Views from the Inside:
An Appraisal of the Effectiveness of International NGOs as Agents of Development through a Case Study of Concern Universal's Local Development Support Programme in Dedza District, Malawi

A thesis submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of MASTER OF SOCIAL SCIENCE

Khadija Sungeni Mussa

Supervisor: Professor Lucien van der Walt

Department of Sociology

RHODES UNIVERSITY

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ABSTRACT

Malawi, which became independent in 1964, attracted Non-Governmental Organisations (NGOs) from the early 1980s. Initially, NGO involvement was a response to the influx of refugees from neighbouring war-torn Mozambique. Since then, NGOs have been active in the development sector. Malawi, a small country, has widespread poverty, and has recently been in international headlines as a victim of floods, drought and food shortages.

Economically unstable, with environmental problems, Malawi is in need of development assistance. NGOs have been centrally positioned in such efforts, but the academic literature on their role has been limited. NGO interventions in development efforts, generally, have been subject to controversy. While some argue that NGOs provide an essential means of development, especially where state capacity is limited, others argue that, with most NGOs headquartered or funded from abroad, their strategies and practices are often more accountable to external pressures than local needs.

This thesis intervenes in these debates with a case study: with the aim of examining the sustainability, appropriateness, accountability and effectiveness of NGO projects, it looks at a project by the international NGO (INGO), Concern Universal (CU), which works in the central region in Dedza, Malawi. It examines the project, using fieldwork in three villages, looking at issues such as its use of participatory methods, relations with local government and village structures, capacity building methods, and donor relations. The thesis argues that (I)NGOs like CU exist in a conflicted situation: they have to remain in the good books of their donors, while, at the same time, maintaining accountability to their beneficiaries; they depend on their ability to manoeuvre through the conflict in order to ensure their continuity, and so, their impact is shaped by competing imperatives. CU has made a real impact on poverty alleviation efforts, but its methods and approaches are shaped by said competing imperatives.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACCRONYMS

ADC	Area Development Committee
ADMARC	Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation
AIDS	Acquired Immune Deficiency Syndrome
AIDEP	African Institute for Development Policy
CBCC	Community-Based Childcare Centre
CBDA	Community-Based Distribution Agent
CBO	Community-Based Organisation
CSP	Country Strategy Paper
CU	Concern Universal
DEC	District Executive Committee
DFID	Department for International Development (UK Aid)
DPD	Department of Population and Development
EPA	Extension Planning Area
EU	European Union
GoM	Government of Malawi
HIV	Human Immunodeficiency Virus
HSA	Health Surveillance Assistant
IFIs	International Financial Institutions
IMF	International Monetary Fund
INGO	International Non-Governmental Organisation
ISI	Import-Substitution-Industrialisation
LDSP	Local Development Support Programme
MDGs	Millennium Development Goals
MGDS	Malawi Growth and Development Strategy
MCP	Malawi Congress Party
NGO	Non-Governmental Organisation
OTP	Outpatient Therapeutic Programme
PAI	Population Action International

PD Hearth	Positive Deviance Hearth
SAPs	Structural Adjustment Programmes
PIPs	Policies, Institutions and Processes
RUTF	Ready-to-use therapeutic foods
SL Framework/ SLF	Sustainable Livelihoods Framework
T/A	Traditional Authority
WASH	Water, Sanitation and Hygiene
WFP	World Food Programme
VDC	Village Development Committee
VSL	Village Savings and Loans
UDF	United Democratic Front
UN	United Nations
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme

Chapter 1:

Introduction

1.1. Introduction

The aim of this thesis is to engage in the larger debates over the sustainability, appropriateness, accountability and effectiveness of Non-Governmental Organisation (NGO) projects in the area of development. It examined an international NGO (INGO) development project in Malawi, in order to evaluate the impact of (I)NGOs on development and poverty alleviation.

