without geocoded information. Within a few months, the aid-mapping tool was fully integrated and donors were trained on how to use and make use of the new function. The Government of Malawi became the first to fully utilize the aid-mapping tool of AMP 2.0 to track the programs of all donors over time. In October 2013, the aid-mapping tool component was formally launched with the Public Portal (as shown in Figures 3 and 4), making data that is uploaded by the development partners openly available (“Malawi Launches the Aid Management Platform Public Portal” 2013). The MoF owns AMP 2.0 software, which it purchased with the help of UNDP (MOF1). They maintain and update the public portal as well as their internal system to reflect donor inputs.

**Figure 2: Snapshot of AMP Public Portal; Result of Search for Education Projects**

Projects search Export in XLS format Permanent link

Project title	Development Partner	Primary sectors	Locations	Status	Start date	End date	Commitment amount (USD)	Disbursement amount (USD)
Basic Education and Youth Development (2002/07)	United Nations Children's Fund	EDUCATION		Closed			0	3,652,018
Education Support to NESP	Department for International Development	EDUCATION		Planned			0	0
MALAWI TEACHER TRAINING ACTIVITY	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION		Ongoing			180,000	116,841
TPM - Dutch Government	Department for International Development	EDUCATION		Ongoing			39,473,885	0
MALAWI EDUCATION SECTOR POLICY, PLANNING AND EMIS PROJECT	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION	Mulanje, Blantyre, Chiredzulu, Machingo, Mangochi, more...	Closed			2,345,000	2,073,660
Support to Education Sector - FA	Department for International Development	EDUCATION		Closed			64,326,409	70,086,976
TRAINING INSTITUTIONS	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION		Ongoing			400,000	400,000
PRIMARY SCHOOL SUPPORT PROGRAM	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION	Dowa	Ongoing			6,930,449	6,894,048
PARTICIPANT TRAINING	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION		Ongoing			2,139,750	879,530
START PROGRAM	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION		Closed			400,000	490,000
UNIVERSITY PARTNERSHIP FOR INSTITUTIONAL CAPACITY- PRIMARY	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION		Closed			4,171,622	4,164,241
Basic Education and Youth Development (2008/11)	United Nations Children's Fund	EDUCATION		Ongoing			27,723,600	12,359,106
SUPPORT FOR DEVELOPING INSTRUCTIONAL TECH SKILLS	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION		Ongoing			804,000	773,632
ENHANCING CAPACITY ACROSS SECTORS IN TRANSITION (FORECAST)	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION		Ongoing			775,955	1,501,842
MALAWI EDUCATION SUPPORT ACTIVITY	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION		Closed			5,500,000	5,012,720
Technical Cooperation Project / Advisor for improvement of education plan and management	Japan International Cooperation Agency	EDUCATION		Closed			98,499	98,499
Secondary School Teachers Education Project	Canada	EDUCATION		Closed			5,551,110	1,640,084
Grant Support Ed Sector Phase II GSES II	Canada	EDUCATION		Closed			17,748,276	13,878,160
INTERACTIVE RADIO INSTITUTION	United States Agency for International Development	EDUCATION		Ongoing			5,300,000	10,901,969
Support to Primary Education in Mangochi	Iceland International Development Agency	EDUCATION	Mangochi	Closed			3,154,433	1,122,259

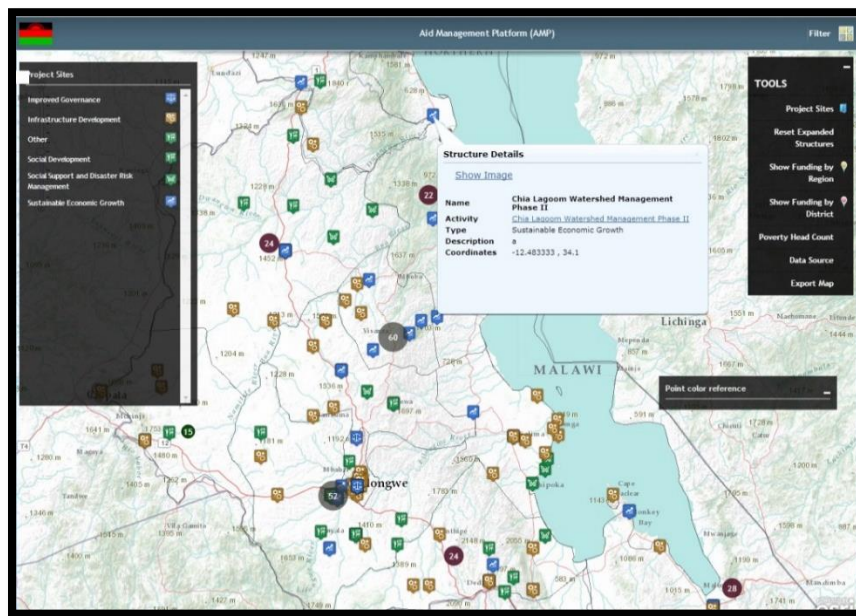
Projects data is as of: not available

1 2 3 4 5 next last

	Commitment amount (USD)	Disbursement amount (USD)
Total:	1,170,185,894	1,492,859,857

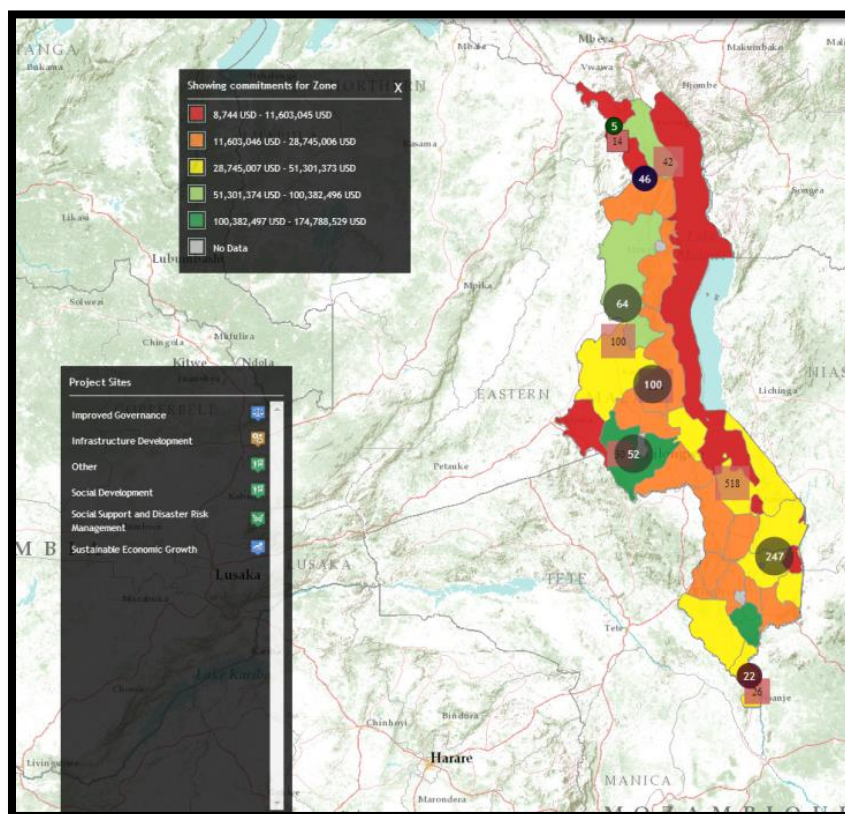
Source: Ministry of Finance Website, 2014

Figure 3: Snapshot of AMP Public Portal Aid-Mapping Tool; Project Sites Display



Source: Ministry of Finance Website, 2014

Figure 4: Snapshot of AMP Public Portal Aid-Mapping Tool; Donor Commitments by District



Source: Ministry of Finance Website, 2014

According to Dodds et al., “Informing donors of the locations of other donor-financed operations should enable them to better coordinate the delivery of aid resources and reduce duplicative activities. Ultimately, this should enable recipient governments to take the lead in coordinating allocation of aid resources across development partners” (2013, 11). Those in the Ministry of Finance agree that government ownership of the process is an ultimate goal (MOF1).

