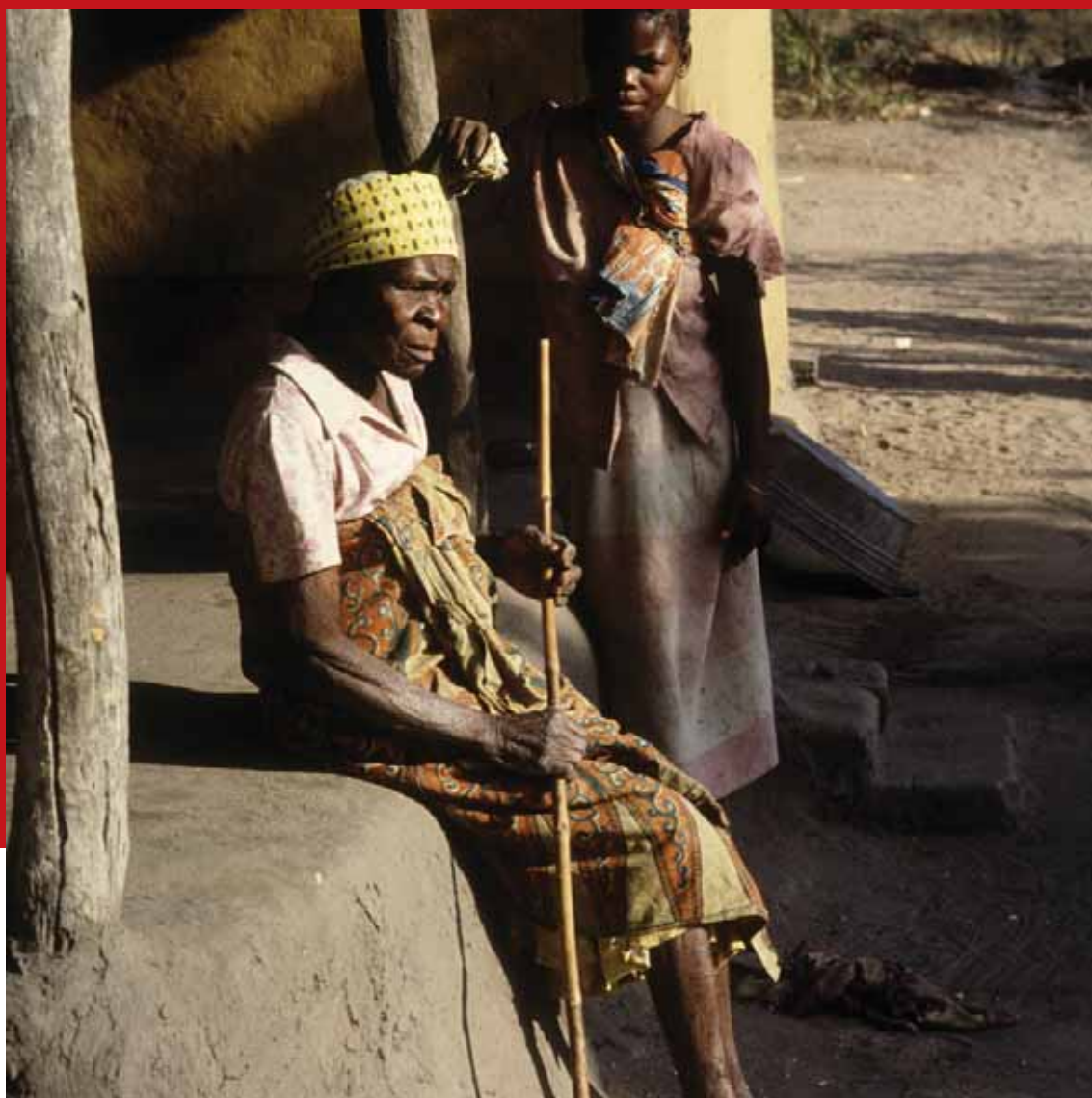


POPULATION AGEING IN MALAWI: UNDERSTANDING CHALLENGES, RESPONDING TO OPPORTUNITIES



Proceedings of the meeting organized jointly by the Bingu Silvergrey Foundation for the Elderly and the Food and Agriculture Organization of the UN

Lilongwe, Malawi, 28-29 November 2007

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ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
AIDS	Acquired Immunodeficiency Virus
ASSOM	Aged Support Society of Malawi
AU	African Union
AU SARO	African Union Southern Africa Regional Office
AWEDA	Aged Welfare and Development Association
BSF	Bingu Silvergrey Foundation for the Elderly
CBO	Community Based Organization
DAES	Department of Agricultural Extension Services
CSO	Civil Society Organization
ECOST	Elderly Community Support Trust
FAO	Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations
FBO	Faith Based Organization
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HOFE	Hope for the Elderly
MBC	Malawi Broadcasting Corporation
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MIPAA	Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing
NAC	National AIDS Commission
NGO	Non-governmental Organization
SADC	South African Development Community
UN	United Nations

1. BACKGROUND

Population ageing – the increase in the proportion of older people in a population – is fast becoming one of the main demographic processes shaping the world today. Population ageing is a major achievement of modern society: we can all expect to live longer than our ancestors. However, population ageing also poses major challenges for society as a whole. In Malawi, where the process of population ageing is in its infancy, older people are increasingly recognized as a group particularly vulnerable to poverty, food insecurity, social exclusion, and generally poor living conditions. The majority of the elderly population in Malawi are perceived as being vulnerable because they are often not able to change their situation should unexpected shocks occur. Furthermore, the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS among the reproductive age groups in the country exacerbates the burden borne by older persons as this not only deprives them of support from the younger generation, but it also increases their responsibilities as care givers and economic producers. These factors cause immense hardship and suffering for the elderly, notwithstanding their resilient character.

In recent years, policy makers at all levels, as well as development practitioners working with poverty reduction, social protection, health care, education, agriculture, rural development and related fields, have become increasingly sensitive of the need to develop specific welfare interventions to improve the well-being and economic security of the growing numbers of older Malawians. The president of Malawi, Dr Bingu wa Mutharika, recognising the contribution that the elderly population are making – socially, economically, politically, culturally and ecologically – has devoted and established the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and The Elderly to tackle these issues at policy level as well as operationally. This recognition is one of the main reasons for convening this meeting in Malawi in collaboration with the Bingu Silvergrey Foundation for the Elderly (BSF), and it is in line with the FAO mandate to raise levels of nutrition, improve agriculture and better the lives of rural people of all ages.