The case study was a project run by an INGO called Concern Universal (CU) in the central region of Dedza. Three villages from the Chafumbwa Extension Planning Area (EPA) in Dedza District, where CU's Local Development Support Project (LDSP) has operated for six years, were studied. The thesis used qualitative research, examining perceptions and experiences of poverty, and of poverty-reduction strategies and of development, and the experiences, successes and failures of the Dedza project and of CU as a developmental organisation. Issues covered included CU's use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF), and participatory methods, and its relations with local government and village structures, capacity building methods, and donor relations. It argues that CU has made a real impact on poverty alleviation efforts, but that its methods and approaches are shaped by competing imperatives.

This chapter discusses the literature on NGOs, as well as the issue of "development" – specifically the issue of poverty in relation to the steps required in order to end poverty. This is followed by an outline of the thesis structure, which provides a summary of each of the focus of the following chapters.

1.2. Context of the Thesis

The concept of "development" is understood in this thesis as involving steps to meet basic needs, enhance standards of living and secure tangible achievements such as increased life expectancy and levels of nutrition (Simon, 1997: 185). "Best practices" ought to be determined from these achievements for future planning and to ensure sustainable progress. The thesis looks, in particular, at the results of NGO activities designed to improve the food security, nutrition and health of project beneficiaries. It will also explore alternative understandings of development and poverty, as well as issues of income and expenditure, social inclusion, basic needs, and human development indicators with regard to the development discourse (Johnson, 1996).

Fundamentally, the thesis is intended to enrich the literature on NGOs' role in development, and to evaluate competing claims about the impact and role of NGOs. There are many claims regarding this impact, which has been portrayed in positive, negative and neutral lights. NGOs are non-profit bodies, reliant on donors, and are faced by the need to make choices that attract funding, as well as between a range of options in development techniques (such as participation, or bottom-up vs. top-down approaches), and criteria for beneficiary selection. Helliker argues that the work of NGOs needs to be understood "from within" because NGO practices cannot be read "from outside" (2009: 105-106) in terms of what donors want. It is important to know what pressures, demands, and negotiations NGOs face, and their coping practices, in order to have a more complete picture of the world of NGOs (Helliker, 2009: 106).

This research will use its case study to engage the different views in the literature with reference to the role of (I)NGOs in promoting sustainable livelihoods through improving health, food and nutrition security. Health, food and nutrition security are the main points of focus because these are the most basic needs.

People are motivated to perform actions that lead to as many of these basic needs being satisfied as possible (Maslow, 1943: 370). In his hierarchy of needs, Maslow argues that biological and physiological needs are the basic needs for human survival (1943: 372) and have to be met before any other needs (such as the promotion of development in any larger sense) can be pursued. Examples of these basic needs include shelter, food, drink, warmth, air and sleep

among others, all of which inform human development indicators used to measure achievements in key dimensions of human development (UNDP, 2014a).

Maslow also adds that the body needs to maintain the constant, normal state of the blood stream which is achieved by the regulation of the water content of the blood, salt content, sugar content, protein content, fat content, calcium content, oxygen content, constant hydrogen-ion level (acid-base balance), constant temperature of the blood, minerals, hormones and vitamins (Maslow, 1943: 372). The balance and stability in the body of these components comes from nutritious food and leads to a healthy body fit to perform the activities of the next stages of needs. All of the processes and efforts involved in alleviating poverty and advancing development fall under one or more of the next stages in Maslow's hierarchy which are safety needs, love needs, esteem needs (Maslow, 1943), cognitive needs, aesthetic needs (Maslow, 1970a), self-actualisation needs (Maslow, 1943) and transcendence needs (Maslow, 1970b).

The amount of inequality in the world today has meant that what is basic to some of the world's population is hard to come by for others. Not everyone is able to put food on their table at the end of every day, or be free of worry about manageable diseases that need to be treated with resources and money that is scarce. Access to nutritious food is necessary for achieving full potential growth, concentration in school and improved educational performance (Jukes, McGuire, Method and Sternberg, 2002), leading to a generation equipped with knowledge to lift themselves out of poverty; but nutritious food is not accessible to millions.