### ***1.3 Research Overview***

Aid Mapping is a very new concept and tool. It has been anticipated to bring positive changes in the realm of development aid, yet no significant evaluative research has been completed since the public portal launch to determine the impact of the tool. Thus far, it has simply been hypothesized that multi-donor aid-mapping will have positive impacts on coordination, along with a number of other benefits including transparency and monitoring efforts. Initial research by Dodd et al. (2013) on the aid-mapping tool within Malawi has identified the goals of the project along with the limitations that affected the project’s initial implementation. My research will draw heavily upon the work of Dodd et al. (2013) and determine what progress in aid coordination has been made in the year since the open map was launched.

The findings of this research will contribute to the field of aid effectiveness, specifically aid coordination. While information sharing and common arrangements are understood as two elements of aid coordination (as shown in the conceptual pyramid, Figure 1), there is a lack of literature addressing the interplay of these two elements. These findings will provide a meaningful case study which examines the effect information sharing can have upon common arrangements. To my knowledge, this will be the first time information sharing and coordination will be examined within the aid area and will add to the work of Nedovic-Budic and Pinto which has examined information sharing of spatial data and its impact on coordination between agencies in domestic urban and rural planning. This will have implications for the importance of

information openness beyond transparency, and illustrate the clear impact it can have upon common arrangements when made accessible.

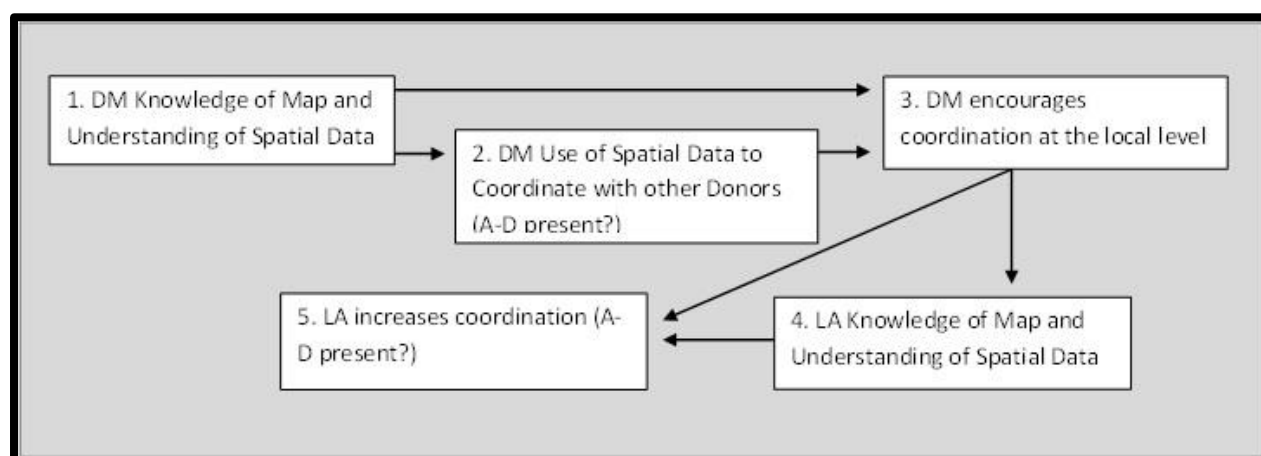
My research will seek to answer the question: Can coordination be improved through development partner utilization of shared information available through aid-mapping?

This will be answered through a case study of Malawi where this tool was introduced one year before the empirical work of this study. The specific guiding question is therefore: To what extent are development partners in Malawi utilizing the aid-mapping tool to improve coordination?

This requires, firstly, an understanding of the status of aid coordination in Malawi and the challenges to coordination. Armed with this understanding, this research will show if and how aid actors are utilizing the aid-mapping tool to overcome these obstacles.

As the aid-mapping tool has only been available to development partners in its current form for about a year, this study does not aim to assess the full impact of the aid-mapping tool. Rather, a process tracing inspired methodology, illustrated in Figure 5, allows for testing if the aid-mapping tool is thus far functioning as theorized and to assess what progress has been made in utilization in this period. The research goes deeper into the reasons behind the successful utilization, or lack thereof, in order to issue recommendations. The data has been collected through a series of interviews in Malawi, the first country to utilize multi-donor aid-mapping. The interviews provided the perspective of development partners on general coordination challenges as well as the relationship between the aid-mapping tool and their ability to successfully coordinate.

**Figure 5: Theoretical Process of Map Influence on Coordination Efforts**



*Source: author generated*

This thesis has defined coordination in four possible areas, making it conceptually similar to what the HLFs define as common arrangements. The research will seek evidence of these types of coordination within Steps 2 and 5:

*A. Checking for Program/ Activity Overlap -- Discussion with other development partners working within close geographical proximity when planning programs/ activities to avoid duplication*

*B. Joint Efforts -- Some programs/ activities are conducted jointly, drawing upon the strengths of each development partner*

*C. Increasing National Spread of Programs/ Activities -- New programs are developed in areas where needs are not being addressed by other development partners, or programs are terminated due to the involvement of another development partner which can adequately address the need*

*D. Increasing Local Spread of Programs/ Activities -- Existing programs or activities shift sectoral or geographic focus to areas where needs are not being addressed by other development partners*



As a number of organizations are already supporting the extension of the “Malawi example” and funding multi-donor aid maps in other countries, this research will help them to understand the potential and limitations of this tool. Furthermore, Development Gateway is continuing to develop mapping tools. This research can help to guide their work, and help countries make informed decisions when deciding whether or not to purchase the aid-mapping tool update.

As the feasibility of the principles of aid alignment and country ownership are being questioned by scholars and development partners, this research focuses on the attempts of development partners to coordinate among and for themselves. However, this should be viewed as only one element which ultimately influences coordination as governments certainly play a significant role. The focus on donors and development actors, which tend to be similar worldwide, gives this study greater external validity than would be possible in a case study of a single government’s efforts in coordination.

The thesis consists of five chapters. The second chapter will introduce literature relevant to the field and this study. The third chapter will explain the construction and implementation of the research. The fourth chapter will explain the relevant background information and cover the factors which inhibit coordination. It will furthermore examine the current state of the utilization process, present the current state of coordination efforts within Malawi, and suggest factors which inhibit the tool’s successful utilization. The final chapter will highlight relevant findings and suggest recommendations for policy makers and aid-mapping tool developers.

## 2. Literature Review

This chapter will build upon the introduction of aid coordination and the aid-mapping tool by presenting the findings and perspectives of relevant authors on this issue of information sharing, coordination challenges, and additional principles of aid effectiveness.

### *2.1 Coordination through Information Sharing*

Through aid coordination “money that is intended to help poor people will reach them in more efficient and equitable ways, and it will help deliver greater development results” (Fengler and Kharas 2011, 5). Coordination is rooted in the knowledge of others’ activities. Information sharing, comprised of both availability and accessibility of information, is therefore imperative to the success of coordination. Dawes, studying information sharing among government agencies in the United States found that “respondents said that sharing promotes better, more integrated planning, policy development, and program implementation across agencies; contributes to more comprehensive and accurate information for decision-making and problem solving; makes more productive use of increasingly scarce staff resources; and helps build positive interagency and professional relationships” (1996, 391).

#### **2.1.1 Information Availability**

Fengler and Kharas (2011, 5) argue that knowledge sharing is an essential step for coordination and conclude that governments should provide information to development actors about current and planned development projects which are being undertaken both internally and through other development actors. This information should include a description of “who does what where” (Fengler and Kharas 2011, 6).

However, information about aid distribution has been traditionally collected at the national level, leaving very little data available on the sub national aspect of distribution (Dodds, Xu, and Jhalla 2013). The 2013 Aid Transparency Index reports that only 19 aid organizations of the 67

organizations considered in the report consistently report sub national data (Basu et al. 2013). This may be due to a lack of perceived benefits from sharing, as tools to improve the utility of shared information such as the aid-mapping tool are not widespread. Dawes (1996) found that managers were more likely to invest resources into making their information available when they saw direct benefits for their agency.

### **2.1.2 Information Accessibility**

The 2013 Aid Transparency Index found that though an increasing amount of data regarding aid is openly published, the usefulness of this publication is highly limited by its inaccessibility as much of the data is available only on the donor's websites which can be difficult to navigate (Basu et al. 2013). This clearly makes aggregating information to get a comprehensive understanding of this information across donors very difficult. High quality aid data should be comprehensive, timely, accessible and comparable (Basu et al. 2013).

