



Republic of Malawi

**ACCELERATING SUSTAINABLE AND CLEAN ENERGY ACCESS
TRANSFORMATION MALAWI PROJECT (ASCENT-MALAWI)**

STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN (SEP)

DECEMBER, 2024

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LIST OF ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADC	Area Developement Committee
AGRMC	Area Grievance Redress Managment Committee
ASCENT-MALAWI	Accelerating Sustainable & Clean Energy Access Transformation Malawi
DEC	Disttrict Executive Committee
DGRMC	District Grievance Redress Managment Committee
EaaS	Energy As A Service
ESCOM	Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi Limited
ESCP	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan
ESOs	Energy Service Operators
ESS	Environmental Social System
ESIA	Environmental and Social Impact Assessment
ESMP	Environmental and Social Management Plan
GoM	Government of Malawi
GRM	Grievance Redress Mechanism
GRMC	Grevance Redress Managment Committee
MDA	Ministries, Deaprtments and Agents
MEPA	Malawi Environmental Protection Agency
MEAP	Malawi Electricity Access Project
MoE	Ministry of Energy
MoFEPD	Ministry of Finance Economic Planning and Development
MoL	Ministry of Lands
MoGCSW	Ministry of Gender Community Development and Social Welfare
MoLGUC	Ministry of Local Government and Unity and Culture
MoNRCC	Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change
MoEd	Ministry of Education
MoH	Ministry of Health
NNNF	Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund
PAP	Project Affected Person
PAYGO	Pay As You Go
PDO	Project Development Objective
PGRMC	Project Grievence Redress Management Committee
PSC	Project Steering Committee
PTC	Project Technical Committee
RP	Resettlement Plan
SEP	Stakeholder Engangement Plan
VDC	Village Development Committee
WGRMC	Workers Grievance Redress Mechanis

1 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background Information

Access to electricity in Malawi is critically low, with only 25.9% of the population having access in 2024¹ of which 11.3% are connected to the national grid, while 14.6% utilize off-grid solutions, which include 4.4% through mini-grids and 10.2% through solar home systems (SHS). This limited access poses significant challenges to economic growth, social development, and quality of life, particularly in rural areas where access rates are alarmingly low.

There is large disparity in access as 56.5% of urban households benefit from electricity supplied by the national grid, compared to a mere 3.8% of rural households. This urban-rural divide highlights infrastructural challenges and a lack of investment in rural electrification initiatives, leaving many communities without reliable energy supply. Gender disparities exacerbate the situation, as approximately 31.2% of households in Malawi are female-headed, yet only 18% of these households have access to electricity. In contrast, 68.8% of households are male-headed, with 29.4% enjoying access to electricity. These disparities can be attributed to socio-economic factors, including limited access to financial resources and social norms that may restrict women's participation in decision-making processes related to energy access.

Encouragingly, there is a growing trend in the adoption of solar home systems (SHS) and Pico Solar Products (PSPs), along with the emerging potential of decentralized mini-grid systems to enhance electricity access. These off-grid technologies play a vital role in providing essential electricity services, enabling families to power lights, charge mobile phones, and run small appliances.

In terms of clean cooking solutions, Malawi incorporates a range of options, including improved cookstoves, electric cooking (e-cooking), biogas, Liquefied Petroleum Gas (LPG), bioethanol, and briquettes or pellets. However, only 2% of households currently utilize clean fuels and technologies for cooking, revealing a significant gap in access to sustainable energy solutions. Traditional cooking methods, such as three-stone fires, remain prevalent, particularly among female-headed households, which tend to rely more on inefficient and often harmful cooking practices. These households face a higher risk of respiratory issues due to smoke inhalation and bear the socio-economic burden of spending more time gathering firewood or purchasing charcoal.

The reliance on traditional biomass fuels contributes to environmental degradation exacerbating climate change impacts. The adoption of cleaner cooking technologies is important not only for health and environmental benefits but also for empowering women and promoting gender equality by reducing their workload and enhancing their well-being.

¹ MTF

As part of the efforts to address these challenges, the Government of Malawi, with support from the World Bank, is preparing the Accelerating Sustainable and Clean Energy Access Transformation (ASCENT) Malawi Project which will focus on increasing access to electricity and clean cooking in the country which will be implemented for 5 years starting in June 2025. The Ministry of Energy (MoE) and Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM) Limited will be the main implementing partners. Under the Ministry of Energy, the project is expected to build upon and scale up the success of the Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund (NNNF), an off-grid Market Development Fund established under the Malawi Electricity Access Project (MEAP)². The ASCENT project will focus on increasing access to electricity and clean cooking energy in the country in all districts except Likoma.

The Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund will serve as a revolving financial mechanism under ASCENT. It will provide loans and results-based financing grants to private sector companies involved in the off-grid solar and clean cooking markets. These companies will sell solar home systems and clean cooking solutions to rural households on a Pay-As-You-Go (PAYGO) basis, allowing customers to pay for energy services incrementally. This approach lowers upfront cost barriers, making clean energy more affordable for low-income households, while ensuring that the financial model remains sustainable.

In addition to household-level interventions, the NNNF under ASCENT project will focus on electrifying rural off-grid public schools and health facilities using solar-powered microgrid systems. These systems will be installed, maintained, and operated by Energy Service Operators (ESOs) under an Energy-as-a-Service (EaaS) model. The ESOs will ensure that the systems remain operational and sustainable over the long term.

An innovative aspect of the ASCENT project is that these solar-powered microgrid systems will not only provide electricity to the public institutions but also to the surrounding communities. Local households and small businesses located near these schools and health facilities will be able to connect to the microgrids, gaining access to reliable and affordable electricity. This is expected to significantly improve local economic activities, enhance the delivery of healthcare and education, and boost the overall well-being of rural populations while making the systems financially sustainable.

The project will also promote the adoption of Tier 4 and above clean cooking technologies by working with companies that provide efficient cooking devices and alternative clean cooking solutions. This initiative aims to reduce reliance on traditional biomass fuels such as firewood and charcoal, which are associated with deforestation, respiratory health issues, and high carbon emissions. By improving access to clean cooking energy, the ASCENT project supports healthier households and contributes to environmental sustainability.

² The Malawi Electricity Access Project (MEAP) is a World Bank funded project aimed at increasing access to electricity in the country through both grid and off-grid solar initiatives. MEAP is part of the Government of Malawi's broader strategy to achieve universal energy access and support economic growth and development. For more information refer to <https://www.energy.gov.mw/>

Overall, the ASCENT project seeks to address energy poverty holistically, combining efforts to expand off-grid electrification with initiatives to improve access to clean cooking technologies. This approach aligns with Malawi's national development goals, including its commitment to achieving universal energy access by 2030 as set out in Malawi National Energy Policy of 2018.

1.2 Justification of the SEP

In alignment with the commitments outlined in the project and in accordance with the World Bank Environmental and Social Standard (ESS) 10 on Stakeholder Engagement and Information Disclosure, the Government of Malawi has developed this stakeholder engagement plan. This plan outlines a comprehensive approach for engaging all relevant stakeholders and addressing compliance issues related to the ESS. The implementing agencies shall provide stakeholders with timely, relevant, understandable, and accessible information, and consult with them in a culturally appropriate manner, which is free of manipulation, interference, coercion, discrimination, or intimidation.

The Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) outlines the timing and methods for engaging stakeholders throughout the project's life cycle, as agreed upon by the Bank and Borrower. It distinguishes between parties directly affected by the project and other interested stakeholders. Additionally, the SEP details how communication with stakeholders will be managed during both project preparation and implementation.

1.3 Objectives of the SEP

This Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) aims to foster coordinated and ongoing engagement with all relevant stakeholders, including affected individuals and interested parties, throughout the project cycle. The purpose of this SEP is to provide a strategy for involving stakeholders in the ASCENT-Malawi, ensuring they understand the project's objectives and have avenues to provide feedback, voice concerns, and contribute to related activities.