1.3. Thesis Outline

Following this introductory chapter, this thesis has six more chapters which are as follows:

Chapter 2 provides a contextual background to Malawi where the INGO in question is implementing its project. It discusses the meaning of development, then goes on to discuss Malawi's developmental journey, citing historical advances as well as current development challenges, the product of this history. It pays close attention to issues of food security, and the challenges of both reducing food insecurity and maintaining a fixed state of food security.

Chapter 3 provides a discussion of NGOs generally, and of the size of the NGO sector globally, as well as in Africa and in Malawi. Included in these discussions is the issue of development, the actors involved and the extent of their capacity; debates over NGOs in the academic literature with regard to their role in society and development; the contradictions, pressures and conflicts that exist in the world of NGOs; their relationship with states, and the issue of their accountability to beneficiaries and donors. The chapter ends with a discussion of the link between poverty and neo-liberalism in Malawi, and how the two have paved the way for rapidly growing (I)NGO work in the country.

Chapter 4 continues the discussion, looking more closely at INGOs and the world in which they exist, as well as the processes involved in assisting sustainable livelihoods through (I)NGO intervention in local and rural development. It looks at the processes involved in INGOs' global as well as local relations to better understand how and why INGOs adopt certain practices and strategies. Following this, it goes on to discuss one such strategy, adopted by the case study INGO, CU: its use of the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) in its LDSP in Dedza District. An outline of the SLF framework and its limitations is provided.

Chapter 5 is a research methodology chapter, which outlines the processes undertaken to mount this study and obtain empirical data. It provides a profile of the research participants, sampling strategies, data collection and analysis methods, as well as ethical considerations undertaken.

Chapter 6 outlines the findings of the research. It provides a brief overview of the INGO, CU, as an organisation, and its LDSP in Dedza for rural development and poverty alleviation; a discussion of research findings from the Chafumbwa EPA, where fieldwork was undertaken in three different villages; and an indication of how the fieldwork data relates to the issues raised by the literature. This chapter links the theoretical issues with the empirical evidence, in order to address the issues arising from the previous chapters: (I)NGO legitimacy, practices and methodology; the success or otherwise of NGO developmental efforts towards sustainable livelihoods and resilience in rural communities; development and service delivery in Malawi; and food security and health status in the project area.

Finally, chapter 7 draws conclusions from the case study INGO and its developmental project, and outlines some recommendations for NGO effectiveness, sustainability, appropriateness, and accountability in development efforts.

1.4. Conclusion

This chapter has set out the structure of the thesis, defining what is meant by development, identifying INGOs as the subject under examination, and outlining how the thesis will provide historical background, engage the literature, undertake research and a case study, link the literature and the fieldwork, and draw lessons from the research. It will be argued that, if some (I)NGOs might be liable to the charge of being agents of Western power and imperialism, it is irresponsible to make this into a general claim. INGOs operate within a complex development sector, with competing imperatives and pressures, have a substantial degree of autonomy, and can contribute to a range of outcomes.

Chapter 2:
Development in Malawi

2.1. Introduction

This chapter provides information relevant to putting the case study and the literature engaged into larger context. It discusses what "development" means, and provides a historical overview of Malawi and its development, the challenges for development, and the processes, both governmental and non-governmental, that have been involved in the pursuit of poverty alleviation. It also highlights food security as a major element of poverty in the country, and looks at how civil society and international donors have played a part in addressing the problem. Lastly it draws attention to (I)NGOs and their donor-funded projects as an element of civil society that has engaged in sustainable food security activities, particularly in the central region, identifying Dedza District as an area of concern.