In order for information to be accessible, it needs to be available to development partners in a clear simple manner. While this has traditionally been done in the form of paragraphs or tables, these methods are not well suited for location information. Locations have natural connections to a large number of variables: resources, population, relationships to other locations, and more. Spatial data allows expectations of strong relationships between variables that are close to each other, and to examine variance among spatial units; although variance within or among spatial units may be due to the nature of spatial units themselves (Anselin and Getis 2010, 40).

Mulvenon et al. aptly describe the functionality of maps, noting their accessibility: "Digital maps created using GIS can directly access the power of human vision and reveal patterns that are often more difficult to discern in numerical summaries of data"(2006, 47). While maps and GIS are ideal for making information accessible within one organization, they have even greater potential for sharing among organizations as map layers can allow for the addition of new

information and variables. Nedovic-Budic and Pinto (1999) discussed sharing practices in GIS work, noting that sharing information based on location can be useful for all actors involved in policy within an area. While this should encourage sharing, Omran and Van Etten (2007) discovered that the perception of the benefits of sharing spatial information among organizations depends largely upon one's position within an organization, and the position of the organization within a sharing network. Once organizations begin to share information, however, it is not only the information that can lead to increased coordination but also the perception of stronger unity. A later study by Nedovic-Budic and Pinto (2000) showed that sharing spatial data actually improved the relationships between involved organizations through increased interaction and a perception of shared goals.

## ***2.2 Challenges to Coordination***

Solving coordination failure requires understanding its causes. The HLFs were an important step in bringing to light the issue of aid coordination, which has been identified, yet remained in the shadows of aid discourse for many years (Bigsten 2006). Despite the increased focus on coordination, Aldasoro, Nunnenkamp, and Thiele (2010) did not find evidence that donor coordination has increased. A study by Nunnenkamp, Öhler, and Thiele (2013) found that in a number of countries, aid coordination efforts may have actually weakened since the Paris Declaration.

### **2.2.1 Competition over Coordination**

Mascarenhas and Sandler (2006) determined that donors fail to exhibit cooperative behavior when deciding upon the allocation of aid but rather seek their own interests. Aldasoro, Nunnenkamp, and Thiele (2010) found that coordination can limit the ability of donors to pursue their own interest in having the best outcomes of aid, especially as these 'wins' allow them to gain favor with policy makers. Aid agencies are inherently competitive as they must

report on successful aid programs to ensure their allotment of limited funding. Furthermore, while many actors in the development sphere may recognize the importance of coordination, the additional costs of reporting and sharing, may prevent them from naturally seeking it. These short term, organization serving goals coexist with long term, development serving goals. Taylor and Doerfel (2003) note that the long-term goals of aid organizations may be aided by collaboration and cooperation, though the realization of short term goals may undermine this collaboration.

### **2.2.2 Complex Aid Delivery Structure**

Coordination is even hindered by the structure of many donor organizations. Many donors lack field agents, leaving decisions about activities to be decided in headquarters (Fengler and Kharas 2011, 5), far away from the people their funding is intended to help. Decision makers located in headquarters are often not even aware of the presence of other development actors in the areas targeted for activities and are therefore unlikely to engage in coordination.

The system of aid delivery is so complex that understanding it is difficult, let alone communicating effectively through it. Sometimes donors design and implement their own programs. More often, however, they design a program and then invite other development partners or the government to implement the program. In the case of invitations to development partners, once donors have a program design (which usually involves a target sector as well as a target location), they issue calls for proposals from development partners who are interested in receiving the funds and carrying out the program. Sometimes the development partners whose proposals are selected directly issue the implementation orders to their field agents, but often they in turn ask for proposals from implementing partners located in the field. In some cases the process of delegating the work is even repeated to involve a fourth development partner in the chain of command.

### 2.2.3 Aid Fragmentation

One of the strongest trends in development aid over the few decades has been aid fragmentation, meaning that the aid dollars are now being disbursed by a higher number of actors and through a higher number of projects and programs. Klein and Harford (2005) suggest that a larger number of donors and activities can mimic a free market, allowing recipients to select and demand aid. However, the negative effect of aid fragmentation on recipients and donors has been illustrated by Halonen-Akatwijuka (2007). Her work models coordination failure at a sub-national level among aid groups that offer programmatically similar aid and finds a strong link between a large number of donors in an area and coordination failures. This finding was supported by the work of Djankov, Montalvo, and Reynal-Querol (2009), which showed that aid was less effective in countries with higher numbers of donors. Anderson (2011) further found that aid money is being wasted as fragmentation increases transaction and administrative costs. These recent studies have led to the common acceptance of aid fragmentation as undesirable as evidenced in its inclusion in the High Level Forums as a threat to harmonization which donors committed to avoid. As Halonen-Akatwijuka's work has been highly influential, fragmentation is seen as a basic threat to coordination efforts.

Though the number of programs delivered by donors is unknown, fragmentation is evident in the fact that aid money has grown while the average disbursement has shrunk. In 1996 the average project cost \$2,970,000, while the average cost is now below \$87,499 (Fengler and Kharas 2011, 4). While in the past, the donor community, mostly organizations attached to a number of wealthy countries to disburse their foreign aid, directed the flow of aid, there are now a number of other actors which are growing in importance including non-governmental organizations, foundations, faith-based organizations and businesses/corporations. The number of actors has skyrocketed globally. In 2011, it was estimated that there were 263 multilateral aid organizations and 56 bilateral aid agencies (Fengler and Kharas 2011, 3). These numbers are

expected to grow even further as new countries shift into the donor arena (Fengler and Kharas 2011).

### ***2.3 Additional Principles of Aid Effectiveness***

Along with coordination, aid alignment and country ownership have become explicit objectives of the aid community for achieving effectiveness, as shown in Figure 1. The Paris Declaration, in support of aid alignment, committed donors to moving away from project implementation units and to rather engage in aid alignment by calling on donors to base their overall support on partner countries' national development strategies, institutions, and procedures. Koeberle, Walliser, and Stavreski (2006) and Tavakoli and Smith (2011) found evidence of aid alignment benefits, especially through reducing transaction costs and supporting the development of financial management systems for the governments. However, a study by Molenaers (2012) found that budget support actually increases the unpredictability of aid and imposes increased conditionalities upon recipient governments, a finding echoed by Swedlund (2013). The Paris Declaration also committed donors to country ownership, defined as shifting operations in a way that allows partner countries to exercise effective leadership over their development policies and strategies, and coordination actions.

Some argue that donors should have more control as governments are not necessarily development focused. Of aid alignment, Booth observes "[T]he concept makes the diplomatic assumption that recipient countries are already led by people for whom national development is a central objective. I would argue that this is not normally a valid assumption... [in] sub-Saharan Africa, the modal pattern is that public policies are largely driven by short run political considerations" (2012, 3). Attaching funding to these short run considerations hinders long term goals, is likely inefficient, and can reinforce power divisions. However, Sjöstedt (2013) found that donors experienced frustration as governments sometimes proposed conflicting policies and

strategies, or acted in a manner that disregarded coordination. Similarly, Faust (2010) argues that in emerging democracies, where the majority of development aid tends to be directed, “donor strategies that build ambitious coordination plans upon simplistic notions of encompassing ownership are often ill prepared, when confronted with the reality of the policy processes” (517). The Senior Level Forum on Development Effectiveness in Fragile States (2005) underscored the idea of coordination’s importance as a precursor to the objectives of alignment and country ownership and noted that in difficult environments, this is likely the only way in which donors can push the country forward. Such findings have led to an increased focus on donor-donor coordination efforts.

## ***2.4 Theoretical Summary***

Information sharing, making information widely available and accessible, can lead to an increase in coordination efforts. Through the sharing of information, an element of cooperation is already needed and this can springboard greater relationships between development partners. More importantly, however, the basis of coordination is knowledge of coordination potential, which comes through information. While information sharing can lead to increased coordination, these efforts can be hindered by the competitive nature of the field, the complex structure of aid delivery and the growth in the number of development partners and programs. Aid alignment and country ownership, two of the principles of aid effectiveness, are both dependent upon the base of coordination between development partners. As the feasibility and desirability of these principles in practice have been called into question in countries with less advanced democracies, a stronger emphasis has been placed on the principle of coordination between development partners.