The SEP outlines the anticipated stakeholders, their information needs, and the timing and methods for their engagement throughout the project's lifecycle. The key objectives of this stakeholder engagement plan are as follows:

- Identify and implement effective collaboration strategies among project stakeholders.
- Enhance acceptance and participation in project interventions among target beneficiaries.
- Recognize potential barriers to the accelerated implementation of the project and collaboratively address them

2 ASCENT MALAWI PROJECT DESCRIPTION

The Project Development Objective (PDO) for the ASCENT-Malawi is to "rapidly increase the access to energy in a sustainable way." ASCENT Malawi supports the Government of Malawi's National Energy Policy, which aims to increase access to affordable, reliable, sustainable, and modern energy for all. The project contributes to this goal by focusing on grid and off-grid energy solutions, while promoting clean cooking technologies to improve energy security and livelihoods across the country.

The Ministry's project scope is structured around three components that contribute to achieving the PDO. This Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) focuses on project activities under the off-grid component. The remaining components focusing on grid-based electrification, will be implemented by Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM) Limited. Below is a summary of the activities under each component and the expected outcomes:

2.1 Components

2.1.2 *Component 1 – Off-grid Connection through Solar Home Systems*

This component will focus on scaling up the Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund (NNNF), an Off-Grid Market Development Fund established through the Malawi Electricity Access Project (MEAP). The Fund will provide financing opportunities to off-grid solar companies, enabling them to implement solar electrification initiatives in social infrastructure and household-level installations. The NNNF is designed to promote business models that ensure solar systems are affordable and sustainable for operation and maintenance. This component will finance:

- **Installation of solar home systems in off-grid areas** to expand access to electricity for households.
- **Electrification of all off-grid public primary schools** to provide reliable power for improved educational outcomes in rural areas.
- **Electrification of all off-grid health facilities** to enhance healthcare delivery by ensuring reliable electricity in rural health centers, thereby improving medical services and patient outcomes.

2.1.3 *Component 2 –Clean Cooking Solutions*

This component will aim to promote clean cooking solutions by facilitating distribution of Tier 4 and above clean cooking technologies targeting urban households and public institutions. The focus will be introducing modern, energy-efficient cooking technologies such as electric, LPG, or pellet-based cookstoves.

2.1.4 *Component 3 –Technical Assistance and Project Management Support*

This component aims to strengthen Ministry of Energy 's capacity to implement the proposed project in partnership with Ministry of Health and Ministry of Education. (i) technical assistance and capacity building on fund management , monitoring and evaluation of project interventions and their results including management of the national remote monitoring platform; (ii) impact evaluations to build the evidence to inform future energy access projects; (iii) project management support to the multi-sectoral technical team on project management, financial management, procurement, monitoring and evaluation, and environmental and social standards implementation; and (iv) incremental operating costs associated with day-to-day management of the project and for coordination with different sectoral agencies/departments at national, district and local levels; (V) public awareness and project results dissemination including NNNF website management.

2.2 Summary of Potential Environmental and Social Impacts of the Project

During implementation of ASCENT-Malawi activities, it is expected that some environmental and socio-economic impacts will be generated, some of which will be positive while others will be negative. Overall, the ASCENT-Malawi will offer a wide range of environmental and social benefits that contribute to sustainable development and improved quality of life, particularly in rural and underserved areas. Environmentally, the project will help reduce greenhouse gas (GHG) emissions by decreasing reliance on fossil fuels such as kerosene and diesel. Solar Micro-grids, Solar Home Systems and clean cooking technologies play a critical role in mitigating climate change by providing renewable energy alternatives that reduce the carbon footprint of households and social institutions. The promotion of clean cooking stoves will significantly lessen the demand for firewood and charcoal, helping to combat deforestation and protect vital ecosystems. By preserving forests and reducing air pollution, off-grid energy solutions improve overall environmental quality and enhance biodiversity.

The project will improve public health by reducing indoor air pollution, which is a leading cause of respiratory diseases, especially among women and children in rural areas. The electrification of schools and health facilities enhances educational outcomes by providing reliable lighting for extended study hours and access to digital learning tools, while health centers benefit from stable power for essential medical equipment and vaccine refrigeration. Additionally, the project will play a pivotal role in alleviating poverty by fostering new economic opportunities. Solar-powered systems will enable small businesses, such as phone charging stations and cooling services, and electric mobility charging thereby enhancing livelihoods.

Women, in particular, will benefit significantly from the project as clean cooking solutions reduce the time spent gathering firewood, enabling them to pursue education and employment opportunities. Improved access to lighting and energy services enhances security for women and children, reducing the risks associated with gender-based violence. Community development is also strengthened as reliable energy access powers essential services such as water supply systems and agricultural processing units, creating a ripple effect that enhances social cohesion and economic resilience. For vulnerable and remote populations, off-grid energy access addresses the issue of energy exclusion, providing them with equitable opportunities for development.

The project will also enhance community resilience to climate change by offering reliable power for productive use of electricity such as irrigation and water pumping, while also equipping local populations with the skills to operate and maintain renewable energy systems.

The deployment of solar home systems, micro-grid systems and clean cooking technologies, may involve certain social and environmental risks. While large-scale impacts are not anticipated, other environmental and social risks remain relevant. The key social risks include:

1. Labour-related risks associated with the installation and maintenance of solar home systems, micro-grid infrastructure, and clean cooking technologies.
2. Community health and safety risks, particularly concerning the handling, installation, and operation of solar equipment, as well as the safe use and maintenance of clean cooking technologies such as electric, LPG, or pellet-based stoves.
3. Proximity to micro-grids and potential safety concerns related to the installation of off-grid solar systems and clean cooking solutions in densely populated areas.

The environmental potential impacts include:

- Occupational Health and Safety (OHS) risks for workers involved in system installation and maintenance, including those working with clean cooking technologies.
- Waste management challenges, particularly the disposal of batteries, cooking system components, and other electronic or fuel-based waste at the end of their lifecycle.

These impacts are not expected to be irreversible when the proposed mitigation measures or interventions are implemented. The potential impacts are expected to be minor, localized and temporary making these impacts manageable. Most of these risks will be managed by the Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund (NNNF). The ESMS will provide a comprehensive framework to identify, mitigate, and monitor these impacts throughout the project lifecycle, ensuring compliance with national regulations and international best practices.

3 BRIEF SUMMARY OF PLANNED STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

During both the project planning and implementation phase, consultations with stakeholders at community, district and national level will be undertaken. At national and district level, strategic government ministries, departments, non-state actors, Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) will be engaged to draw out lessons learned in the previous project and other similar projects. At local level, communities around proposed project areas and local leaders will be consulted. These stakeholders are expected to provide inputs into the project design/preparation and implementation of ASCENT-Malawi

4 STAKEHOLDER IDENTIFICATION AND ANALYSIS

4.1 Methodology

In order to meet best practice approaches, the project will apply the following principles for stakeholder engagement:

- i. **Openness and life-cycle approach:** Public consultations for the project(s) will be arranged during the whole life cycle, carried out in an open manner, free of external manipulation, interference, coercion, or intimidation.
- ii. **Informed participation and feedback:** Information will be provided to and widely distributed among all stakeholders in an appropriate format; opportunities are provided for communicating

stakeholder feedback, and for analysing and addressing comments and concerns.