2.2. Malawi Country Profile

Malawi is a small landlocked country in southern Africa surrounded by Zambia, Mozambique and Tanzania. According to the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), its surface area is approximately 118, 484 square kilometres and separating the country from Mozambique and Tanzania is Lake Malawi, which constitutes 20% of the country's surface area (UNDP, 2013). Lake Malawi provides food, employment, tourist attractions, resorts and souvenirs to visitors and locals alike. With a population of 16.36 million, Malawi is ranked at number 174 in the Human Development Index (HDI) and has 68.68% of its population living in multidimensional poverty (UNDP, 2014b). Currently, the country is creating and implementing development strategies and policies aimed at reflecting the "Vision 2020" strategy developed in 1998 which is aimed at realising Malawi's development goals by the year 2020 (UNDP, 2013).

Its economy is mainly agriculture-based, with other sectors like tourism, services and mining also contributing to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP), the low-value agricultural

component decreasing from 38% in 1994 to about 27% in 2010 (UNDP, 2013). Overall, the country is one of the world's poorest countries, but it has made strides of progress in some areas. Below is an overview of the country's history and economy, and the factors that have shaped its developmental progress.

2.3. History of Malawi's Development Challenges

2.3.1. Defining Development

Development has several meanings today that take into account various elements. Citing various authors, Mitlin *et al* provide a definition of "development" in two ways: "little d" and "big d" *d/D*evelopment. "Little d" *d*evelopment describes the core processes of capitalist development that occur on a global scale that are geographically uneven, contradictory and sometimes unintentional whereas "big D" *D*evelopment describes development intervention projects that occur particularly in the third world, that emerged in the wake of decolonisation and the Cold War (Mitlin *et al*, 2007: 1701). These *D*evelopment interventions are often made today in line with "sustainable development" ideologies that inspire long-term eradication of poverty and improved availability of basic needs, such as food and healthcare, as the driving force behind them. Sustainable development has been defined by the UNDP as efforts that are:

> …expanding the choices for all people in society. This means that men and women, particularly the poor and vulnerable, are at the centre of the development process. It also means the protection of life opportunities for future generations and the natural systems on which life depends. This makes the central purpose of development the creation of an enabling environment in which all can enjoy long healthy and creative lives (UNDP, 1997, cited in Work, 2002: 3).

Simon provides an explanation of development that fits this approach by arguing that "development is the process of enhancing individual and collective quality of life in a manner that satisfies basic needs (as a minimum), is environmentally, socially and economically sustainable, and is empowering in the sense that the people concerned have a substantial degree of control (because total control may be unrealistic) over the process through access to the means of accumulating social power" (1997: 185).

This definition offers more than the approach offered by Power (2003: 3) that development is a concept that pushes for linear progression as a way of bridging the gap between the Rich North and the Poor South in favour of creating an improved economy. This approach, where the South emulates the North, is increasingly criticised: for many, development is no longer about "modernisation" and becoming like Western countries (Nederveen Pieterse, 2010: 1). For some countries, development might mean having state-of-the-art technology and infrastructure yet for others, it simply means being able to provide a maintainable means for people to have basic resources such as water, shelter and food on their tables at the end of each day. These basic resources were originally the duty of the postcolonial state to its citizens in the form of services, but over time, a more complex process of service delivery has evolved (this shall be examined further in the chapter, after exploring the various challenges to development that Malawi has seen).

2.3.2. Malawi's Path to Development

There are several challenges that Malawi has faced, which have hindered its developmental progress and growth as a third world country. Like other developing countries, Malawi's underdevelopment is a *product* of history, resulting from past decisions and processes which need to be examined in order to create better policies for the future (Vail, 1984, author's emphasis, cited in Kayuni, 2011: 116). Under colonialism, Malawi (then Nyasaland) was not the site of major investments, unlike other nearby British colonies. Already faced with high poverty levels and reliance on subsistence agriculture at independence in 1964, its undeveloped manufacturing sector was only responsible for 7% of employment and 10% of the economy's monetary output, which meant a weak economy because taxation could not balance out the situation (Morton, 1975, cited in Kayuni, 2011: 118).