### 3. Methodology

This study focuses on Malawi, the first country to utilize multi-donor aid-mapping, making this an Influential case (Seawright and Gerring 2008). This style of case is highly appropriate when seeking theoretical confirmation, the aim of this research. As aid-mapping is new, reviews of archives or secondary sources were not appropriate or possible for this research, necessitating travel to the implementation site for the collection of primary data. The empirical evidence in this thesis is derived from interviews conducted during my research trip to Malawi from 22 April to 8 May 2014. The interview method was selected as it is the best option for illuminating decision making processes, challenges, and experiential facts related to an occupation, in this case development workers (Littig 2008). The sample consists of 15 interviews<sup>1</sup>, including 13 individuals (two interviewees provided information in two different capacities, firstly on behalf of their organization and secondly on behalf of the Mzuzu Civil Society Network). The interviews were conducted in Lilongwe District, Nkhata Bay District, and Mzimba District with actors stationed in these districts at their places of work. Nkhata Bay and Mzimba districts were selected based on the willingness of Peace Corps contacts in these areas to host me. As there are Peace Corps volunteers imbedded in each district, this sampling was fully randomized.

The majority of interviews (11) were conducted using a set list of questions (see Appendix B) to determine the experience of the development partners in terms of coordination and map usage. As some interviewees were elites, those interviews tended to take a more semi-structured form. Face-to-face interviews were selected partly due to the limited technological capacity for long-distance communication, and partly for the advantages of spontaneous responses and the

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<sup>1</sup>In addition to the interviews conducted in Malawi, I conducted a number of initial fact finding interviews with two employees of the World Bank's Open Aid Partnership and one employee of Development Gateway. These interviews were valuable in providing me with background information on the topic which allowed me to formulate my research and therefore must be considered to have an influence on the outcome, yet the interviews had no influence upon the findings.

development of rapport to facilitate openness on a sensitive issue (Opdenakker 2006). One development partner, however, agreed to respond only through email.

The sample was obtained through a variety of methods. In Lilongwe District, the sample was selected through a list of the Ministry of Finance's contact points. I contacted at random and interviewed with every individual that agreed to speak with me and was available during the research period.

In Nkhata Bay and Mzimba, I utilized a snowball method where the initial interviewees connected me to other potential interviewees. An additional four interviews were conducted with experts. I conducted two interviews within the Mzuzu Civil Society Network (the Chairperson and Secretary) and two interviews with those in charge of the AMP within the MoF.

Though only donors (bilateral and multilateral aid agencies) and some large INGOs are currently reporting to the AMP, I also interviewed development partners that are not currently reporting to the AMP, but may report later as the project develops. This decision was made in order to test whether or not there had been any "trickle down" of coordination information from the larger development partners to their implementing development partners (local development actors) as well as to gain a wider perspective of coordination problems.

### ***3.1 Validity***

The Malawian culture tends to focus on honor and developing relationships. These two elements lead to interactions which rely less on a Western idea of accuracy and focus heavily on positives. This is heightened in their interactions with outsiders, as they want to make sure that guests feel welcome and are not burdened with negative thoughts. In an attempt to elicit less cushioned answers, I emphasized to interviewees that my goal was an evaluation of the mapping tool rather than of their organizations and highlighted that criticism was useful. While this may

have led interviewees to be more forthcoming about the true limitations of the aid-mapping tool's utility and the problems they face in coordinating with other development partners, my impression is that the results may still be more indicative of the aid-mapping tool's utility than the reality.

As with any study drawing upon interviews, the validity is decreased by interviewer bias.<sup>2</sup> In response to the issues of validity, I will draw modest conclusions to avoid overstating the impact of the aid-mapping tool.

### ***3.2 Reliability***

In all cases, the sample is likely biased towards greater coordination than average as the lack of response from contact points may have resulted from embarrassment over lack of coordination as they were informed in the initial email of the nature of the interview, and those people I contacted through the snowball method clearly had a stronger connection to those in the earlier other organizations than those that were not mentioned and could be more prone to coordination due to stronger relationships. The interviewees contacted in Lilongwe using the MoF's contact points may have increased the bias in terms of finding evidence of knowledge of the aid-mapping tool, as they would all be familiar with the AMP to be listed as a contact point. However, as a contact point exists for each donor in Malawi, it was actually quite a randomized sample as I was in fact choosing from a population.

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<sup>2</sup> This bias was likely greater with interviews performed in Nkhata May District where the concepts of coordination were as not familiar to interviewees. In these cases, I proffered some examples of coordination efforts which may have biased the results towards confirmation.

## 4. Analysis

This chapter will firstly present the relevant background information. This will be followed by a discussion of the coordination variable and a delineation of the challenges into elements which are beyond the realm of the aid-mapping tool's impact, and those which may be improved. Next, the aid-mapping tool utility tracing will help to identify how the map it currently being utilized by development partners and the impact this is having upon coordination efforts. Finally, I will present the factors which interviewees believe are inhibiting the successful utilization of the mapping tool.

### ***4.1 The Malawian Context***

As the state of aid in Malawi, the government directed coordination efforts, and recent events have all influenced the perception of aid coordination in Malawi, they have also influenced the research results.

#### **4.1.1 Aid Overview**

In the period of 2010 to 2013, Malawi's population grew from 15 million to over 16 million ("Malawi Country Report" 2013). This rapid growth rate has led to a significant decline in gross national income (GNI) per capita, which was estimated at 320 dollars in 2012 ("Malawi Country Report" 2013), meaning that the average Malawian lives on less than a dollar a day. These poverty levels have attracted the attention of donors. The amount of aid delivered to Malawi has been steadily increasing, with external donor assistance accounting for 28.4% of the GNI in 2012 ("Malawi Country Report" 2013). Malawi's donors have been increasing their emphasis upon general budget support since the 1990s ("Malawi Country Case Study Question and Answer Matrix" 2011).

Aid flows were disrupted briefly in 2011, when the government refused to accept the conditionalities of loans and devalue its currency to reflect its true exchange rate. The

government backed down after public outrage over the failure to accept the donor's terms led to demonstrations and unrest, and accepted the donors' terms (Wroe 2012).

#### **4.1.2 Government Directed Coordination**

The aid-mapping tool addition to the AMP is just one among many efforts on behalf of the Malawi Government to encourage donor coordination. The Debt and Aid Management Division (DAD) is housed in the MoF and is responsible for the management of foreign aid. One of the four units within the DAD is the Development Assistance Coordination Unit (DACU).

DACU has helped to coordinate domestic High Level Forum meetings, which call together both government officials and development partners to discuss aid coordination. Sixteen Sector Working Groups (SWGs) were formulated in 2008 to facilitate sector coordination among development partners working in the same sectors, however these meet extremely rarely. A more successful initiative has been the creation of two development partner dialogue groups which comprise of heads of missions and heads of corporations and meet frequently, approximately monthly ("Final Report of the End of Project Evaluation of the Development Assistance Coordination Unit Project" 2011, 28).

At the local level, District Executive Committees (DECs) within District Councils are charged with the task of creating and implementing District Development Plans (Chiweza 2010, 42). The DECs are seen by most development partners to be in charge of coordination on the local level, in accordance with their mandate, yet they seem to be functioning at a minimal level. A study by Chiweza (2010, 43) found that most members of the DECs did not even have access to copies of the District Development Plans. Their meetings tend to be rare and irregular.

Development partners wishing to begin a new program are required to submit a proposal to the relevant DEC. The DECs are supposed to play a role in preventing overlap. However, none of the local development actors I interviewed indicated that programs or activities had been redirected by the DECs. Rather, proposal submission is seen as more of an approval process than a consultation. Furthermore, development partner representatives generally only attend meetings when they have a request to be approved, indicating a lack of ongoing communication facilitation by the DECs.

#### **4.1.3 Cashgate Scandal**

While the government has been making important strides towards improving development partner to development partner coordination, recent events have degraded the trust and relationship between the government and development partners. Malawi's "Cashgate" scandal broke in September when a government clerk was found carrying 300,000 dollars in his vehicle and a treasury official was mysteriously murdered the following week (O. 2014). The combination of events led to suspicion of widespread corruption. The government called for an audit, which concluded that the scandal was worse than anticipated. The total amount of money expected to have been stolen or misappropriated for the purpose of personal gain over the course of only 6 months was reported at almost 13.7 billion KW (35 million dollars) ("National Audit Office Malawi: Report on Fraud and Mismanagement of Malawi Government Finances" 2014).