Since 2006, FAO has been implementing activities in Malawi under the project *Building the Capacity of Agricultural and Natural Resources Sectors for Effective Implementation of the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), with Special Focus on HIV and AIDS*. The project has been made possible through funding from the Government of Norway and is being implemented by an FAO interdisciplinary taskforce (comprising the FAO Representation in Malawi and several technical units in FAO headquarters in

Rome) in close collaboration with the Government of Malawi and numerous national as well as international stakeholders and partner organizations. The joint BSF-FAO meeting on population ageing, which was held in Lilongwe on 28-29 November 2007, was organized as part of this project. The meeting was a follow-up of an FAO workshop held in July 2007 in Lilongwe, where preliminary results of an FAO-led study on population ageing and livelihoods in rural and peri-urban Zomba district were disseminated. One of the recommendations made at this meeting was to hold a national meeting on population ageing in Malawi, in order to: (a) share experiences and the results of the FAO study with others working with or interested in ageing issues, (b) create a network of individuals working with population ageing.

2. AIMS OF THE MEETING

The overall aim of the meeting was to contribute to promoting the empowerment of elderly in Malawi by assessing the dynamics of the ageing process of the Malawian population and its implications for food security, livelihoods, and rural development. The specific objectives of the meeting were as follows:

- to bring together key national partners working in the area of population ageing;
- to discuss the linkages between population ageing and socio-economic development in order to develop a common understanding of determinants and impacts;
- to identify challenges and opportunities emanating from population ageing and discuss ways of addressing them through research, policy, community engagement and institutional responses;
- based on the above, generate ideas for policy and programmatic action to be implemented by the Government and relevant partner institutions;
- to form an informal, needs-based network of practitioners, researchers and communal institutions interested in collaborating on ageing-related issues;
- to define priorities for further programmatic and policy work.

This report provides an overview of deliberations and recommendations of the meeting. The report was prepared by members of the meeting's organizing committee: Ms Frances Mkandawire and Mr Zifa Kazeze (Bingu Silvergrey Foundation for the Elderly, Malawi), Ms Linley Chiwona-Karlton (Department of Urban and Rural Development, Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Uppsala), Ms Michelle Remme (FAO Representation in Malawi) and Mr Libor Stloukal (Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, FAO Rome).

3. SUMMARY OF SESSIONS

3.1 OPENING CEREMONY

The opening ceremony started with welcoming remarks by **Mr Zifa Kazeze**, master of ceremony. On behalf of the Board of BSF, **Mr Tony Kandiero** thanked the organizers for preparing the meeting and recalled what the President of Malawi has declared as the general purpose of the BSF: “It is about making the elderly useful”. Speaking on behalf of the FAO Representation in Malawi, **Mr Vincent Langdon-Morris** reminded the meeting of the many linkages between population ageing and agriculture, and stated that population ageing is not a threat, but an important achievement which needs to be seen as an opportunity for improving the lives of people of all ages. Thereafter, all participants took their turn to introduce themselves, stating their names, institutions they represented, and their expectations of the meeting. Next, **Mr Libor Stloukal** provided a short introduction to the meeting, specifying its objectives, desired outcomes, and modalities of work. To conclude the opening ceremony, **Ms Frances Mkandawire** said that the meeting was an opportunity to network, link up and work together for the benefit of elderly Malawians, especially as regards their access to nutritious food and health services and their right to be treated with respect and dignity.

The short **discussion** that followed started by debating the specific roles of the government, civil society, international organizations and other stakeholders in addressing ageing-related issues. Participants agreed that during recent years, Malawi has been blessed with political will and a favourable political environment to develop responses to the multiple threats, challenges, and opportunities resulting from population ageing. Some institutions – such as the Malawi Defence Force or several church-based organizations – have an even longer history of providing for the well-being of older persons, and thus have rich experience to share. In addition, several institutions (including the National AIDS Commission, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, and others) have successfully piloted projects to explore different ways of assisting older persons and the households to which they belong. The discussion also made it clear that serious obstacles remain at many levels, including: limited institutional capacity to target older persons who need assistance; lack of funding to develop concrete interventions; inadequate policy and legal frameworks to effectively support the elderly; and lack of best practices

to make the most of older persons' knowledge and capacity to contribute to economic, social and cultural development. Many participants felt that the meeting was a timely activity as it could contribute to raising awareness and designing appropriate responses to population ageing in Malawi.

3.2 THEME 1: IDENTIFYING CHALLENGES AND OPPORTUNITIES OF POPULATION AGEING

The theme was introduced by a presentation by **Mr Libor Stloukal**, starting with a short overview of global trends in population ageing over the last 50 years and expected developments into the next half century. At present, Malawi still has a young population structure, although the proportion of persons aged 60 years and over is projected to increase from 4.6% in 2000 to 6.5% in 2050. In absolute terms, the numbers of persons aged over 60 will grow from the current figure of about 550,000 to over 2 million in 2050. The situation of older persons is changing because of three inter-dependent factors: demographic change (increasing numbers of the elderly, feminization of population ageing), modernization and development (urbanization, industrialization, weakening of traditional systems of care, growing inter-generational differences), and the impact of HIV/AIDS (increased responsibilities of the elderly to care for orphans and other vulnerable family members, loss of support from children who have died). In rural areas, ageing is further intensified by rural-urban migration, which comprises mainly young adults leaving to find work in cities. Population ageing in rural settings thus generates major social and economic challenges which – unless addressed properly – can threaten efforts to promote sustainable agriculture, natural resource management and rural development.

At the same time, there are many positive aspects to population ageing. For instance, many older people are able to make significant contributions as income-earners, providers of care, sources of knowledge and experience, and guardians of traditions. Since the effects of the ageing process are certain to continue for many years to come, agriculture and rural development will be increasingly dependent on older persons. Therefore, policy makers must find better ways to ensure that older people are able to “age successfully”: have good health, be physically and mentally active, and remain actively involved in community life.