The 1950s saw Nyasaland and the Northern Rhodesia (now Zambia) and Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) in a Federation. With the end of Federation, and independence, the capacity of the new Government of Malawi (GoM) to handle public services decreased and what little benefits had been gained from "revenue-sharing arrangements" with the Federal government before its dissolution had left the poor with unfavourable living conditions (Williams, 1978, cited in Kayuni, 2011: 118-119). There were no systems put in place for

managing the economy, or central banking, or any national development plans, and only half the roads and infrastructure needed to reach all areas necessary if national development was to be achieved, were being maintained (Morton, 1975 and Pike, 1968, cited in Kayuni, 2011: 119). As an institution, the independent state was doomed to fail, with its lack of tools for development initiatives.

Inasmuch as the country was a source of labour for the Federation, with an outflow of workers, there was lack of available *skilled* labour in the form of technical and professional skills; few people were being enrolled in school and the population was tripling (Williams, 1978 and Morton, 1975, cited in Kayuni, 2011: 119, my emphasis). The one thing Malawi really had going for it was agriculture, because there were no minerals discovered at the time that the country could use to boost the economy (Kayuni 2011: 120). But even that led to another series of problems because population growth meant that more land was needed for agricultural purposes, and that put a strain on the soil fertility and the hopes for cash crop production as a road to economic development (Kayuni, 2011: 120). By default, this also posed a threat to national food security, because the country was so desperate to achieve economic development status through cash crops that the pressure on the land had an impact the people's ability to produce enough food for themselves through subsistence farming.

There were few opportunities for the country, because every avenue explored led to further complications, and the chances of Malawi becoming a "developed" nation were slender. The first leader of independent Malawi, however, had a different plan that saw Malawi go through a unique phase of development that was specifically tailored to the country and involved alienating the West and disregarding existing theories for development (Kayuni, 2011: 120-122).

This man was Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda, Malawi's first prime minister, turned authoritarian dictator and self-proclaimed "President for Life" (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 16). Although being the "odd man out" and leading Malawi through a series of developmental efforts dissimilar to most of its African counterparts (Crosby, 1980, cited in Kayuni, 2011: 116), Banda's post-independence regime was successful in the short-term, but just as crippling in the long run.

The years 1964 to 1980 were a period in which the GoM adopted a unique developmental approach under the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) / Banda regime (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 16). It was unique in that the MCP, the only party permitted in politics, was used by Banda to spearhead development policies that focussed on production and the economic growth of the country in the form of infrastructural, agricultural (high-value export crops), business (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 16) and transport developments (Kayuni, 2011: 113). During this time, Banda had *almost* total control of Malawi's economic and development policies (Kayuni, 2011: 116, author's emphasis). Many had doubted that Banda's "fight against poverty, ignorance and disease" slogan and intended direction after Malawi gained independence would last long, especially after Banda himself had admitted that the economy was 'frail' and development achievements would require a lot of work (Kayuni, 2011: 113).

However, these policies and Banda's strategy produced remarkable results. By the end of the 1970s, the economic growth rate, investment, and agricultural returns had increased, more people were in wage employment and the country relied less on grants from the British government, its former colonial master (Kayuni, 2011: 113). Following from these successes, Banda branched into personal entrepreneurship. He owned the Press Corporation and was the majority shareholder of Independence Press Holdings which allowed him to tap into tobacco farming, textiles and manufacturing, food processing, wholesaling and retailing, financial services, distilling and bottling, as well as control of the major stores in these various fields of expertise (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 17).

His company contributed heavily to economic growth and paid large sums of state tax (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 17) showing that he was dedicated to re-investing in the country's welfare and not in increasing personal wealth. Also, Banda did not tolerate theft and corruption, rewarded those who worked hard with employment and assets, and managed to keep a stable government (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 17).

However, these efforts only saw 15 years of glory; it all started to unravel by the late 1970s (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 17). External forces had come into play introducing a decline in trade revenues for exports and revealing problems in smallholder agriculture, governmental finances and the improper management of parastatals (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 17-18). Banda

had not prepared for these events, nor had he put in place proper structures and procedures for succession within his party. His mistress/nurse Cecilia Kadzamira and her uncle John Tembo who were closest to Banda, began to act against those they perceived to be a threat to what Banda had built (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 18). From the 1980s, the country was involved in various relations with the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and World Bank, and since assistance from these bodies was linked to the adoption of more neo-liberal approaches, the policy space was increasingly narrow.