- iii. **Inclusiveness and sensitivity:** Stakeholder identification is undertaken to support better communications and build effective relationships. The participation process for the projects is inclusive. All stakeholders at all times are encouraged to be involved in the consultation process. Equal access to information is provided to all stakeholders. Sensitivity to stakeholders' needs is the key principle underlying the selection of engagement methods. Special attention is given to vulnerable groups that may be at risk of being left out of project benefits, particularly women, the elderly, persons with disabilities, displaced persons, and migrant workers and communities, and the cultural sensitivities of diverse ethnic groups.
- iv. **Affected parties and other interested parties:** The WB ESS 10 recognizes the following categories of stakeholders:
 - Affected Parties
 - Other Interested parties and
 - Disadvantaged / vulnerable individuals or groups

Affected Parties are those likely to be affected by the ASCENT Malawi project because of environmental and social impacts or potential risks to their physical environment, health, security, cultural practices, well-being, or livelihoods among others. These stakeholders may include local communities, individuals, or groups or households' beneficiaries most likely to observe/feel changes from environmental and social impacts of the project.

The Interested Parties refer to individuals, groups, or organizations with an interest in the ASCENT Malawi Project. These may include government ministries and agencies, the private sector, civil society or local organisations, women's organizations and shop owners. Table 1 provides list of ASCENT-Malawi stakeholders at National, District and Community level according to project components.

It is also important to understand project impacts and whether they may disproportionately fall on disadvantaged or vulnerable individuals or groups, who often do not have a voice to express their concerns or understand the impacts of a project.

Table 1: List of ASCENT-Malawi Stakeholders at National, District and Community level according to projects components

NO	COMPONENT	COMPONENT DESCRIPTION	STAKEHOLDERS	LEVEL
1	Off-grid Connection through Solar Home Systems (SHS)	The Fund will provide financing opportunities to off-grid companies, enabling them to implement solar electrification initiatives in social infrastructure and household-level installations.	Project Affected Parties <i>Direct Affected Parties:</i> Targeted solar electrification initiatives of social infrastructure and household-level installations <i>Indirectly Affected Parties:</i> Area Development Committees, Traditional Leaders, CSOs, CBOs, Other Interested Parties Other Interested Parties District Council Members, DEC, NGOs/CSOs Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund	Community Community District National
2	Clean Cooking Solutions	The Project will promote clean cooking by distributing Tier 4 and above technologies to urban households and public institutions	Project Affected Parties <i>Direct Affected Parties:</i> Targeted users of clean cooking technologies at households and institutions <i>Indirectly Affected Parties:</i> Area Development Committees, Traditional Leaders, CSOs, CBOs, Other Interested Parties Other Interested Parties District Council Members, DEC, NGOs/CSOs	Community Community District
3	Technical Assistance and Project Management Support	Will finance capacity building of Ministry of Energy to strengthen its capacity to implement the project	Project Affected Parties <i>Direct Affected Parties:</i> Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education, Off-grid companies <i>Indirectly Affected Parties:</i> District Health Management committee, PTA, SMC and Traditional Leaders Other Interested Parties District Council Members, DEC, NGOs/CSOs Ministry of Energy, Ministry of Health, Ministry of Education	National Community District National

Disadvantaged / vulnerable individuals or groups: While the project envisages to transform different communities and create a lasting impact, the probability of certain groups of people feeling discontent is possible. These people could be beneficiaries or non-beneficiaries of the project. Women and children, elderly, disabled and chronically ill were identified as the most vulnerable because of their limited access to information due to physical, social, cultural and structural barriers within the communities.

Another envisaged challenge is low literacy levels in some of the targeted communities that will make it difficult for beneficiaries to read and understand written information related to the project. This challenge is even more exacerbated if the documents are in English. In many communities, women and girls, despite bearing a huge burden of care and responsibilities, their participation especially as agents for selling of various off-grid solution, is very minimal.

The Project will give particular attention to these categories of people to enable information sharing and understanding of the nature of project activities and the anticipated positive and potential negative impacts of the project as well as their expectations. These groups of people will be engaged through interpersonal communication approaches such as meetings, demonstrations, focus group discussions, theatre, use of images and illustrations and individual household visits, with specific and tailored messages in vernacular languages to address their existing challenges.

Further, in order to reduce GBV/SEA/SH risks women participation will be encouraged at all level committees (village, area, district and national) according to the 2013 Gender Equality Act with an aim of improving the quality of life of women and girls. The NNNF ESMS processes and procedures will ensure that the needs of vulnerable groups are addressed, and the MoE will monitor their implementation.

The non-beneficiary members of the target communities will also be engaged to ensure that they understand the project targeting processes and capacity and resource limits so that they don't feel neglected.

4.2 Summary of stakeholder engagement done during project preparation

During project preparation, the following public consultation meetings will be conducted between the month of January to April 2025. Refer to Annex Table 1 for details.

The MoE E&S instruments such as the updated SEP, and NNNF Environmental and Social Management System will be disclosed before project implementation commences. Feedback received during consultations will be included and incorporated into the instruments. The Stakeholder Engagement Plan will be updated integrating recommendations and key points raised by Stakeholders.

4.3 Summary of project stakeholder needs

The key stakeholders for the implementation of ASCENT-Malawi are identified according to their interest, influence and importance. At national level, the Ministry of Energy is the lead Government

Institution working in close cooperation with ESCOM, Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (MoFEPD), Ministry of Local Government Unity & Culture, and Environmental Affairs Department. At the district council level, stakeholders include District Executive Committees while structures remain instrumental to support implementation and feedback. At community level, community structures such as the ADCs and VDCs including beneficiaries are important groups that will directly be active participants in the project and the success of the project is underpinned by mostly the outcomes generated by the action of the beneficiaries. At this level, engagement will be done by NNNF through the solar companies. Table 2 provides a description of each of the key national, district and community level stakeholders including their roles and interests.

Table 2: Description of stakeholders and their roles, interests and needs

Stakeholder Group	Roles & Responsibilities	Nature of Needs and Interests
Targeted beneficiaries; recipients' public institutions (schools and hospitals)	Contribute to the design of the project in order to maximize the benefits from the project interventions. They are also the main implementers of the project interventions. They also provide feedback on the progress of the project	Information on the installation process, design, clear description of the project's expectations and implementation modalities and the project impacts in their project area.
Persons/Households affected by the project's interventions in the targeted communities	Support project activities' implementation and create a conducive environment despite the possible undesirable consequences brought by the project. They will also support in providing feedback on the impact of the project	Information on project, its design, activities, implementation modalities, expectations as well as the project impacts on their livelihoods and project area.
ADCs, VDCs, Traditional leaders, CSOs, CBOs	Mainstream and support the development and implementation of the project. Assist in community mobilization and participation. They also act as structures to provide feedback on the progress of the project.	Information on their expected roles in the project, project implementation work plans and progress reports, project activities and the expected results/outputs
Community Extension Workers	Facilitate delivery of project interventions to communities and the first interface on GRM after the community level.	Project implementation work plans and progress reports
District Councils and Sub Committees	It's a decision-making body on all development matters taking place in the districts. They are expected to support the implementation of project activities and provide feedback to PIU. They will also form another level of the GRM.	Project concept, implementation work plans and progress reports

Stakeholder Group	Roles & Responsibilities	Nature of Needs and Interests
The District Executive Committee and Sub-committees	Provide technical guidance on all development matters taking place in the district. They are expected to provide both oversight and direct support in the implementation of the activities.	Project concept, implementation work plans and progress reports
Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund (NNNF) and its management	Provide financing to Off-grid solar companies (OGS) to scale electricity access	OGS business proposals
Ministry of Finance, Economic Planning and Development (MoFEPD)	Management of project resources and overall oversight of the project	Financial information from the project and project implementation progress reports and achievement of the project development objective
Reserve Bank of Malawi (RBM)	Provide guidance to ensure that financial mechanisms for the Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund (NNNF), are effectively managed and that financing for off-grid companies is accessible and sustainable.	Financial information from the project and project implementation progress reports and achievement of the project development objective
Commercial Banks	Partner with the Project to provide loans, credit facilities, and financial products to off-grid companies, energy service providers, and households involved in the project and guaranteeing the loans.	Financial information from the project and project implementation progress reports and achievement of the project development objective
Micro Financing Institutions	Partner with the Project to provide small-scale financing to low-income households, community-based organizations, and local energy entrepreneurs in rural and urban areas	Financial information from the project and project implementation progress reports and achievement of the project development objective
Ministry of Gender, Community Development and Social Welfare (MoGCDSW)	Provide technical guidance on gender equality and sexual exploitation prevention, Gender based violence and any other relevant social challenges.	Project implementation plans and monitoring reports on the compliance to E&S standards and management of the risks of gender-based violence (GBV) and sexual exploitation and abuse (SEA).
Ministry of Local Government Unity and Culture	Provide guidance on local governance issues affecting the project and demonstrate Government's support towards the project	Project concept, implementation progress reports and challenges requiring action