The presentation by **Ms Linley Chiwona-Karlton** focused on the connections between ageing in Malawi and nutritional issues. There is a paucity of information when it comes to nutrition and the elderly – in research, policies and programmes – not just in Malawi but in most low-income countries. There has been a tendency to focus on nutrition issues mostly on women of reproductive age, infants and children. However, experience shows that we know less about energy requirements, micronutrient issues and the effect of decreased muscle mass in the elderly. The presentation highlighted the importance of understanding the role of physical status as well as mobility and how these affect nutritional status in the elderly. Being mobile and physically fit in a poor rural context makes a world of difference in accessing resources, cooking for oneself, and being able to fend and feed oneself. Studies in Malawi show that elderly men are more likely to have poor nutritional status and have poorer physical ability than elderly women. This

gender difference could be attributed to the knowledge and skills that women have when it comes to food processing, preparation and nutrition content of the foods that they prepare. This was illustrated with an example of cassava processing, whereby women in rural Nkhata-Bay district possessed knowledge on how to detoxify bitter cassava roots and consumed cassava leaves very often. Cassava leaves, though frequently frowned upon as “modern vegetable”, when prepared as a relish has higher nutrient density than the exotic vegetables such as cabbage and rape. This knowledge is taken for granted, however the implications for food security and nutrition are so important, and in the context of knowledge gaps between the younger generations and the elderly this needs to be underscored.

The presentation also highlighted the links between nutritional status and infection. Infections fester when coupled with poor nutritional status, especially in the elderly population. Due to poor immunological status, the elderly often endure more severe malaria episodes. While some diseases such as diarrhea and salmonella and giardia infections can be prevented, the lack of hygiene and good sanitation exposes many elderly residing in poverty to these un-necessary infections. We should remember that there are some portions of the ageing population in Malawi who are not poor and whose disease pattern differs. In such a category, insulin metabolism may be more of an issue, dietary transition and non-communicable diseases such as obesity, high blood pressure and type 2 diabetes may be of major concern. Whether ageing in poverty or plenty, we cannot escape one overriding issue of ageing, that is the feeling of being needed, useful and wanted. Isolation often leads to depression that may lead to loss of appetite and the will power to do something about oneself. The neglect of the elderly becomes a burden on society, and the lack of political will to safeguard their health only leads to a reservoir of disease and infection and increased health costs. For Malawi, the loss in years in life expectancy due to HIV/AIDS may call for a younger cut-off age of entry into old age because of the harsh environment that many women and men have to function in on a day-to-day survival. If we do not take care for this ageing population already in its younger days, we will not only lose individuals but also irretrievable libraries of food and nutrition security knowledge. We need to promote this knowledge by supporting the health and nutrition of the elderly through the care and involvement of the elderly in promotive lifestyles for the younger populations who will later become the elderly. The presentation ended by calling for more professional expertise in the area of nutrition and the elderly, as these emerging issues require more trained human resources.

Lastly, **Mr John Kadzandira** made a presentation of findings from an FAO-commissioned study of the elderly in rural areas of Zomba District, which he conducted between December 2006 and April 2007. The study collected cross-sectional data in Kuntumanji, Chikowi and Mwambo traditional authorities. It used the technique of snowball sampling to select and interview over 250 elderly respondents (one elderly person per household). To complement data from individual interviews, six focus group discussions were carried out in individual study sites. The study provided a wealth of insights about various manifestations of poverty among the elderly: high levels of ill-health and disability, low household production, low cash flow, poor housing conditions, limited ability to buy from the market, irregular meal consumption patterns and food insecurity, and problems related to caring for sick children and orphans. Furthermore, the findings revealed the various roles played by the elderly within their households and communities (e.g. advisors of members of younger generations on social and sexual matters, traditional healers, etc.), as well as the obstacles they face in social participation (such as superstition

and various forms of age-based abuse, including witchcraft accusations and property grabbing). The study paid special attention to access to natural resources and found that it is becoming particularly difficult for the elderly to access firewood, clean water and fish products, with serious negative consequences for their nutritional status and standard of living. The study also highlighted important gender differentials: in general, households headed by females seem to perform poorly on socio-economic issues, whereas those headed by elderly men perform poorly on sanitation and food consumption.

The three formal presentations were followed by a general **discussion**. Several participants mentioned that most social problems associated with ageing have to do with a lack of awareness of how the elderly are affected by social and economic change, combined with the still prevalent societal perception of older people as inactive and dependent. The issue of witchcraft was raised as being a widespread belief in Malawi; however, believing in witchcraft is no excuse for claiming that all older persons are witches. Poverty is obviously a major issue for the elderly; however, improving economic security should not be seen as an end in itself, but rather as a means to ensure that the elderly can enjoy good physical and mental health and participation in social life. Remittances from migrant children (their quantity and regularity, as well as how they are used to contribute to older persons' livelihoods) need to be studied much more systematically than has been the case so far. Likewise, political participation of older persons remains poorly understood: for instance, not much is known about voting attendance of the elderly, yet at the same time it is evident that most politicians in Malawi are older people and so higher age is an important prerequisite for becoming a policy-maker.

Furthermore, the discussion revealed a wealth of social protection initiatives now underway in Malawi, some of which are government-owned and some community-based. There is ample room for extending these programmes (for instance, to include nutritional assistance, psychosocial care, geriatric assistance, etc.) and bringing the information about existing initiatives to community and local levels. Practitioners working on ageing issues need to collaborate and exchange information in order to strengthen effective approaches and avoid fragmentation of efforts. There is also need for more collaboration between practitioners on the ground with scientists (e.g. medical researchers, nutritionists and agro-experts), and the existing extension services can play a catalytic role in this regard. The discussion also touched upon perceptions towards food processing methods perceived as unhygienic (such as cassava fermentation) and how there is a need to communicate the popular science behind this so that these perceptions are dispelled and the advantages and good nutrition implications are understood. Participants representing the Government informed the meeting about policy initiatives that are already in the pipeline (draft policies on the elderly and social protection). In this context, many participants regretted that some key Ministries were not present and therefore the meeting could not capture the full range of developments in policy-making on ageing in Malawi.

After the plenary discussion, Mr Stloukal introduced **Group Work 1** in which participants were asked to: (a) discuss various dimensions of population ageing, (b) identify challenges and opportunities, and (c) assess the quality of existing knowledge and identify options for improving understanding of ageing-related issues. The results of Group Work 1 are summarized in Table 1 below.

