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Training Helps Journalists Expose Corruption in Malawi

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US Training Helps Journalists Expose Corruption in Malawi

Lilongwe- The United States Government's Millennium Challenge Corporation (MCC) initiative recently concluded training for more than 30 Malawian journalists on investigative and corruption reporting. The training, under the theme: "Following the Money: How the Media Can Strengthen Government Integrity in Malawi," aimed to give Malawian reporters and editors the tools they need to investigate and produce stories about how public money is managed.

The training has helped journalists learn how corruption in Malawi costs citizens millions of dollars, and in some cases, endangers lives.

Reporters and editors from Capital FM, Television Malawi and the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation took part in the November 20th -December 15th training program. Journalism trainers from IFES and the University of Malawi's Polytechnic conducted week-long sessions in each media organization's newsroom, a new approach in Malawi that gave the journalists an opportunity to use the training in a real life setting.

The journalists learned about the media's watchdog role in a democratic society, government oversight agencies in Malawi and using public documents to unearth possible malpractices. Beatrice Juma, a Television Malawi Journalist who attended the program, commented: "I have learned how to investigate stories about money no matter how sensitive the story can be."

The program required each trainee to do rigorous field reporting and produce a story about corruption in Malawi during the week of training. One trainee investigated how corruption in the country's medical system affects patients while another investigated how the government privatization commission handles the proceeds from the sale of public companies.

In the course of reporting and editing these stories, the trainees learned about international journalism ethics and standards, fact-checking and source protection.

"Malawi's journalists are keen to put these investigative skills to work to 'follow the money,' and in the process, serve all the Malawians," said IFES Journalism Trainer Suzanne Marmion. She added that the training helps to strengthen journalists' ability to work effectively within a system

where government censorship and self-censorship are common. Casals and Associates, Inc. and IFES plan to conduct training for journalists working in print media in Malawi in 2007.

The training was funded through Malawi's Millennium Challenge Account Threshold assistance program. The Government of Malawi requested assistance from the MCC to combat corruption and strengthen its capacity to manage and monitor its finances. As a part of Threshold assistance program, Casals & Associates, Inc. and IFES are providing training to local media houses to strengthen their capacity to analyze and report on corruption and government fiscal management.