Stakeholder Group	Roles & Responsibilities	Nature of Needs and Interests
Ministry of Natural Resources and Climate Change	Provide policy and technical guidance on natural resources and climate change	Project concept, implementation progress reports and challenges requiring action
Ministry of Energy	Provide policy and technical guidance on energy related off-grid solutions and technical support on implementation of project activities	Project concept, implementation progress reports and challenges requiring action including ESF
Ministry of Education	Providing guidance and support and coordinate energy access in education to improve education service delivery	Improving educational outcomes through reliable access to electricity for lighting, ICT equipment, and e-learning tools. Partnerships for providing energy solutions in schools, data on energy needs at educational facilities, and support in ensuring that energy access initiatives align with educational goals and infrastructure improvements.
Ministry of Health	Providing guidance and support and coordinating energy access in health facilities to improve healthcare services,	Ensuring continuous energy supply for healthcare equipment, lighting, refrigeration of vaccines, and improved service delivery in health centers. Reliable energy solutions tailored to the needs of health facilities, especially in remote areas; collaboration with energy providers for maintaining systems; and data on energy consumption patterns to plan for future energy need
Ministry of Labour	Provide policy guidance on employment/labour issues (including labour related GRM issues) and requirements	Implementation progress reports and challenges requiring action

Stakeholder Group	Roles & Responsibilities	Nature of Needs and Interests
Ministry of Trade and Industry	Implementation of project activities and monitor project progress	Project concept, implementation progress reports and challenges requiring action
Ministry of Lands	Provide technical and policy direction on land administration issues, Implementation of some project activities and monitoring of project progress	Project concept, implementation progress reports and challenges requiring action
Malawi Environmental Protection Agency, (MEPA)	Implementation of project activities	Enforcing compliance to environmental regulation as stipulated by EMA, 2017
Malawi Bureau of Standards (MBS)	Provide guidance on equipment and installations guidelines and standards	Enforcing standards on solar home systems, micro-grids and clean cooking technologies
Malawi Energy Regulatory Authority (MERA)	Provide regulatory guidance	Ensuring the project adheres to energy regulatory frameworks
Electricity Supply Corporation of Malawi (ESCOM) Limited	Guidance on electricity distribution infrastructure and ensure technical design standards for micro-grid systems are adhered to	Guiding on compliance with the electricity distribution code
Development Partners (World Bank)	Financial and technical assistance, capacity building and sharing lessons and best practices	Successful project implementation, transparency, and alignment with global development goals. Regular updates on project progress, monitoring and evaluation reports, and opportunities for feedback and involvement in project activities
Private sector actors	Investment, technology provision, and service delivery	Profitability, market expansion, and partnership opportunities. Clear regulatory frameworks, access to financing, information on market trends, and collaboration

Stakeholder Group	Roles & Responsibilities	Nature of Needs and Interests
		with government and communities.
Offgrid Solar Companies and Energy Service Providers	Delivering solar home systems and micro-grid solutions, often through Pay-As-You-Go (PAYG) and Energy as a Service models, especially in rural and off-grid areas.	Expanding market share, securing financing and technical support, and accessing new customers through government-backed initiatives
		Clear regulatory frameworks, access to financing, government and community support for market growth, and streamlined processes for integrating their technologies into electrification efforts
Accademia and Research Institutions	Research and knowledge generation, training and capacity building	Data collection, research opportunities, and policy influence.
		Access to data, collaboration opportunities for research, and involvement in project evaluations
Vulnerable Individuals and Groups such as Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA)	Contribute to the design of the project in order to maximize the benefits from the project interventions. They are also the main implementers of the project interventions. They also provide feedback on the progress of the project	Interested in accessibility, affordability of project investments and how the project will affect them
Civil Society Organizations	Advocating for community rights, monitoring project impacts, and facilitating community engagement.	Promoting social equity, environmental sustainability, and transparency in project implementation.
		Involvement in stakeholder consultations, access to project information, and resources for capacity building to effectively

Stakeholder Group	Roles & Responsibilities	Nature of Needs and Interests
		advocate for community interests.
Media	Enables wide and regular dissemination of information related to the Project, ensures its visibility and facilitates stakeholder engagement	Interested in spreading news about projects activities and impacts to the public

5 STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT PLAN

5.1 Purpose

The Project includes stakeholder engagement during all phases of the project cycle to ensure that every stakeholder is aware of the project's planned activities, scope and expected results. Table 3 outlines the stakeholder engagement plan outlining the timing and methods of engagement. The purpose of the engagement plan is to:

- i. Consult stakeholders on the proposed project design, anticipated environmental and social risks and impacts, mitigation measures, and environmental and social risk management instruments; and
- ii. Provide regular information on the implementation progress and feedback to stakeholders and any other emerging issues throughout the project cycle.

Table 3: Stakeholder Engagement Plan

No.	Project Phase	Method of Engagement	Objective	Topic of consultation/message	Targeted Stakeholders	Time Frame/Frequency	R
1	Project Preparation Phase	National stakeholder consultation workshops/meetings materials e.g. brochures, posters, flyers, social media, electronic factsheets, TV announcements, websites, emails, workshops, and interviews	Collect views on the design of the project, environmental and social risks, mitigation measures, grievance redress mechanisms, Stakeholder engagement plan, ESMS	Project scope, coverage and beneficiaries including implementation approach and Environmental and Social issues	Representatives of Government Ministries, Departments and Agencies (MDAs), Development Partners, NGOs, Civil Society Organizations, Associations, religious groups	January to March 2025, At the start and Bi-monthly	M E In U M E H re th
		District level Stakeholder consultations workshops/meetings materials e.g. brochures, posters, flyers, social media, electronic factsheets, TV announcements, websites, emails, workshops, and interviews	Collect views on the design of the project, environmental and social risks, mitigation measures, grievance redress mechanisms and Stakeholder engagement plan, ESMS	Project scope, coverage and beneficiaries including implementation approach and Environmental, Social and Gender issues	Members of the District Executive Committees and its Subcommittees	January to March 2025, At the start and Bi-monthly	M E In U M E H re th
		Community level Stakeholder consultation meetings; radio messages,	Collect views lessons learned in the previous or related project, challenges, environment and social risks and their mitigation	Project scope, coverage and beneficiaries including implementation approach and	Community members extension workers, NGOs and organizations working in the community	January to March 2025, once prior to the start of the project	M E In U M