TABLE 1: SUMMARY OF GROUP WORK 1

CROSS-CUTTING ISSUES: GENDER INEQUALITY, LONELINESS, POOR HOUSING, ILLITERACY

	Economic and Food Security	Health and Nutrition	Social participation and access to services
<i>What are the key challenges/constraints facing older people?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - low/no income - limited capacity to generate income - high unemployment - labour constraints - lack of farm inputs/fertilisers - lack of savings - property grabbing - no support from children - lack of tailor-made programmes/support - lack of Pension Act/scheme - no approved policy yet - limited information about commodity markets - more vulnerable to external shocks - illiteracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - lack of safe water (esp. in rural) - disease vulnerability (poor housing, sanitation) - limited visual aids - loneliness impacting on health - gender inequality impacting health and nutrition - limited access to nutritious food - limited (physical) access to health care services - lack of specific care - lack of health insurance - limited knowledge of dietary diversification - lack of health education - illiteracy 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - stigma and discrimination (not invited to participate in social activities) - lack of access to justice/legal aid - poor housing conditions - cultural abuse (disrespect of elderly) - limited access to basic necessities (clothing, blankets, etc.) - loneliness - not given preferential treatment (health services, water points, ADMARC, etc.) - isolation due to prejudice - lack of involvement by service providers - expected roles and responsibilities (due to stereotypes) - limited political participation - illiteracy
<i>Does population ageing bring any opportunities for improvement?</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - pressure on government to address issues of elderly - less burden of care for orphans if parents live longer - reduced dependency - provide better care to orphans as last resort - more institutional knowledge/memory - play leading role in various economic activities - population ageing → higher life expectancy → increased long-term investments 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - knowledge of traditional medicine - new specialisation in medicine: gerontology - care for sick - bank of knowledge on preparation of indigenous nutritious food - unique knowledge of control of crop and animal diseases 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - bank of wisdom/experience - counsellors for the community - conservation of cultural values

<p>How do we know about such challenges and opportunities?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media - contacts/networking - research-based information/technologies - workshops - international fora - churches, FBOs - politicians - CBOs - NGOs - experience - observations - consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media - contacts/networking - research-based information/technologies - workshops - international fora - churches, FBOs - politicians - CBOs - NGOs - experience - observations - consultations 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - media - contacts/networking - research-based information/technologies - workshops - international fora - churches, FBOs - politicians - NGOs - CBOs - experience - observations - consultations
<p>What are the key knowledge gaps about population ageing?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appropriate civic education to plan for old age - impact of inflation on pensions - economic activities of elderly - sources of income of elderly - economic needs of elderly - expenditures of elderly - no records kept, hampering planning - magnitude of issue unknown - role of remittances - post-employment livelihoods (challenges urban/rural, agricultural/non agricultural) - best practices on support for elderly <i>How to bridge the gaps?</i> - research in Malawi - use existing outcomes from international research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appropriate civic education - loss of memory - Parkinson syndrome - health and nutrition - diabetes - health education - physical changes - nutritional value of different foods - security for elderly - mental depression - few gerontologists - no psychosocial support - best practices on support for elderly <i>How to bridge the gaps?</i> - research in Malawi - use existing outcomes from international research 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - appropriate civic education to promote acceptance of old age - impact of lack of interaction - cultural practices - access to social opportunities - effective policies - lack of understanding of existing policies - growing intergenerational gap: youth view elderly and their views as archaic - no preparation for retirement - best practices on support for elderly <i>How to bridge the gaps?</i> - research in Malawi - use existing outcomes from international research

3.3 THEME 2: OPPORTUNITIES IN DEVELOPING AND IMPLEMENTING POLICIES TO PROTECT AND SUPPORT THE ELDERLY

To introduce the theme, **Mr Zifa Kazeze** made a presentation on social protection in Malawi. Factors determining the well-being of the elderly in Malawi were noted and these were similar to those reflected in the 2002 Madrid International Plan of Action on Ageing (MIPAA) and the 2002 African Union (AU) Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing. The determinants include: active participation in society and development; access to knowledge, education and training; intergenerational solidarity; eradication of poverty; income security, social protection; access to health care services; prevention and reduction in HIV and AIDS; good housing and living environment; reduction and prevention of abuse of elderly persons; and creation of positive images of ageing.

The presentation deplored the fact that Malawi, like many developing countries, suffers from intergenerational transmission of poverty. It then argued that some form of social protection, including social pensions, would go a long way in reducing poverty and vulnerability among the elderly and their families. Mr. Kazeze pointed out that it would be difficult for most developing countries, including Malawi, to achieve the Millennium Development Goal of reducing poverty by half by 2015 without some form of social protection.

Mr. Kazeze then appealed for the need for the Malawi Government to take action on the 2006 Livingstone Call for Action on Social Protection. Among the actions recommended was the call for African governments to prepare costed cash transfer plans within two to three years and that these be integrated into national development plans and national budgets, which development partners can supplement. The presentation noted that Malawi did not have a comprehensive social protection programme. Existing social protection related to a small proportion of retirees from the public service. Even for this group, the pension benefit was not sufficient. Thus the pilot cash transfer project initiated in the district of Mchinji in 2006, and currently being extended to six other districts, would provide a safety cushion to the vulnerable, including the elderly.

Examples of social pension programmes from Zambia, Lesotho, South Africa and Brazil were highlighted in the presentation. The general lessons from these countries were that social pensions: empower the elderly; help reduce extreme poverty and hunger and improve health; contribute to the human rights agenda including gender equality; improve the life chances of orphans and vulnerable children; are feasible and create economic opportunities; can be implemented at minimum cost (which may be less than 3 per cent of a country's GDP); strengthen the social contract between the government and its citizens, thereby enhancing social cohesion; strengthen intergenerational solidarity within households/families; improve the economic situation of households where the elderly provide care to the vulnerable children whose long-term prospects are thus enhanced; strengthen the ability of households to manage assets and respond to risks, vulnerabilities and opportunities; and contribute to gender equality and help in promoting the empowerment of women.

Finally, the presentation proposed a number of recommendations addressed to various development actors. These recommendations form the basis of section 4 of this report.

Next, **Mr Harry Mwamlima** talked about the piloted social cash transfers scheme in Malawi. He started by briefly discussing overall statistical data about poverty and vulnerability patterns in Malawi, and then described key parameters, targeting criteria, financing arrangements and implementation structures of the Government-sponsored cash transfer scheme which has been piloted in Mchinji, Likoma, Machinga and Salima districts since late 2006. Despite capacity problems at various levels of administration, preliminary results clearly show that the cash transfer scheme is effective in improving beneficiaries' food security, standard of living, access to education and health services, as well as household agricultural production. Preparations are underway to scale-up the scheme to three additional districts in 2008, and to enhance monitoring and evaluation procedures. Importantly, lessons learned through the pilot helped to include cash transfers into the draft Social Protection Policy as a core strategy.