The scandal resulted in a high level of mistrust of government officials among both citizens and donors. Following the scandal's break, the UK withdrew 150 million dollars in budgetary support (Kaufman 2014), while a number of other donors suspended, decreased, or threatened the withdrawal of aid in general. Donors are coming to favor program based support in which their agencies play a larger role in deciding where and how money is spent (Kaufman 2014).

Though this stands in contrast to the aid alignment and country ownership principles of the Paris Declaration, donors are unwilling to give money only to watch it be squandered by corrupt officials.

## ***4.2 Factors Inhibiting Success of Coordination***

### **4.2.1 Factors Mapping Could Address**

Interviewees noted that a lack of information hindered coordination efforts. As information sharing should be improved by the aid-mapping tool, the following issues could be improved through its utilization.

#### **4.2.1.1 Lack of Information about Other Actors**

Donors and large INGOs are called together to government led meetings where they discuss challenges as well as provide updates on their work. Though the updates are often vague and refer to project titles and district or even regional locations, the meetings are quite meaningful as they provide at least a general understanding of the sectors and locations in which each organization is working (INGO1, BA1). This allows development partners to select partners for consortiums. While this is the system that donors and IOs have been using for a number of years, it is not necessarily the most effective. An interviewee said that in choosing consortium partners,

"Relationships matter." (INGO1).

"We cannot avoid duplication unless we know what others are doing" (CSN2).

He noted that this knowledge was rare.

One actor highlighted the interconnectedness and interdependence of the sectors. He noted that while it is possible to keep up with the activities of a few other development partners within the specific sector in which one's own organization is involved, it can be very difficult to keep up

with cross-sector development. The Malawi Government has been focusing on improving sector wide communication with the creation of their sector wide approach groups, but there is limited information flow between these groups.

“It can often be challenging to know about the work in these other thematic areas. While we are mindful of the activities of WFP, there can be many contributing factors to food insecurity such as education yet we don’t know as much about activities in this area.” (MA2)

#### **4.2.1.2 Lack of Local Level Information Sharing with Decision Makers**

The complex aid delivery structure makes information sharing difficult.

"The one who has got the money commands the tune." (INGO1)

While large IOs have some money to implement programs and projects of their own volition, the majority of their work is carried out in response to a donor call. Small NGOs and other implementing partners have little or no funding to carry out the activities that they feel are most needed. Donor calls also specify the location, leaving very little decision making to actors down the chain.

It is of course decision makers who are most in need of coordination information and yet it is local actors who are most aware of opportunities to partner with other aid organizations as well as the potential for overlapping projects.

“Sometimes the organizations send overlapping instructions.” (INGO2)

One interviewee noted that he had become aware of an issue of overlapping projects and had tried to notify his superiors, but nothing had been done as a result of his report (INGO3).

This type of attempt may be rare as field implementers tend to see overlap as threatening to their jobs.



“Last year we were told of phasing out because of other organizations now operating here.” (INGO2)

Most donors tend to have centralized operations, and local actors, as described above, often feel that their insight is not heard or taken into account, though donors seem to assume that relevant information will trickle up.

“As the largest development partner in Malawi, USAID maintains one central office location. However, USAID’s implementing partners and partner field offices are located throughout the country.” (BA2)

This assumption that local needs are heard by decision makers is challenged by many at the local level.

“We have got our ears on the ground, not the donors, so they do not know as well as we do what is really happening and what the needs are....constant and consistent communication is necessary but it is not always what happens.” (INGO1)

"We need decentralized motion of the whole system." (CSN2)

He explained that decisions made at a national level fail to take into account regional and district level realities. Rather than funding being disbursed at the national level, he believes it would be more effective if the money was disbursed to organizations with local expertise.

#### **4.2.1.3 Competition**

As INGOs and NGOs compete for limited funding, and all development partners are interested in producing results which will increase funding in the future or open up more opportunities, there can be a reluctance to cooperate as other organizations can be viewed as opponents rather than partners. This theme has been covered extensively in existing literature, and is clearly a persistent issue in Malawi.

"Sometimes you encroach on others' mandates just to show results." (MA2)

“I cannot deny that there is competition among us.” (INGO1)

In addition to a sense of competition, some organizations may feel that they are hindered through joint activities. Many actors felt that partnerships led to their organizations' goals being compromised.

“As much as we are all UN, we all have different goals and strategic objectives which can make coordination difficult.” (MA2)

“Partnerships involve a compromise of ideologies.” (BA1)

Even conscious attempts to coordinate can result in failures when organizations wish to hold claims to projects which are producing impressive results. One interviewee reported that they sought to avoid overlap with another organization which was implementing a nearly identical project by rotating who would carry out the activities each month. This was their solution "to avoid duplication" (INGO4). Instead of selecting one organization to do the work, they split it so that both could report on the project. This does not appear to be an efficient use of resources. One of the major benefits of harmonization is reducing transaction costs, yet this appears to increase costs as both organizations must have staff and resources on retainer until “their month” comes around.

Nedovic-Budic and Pinto (2000) would likely suggest that the aid-mapping tool could actually assuage the competitive spirit by highlighting the shared goals among development partners. This sentiment appears to be echoed by the chairperson of an NGO network who noted,

"If the NGOs come together the competition will be lessened." (CSN2)

Though without a baseline of competition perception, I cannot judge whether or not it has been influenced by the aid-mapping tool, it is possible that increased sharing will improve the sense of unity and yield greater coordination.

## 4.2.2 Factor Mapping Cannot Address

There are challenges that prevent coordination which will exist regardless of increased information sharing. In Malawi, a major challenge is working with and through the government.

### 4.2.2.1 Government Barriers

Cooperation may be hindered by government registration requirements. While small CBOs and NGOs are able to receive local operational licenses, in order to be eligible for larger sums of funding through the government to implement programs, the organizations must pay a substantial sum of money and travel to Blantyre (a southern city) to receive their license (CSN1, CSN2). Small organizations lack the resources to take on this project. NGO1 explained that in his own experience the process took months and multiple trips.

“How does a local NGO access money? People try to write proposals, but it is difficult.”  
(CSN2)

Development partners that are not licensed are excluded from government sponsored coordination efforts and dialogues as they are not officially recognized. While government led registration can be seen as in keeping with the country ownership principle, this effort is undermining coordination efforts as many organizations are excluded from activities due to lack of resources. Those which can afford to register still expend limited resources through the high transaction costs involved in registration.

Some organizations noted confusion over which ministry they should approach for coordination assistance or information. MA2 noted that the MoF was an inappropriate Ministry to be in charge of the mapping effort and suggested that it would be better situated within the Ministry of Development Planning and Coordination (MoDPaC), a sentiment echoed by those close to the project within the Government. While the mapping was a natural extension of the AMP as an additional tool available through Development Gateway, and the MoF is of course the natural

Ministry to deal with money entering the country, the additional functions provided by the map are more relevant for the MoDPaC.

When asked which areas of the country were in need of assistance yet were not receiving as much as they should, one interviewee responded "it might be a political question." This sentiment was repeated by the majority of interviewees, who, unprompted, mentioned mistrust of government aid allocation. One interviewee reported that he felt that government directed development strategies tended to favor certain regions over others because of their political allegiances. Some expressed that they believed that aid coordination was not the responsibility of aid actors but rather the responsibility of government, yet every mention of why government should ideally be the coordinating player was followed by a reason or anecdote to express why they felt that the government could not be expected or trusted to coordinate aid in a way that would ensure that people benefit equally.