No.	Project Phase	Method of Engagement	Objective	Topic of consultation/message	Targeted Stakeholders	Time Frame/Frequency	R
		brochures, posters, flyers, social media, electronic factsheets, TV announcements, and interviews	measures, ESMS,	Environmental, Social and Gender issues			E H re th
2	Project Implementation Phase	Project inception workshops/meetings with National and District IEC materials e.g. brochures, posters, flyers, social media, electronic factsheets, TV announcements, websites, emails, workshops, and interviews	Provide feedback on approved project design and orient district level stakeholders on their roles in the project	Approved project scope, coverage and beneficiaries including implementation approach and Environmental, Social and Gender issues	National and District stakeholders	May to June, 2025, Monthly	In U M E H re th
		Community mobilization meetings; Focus Group Discussions radio messages; IEC materials e.g. brochures, posters, flyers, social media, electronic factsheets, TV announcements, websites, emails, workshops, and	Mobilize and prepare target communities for project implementation and formation of subproject implementation structures, determination of PAPs, identification of vulnerable groups, and preparation of the GRM.	Project details, SEP, ESMS and GRM	Members of target beneficiary communities, Project affected persons/households, ADCs, VDCs, traditional, religious and political leaders,	June 2025 to December 2025, Monthly	In U M E H re th

No.	Project Phase	Method of Engagement	Objective	Topic of consultation/message	Targeted Stakeholders	Time Frame/Frequency	Reason
		<p>interviews</p> <p>Project implementation monitoring and supervision (through focus groups, interviews, household visits); meetings; IEC materials, e.g. brochures, posters, flyers, social media, electronic factsheets, TV announcements, websites, emails, workshops, and interviews</p>	Provide and obtain updated information that can support on project performance	Project progress updates	National, district, and community level stakeholders including beneficiary communities, Project affected persons/households	Quarterly throughout project implementation	Community engagement
		Project review meetings with selected stakeholders from National, District and Community level (including PTC and PSC); FGD; IEC materials	Provide and get periodic feedback on project implementation progress and any emerging issues	Project progress updates	Selected National, District and Community level stakeholders including beneficiary communities, Project affected persons/households	Quarterly, Continuous throughout project implementation (on quarterly basis but also as and when need be)	Project completion
3	Project Close Out Phase	Project close out meetings	Increase the stakeholders' understanding on the project exit strategy	Project achievements and lessons learnt	Beneficiary communities and groups, national and district stakeholders	At the end of the project. June 2030	Project completion

5.2 Strategy for information disclosure

While all the project information is public, appropriate information to various targeted groups will be provided including the availability of the grievance redress mechanism. The project will use a combination of methods to disclose information pertaining to the project in manner that is commensurate with the nature of the identified stakeholders and environmental and social sensitivity of the project. Table 4 describes what kind of information to be disclosed, in what formats, and the types of methods that will be used to communicate the information to target the wide range of stakeholder groups.

Table 4: Methods for disclosure of project information

List of information to be disclosed	Target stakeholders	Methods proposed	Timeline	Responsibilities
Project Design Summary or Project Appraisal Report Project ESF documents (ESCP, ESMS and SEP,)	National- MoFEPD, MoE, MoEd, MoH, MoNRCC. MoLGUC, MoGCSW, NWRA, DCCMS, MoL, Labour, Districts-DEC, DESC Community-VDC, Traditional Leaders, Women, Girls and Vulnerable Groups	NNNF website, Ministry of Energy website, Inception workshops/me eting, Events, and gatherings,	Upon Completi on of the documents	PIU
Project Progress Reports (Quarterly and Annual) GRM	National- MoFEPD, MoE, MoEd, MoH, MoNRCC. MoLGUC, MoGCSW, Districts-DEC, DESC Community-VDC, Traditional Leaders, Women, Girls and Vulnerable Groups	PTC, PSC and district review meetings; supervision missions; and Reports, Community Meetings, Events, and gatherings, websites, newspapers	Continuou s (but on quarterly basis	PIU team District Councils
Project Completion and evaluation Report	National- MoFEPD, MoE, MoEd, MoH,	PTC, PSC and district review meetings; and	June 2030	PIU team

List of information to be disclosed	Target stakeholders	Methods proposed	Timeline	Responsibilities
	MoNRCC. MoLGUC, MoGCSW, MoL Districts-DEC, DESC Community-VDC, VDC, Traditional Leaders, Women, Girls and Vulnerable Groups	Reports, Community Meetings, Events, and gatherings		

5.3 Strategy for consultation

A combination of methods will be used to consult and engage stakeholders so that they fully understand what is being communicated and allow for full participation in terms of voicing views and providing feedback. The consultations will be gender sensitive so as to ensure that Groups with specific information needs based on disability, gender, age, mobility or morbidity are accommodated to ensure equity in information sharing and exchange. The project will continue to encourage the participation of women and highlight project characteristics that are designed to respond to their needs and increase their access to project benefits. The project will also continue to carry out targeted consultations with vulnerable individuals and groups to understand their concerns or needs in terms of accessing information. Table 5 summarizes the key consultations that will be conducted.

Table 5: Summary of Proposed Consultations

Project stage	Topic of consultation/engagement	Method used	Timeline	Aim of Consultations	Target stakeholders	Responsibilities
Project Preparation	Project design	Workshops	Jan-25	Collect views, and inputs on the proposed project design	National and District level stakeholders	Malawi Government Project Preparation Team
		Focus Group Discussions	Jan-25	Collect views, and inputs on the proposed project design from the disadvantaged groups	Community level stakeholders specifically the disadvantaged groups	Malawi Government Project Preparation Team

Project stage	Topic of consultation/ engagement	Method used	Timeline	Aim of Consultations	Target stakeholders	Responsibilities
Stakeholder Engagement Plan		Community meetings with target stakeholders	Jan-25	Collect views, and inputs on the proposed project design orientation of stakeholders' roles and responsibility	community level stakeholders	Malawi Government Project Preparation Team
	Stakeholder Engagement Plan	Workshops	Continuous throughout project implementation	Collect views and inputs on the stakeholder engagements plan during different stages of the project including the grievance redress mechanism	National and District level stakeholders	Malawi Government Project Preparation Team
		Focus Group Discussions	Continuous throughout project implementation	Collect views and inputs on the stakeholder engagements plan during different stages of the project including the grievance redress mechanism	Community level stakeholders specifically the disadvantaged groups	Malawi Government Project Preparation Team
		Community meetings with target stakeholders	Continuous throughout project implementation	Collect views and inputs on the stakeholder engagements plan during different stages of the project including the grievance redress mechanism	community level stakeholders	Malawi Government Project Preparation Team and

Project stage	Topic of consultation/ engagement	Method used	Timeline	Aim of Consultations	Target stakeholders	Responsibilities
	Environmental and Social Commitment Plan,	Workshops	Continuous throughout project implementation	Collect views and inputs on the efficient ways of abating the potential negative externalities of the project	National and District level stakeholders	Malawi Government Project Preparation Team
	Labour Management Procedures	Workshops	Jan-25	Collect views and inputs on issues to do with safety and health, fair treatment of workers, forced and child labour, promotion of gender equality and protection of women from gender-based violence at project sites and communities surrounding	Project PIU staff	Malawi Government Project Preparation Team
	NNNF - Environmental and Social Management System	Workshops	Continuous throughout project implementation	Collect views and inputs on the potential environmental and social negative externalities of the project including abatement measures	National and District level stakeholders	Malawi Government Project Preparation Team
Project Implementation	Project implementation Progress Review meetings	Workshops, progress reports	Continuous on Quarterly (and when the need arises)	Review Project's implementation progress, challenges and provide technical and policy	National and District level stakeholders	National Project coordination team

Project stage	Topic of consultation/ engagement	Method used	Timeline	Aim of Consultations	Target stakeholders	Responsibilities
				direction on project issues		
		Bank Missions	Continuous on quarterly (and when the need arises)	Review Project's implementation progress, challenges and provide technical and policy direction on project issues	All National District and community level stakeholders and the Bank	District Councils with and National Project coordination team
		Field visits	continuous on quarterly (and when the need arises)	understanding and validating implementation progress and challenges face by the project	All National District and community level stakeholders and the Bank, PAPs, beneficiaries and traditional leaders	District councils with and National Project coordination team
		Community Meetings	continuous on quarterly (and when the need arises)	understanding and validating implementation progress and challenges face by the project	All National District and community level stakeholders and the Bank, PAPs, beneficiaries and traditional leaders	District councils with and National Project coordination team
	Implementation Status of ESF instruments i.e.	Review Meetings	Continuous on Quarterly	Following up implementation progress of the ESF instruments	All National District and community level stakeholders, PAPs,	District councils with and National Project coordination team