The last formal presentation under Theme 2 was by **Mr Libor Stloukal** on international initiatives in the area of population ageing. A brief recapitulation of key historical milestones in international action on ageing was followed by a more detailed presentation of the goals and recommendations of the Madrid International Plan of Action and the African Union Policy Framework and Plan of Action on Ageing (both adopted in 2002). Next, some emerging trends in policy-making on ageing since 2002 were highlighted. The presentation concluded by identifying major challenges to building "a society for all ages" and suggested some possible ways to overcome them.

The **discussion** that ensued touched several key issues associated with cash transfers and older persons, such as: soundness of criteria for selecting beneficiaries; practicable methods of targeting approved recipients; ability of household-targeted cash transfers to really help older people (who may lose out when they find themselves in competition with younger household members); gender-equality in access to cash transfers; monitoring of transfer mechanisms and validation of indicators of success; the question of whether or not pensioners should be included in social cash transfers; side effects as well as multiplier effects of cash transfers at household and community levels, etc. However, there was unanimous agreement that this initiative of the Government is to be welcomed; that its overall costs are much less than most people fear; and that the lessons learned in the current pilot scheme should be disseminated as widely as possible.

Experience of other sectors can also be useful, such as the cash transfer scheme to ex-servicemen and their families which was established by the Kamuzu Foundation Trust in 1967 and is administered through the Malawi Defense Force. Participants agreed that a major challenge is to make social cash transfers sustainable and that political commitment is crucial in this regard. The discussion eventually moved to more general aspects of social protection in old age, including issues of defining who is old and the need to educate the public, relevant professionals (politicians, researchers, development workers, etc.), as well as the private sector about the rights and capacities of older people.

3.4 THEME 3: WHAT ARE THE PRIORITIES FOR FURTHER WORK AND HOW ARE WE GOING TO ADDRESS THEM?

The third theme of the meeting started with a presentation by **Ms Frances Mkandawire** on the mission, goals, and mechanisms of work of the Bingu Silvergrey Foundation for the Elderly (BSF). She noted that the Foundation was a non-government, non-religious and non-political organisation founded by Dr. Bingu wa Mutharika, President of the Republic of Malawi, in 2005 to promote and safeguard the interests and welfare of the retired and elderly people over the age of 60. The Foundation has a Board chaired by the Founder and a Fund Raising Committee, although as the Foundation grows other committees will have to be set up. The Secretariat is run by the Executive Director who is responsible for its day-to-day administration and planning of outreaches and programmes in consultation with the Founder and members of the Board.

The Foundation's mission is to provide a new and unique platform for the elderly to impart their skills and experiences to the younger generations, and to ensure that their common interests and welfare are safeguarded. Although the Foundation continues to distribute much needed food items, clothing and other basic necessities to the elderly throughout the country, the Foundation aims at setting up centres for the elderly in the North, South, Centre and Eastern Regions of the country and, eventually, in all districts. Such centres will provide venues where the elderly can obtain health care, spiritual support, nutrition, interaction with one another and the younger generations and, if needed, give shelter to the truly destitute. Such centres will also provide skills training to encourage the elderly to remain active in their old age.

The Foundation has reached out to several commercial companies with the view of seeking donations as well as encouraging them to take up their social responsibility and thus become part of the solution of caring for the elderly. At the same time, the Foundation plans fund raising activities to sustain its operations and reaches out to donors who might be willing to assist, although the desire of the Foundation is to eventually become self-sustaining. The Foundation sees the need for organisations dealing with issues of the elderly to interact one with another while at the same time the media needs to become actively involved in sensitizing the general public to the challenges the elderly people face.

Subsequently, **Mr M. S. Nyirenda** spoke about activities of the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly, which is (since 2006) in charge of the portfolio of ageing-related matters. The presentation focused on five key areas of the Ministry's work: policy formulation, provision of nutritious food to those in need, civic education and awareness-raising about the elderly, collaboration with BSF, and production of printed materials. The Ministry is currently in the process of drafting a national policy on the elderly which – after a series of regional consultations as well as coordination discussions with the Ministry of Women and Child Development and the Ministry of Economic Planning and Development – will eventually be submitted to the Government for approval. Other immediate plans of the Ministry include developing a national register of all NGOs that deal with issues of the elderly, and building emergency centres for destitute elderly. One problem the Ministry is facing is an acute shortage of staff with qualifications in the area of ageing, but the missing posts are likely to be filled soon.

The concluding **plenary discussion** revealed, once again, that there are many institutions in Malawi engaged in ageing-related activities, but that coordination among them is poor or non-existent – and this fact is not explainable just by limited resources. The poor coordination of ageing-related activities is exemplified, for instance, by the numerous policy training workshops taking place every year that, however, rarely result in new initiatives being actually developed and implemented. A partnership between the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly, the Ministry of Education, the Ministry of Women and Child Development, the National AIDS Commission and BSF represents a promising framework for collaboration, which should be built upon. Participants agreed on the necessity to improve information-sharing and networking among government and non-government bodies working on ageing-related matters, as well as on the need to develop joint, longer-term policy and fundraising initiatives. The issue of building the capacity of professional staff was identified as crucially important, especially at the central level. Excessive reliance on external donors should be avoided because action needs to be taken primarily by Malawians for Malawians (which would also make it easier for donors to come in). Although each and every stakeholder can contribute to improving coordination and collaboration, there is no doubt that the key role must be played by the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly as the lead government body to guide national initiatives on population ageing.

3.5 THE WAY FORWARD

In order to make concrete agreements on the way forward after this workshop, the group work that followed the plenary discussion on Theme 3 decided to focus efforts on three major areas of intervention:

a) What networking arrangements could be designed to sustain these initiatives?

It was agreed that a **Technical Working Group on Ageing** should be convened by the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly, comprising various stakeholders, including key ministries, NAC, NGOs, FBOs, CBOs, the UN family and academia. Additionally, participants considered it important that the output of this meeting be used to feed into the ongoing formulation of a national policy for the elderly. The task of sharing the report with the Ministry was delegated to the organisers of the workshop. To this end, two participants from this meeting also participated in the last two days of the workshop on *Ageing in African Cities: revisiting the issues, responses and outcomes* hosted by Chancellor College and The Nordic Africa Institute in Zomba on 29 November – 1 December 2007. They informed the meeting of the BSF-FAO initiative and a presentation of the BSF was done by Mr Zifa Kazeze. This was part of consolidating activities being undertaken in the field of ageing in Malawi, and the two members joined the network for future collaboration (see <http://www.nai.uu.se/events/conferences/ageing/index.xml> for proceedings of this workshop).

b) What are the research and capacity building needs?