“Well, it is the District Council that should advise us where to go.” (NGO2)

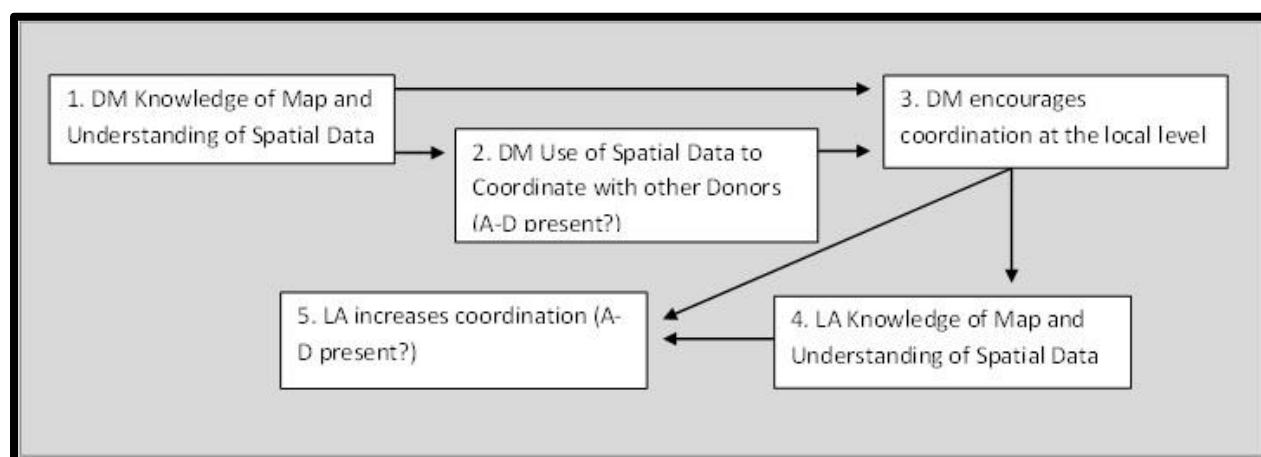
The conflict between aid effectiveness and country ownership is clearly identified. Furthermore, many felt that the government could not even be considered a reliable development partner, much less a leader, as their own programs were unreliable. They said they could not trust that the government would complete promised activities or projects.

#### ***4.3 Addressing Coordination Challenges: Aid-Mapping Tool Utility Tracing***

In order to determine the extent to which development partners are utilizing the aid-mapping tool to address coordination challenges, this utility tracing provides insight into the processes that lead to coordination. While information sharing is important, it is equally essential that this information is utilized. Figure 5, repeated here, shows the theoretical ways in which the map can

be utilized by both DMs (Development Partner Management) and LAs (Local Development Actors). Each step was tested through targeted interview questions.

**Figure 5: Theoretical Process of Map Influence on Coordination Efforts**



*Source: author generated*

#### 4.3.1 Step One: DM Knowledge

All of the development partner managers (donor or large INGOs which utilize implementing partners) had knowledge of the map's existence. Three of the five DMs demonstrated knowledge of the aid map features and spatial data which indicated familiarity or previous use of the map, one admitted to never actually seeing the map, and one claimed to have seen the map yet lacked familiarity and did not have knowledge that would indicate previous use.

This result was anticipated by MOF1 and MOF2 who noted that all donor development partners were aware of the existence of the aid-mapping tool as it was built in to their reporting requirements.

#### 4.3.2 Step Two: DM Coordination

Though each of the development partner managers were involved in some form of coordination efforts, it is not clearly attestable to the aid-mapping tool. Half of the interviewees claimed that

they were already integrating the aid-mapping tool into their strategic planning. They all claimed that they intended to use the tool in future planning.

There was significant variation in the impact of the aid-mapping tool on the different forms of coordination (repeated here from the Introduction):

*A. Checking for Program/ Activity Overlap*

*B. Joint Efforts*

*C. Increasing National Spread of Programs/ Activities*

*D. Increasing Local Spread of Programs/ Activities*

When expressing how they believed the tool would be useful in future planning, increasing national spread (C) was mentioned by two of the four development partners, increasing joint activities (B) was mentioned by one of the four development partners, and checking for overlap (A) was mentioned by one of the development partners. None of the development partners mentioned increasing local spread (D) as a potential benefit of the mapping tool, probably due to the fact that most reporting is not currently done in a way that provides enough specificity from enough donors to determine where programs are within a district.

#### **4.3.3 Step Three: DM Encouragement to LA**

None of the development partner managers has passed on information about the aid-mapping tool to implementing partners. Each of them acknowledged that coordination among implementing partners would be beneficial and one mentioned an internally proposed policy to place emphasis on local coordination. However, there is no indication that this policy formulation was related to the aid-mapping tool.

#### 4.3.4 Step Four: LA Knowledge

Unsurprisingly, none of the local development actors had heard of or seen the aid-mapping tool.

#### 4.3.5 Step Five: LA Coordination

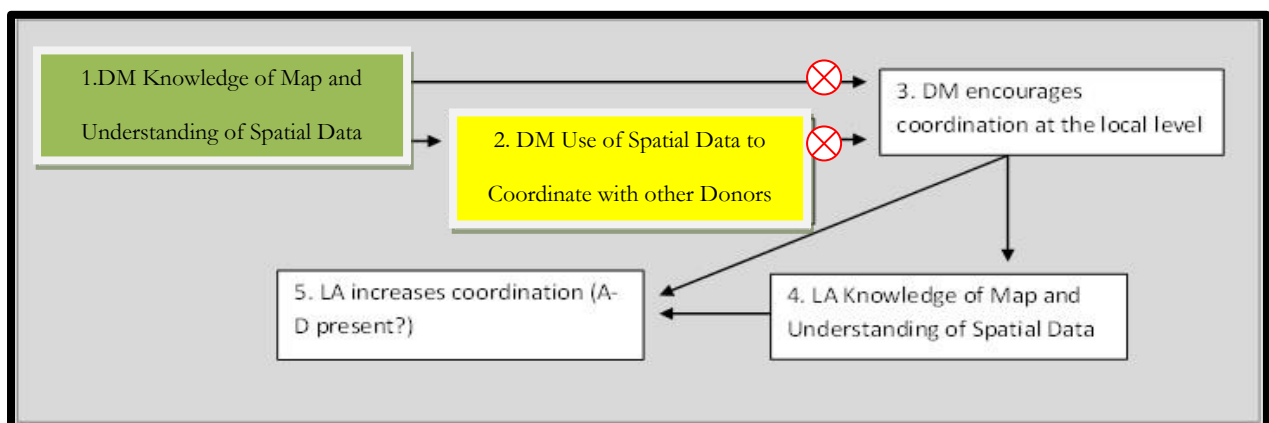
None of the local development actors reported specific directives or initiatives from development partner management to increase coordination.

With no influence of the map, their coordination activities can be seen as a baseline. However, it should be noted that three of the five local development actors noted that decisions made at higher levels increasingly tended to favor joint programs and activities (though as they did not note any specific changes within the past year, this again is not attributable to the map.)

Of the five local development actors, four reported joint programs or activities (B) were implemented within the past year, although it was only common for two. Two reported knowledge of changing local programmatic or activity spread (C). One reported knowledge of changing national spread (D), though two said that this could be happening with their organizations without their knowledge. None of the local actors reported attempts to avoid overlapping activities.

#### 4.3.6 Tracing Results

**Figure 6: Evidenced Process of Map Influence on Coordination Efforts as of May 2014**



*Source: author generated*

The data shows strong evidence of Step 1, Knowledge of Map and Understanding of Spatial Data, and indicates that some organizations have moved into Step 2, Use of Spatial Data to Coordinate with Other Donors. The data also supports the conclusion that Steps 3, 4, and 5 have not yet occurred. While any conclusions as to the future process are tenuous, some development partner managers noted that they intended to encourage local level coordination in the future. The chances of this occurring are likely to increase if INGOs, NGOs, foundations, and other development partners are included in aid-mapping efforts.

Despite the rather limited progress thus far, there is evidence that the aid-mapping tool is being appreciated as a significant improvement in information sharing by development partners.

“We already know the other organizations that exist and what kind of work they do. The added benefit of the AMP Map is in the rising awareness of where their activities are.” (BA1)

“The AMP is not the only thing I use to know about other organizations, I know already with the map and the AMP.... But the tool helps you to know what is really going on. You would eventually start seeing trends that may show if needs are really being responded to.” (INGO1)

“There are areas that are getting, but aren’t getting enough.” (MA2)

It can be hard, he noted, to know where these areas are.

“Some areas have been labeled as needy, and we think about them, but then we forget about the others.” (MA2)

The aid-mapping tool can help ensure that development partners are more aware of need areas through the overlay of information such as poverty headcount.

#### ***4.4 Evidence of Coordination***

Christian Aid reported that most of their programs are no longer implemented individually. Large donor organizations will send out calls for applications for a program or project they wish to fund. Large INGOs now tend to respond with a joint application involving multiple IOs



known as a consortium or basket funding. They seek partners who have skills and programmatic experience that complement their own, as well as those who have experience and connections to specific geographic locations, in order to satisfy the donors' calls. This trend is becoming increasingly common.

