

Development Project Management Deliverable

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DPMI Module: Two—Social Entrepreneurship and Strategic Partnering

[The following report contextualizes the attached Core Competency Map. First, the report illuminates the organization with which I conducted the attached social entrepreneurial tool, National Initiative for Civic Education. Next, the report clarifies the problem that necessitated the tool's creation. Last, the report evaluates the map and connects it to development project management concepts.]

Organizational Background

On February 1, 1999 the Government of Malawi established the National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE) to increase civic education and adult literacy. With financial support from the European Union, this project added a Namandanje, Machinga branch in 2003. NICE—Namandanje serves residents living in Liwonde, Kawinga, and Nyambi Traditional Authorities (TAs). The total population of these three TAs is 241,886—with 110,658 over eighteen years-old.¹ Ninety percent (90%) of residents belong to two tribes: fifty percent (50%) are *Yao*; forty percent (40%) are *Lomwe*. Over sixty-three percent (63%) of residents are practicing Muslims; thirty-five percent (35%) adhere to various Christian denominations.²

In 2007, when community members advocated for a library, NICE—Namandanje added a rural library to its center. When this rural library opened on 26 December 2007, it became the largest public library in a 64-kilometer radius. Decreasing users' travel time was the library's first major achievement. The library's other major achievements include the following: training twelve board members in library management; providing youth clubs and community based organizations with a meeting space; disseminating informational materials to farmers; and linking residents to district services.

Core Competency Map Rational: Project Feasibility Assessment

When I arrived at Namandanje in August of 2009, NICE—Namandanje's director, Felix Muhala, introduced me to several of the area's community based organizations (CBOs). Mr. Muhala also helped me understand the area's major challenges better. Area residents had limited employment opportunities. Salaried workers were government employees—health professionals, teachers, police officers, or agricultural advisors—or Liwonde National Park employees. Most residents

¹ Machinga District Assembly, "Machinga District Social and Economic Profile 2009-2015," (2009), p. 5.

² Machinga District Assembly, p. 6.

farmed for subsistence: they cultivated rice and cotton for sale and maize and pigeon peas for nourishment. Along with lack of economic opportunities, residents also had poor health indicators. Between 2005 and 2006, for example, there were 12,811 new cases of non-bloody diarrhea, 3,893 cases of dysentery and 4,328 cases of schistosomiasis in the area.³ The area, moreover, had an HIV prevalence rate of 13.3 percent, which is significantly higher than the national average.⁴

Government and NGO employees claimed to be working diligently to reverse these indicators. Although residents saw many government and NGO vehicles passing through their villages, they had yet to see substantial improvements in the area's development. Take water and sanitation for instance. TA Liwonde had, on average, 1 borehole for every 358 residents, a ratio well below the national standard of 1:250. Area schools had one pit-latrine for every 222 students, again well below the 1: 50 national standard.⁵

The aforementioned indicators suggest that social welfare organizations were not delivering services effectively. Community members had, instead, seen numerous examples of graft and corruption by both government and civil society employees. These practices hampered area development. Additionally, social welfare organizations under utilized assets due to lack of knowledge and poor cooperation.

I worked with Mr. Muhala and the NICE—Namandanje staff to determine the root causes of the area's low development results. Lack of useable information was the root cause of two of the problem's main drivers: corruption and poor asset management. Area organizations did not provide a platform for community members to exchange valuable information with each other. Moreover, villagers' inability to provide development workers with feedback—resulting from spatial, financial, and technological barriers—weakened transparency and accountability.

To improve the quality and amount of usable development related information, Mr. Muhala and I designed a two-year project in November of 2009. Upon completing the core competency map, NICE's employees discovered that they could most feasibly help bring about four objectives. First, NICE could increase transparency of development projects occurring in the Namandanje Area by 25 percent before March 2011. Second, this branch could improve institutional asset management capacity of Namandanje community organizations by 2 likert points before March 2011. Third, NICE aimed to double the usage of the Namandanje area's information services before March 2011. Finally, NICE proposed to expand Namandanje CBOs' institutional resource base by 30 percent before March 2011.

Core Competency Map Review: Linkages to Development Project Management

The core competencies map below enabled NICE to articulate key strengths from which to build a project with the latter four objectives.⁶ To create this map, NICE employees first focused on the skills and capabilities that propelled the organization to produce value-creating activities. As the map shows, NICE's competencies encompass its experience with promoting good

³ Machinga District Hospital, "Health Management Information Systems Annual Report," (2006).

⁴ Namandanje Health Center, "HIV Testing and Counseling Clinic Register," (September, 2010)

⁵ Machinga District Water Office, "District Water Point Data Set," (2009).

⁶ Refer to Appendix A for a detailed version of NICE—Namandanje's Core Competency Map

governance and providing library services. NICE—Namandanje employees and key stakeholders believed that these two competencies were the summation of the organization's intellectual capital, skills, and management processes. NICE—Namandanje's key products—posters about good governance and a wide selection of books and pamphlets—and the profile of major end users—community based organizations, small holder farmers, youth, and civil servants—support this belief.

These competencies also distinguish NICE—Namandanje from other organizations operating in the area. NICE—Namandanje's library, location, and building were the major assets that distinguished it from other civil society organizations in the area. The organization correctly saw itself as a hub where other groups go from information and skills training. NICE—Namandanje used these assets to build agecent competencies, particularly first and second teir competencies.

Employees also followed DPMI Module Two's recommendation by fitting adajacent competencies to NICE's mission and partnership attractiveness. Because NICE—Namandanje applied for a Electronic Information for Libraries grant through the Public Library Innovation Fund, its employees saw the use of cutting-edge technologies as a leading practice that would change the landscape in which NICE—Namandanje's worked. They, consequently, chose to list technologically-intensive competenices in Tier Three level competencies.

On a theoritical note, this map lacks a robust set of competencies in each teir. Most teirs have only two or three competencies. I am unsure whether this is a strength or a weakness.

The map does have two clear weaknesses. First, the map lists tier three level competenices that NICE—Namandanje did not have in place during the map's construction. Second, NICE—Namandanje's refusal to elicit input from primary stakeholders proved to be a major process failure. NICE—Namandanje's need to attain external-funding through the Public Library Innovation Fund was the main driver of these weaknesses. NICE—Namandanje's staff and I felt pressured to design a program that would fulfill grant requirements. We, therefore, added third tier competencies that would appeal to the funding sources. Although attracting potential partners may be a valid reason to place preferred competencies at the tier three levels; it is effective if and only if an organization already has some services that speak to said competencies.

The above mentioned weaknesses contributed to the project's downfall. By not involving community members during the design process, NICE—Namandanje failed to generate sufficient community support during the project sensitization phase. Mostly importantly, however, due to external nation-wide finanical pressures, NICE—Namanandaje closed its doors in early 2010.⁷ Recently the Malawi Government took steps to re-establish NICE as a private trust. If and when NICE re-opens, NICE—Namandanje will attempt to seek funding for, and implement, the latter project. I sincerely hope that NICE—Namandanje builds upon the lessons learned from the core competencies map making process.

⁷ NICE's primary funding partner, the European Union, withdrew its financial support due to "poor governance" concerns.

Appendix A: NICE—Namandanje’s Core Competencies Map