The priority research needs that were identified include:

- Making a compilation of state-of-the-art research on population ageing in Malawi
- Conducting a needs assessment of capacity in gerontology in Malawi
- Conduct specific policy research on ageing in Malawi

- Reviewing existing legislation affecting the elderly
- Conducting research on a national scale to identify national challenges and opportunities for the elderly
- Ensuring that the national population census collects useful gender-disaggregated data on the country's elderly.

The overall consensus was that academia, and Malawian universities in particular, should take the lead on bridging the knowledge gaps. In terms of data at national level, the National Statistics Office, the Centre for Social Research and the Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly should be the leading actors.

c) How can we build public awareness and political commitment?

On the last topic, participants emphasised the need for enhancing public awareness, while political commitment is already considered to be strong given the President's personal dedication to improving the lives of old Malawians. Three appropriate entry points were identified:

- **Media:** participants recognised the importance of informing the media to minimise negative stereotypes of the elderly and to focus on the opportunities presented by population ageing.
- **Schools:** the inclusion of civic education on issues related to the elderly in the school curriculum is expected to be effective in positively changing behaviours towards ageing and the elderly.
- **The community:** action is needed within communities to raise awareness on the plight of the elderly. Theatre is expected to be a good vehicle for conveying such messages.

3.6 CLOSING CEREMONY

Mr Mazlan Jusoh started by thanking all the participants for coming to the meeting, which he said had been fruitful and inspiring. He told the participants that FAO remains committed to working on rural ageing issues in Malawi and will make sure that comments and suggestions from the meeting are taken into consideration.

In her closing remarks, **Ms Frances Mkandawire** expressed her overall satisfaction with the meeting. However, much still needs to be done to ensure that population ageing is fully taken up and addressed by policy-makers, academia, practitioners and the civil society. Looking after the interests of older generations, as well as providing material assistance and empowerment to marginalized elderly men and women in Malawi, represents the core of the Bingu Silvergrey Foundation's work. The Foundation is open to collaboration with interested partners in order to identify effective policy and programmatic strategies to respond to the various challenges and opportunities of population ageing. Finally, Ms Mkandawire emphasized the need to maintain the ties that had been established during the meeting, urging all participants to continue collaboration and networking for the benefit of elderly Malawians.

The meeting concluded with a prayer said by **Rev. Dr. Silas S. Ncozana**, Member of the Bingu Silvergrey Foundation Board.

4. RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE MEETING

In the light of the presentations and discussions at the meeting, the following **recommendations** are proposed for further action to the Government of Malawi, the public and the private sectors, civil society organizations, academic institutions and other development partners:

1. The Government of Malawi, the public and private sectors, the civil society organizations (CSOs) and other relevant partners should work together to create a conducive environment that promotes greater awareness on ageing issues and encourages, as well as enables, older people to continue making contributions to the country's social, economic and ecological development.

2. The Government of Malawi, the public and private sectors and the CSOs need to incorporate and mainstream population ageing issues into the development process and earmark resources.

3. The Government of Malawi should respond, in a proactive manner, to the Livingstone Call for Action on Social Protection and Cash Transfers.

4. In view of the policies under preparation on ageing and social protection, the Government of Malawi needs to strengthen technical and human capacity of those to be involved in the implementation of these policies. Furthermore, institutional mechanisms for policy implementation should be strengthened and adequate resources should be allocated in the national budget. Development partners (UN agencies, the private sector, and CSOs) should support the Government in this regard financially as well as technically.

5. The Government of Malawi should consider the provision of non-contributory pensions as a significant component of income and social security in old age.

6. The Government of Malawi, depending on the findings of the existing pilot cash transfer project, should consider expanding the project to cover the whole country on an evidence based needs assessment basis and not on parliamentary vote. Development partners should provide the necessary financial and technical support to such a national social assistance scheme.

7. Researchers and members of the academia should conduct policy-relevant research in order to respond to the needs of the ageing population.

8. Development partners need to continue supporting Malawi in its efforts to address the plight of vulnerable groups, including the ageing population.

9. Given that support from development partners is finite, the Government of Malawi has to ensure sustainability of programmes and projects initially supported by development partners before inception.

10. Government and those involved in programme design and implementation concerning ageing populations need to involve and consult the elderly, wherever possible.

11. The Government of Malawi, research institutions and individual researchers should systematise data collection, analysis and dissemination with respect to population ageing. The National Statistical Office in the 2008 Population and Housing Census should collect age- and sex-disaggregated data on socio-economic characteristics to better understand the situation of the elderly.

12. There should be coordination in the implementation of various national policies including those on ageing and social protection being formulated.

13. The Government of Malawi should support and convene a network of professionals, academicians and civil society representatives working on ageing issues in Malawi and link the Day of the Elderly with an annual meeting/forum for sharing and disseminating current issues and concerns on population ageing in Malawi.