"We cannot be everywhere and we cannot be a jack of all trades [...] In consortiums we can draw from the combined skills and strengths and operational areas of partners so it is easy to see the value addition." (INGO1)

MA2 mentioned a project that they are jointly coordinating with the UNDP, UNICEF, and WFP and noted that each organization was helping to tackle the issue of food security from a different perspective using different activities. However, there was consensus that activities in the same sectoral and geographic area can be problematic if not operated through a joint proposal. In joint proposals or consortiums,

"Right from the beginning it was coordinated." (MA2)

CSN2 explained that many NGOs carry out very similar or identical work due to a lack of understanding of the gaps. Through access to information about other development partners, organizations could come to specialize. These specializations, along with increased communication, could cause a larger number of organizations to offer joint bids for programs. These consortiums could allow smaller NGOs and CBOs to appear more competitive.

One interview demonstrated a desire to fill gaps and avoid overlap.

"There are a number of focus areas associated with [the organization], but they have chosen to focus exclusively on forestry within this traditional authority as the other sectors already have involvement from other NGOs." (INGO3)

One interview demonstrated efforts to overcome fragmentation.

"Two years ago we had 36 implementing partners, now we have only 27. Our Country Strategic Plan had eight objectives, but it was decided that we should reduce those to

five. We made a strategic decision to narrow our focus and provide more targeted money. With too many projects and partners you can get sliced too thin.” (BA1)

#### ***4.5 Factors Inhibiting Success of Mapping Tool***

##### **4.5.1 Reluctance to Report**

Donors are technically required to send in monthly updates to the AMP, however their reports are often "not comprehensive or timely." (MOF2) This seems to be due in large part to a lack of understanding of the importance of reporting and a shortage of resources.

“USAID provides quarterly disbursement reports to the AMP. However, USAID does not send in geocoded data...This is time consuming and USAID does not have the staff to devote to this data process.” (BA2)

“We are trying to bring in a new hire so that we can work more with the AMP.” (BA1)

Additionally, a collective action problem appears to be a major hindrance to success. Organizations do not feel that they should report because they cannot rely upon others to report to an extent that the tool would become beneficial to them.

“I think many organizations are wondering ‘what’s in it for me?’” (INGO1)

##### **4.5.2 Incomplete Information**

The MoF is planning to address this issue by expanding the AMP and aid-mapping tool by including other development actors in reporting instead of the traditional donors. They plan to begin collecting information from implementing partners and foundations. They note that without this they are “missing a large portion of the aid that is flowing into the country, for example the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.” (MOF1)

However, the most important missing element from the perspective of most organizations was government aid.

“Without the government reporting, we are just looking at half a picture.” (BA1)

“We need more budget tracking of government money; we need to know where that money is being allocated.” (INGO1)

Even those that are currently asked to report are reluctant to do so, which leaves many organizations with the impression that they cannot accurately draw conclusions by the information available from the map.

“As a project planner, I’m excited, but it hasn’t really been rolled out. Not many people know about it.” (MA2)

He was aware of the map yet had not bothered to view it as his impression was that there was not enough reporting from other organizations to make it useful as of yet. The view was echoed by others.

“The AMP needs to be updated as regularly as possible and also cover as many players, sectors, data and information as possible so that one can also analyze the development impacts of development projects...” (BA2)

#### **4.5.3 Intra-Organizational Communication Breakdown**

In one organization that I interviewed, the contact focal point for the AMP was able to answer questions related to reporting but could not provide any information regarding the activities of the organization as his role was in administration and finance (MA1). Within the same organization, I spoke with the National Project Coordinator (MA2), who provided a wealth of information about their efforts to improve coordination yet had never seen the AMP map.

Those at the MoF seem to believe that this is not an isolated problem but rather widespread in the donor community as the AMP is seen as an administrative duty rather than a planning tool.

Often times the contact point with the AMP is an entry or middle level employee who has little or no influence on decision making (MOF1, MOF2). While these individuals clearly access the portal regularly and are aware of the information it provides, they are limited to inputting data to

the system instead of utilizing the potential outputs. As their job description tends not to involve planning or organizing, the information is not utilized by those most familiar with it.

“The push has to come from management,” (MOF2)

However, the management is not even aware that the tool and information exists and therefore cannot demand it. As the decision makers are largely unaware of the tool, yet know of the reporting requirements, they tend to view the AMP as an administrative duty and a box to be checked rather than an instrument which can be used in planning.

"Donors view the AMP as a requirement instead of a tool; they report and forget about it." (MOF1)

MA1 reported that he has never been approached by colleagues who were interested in viewing or utilizing the map.

“We are not using the AMP, we are just reporting to it.” (MA1)

Furthermore, people tend not to stay in these jobs for a long time so that they would develop an understanding of the platform and map’s potential as a planning tool.

“People change too often so there is no follow up.” (MOF1)

#### **4.5.4 Slow Response Time**

Donors and IOs tend to develop country specific Strategic Plans that last for a period of five years. While there may be some modifications to the objectives and sectoral focus areas during this five year period, they report that the changes are more "tweaking" (BA1), they tend not to involve large programmatic shifts.

As the Mapping element has only been widely available and known for a year, some organizations report that they plan to use it when the time comes, yet thus far they have not integrated it into planning.

#### **4.5.5 Lack of Geocoding Specificity**

Many programs are taking place at sub district levels, although they are reported as located simply within a district. MOF2 reported that ‘location’ is now a required field for donors when reporting to the AMP, but that the majority give broad responses, covering a region or district.

This style of reporting does not capture the true location of support as much of the work done by development partners does not span the entire district but rather is concentrated in traditional authorities or villages.

“We attempt to target the pockets of poverty that exist within the districts.” (INGO1)

This problem will likely continue as long as development partners are asked to report at a program level rather than at an activity level.

#### **4.5.6 Input Difficulties**

Every interviewee who had personal experience with inputting data to the AMP for mapping noted that they found the software difficult to work with, and expressed a desire for more uploading/inputting options.

“To even get to the platform is challenging.” (MA1)

“The AMP system does not permit USAID to upload a mass quantity of geocoded data, but rather expects single entry data points [...] USAID would like to contribute its data to the AMP, however, it is unable to do so in the current data upload process.” (BA2)

#### 4.5.7 Inaccessibility

MOF2 noted that she has been contacted by a number of donors who were utilizing the AMP information in the creation of their strategic plans. Due to technical limitations of the AMP, however, donors are unable to export the map. The only means of utilizing the map feature beyond viewing it online is to screenshot the image, which makes it difficult to use and manipulate into the types of files that donors would want to use in strategic planning meetings. This limitation means that the donors tend to export the database that feeds the map, losing the advantages of the geocoding.

As screenshots can be difficult to manipulate into images, printing is difficult. Unfortunately, this is the only means of sharing information with some local agents who lack internet access.

“When they put things online, it can be great for those with the technology and Wi-Fi, but it does not do much for us.” (CSN1)

This highly limits the utility of the aid map for many local development actors.

## 5. Conclusion

This chapter will highlight some of the most relevant findings. As a major goal of this thesis is offering policy recommendations, I will then make suggestions for a number of actors including the government, Development Gateway, and development partners. Finally, I will propose further research.

### *5.1 Findings*

This study has shown that coordination can be improved through enhancing information sharing through aid-mapping. Development partners lack information about the programs and projects that are being undertaken by others, especially those who are operating in different thematic or sectoral areas. Local development actors generally have the greatest amount of knowledge about the activities going on in their area as well as the needs, yet this information is not often transferred to those in decision making positions. The aid-mapping tool can help transfer this information. Development partners in Malawi, like those studied by Mascarenhas and Sandler (2006), feel that their organizations compete with one another. Nedovic-Budic and Pinto (2000), however, noted that this sentiment can be lessened by the very act of sharing information.

Though the aid-mapping tool can help improve coordination, government barriers will likely persist regardless of the utilization of the aid-mapping tool. Many development partners noted that the government should be directing coordination efforts in keeping with the effectiveness principle of country ownership. However, confirming the reluctance of Faust (2010) and others to embrace this principle, they felt that they could not rely on the government to coordinate in an efficient and equitable manner. Local development actors face the challenge of being purposefully excluded from government led coordination activities due to their failure to register with the state which is often caused by a lack of resources.