Project stage	Topic of consultation/ engagement	Method used	Timeline	Aim of Consultations	Target stakeholders	Responsibilities
	ESMPs and GRMS)				beneficiaries and traditional leaders	
Project phase out	Project phase out meeting	Workshops	June-30	Collect views and inputs on the project exist strategy and sustainability plans	All National District and community level stakeholders and the Bank	District councils with and National Project coordination team
		Focus group discussions	June-30	Collect views and inputs on the project exist strategy and sustainability plans	Community level stakeholders specifically the disadvantaged groups, PAPs, beneficiaries and traditional leaders	District councils with National Project coordination team
		Community meetings	June-30	Collect views and inputs on the project exist strategy and sustainability plans	community level stakeholders, PAPs, beneficiaries and traditional leaders	District councils with and National Project coordination team

5.4 Strategy to incorporate the view of vulnerable groups

Women and children, elderly, disabled and chronically ill are oftentimes the most vulnerable and disadvantaged because of their limited access to information due to physical, social, cultural and structural barriers within the communities. The project will ensure that the NNNF ESMS will ensure that there is inclusive stakeholder engagement and an Inclusive GM with representation focused on vulnerable groups, working with community social workers.

Another envisaged challenge is low literacy levels in some of the targeted communities that will make it difficult for beneficiaries to read and understand written information related to the project. This challenge is even more exacerbated if the documents are in English. These categories of people will be given particular attention through targeted methods of consultations. The strategy to reach out to these people to get their views and feedback will include;

- holding targeted meetings and focus groups.
- individual household visits with specific and tailored messages.
- interpersonal communication approaches such as meetings, demonstrations, focus group discussions, theatre, use of images and illustrations.

5.5 Review of Comments

The feedback from consultations made at different levels during the project cycle will inform project design process, improve implementation efficiency and ensure that the project has an effective exit strategy. The project will ensure that the consultation platforms provided for are well facilitated and provide enough time and resources for stakeholders to give feedback. For community meetings, feedback will be collated through designated rapporteurs and the GRM structures will be designed to receive complaints as well as feedback. The Project Implementation Unit will be the main institution responsible for receiving feedback and ensure that issues raised are addressed and incorporated in to the project design.

5.6 Future Phases of Project

Stakeholders will be kept informed about the status of the project's progress including environmental and social performance, implementation of the stakeholder engagement plan including grievance redress mechanism. ASCENT-Malawi will provide progress reports and annual reports during Implementation Phase.

6 RESOURCES AND RESPONSIBILITIES FOR IMPLEMENTING STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

6.1 Resources

The project has allocated an indicative amount of funds amounting to US\$1,985,000 to facilitate stakeholder engagement activities including stakeholder engagement and grievance redress mechanism for the entire project period of five years. Table 6 provides estimated budget for key stakeholder engagement activities. Dedicated personnel for these activities will include Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist; and Monitoring and Evaluation expert who will be part of the Project Implementation Unit.

Table 6: Estimated Budget for stakeholder engagement activities

Budget Category	Quantity	Unit Costs	Times/Years	Total Costs	Remarks
1. Estimated staff salaries and related expenses					
Safeguards Specialist	12	4,000	5	240,000	Cost for 5 years
2. Events					
Formal meetings and workshops	4	4,500	5	90,000	Cost for 5 years
Public meetings and consultations	4	4,800	5	96,000	Cost for 5 years
Focus group meetings and Key Informant Interviews	4	3,200	5	64,000	Cost for 5 years
3. Communication campaigns					
Correspondence and communication	12	700	5	42000	Cost for 5 years
Print media; TV/radio Announcements, social media campaign, brochures, posters and flyers	4	3,750	5	75,000	Cost for 5 years
4. Trainings					
Training on social/environmental issues for PIU, companies and beneficiaries	4	112,50	5	225,000	Cost for 5 years
Training on Grievance Redress Mechanisms	4	9,900	5	198,000	Cost for 5 years
Training on gender-based violence (GBV) for Project Implementing Unit (PIU); companies and beneficiaries	4	14,750	5	295,000	Cost for 5 years
5. Beneficiary surveys					
Project perception surveys	2	25,000	5	250,000	Cost for 5 years
6. Grievance mechanism					

Budget Category	Quantity	Unit Costs	Times/Years	Total Costs	Remarks
Establishment/Revamping GRMCs	4	17,500	5	350,000	Cost for 5 years
GRMC's communication materials	12	1,000	5	60,000	Cost for 5 years
Total Stakeholder Engagement Budget				1,985,000	Cost for 5 years

6.2 Management functions and responsibilities

The Stakeholder Engagement activities form part of the Environmental and Social Commitment Plan (ESCP). The implementation arrangement for the project uses the existing decentralized government structures at District and Community levels. As such, stakeholder engagement activities at community level will involve extension workers who will be supported by the District teams comprising of representatives of relevant departments at District Council level.

At national level, the Implementation of the SEP is coordinated by the Project Implementation Unit (PIU). The PIU will have qualified and experienced Officers drawn from Ministry of Energy, Ministry Education and Ministry Health that have a stake in the ASCENT-Malawi.

The Project Implementation Unit (PIU) will include qualified and dedicated Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist who will be responsible for the implementation of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP). The Safeguards Specialist will lead and coordinate all stakeholder engagement activities, supported by the Monitoring and Evaluation (M&E) and Communications personnel. Overall responsibility for the effective implementation of the SEP lies with the Safeguards Specialist, with oversight from the Secretary for Energy.

The contact details for the Secretary for Energy are as follows:

Ministry of Energy
Capital House, City Centre
P/Bag 309,
Lilongwe 3, Malawi
Phone: (+265) 1 770 688

7 GRIEVANCE MECHANISM

A grievance mechanism is an accessible and inclusive system, process, or procedure that receives and acts upon complaints and suggestions for improvement in a timely fashion and facilitates resolution of concerns and grievances arising in connection with a project. An effective grievance mechanism provides project-affected parties with redress and helps address issues at an early stage. It provides an avenue for continuous stakeholder feedback and engagement. ASCENT-Malawi will have an operational grievance mechanism.

7.1 Grievance Redress Process and Institutional Arrangement

Grievance redress system for ASCENT-Malawi will have three levels through committees. These committees are at community, district, and Project Management Unit (national) levels. Community Grievance Redress Management Committee (CGRMC) will be at the Traditional Authority (TA) or Area level. There shall also be a district grievance redress management committee established at District Council level. Finally, at national level, a committee will be established at the Project Implementation

Unit level whose main role is oversight and technical guidance. The project will utilise already existing community and district grievance committees. ASCENT-Malawi will assess these to ascertain whether to maintain or revamp them.

The Community, Area, and District Committees will be implemented through the Environmental and Social Management System (ESMS) managed by the Ngwee Ngwee Ngwee Fund (NNNF). The Ministry of Energy (MoE) Project Implementation Unit (PIU) will play a key role in ensuring the functionality and effectiveness of the Grievance Mechanism under NNNF. A project-level Grievance Committee to oversee and address grievances that may arise during project implementation will also be established as detailed in 7.1.3.

7.1.1 Area Grievance Redress Management Committee

The community grievance committee shall have the following members. However, this can be modified depending on realities on the ground without compromising inclusiveness.