ANNEX I: LIST OF PARTICIPANTS

Name	Position	Organisation/Address	
Baduya, Mr. Charles	Project Officer	Global Hope, P/Bag 144, Lilongwe	
Banda, Mr. Godfrey	Project Officer	Helping Hand Foundation, P.O. Box 4008, Soche, Blantyre 4	
Chawinga, Mr. John	Project Officer	Set Map, P/Bag 524, Blantyre	
Chintsanya, Mr. Jesman	Lecturer	Department of Population Studies, Chancellor College, P.O. Box 280, Zomba	
Chirwa, Brigadier General Marcel R.D.	Director of Personnel	Malawi Defence Force, Kamuzu Barracks, Chidzanja Road, P/Bag 43, Lilongwe	
Chiwona-Karltun, Dr. Linley	Research Associate	Swedish University of Agricultural Sciences, Dept. of Urban & Rural Development, P.O. Box 7012, 75007 Uppsala, Sweden	
Jagali, Mr. Richard W.	Executive Director	Aged Welfare and Development Association (AWEDA), P.O. Box 30239, Lilongwe 3	
Jose, Mr. Rodney S.	Head of Training	Malawi Police Service, National Police Headquarters, P/Bag 305, Lilongwe 3	
Kachule, Mr. Francis G.	Economist	Ministry of Finance, P.O. Box 30049, Lilongwe 3	
Kadzandira, Mr. John	Deputy Director	Centre for Social Research, P.O. Box 278, Zomba	
Kalua, Ms. Miriam	Policy Officer – Socio-Economic	National Aids Commission, P.O. Box 30622, Lilongwe 3	
Kandiero, Mr. Tony	Bingu Silvergrey Foundation Board Member and Vice-Chairman	P.O. Box 31215, Lilongwe 3	
Kapito, Mr. Tony Moses	Publicity Secretary	Nkhalamba Foundation, P.O. Box 60, Mneni, Mwanza	
Kayambo, Mrs. Florence	Head, Policy Support and Development	National Aids Commission, P.O. Box 30622, Lilongwe 3	
Kayira, Mr. Peter B.	Lecturer	Mzuzu University, P/Bag 201, Luwingu, Mzuzu 2	
Kazeze, Mr. Zifa. W.	Farmer and Bingu Silvergrey Foundation Board Member	Box 20447, Mzuzu 2	
Langdon-Morris, Mr. Vincent	FAO Emergency Coordinator	FAO Representation in Malawi, Evelyn Court, Lilongwe	
Mahatta, Mr. Faneil W.	Editor/Journalist	Malawi News Agency, Dept. of Information, P/Bag 310, Lilongwe 3	
Maimba, Mr. C.	Project Officer	Nelson Foundation Trust, P.O. Box 2034, Thyolo	
Malindi, Dr. Grace	Director of Agriculture Extension Services	Ministry of Agriculture & Food Security, DAES, P.O. Box 30145, Lilongwe 3	
Mandalawe, Mr. Alfred P.	Director	Village to Village A.C.B.L. Organisation, P.O. Box 87, Domasi	
Manyowa, Mr. Daniel	Project Officer	Gender Links, P.O. Box 135, Thyolo	
Mbewe, Mr. Thomas P.	Executive Director	Hope for the Elderly (HOFE), P.O. Box 123, Nthenje	
Mb'wana, Manuel	Social Officer	Dept. of Health and Social Services, P/Bag 23, Mzuzu	
Mchilikizo, Mr. John	Principal Information Officer	Ministry of Information and Civic Education, P/Bag 310, Lilongwe 3	
Mhango, Ms. Walekeni	Reporter	Malawi News Agency, P/Bag 310, Lilongwe 3	
Mithi, Mr. Dingan	Public Relations Officer	Aged Welfare and Development Association (AWEDA), P.O. Bo 30239, Lilongwe 3	
Mitole, Ms. Ellen	Reporter	The Guardian Newspaper, P/Bag B341, Lilongwe 3	
Mkandawire, Mrs. Frances E.	Bingu Silvergrey Foundation Executive Director and Board Member	Bingu Silvergrey Foundation, P.O. Box 31215, Lilongwe 3	
Moyo, Mr. Steven	Projects Officer	Aged Support Society of Malawi (ASSOM), P.O. Box 30073, Lilongwe 3	
Mphepo, Mr. Alex	Coordinator	(ECOST) Elderly Community Support Trust, P.O. Box 25 (Magomero), Chiradzulu	
Msoliza, Mr. Godfrey	Administration Officer	Youth Arm Organisation, P.O. Box 31662, Blantyre 3	
Munthali, Mr. Kondwani	Journalist	M.B.C., Mema Studios, P.O. Box 162, Lilongwe	
Mwambo, T/A	Chief	Zomba District Assembly, P.O. Box 23, Zomba	
Mwamlima, Mr. Harry	Deputy Director	Ministry of Economic Planning and Development, P.O. Box Lilongwe 3	
Ncozana, Rev. Dr. Silas S.	Professor, Bingu Silvergrey Foundation Board Member	Zomba Theological College, P.O.Box 130, Zomba	
Nyirenda, Mr. M.S.	CDPAO	Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly, P/Bag 380, Lilongwe 3	
Nyirongo, Ms. Wezi	Reporter	Capital FM Radio, Mishka House, Lilongwe	
Olaniyan, Prof. R.O.	AU Regional Delegate to SADC	AU-SARO, Kang'ombe House, Lilongwe 3	
Phiri, Rev. Canaan R.K.	General Secretary	Malawi Council of Churches, P.O. Box 30068, Lilongwe 3	
Remme, Ms. Michelle	HIV/AIDS, Gender & Food Security Officer	FAO Representation in Malawi, Evelyn Court, Lilongwe	
Sibale, Mr. O.C.	President	Public Service Pensioners Association, P.O. Box 1177, Lilongwe	
Stloukal, Dr. Libor	Population Policy Officer	FAO, Gender, Equity and Rural Employment Division, Rome, Italy	
Thom, Ms. Ellen	Programme Assistant	World Food Programme, P.O. Box 30571, Lilongwe 3	
Zalimba, Mr. Andrea	Producer & Presenter of Programmes	Radio Alinafe, P.O. Box 631, Lilongwe	