In order for these challenges to be addressed through the aid-mapping tool, the information it provides needs to be utilized by development partners. While development partner managers are aware of the map's existence, not all demonstrated true familiarity with the mapping tool. Half of the development partners indicated that they were already utilizing the aid-mapping tool in their planning activities to coordinate efforts, and all indicated that they planned to use it in the future. The improved information sharing through the aid-mapping tool is leading to increasing coordination.

The development partners are increasingly attempting to improve coordination through joint activities or consortiums and at least one is actively fighting fragmentation, one of the biggest factors in coordination challenges as explained by Halonen-Akatwijuka (2007) and others. None of the development partner managers had passed on information about or from the aid-mapping tool to local actors, and none of the local actors had ever heard of it. This step appears to have been impaired by the complex structure of the aid delivery system. Despite the lack of aid-mapping tool influence at this level, there is evidence of increasing coordination not caused by the tool at both national and local levels.

There are numerous factors which are inhibiting the successful utilization of the aid-mapping tool. Development partners are reluctant to report as they lack the proper resources and comprehension of the tool. They suffer from a collective action problem where they are hesitant to devote resources and energy if they do not expect follow through from other development partners. Furthermore, the AMP offers incomplete information as the government many development actors including NGOs and foundations are not reporting (although there are plans to integrate these development actors in the future). Many development partners are failing to utilize the information as they view reporting to the AMP as a requirement, often completed by low level staff, instead of a tool to be utilized by the decision makers. As Omran and Van Etten (2007) found, the position of employees impacts their attitude towards information sharing, and



those at lower levels are often unable to see how the information can be beneficial. The decision makers have furthermore failed to actively respond to the information shared through the aid-mapping tools because of rigid long term strategic goals. There is indication that many development partners plan to utilize the map when the time comes to create a new strategic plan, which tends to happen about every five years. The utility of the map to help with strategic planning is currently limited by a lack of geocoding specificity as many development partners are reporting at district levels. Some development partners find it difficult to input information and many are struggling to access the data which is only available online and cannot easily be printed. These factors must be addressed so that the aid-mapping tool can be better utilized by development partners and lead to an improvement in coordination efforts.

Ultimately, it can be concluded that as of May 2014, the aid-mapping tool is well known to development partner management and some are utilizing the information it provides to improve coordination efforts.

## ***5.2 Recommendations***

The MoF and the MoDPaC should share the responsibilities related to the aid-mapping tool. While the MoF may be better suited to ensure that reporting is done, the MoDPaC should help donors understand how to utilize the aid-mapping tool's output.

Efforts should continue to sensitize development partner management about the utility of the aid-mapping tool. They should focus on the role of the AMP as a tool rather than a reporting requirement. MoDPaC directed efforts may help assist in the necessary change of mindset.

When information is aggregated it becomes less useful for planning. This is true for both overlay information, such as the poverty headcount, which is available through the mapping and considered in planning, and the location level. While some programs may truly cover an entire

district or region, most programs are in fact limited to specific villages. The AMP should include a drop-down menu within each district which requires the selection of relevant villages or at least traditional authorities.

Information sharing is the function through which coordination can increase. However, in the current system, only programs and mass disbursements are reported instead of activity information. Activity level mapping would allow development partners to make more informed decisions regarding potential partners, avoiding overlap, and increasing local aid spreads.

While the MoF saw value in reporting at the activity level, MOF2 expressed reluctance for this reporting to be integrated into the AMP as she feared it would further discourage donors from reporting. While she suggested that the related Ministries could individually collect this information, she felt that this was beyond the current scope of the project. Separate reporting, however, increases transaction costs.

The MoF should move forward with the plan to involve a greater number of development partners in the aid-mapping efforts. Furthermore, the maps showing government programs and projects should be opened up and integrated or linked to the aid-mapping tool.

In order to overcome the challenge of the development partner's reluctance to report, the government could encourage reporting by publishing a list of which partners are keeping up with reporting requirements. As more development partners feel pressured to report, the collective action problem will diminish.

Reporting at the time of planning may help to overcome the challenge of time inconsistency which will likely develop as the long term strategic plans begin to utilize aid-mapping information.

Malawi should improve the registration process for development partners through making the license cheaper and increasing the number of issuing offices.

Development Gateway should address the input difficulties as soon as possible to avoid a situation where development partners become overly frustrated by the program. A printing function would allow development partners to access the information beyond computer screens and utilize it in planning meetings.

### ***5.3 Future Research***

While this study has shown that information sharing through aid-mapping can improve coordination, future research may examine if development partners are utilizing the aid-mapping tool as theorized beyond Step 2. Continuous reevaluation will give indications of the speed of impact by tracing the point at which they proceed to a new step in the framework.

Spatial variance could also be utilized in future research by examining the utilization process and coordination progress in other countries which have recently adopted aid-mapping. This will be particularly useful as it will largely speak to the influence of government on coordination and utilization facilitation. As more cases are examined, the generalizability will improve substantially.

## Appendix A: List of Interviews and Interview Codes

*Name, Position, Development Partner, Partner Type, Location*

NGO1- Mofaat Phiri, Director, Life Skills Awareness Development Organization, NGO,

Mzimba District

NGO2- Anonymous, District Manager, Anonymous, NGO, Mzimba District

INGO1- Phiri Macduff, Country Manager, Christian Aid, Large INGO, Lilongwe District

INGO2- Master Chirwa, Community Change Agent, World Vision, Large INGO, Nkhata Bay District

INGO3- Anonymous, Field Facilitator, Anonymous, Small INGO, Nkhata Bay District

INGO4- Anonymous, Community Projects Supervisor, Small INGO, Mzimba District

PPP1- Anonymous, Assistant Director, Anonymous, Public Private Partnership, Lilongwe District

BA1- Lawrence Munthali, Monitoring and Evaluation Adviser, Irish Aid, Bilateral Aid, Lilongwe District

BA2- Stephen Menard and colleagues, Program/Project Development, USAID, Bilateral Aid, Lilongwe District: *via email*

MA1- Anonymous, Anonymous, Food and Agriculture Organization, Multilateral Aid, Lilongwe District

MA2- Chesterman Kumwenda, National Project Coordinator, Food and Agriculture Organization, Multilateral Aid, Lilongwe District

MOF1- Magdalena Kouneva, Programme Specialist for MoF in Development Effectiveness and Accountability Programme, UNDP, Ministry of Finance, Lilongwe District

MOF2- Chimvano Thawani, Debt and Aid Officer, Ministry of Finance, Lilongwe District

CSN1- Susan Chitaya, Secretary, Mzuzu Civil Society Network, Aid Network, Mzimba District

CSN2- Mofaat Phiri, Chairperson, Mzuzu Civil Society Network, Aid Network, Mzimba District

## **Appendix B: Sample Interview Questions**

### ***MoF Questions***

What kind of agencies/organizations are required to report to the AMP? How many are there currently reporting? Are NGOs, foundations, corporate donors, government efforts reporting? Is there any plan to include them in the future?

What improvements or changes would you like to see in the AMP map?

Are you doing any monitoring and evaluation on the AMP map? Do you have any indication that coordination is increasing or that aid is being reallocated to areas with greater need or less overlap potential?

### ***Development Partner Management Questions***

How often do you send in updates to the AMP including geocoded/ location information?

How could the map/ AMP be improved?

Which organizations have you partnered with in the past year, and for what kind of activities?

Has the number of joint programs or projects increased in the past year?

Can you tell me about a recent joint program or project and explain what resources your organization provided, and what resources were provided by the partner organization?

Have any of your offices switched to new focus areas or topics in the past year? If so why?

What are some of the difficulties you might face when trying to coordinate with other donors?

Have you shared information from the AMP related to the map with local actors?

How do you encourage coordination at the local level?

### ***Local Development Actors Questions***

Have you heard about or seen the AMP and the aid mapping?

Is the AMP helpful to you?

What other organizations are operating in this area?

How are the activities they do similar or different from your organization's activities?

Has the number of joint programs or projects increased in the past year?

Are you working in any new villages this year that you were not working with before? Why are you working there now?

What are some of the challenges you face when trying to coordinate with other organizations?

*Please contact the author at [amschober@gmail.com](mailto:amschober@gmail.com) if you would like to access the full list of questions.*

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