- i. Representative of project affected parties (PAPs).
- ii. Extension worker as Secretary
- iii. Village Development Committee Members
- iv. Community Policing/victim support representative
- v. Women representative
- vi. Community Based Organization /Faith Based Organization /Child protection representative.
- vii. Interest group representative

7.1.2 District Grievance Redress Management Committee

The following is a guide for district committee and others can be co-opted depending on the type of grievance. Sector heads can also be involved where necessary.

- i. Director of Planning and Development
- ii. Chief Administration Officer
- iii. Environmental District Officer- Secretary
- iv. District Lands Officer District
- v. District Labour Officer
- vi. District Community Development Officer
- vii. District Gender Officer
- viii. District Community Police Coordinator
- ix. Land Resources Conservation Officer
- x. District Disaster Officer

7.1.3 Project Management Unit Grievance Redress Committee

The following are recommended members of PIU grievance committee. However, others can be co-opted depending on the type of grievance.

- i. Project Coordinator- Chairperson
- ii. Project Environmental and Social Safeguards Specialist
- iii. Ministry of Land

- iv. Ministry of Education
- v. Ministry of Health
- vi. Environmental Affairs Department representative
- vii. Representative from Ministry of Labour
- viii. Representative Department of Gender

7.2 Gender and Culture considerations

The grievance mechanism for ASCENT-Malawi will be gender inclusive with at least 40% female representation. This will allow both men and women to freely raise their concerns to fellow men and women respectively where they are not comfortable with the other gender or where it is not culturally appropriate to discuss with opposite gender.

The Grievance Redress Mechanism Committee (GRMC) meetings will be held at times and venues that are considered appropriate for the communities, ensuring inclusivity and accessibility. For instance, meetings will be scheduled during daytime hours, with no meetings held at night or in the evenings to accommodate community members' safety and availability.

7.3 Orientation of Grievance Redress Committees

All committee members at national, district and community levels will be oriented on their roles and responsibilities. They shall also be sensitized on gender-based violence, sexual exploitation and abuse, sexual harassment, as well as environmental and social safeguards requirements. The Environmental and Social Safeguard Specialist will prepare training materials and spearhead the reorientations for the committees.

7.4 Grievance Mechanism Sensitization, Establishment of Grievance Committees and Operation of the Committees

The beneficiary community shall be sensitized on the project and the existence of grievance redress mechanism. During the sensitization meeting, in communities where committees are not available, the community members shall elect members of the committee as guided by the PIU on the criteria and requirements. The committees at this level shall record, vet, and hear cases as submitted to them by PAPs at community. If the PAP will be satisfied with the resolution, the case will be closed.

If cases at the AGRMC are not closed, the grievances shall be referred to the DGRMC. The PAP shall be communicated that his/her issue was referred to the upper committee for hearing. The DGRMC shall receive and record the cases as referred to them by either AGRMC. This committee shall hear the case from the PAP and review the decision made by either AGRMC. If the PAP will be satisfied with the decision, the case will be closed.

If the case was not closed at DGRMC, the case will be referred to the PGRMC. The DGRMC shall record the Grievance in the District Grievance Log & Resolution Form. The PIU grievance committee shall invite the affected person to hear the case and review the decisions made earlier by the two lower

committees. Where need be, the PIU shall liaise with Project Steering Committee (PSC) so that a resolution should be made for the case at hand. If the PAP shall accept the resolution made, the case shall therefore be closed at this level.

7.5 Ways of Grievance Uptake

ASCENT-Malawi will use different ways of up taking grievances, and through which aggrieved community members can submit their grievances. These may include the following:

- i. Submissions in person;
- ii. Toll free line-4280;
- iii. NNNF website- <https://www.nnnf.gov.mw> ;
- iv. Ministry of Energy website- <https://www.energy.gov.mw> ; and
- v. E-mail/Phone.

7.6 Process of Grievance Documentation and Timelines for Resolution

The complaints and concerns will be captured in the grievance logbook and the grievant will be given a receipt as proof that he has lodged a complaint. The committee secretary will record the grievances in the logbook. Each committee has a maximum of 14 days to resolve the issue. If the complainant is not satisfied with the resolution, the case will be referred to the next level of committee as stipulated above.

The GM will provide an appeal process if the complainant is not satisfied with the proposed resolution of the complaint. Once all possible means to resolve the complaint have been proposed and if the complainant is still not satisfied, then they shall be advised of their right to legal recourse.

The project will ensure that the GM is responsive to and is able to handle sensitive and confidential complaints, including those related to Sexual Exploitation and Abuse/Harassment (SEA/SH) in line with the World Bank ESF Good Practice Note on SEA/SH. The Labour Grievance Mechanism, if deemed necessary for this project, will be established for workers as detailed in the project Labour Management Procedures. The World Bank and the project will not tolerate reprisals and retaliation against project stakeholders who share their views about Bank-financed projects.

Communities and individuals who believe that they are adversely affected by a project supported by the World Bank may submit complaints to existing project-level grievance mechanisms or the Bank's Grievance Redress Service (GRS). The GRS ensures that complaints received are promptly reviewed in order to address project-related concerns. Project affected communities and individuals may submit their complaint to the Bank's Independent Accountability Mechanism (AM). The AM houses the Inspection Panel, which determines whether harm occurred, or could occur, as a result of Bank non-compliance with its policies and procedures, and the Dispute Resolution Service, which provides communities and borrowers with the opportunity to address complaints through dispute resolution.

Complaints may be submitted to the AM at any time after concerns have been brought directly to the attention of Bank Management and after Management has been given an opportunity to respond. For information on how to submit complaints to the Bank's Grievance Redress Service (GRS), visit <http://www.worldbank.org/GRS>. For information on how to submit complaints to the Bank's Accountability Mechanism, visit <https://accountability.worldbank.org>.

7.7 Grievance Redress Mechanism Public Disclosure to Stakeholders

The grievance mechanism shall be disclosed to the public and beneficiary communities. The public disclosure messages shall include ways of grievance uptake, governance structure, type of grievances, assurance of confidentiality and anonymity, referral pathways in terms of GBV/SEA/SH cases, resolution time and appeal process for unsatisfied grievant. Methods of disclosure shall include the following:

- i. Community sensitization meetings;
- ii. TV and Radio messages;
- iii. IEC materials such as posters, fliers, signages; and
- iv. Display of labelled and branded grievance boxes in communities and construction sites.

7.8 Monitoring and Evaluation of Grievance Redress Mechanism

The grievance redress mechanism will be monitored regularly at all levels to assess its functionality, effectiveness, and efficiency. Through monitoring, gaps will be established, and interventions be made accordingly. For instance, if it is established that the committee members are still lacking capacity, refresher orientations will be done, if some members leave the area, replacements will be done. If any type of grievance is repeated, e.g., labour, safety etc, the contractor will be reoriented and warned where necessary. Monitoring shall be done as follows:

- i. The DGRMC shall receive fortnight reports from the community committee;
- ii. The DGRMC shall be submitting monthly reports to the PIU;
- iii. There shall also be monthly monitoring visits to the community and project sites;
- iv. The DGRMC shall have a summary register of all grievances for easy tracking and follow up; and
- v. The project will also develop web based GRM application which is an electronic database for all grievances. This helps in monitoring of the grievances and generation of reports based on gender, sector and type of grievances received per period.

8 MONITORING AND REPORTING

8.1 Monitoring and Evaluation

The monitoring and evaluation is critical to the success of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan (SEP) for ASCENT-Malawi. Therefore, the SEP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) will be embedded in the existing ASCENT-Malawi monitoring and evaluation (M&E) systems. Considering this, the SEP monitoring and evaluation (M&E) aim at achieving the following:

- i. To assess and document progress towards the achievement of the SEP in meeting its stated strategic objectives;
- ii. To provide project management and all stakeholders with accurate and timely information for assessing progress;
- iii. To identify the gaps of the SEP and suggest areas for improvement to enable project management to act on them timely;
- iv. Act as a reliable tool for not only supervising implementation of the project activities, but also enhance compliance monitoring of the environmental and social safeguard instruments at all levels; and
- v. Enhance transparency and accountability amongst all stakeholders in the use of project resources and attainment of outputs and results.