Telephone Office	Fax No.	Cell No.	E-mail
-	-	08 395 875	glohomoll@yahoo.com
-	-	08 121 310	munawalah@yahoo.com
01 822 788	01 822 788	09 038 081	aidmalawi@yahoo.com
01 524 611	01 524 787	09 677 460	chawinga@yahoo.com
01 791 907	01 792 216	09 552 344	jchintsanya@chanco.unima.mw jchintsanya@yahoo.com
01 791 907	01 791 907	08 867 188	mrdchirwa@yahoo.com
+46 18 672 757	+46 18 673 412	08 846 346	mrdchirwa@mdf.mw
01 725 398	01 725 398	-	linley.karltun@sol.slu.se
01 725 398	01 725 398	09 330 433	awedamalawi@yahoo.com
01 797 248	01 797 979	08 763 625	rodneysnrjose@yahoo.com
01 796 333	01 797 979	08 866 369	rodneysnrjose@yahoo.com
01 789 355	01 789 173	09 950 172	francokachule@yahoo.co.uk
01 524 800	01 524 578	08 203 699	kadzandira@malawi.net
01 524 916	01 776 249	09 951 788	kadzandira@malawi.net
01 770 022	01 776 249	09 365 724	kaluwam@aidsmalawi.org.mw mkaluwa2002@yahoo.co.uk
01 762 735	0 1 762 996	-	-
-	-	09 794 647	nkhalamba@yahoo.co.uk
-	-	08 540 101	mosuekapito@yahoo.co.uk
01 770 023	01 776 249	08 899 389	kayambof@aidsmalawi.org.mw
01 320 403	01 320 568	09 918 934	pbkayira@mzuni.ac.mw
01 331 957	-	09 370 166	zkazeze@yahoo.co.uk
-	-	08 210 821	vincent.langdonmorris@fao.org
01 771 092	01 771 094	08 855 534	mwanasambe@yahoo.com
-	-	09 502 266	mwanasambe@yahoo.com
-	-	09 696 555	kfanizo@yahoo.com
01 728 384	01 750 384	08 506 440	gmalindi@gmail.com
01 536 312	-	08 527 711	
-	-	09 626 061	danielmanyowa@yahoo.com
-	-	09 257 365	hopefortheelderly-2004@yahoo.com
01 352 311	-	09 502 420	mbwana@yahoo.com
01 773 233	01 774 568	08 569 425	jdmchili@yahoo.co.uk
01 771 092	01 771 094	09 569 425	principal.secretary@information.gov.mw
-	-	09 101 758	lekenij@yahoo.com
-	-	09 330 433	awedamalawi@yahoo.com
01 762 735	01 762 735	09 561 851	ellenmitole@yahoo.com
01 762 996	01 762 735	08 461 851	ellenmitole@yahoo.com
0 1 776 611	01 773 865	08 855 652	bingusilvergrey@gmail.com
01 792 970	-	0 9 855 652	fem.deepwaters@gmail.com
-	-	09 412 168	assom@malawi.net
-	-	09 015 251	ecost@yahoo.com
01 880 067	01 880 067	08 333 912	danphirimini@yahoo.co.uk danphinimini@yahoo.co.uk gmsoliza@yahoo.com
01 724 377	01 726 665	09 957 331	kondwani.munthali@gmail.com
01 724 025	-	09 777 398	
-	-	08 859 013	mwamlimaharry@yahoo.co.uk
01 789 461	-	08 859 013	mwamlimaharry@yahoo.co.uk
-	-	08 377 732	sncozana@sdpn.org.mw
01 776 089	01 776 090	08 512 339	disabelderly@malawi.net
01 753 698	01 753 698	08 305 157	wezieyvette@hotmail.com
01 775 335	-	09 961 661	roolaniyan@hotmail.com
01 773 499	01 773 106	08 202 660	crkphiri@malawi.net mipingo@malawi.net
01 773 255	-	09 064 588	michelle.remme@fao.org
01 757 724	-	09 567 559	
+39 06 570 53958	+39 06 570 52004	-	libor.stloukal@fao.org
-	-	08 876 764	ellen.thom@wfp.org
-	-	09 972 419	ellen.thom@wfp.org
01 752 971	-	09 658 129	

ANNEX II: TIMETABLE OF THE MEETING

<i>Time</i>	<i>Activity</i>	<i>Facilitator/Presenter</i>
DAY 1: 28 November 2007		
8.30 – 9.00	Registration	
9.00 – 9.30	Official opening Master of Ceremony: Zifa Kazeze	Opening remarks by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tony Kandiero, Vice-Chairman, Bingu Silvergrey Foundation Board • Vincent Langdon-Morris, Coordinator of Emergency and Rehabilitation Unit, FAO Representation in Malawi
9.30 – 9.50	Introduction of participants	
9.50 – 10.05	Introduction to the Meeting: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • purpose • expected outcomes • process 	Libor Stloukal, Frances Mkandawire
10.05 – 10.15	Discussion	
10.15 – 10.45	Coffee break and group photo	
Theme 1: Identifying challenges and opportunities of population ageing Chair: Dr. Grace Malindi, Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security		
Formal presentations:		
10.45 – 11.00	FAO perspective on rural ageing	Libor Stloukal
11.00 – 11.15	Ageing in Malawi and nutritional issues	Linley Chiwona-Karlton
11.15 – 11.30	Main findings of FAO study on rural ageing in the Zomba district	John Kadzandira
11.30 – 12.00	Discussion	
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch break	
13.00 – 13.15	Introduction to group work 1	Libor Stloukal
13.15 – 15.15	Group work 1 What are the most important challenges and opportunities of population ageing in Malawi? How do we know they are “important”? How well do we understand the various drivers, impacts, opportunities and challenges of population ageing? On what topics is more information/research needed?	
15.15 – 15.45	Coffee break	
15.45 – 16.30	Plenary	groups reporting
16.30 – 16.45	Close of day 1	Libor Stloukal

DAY 2: 29 November 2007		
8.45 – 9.00	Reflections on day 1	Michelle Remme
Theme 2: Opportunities in developing and implementing policies to protect and support the elderly Chair: Mr. Tony Kandiero, Vice-Chairman, Bingu Silvergrey Foundation Board		
Formal presentations:		
9.00 – 9.30	Social protection and ageing in Malawi	Zifa Kazeze
9.30 – 10.00	Social cash transfers in Malawi: from pilot to scaling up	Harry Mwamlima, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development
10.00 – 10.30	Where do we stand in international action on ageing?	Libor Stloukal
10.30 – 12.00	Discussion	
12.00 – 13.00	Lunch break	
Theme 3: The way forward: what are the priorities for further work and how are we going to address them? Chair: Reverend Dr. Silas Ncozana		
Formal presentations:		
13.15 – 13.30	Bingu Silvergrey Foundation introduces itself: mission, goals, and mechanisms of work	Frances Mkandawire
13.30 – 13.45	Presentation	Mr. M.S. Nyirenda, Chief Disability Prevention and Awareness Officer, Department of Social Welfare, Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly
13.45 – 14.15	Discussion	
14.15 – 14.25	Introduction to group work 2	Libor Stloukal
14.25 – 15.30	Group work 2: What mechanisms (institutional, legal, operational, etc.) need to be put in place to improve the well-being of older people in Malawi and to maximize the developmental benefits that population ageing can bring? Who needs to do what? How are we going to collaborate from now on?	
15.30 – 16.15	Plenary	
16.15 – 16.30	Participants' evaluation of the Meeting	Libor Stloukal
16.30 – 17.00	Closure of the Meeting	Closing remarks by: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Mazlan Jusoh, FAO Representative in Malawi • Frances Mkandawire, Bingu Silvergrey Foundation • Harry Mwamlima, Ministry of Economic Planning and Development • Mr. M.S. Nyirenda, Representative from Ministry of Persons with Disabilities and the Elderly