The monitoring indicators are as follows:

- i. Number of public hearings, consultation meetings and other public discussions/forums conducted within a reporting period (e.g., monthly, quarterly, or annually);
- ii. Frequency of public engagement activities;
- iii. Number of stakeholders consulted;
- iv. Types of engagement methods used, e.g. emails, letters and other formal invitation for participation in the planning and public awareness reports;
- v. Feedback and comments received by MDAs, community leaders and other parties and how the actions have been addressed;
- vi. Themes/topics discussed during the consultations;
- vii. Geographical coverage of public engagement activities;
- viii. Number of participants in different engagement activities with gender disaggregated (where applicable);
- ix. Rate of women participation in consultations;
- x. Number of Newly identified stakeholders;
- xi. Number and types of vulnerable individuals involved in consultation meetings;
- xii. Number of grievances received within a reporting period (e.g. monthly, quarterly, or annually) and number of those resolved within the prescribed timeline;
- xiii. Type of grievances received; and
- xiv. Number of press materials published/broadcasted in the local, regional, and national media.

Generally, the monitoring and evaluation of SEP shall be conducted in accordance with the existing M&E Plan for ASCENT-Malawi at the national, PIU, District and community levels.

At the central level, Project Management Unit (PIU), Project Technical Committee (PTC), and Project Steering Committee (PSC), will provide technical and policy guidance (respectively) during both the implementation and monitoring of the SEP for ASCENT-Malawi. Specifically, the PIU through the Safeguards Specialist in collaboration with M&E specialist will take lead in monitoring implementation

of this plan. The project review meetings, quarterly M&E visits and supervision missions will be the main platforms that will be used in tracking implementation progress, identify challenges and strategically plan for a smooth and effective implementation of the SEP.

At district level, the M&E, District Community Development Officer and District Environmental Officer will be responsible for tracking progress in implementation of the SEP. Through the District Executive Committee (DEC), the District Environmental Sub-committee will provide overall oversight at the district level.

At community level, the District M&E office will work in close collaboration with the committees such as ADCs, VDCs and GRMC to conduct participatory monitoring and evaluation of the SEP.

8.2 Involvement of Stakeholders in Monitoring Activities

Given the multi-sectoral nature of ASCENT-Malawi, the monitoring of SEP is essential, and it will be conducted in a participatory manner. Therefore, the project will seek periodic participation of the key stakeholders in monitoring of SEP. The key stakeholders in M&E and their designated M&E functions related to SEP are presented in the Table 7.

Table 7: Key Stakeholders and their designated M&E Functions Related to SEP

No	Name of the Stakeholder	Designated M&E Functions Related to SEP
1	Project Steering Committee (PSC)	Overall policy guidance and strategic direction to the Project and appropriate responses based on M&E results.
2	Project Technical Committee (PTC)	Provide technical direction and guidance on the implementation and monitoring of the SEP in line with the agreed work plans and budgets.
3	Project Implementation Unit (PIU)	Track implementation progress of the SEP in line with the overall Project M&E System. Monitoring resource disbursements (and utilization) towards implementation of the SEP. Providing guidance to the district councils and communities on both implementation and monitoring of the SEP. Updating the PTC and PSC on the implementation progress for the SEP.
4	District Councils	Track implementation progress of the SEP in line with the overall Project M&E System Updating the PIU on the implementation progress for the SEP Providing guidance to the communities on both implementation and monitoring of the SEP

5	Community Institutions (i.e. ADC, GRMC)	Collecting community level data and keep records of all interventions and participation disaggregated by gender. Tracking implementation of various project activities.
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8.3 Reporting back to stakeholder groups

The results of the Stakeholder Engagement Plan activities will be reported back to both affected stakeholders and broader stakeholder groups monthly, quarterly and annually. At National Level, feedback will be provided through the Project Review meetings (Monthly), PTC meetings (Quarterly), PSC meetings (Quarterly) and Technical Missions (semi-annually). Apart from these structured platforms, feedback will also be provided as when and to which stakeholders it is needed based on the topic/issue of engagement across all the phases of the project.

At District Level, feedback will be provided through the quarterly district project planning and review meetings, DEC meeting, project technical missions (Semi-annually) but also when and to which stakeholders it is needed based on the topic/issue of engagement across all the phases of the project.

At Community level, the VDC/ADC planning, and review meetings be the main platform for providing feedback on the implementation progress of the SEP. Reports/feedback will also be provided during FDGs or community meetings by both the districts extension workers and PIU staff on specific issues which require feedback after engagements (e.g., land issues or grievances).

The Project will also utilize its existing communication platforms (i.e., website, and social media platforms-Facebook page, Twitter and Instagram) to provide reports and feedback to the stakeholders on other specific issues.

Specifically, the M&E Specialist will be responsible for preparing progress reports on the implementation of the project. He/she will consolidate reports received from the Environment and Social Safeguard Specialist and District M&E Units in order to prepare monthly, quarterly and annual progress reports. Table 8 summarizes the key reports which will be produced; where they will be submitted and their corresponding frequency on when they will be produced, submitted and dissemination method.

Table 8: Key reports and dissemination strategy

Table 8: Key Reports, Frequency and Dissemination Method/Strategy				
No.	Report	Where will the Report be Submitted	Frequency/Schedule	Dissemination Method/Strategy
1	Monthly progress reports	PIU and District Councils	Monthly	Monthly In-depth Discussion meetings (Face to face and Virtual); Hard and electronic copies by emails
2	Quarterly progress report	PTC PIU and District Councils	Quarterly	Hard and electronic copies by emails
3	Semi-annual report	PSC PTC	Semi-annual	Hard and electronic copies by emails
4	Annual report	District Councils, PTC & PSC	Annual	Annual review meeting with stakeholders
5	Mission Status Reports	District Councils, PTC, PSC and World Bank	Semi-Annually	Hard and electronic copies by emails

9 ANNEXES

9.1 District Grievance Log and Resolution Form

DISTRICT GRIEVANCE LOG & RESOLUTION FORM								
SECTION 1: BASIC INFORMATION								
District:		TA:				GVH		
Name of the Sub-Project		Location (Village)				Report Date:		
Name of Complainant		Project Name			Se ct or	Phone #	E-Mail	
Gender	1- Male	2- Female	ASCENT-Malawi					
SECTION 2: DETAILS OF GRIEVANCE								
Ref #	Date Grievance is reported		Is Grievance New or Referral?		Date of follow up/Investigation		Assi gned Pers on	
			New	Referral				
Description of Grievance			Resolution Made					
Category of the Grievance: 1-Labour 2-Land 3-GBV/SEA 4 – Corruption 5-Other								
Name of the Person recording the issue:								
SECTION 3: CLOSURE				SECTION 4: REFERRAL				
If case is closed, GRM Committee members & complainant to sign below				Referred to:			Ref #	
				Date of receiving a Referral:				
				Person assigned to do follow up:				
GRM Committee Chair:								
Name & Signature of Project					Resolution made			
Affected Person /Beneficiary:								
Name		Sig nat ure						
GRM Committee Secretary:								
Date								

SECTION 5: GRIEVANCE SUBMISSION RECEIPT								
Grievance:				Form #:				
TA			Case Status:		New	Referral		
Name of Complainant			Reported to (Name of Officer and Signature)		Phone # for follow up:			
Signature of Complainant					Date:			

9.2 GRM Register Summary: ASCENT-Malawi (To be inserted)

9.3 List of stakeholders engaged