Banda was now old, and there were fights about who would take over: instead of getting a leader with the same vision for development (Kelsall and Booth, 2010: 18), Malawi got an economic status full of ups-and-downs, a distrustful public who resented the repressive MCP regime, and even more developmental set-backs as various the new leaders came into place. The focus on economic growth only, and not also on the socio-economic welfare of the people themselves, was also an issue.

Aside from the economic shocks and problems in its path to development, Malawi continues to encounter other problems that further inhibit its development. Examples include high illiteracy levels, inadequate energy supply and generation, high costs for transportation, a lack of skilled human resources, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, a narrow export base, over-dependence on rain-fed agriculture, insufficient financial resources and high population growth rates (UNDP, 2013). All are matters of high concern and some are addressed in various GoM publications.

Population growth is one of the major problems hindering sustainable development in the country, with other issues following closely behind it. Malawi's Department of Population and Development (DPD) prepared a report in 2012 that identified Malawi as a densely populated country whose population grows by 400, 000 every year (DPD, 2012: 3). The number went from 2.9 million in 1950, close to 4 million in 1966, 11.2 million in 2000, 14.8 million in 2012 and it is feared the number could go up to 23 million in 2025 if families continue to have six children on average (DPD, 2012: 2). This has been due to several factors including a high fertility rate since 2004, improved health care and nutrition, and a decline in the mortality rate since the 1950s (DPD, 2012: 2).

This type of very rapid growth, if not controlled, poses risks to Malawi's ability to make some headway towards meeting the United Nation's (UN) Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and advancing its economy (DPD, 2012: 3). A report compiled by the African Institute for Development Policy (AFIDEP) and Population Action International (PAI) highlights that population growth adds pressure on the nation's capacity to fully allocate resources towards the provision of adequate education facilities, health care, poverty reduction, management of natural resources (AFIDEP and PAI, 2012: 12) as well as public service delivery, food security, and employment rates – to name a few priorities. The number of people having to share arable land for subsistence farming is also continually increasing due to rising population density (AFIDEP and PAI, 2012: 15) which in turn also has adverse effects of food security. The high fertility rate has also ensured that the majority of the population, about forty-five percent, is comprised of youths below the age of 15, meaning that the government has the added problem of having to support a large number of citizens who are not yet a part of the workforce (AFIDEP and PAI, 2012: 12).

Climate change is another challenge faced by Malawi when it comes to development. Only recently creating an environmentally-sensitive development policy (2012), the GoM aims to reduce vulnerability, increase adaptation and mitigation for sustainable livelihoods in the face of climate issues such as droughts, storms and floods (Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Management, 2012: 8), of which one occurs every three to five years (DPD, 2012: 6). Particularly of note is that Malawi has suffered several food crises due to conditions brought about by climate change in the 1991/92, 1996/97, 2000/2001 and 2001/2002 growing seasons, despite the fact that government subsidies resulted in a food surplus between 2005 and 2009 (AFIDEP and PAI, 2012: 19). Rainfall remains unpredictable and there is need to include irrigation practices in development initiatives (AFIDEP and PAI, 2012: 19), otherwise the food security situation will continue to be unstable, with the main people likely to be affected being the poor in the rural areas who depend on farming for survival.

Other dimensions of climate change known to affect Malawi over the years include the drying up of rivers and lakes, heat waves, short rainy seasons, lengthy dry spells during the rainy season, unpredictable weather patterns, landslides, bush fires, declining natural species, flora and fauna and the scarcity of water which leads to unstable hydro-electric production (AFIDEP and

PAI, 2012: 16). These events lead to livelihoods being severely affected because Malawi depends on rain-fed agriculture; the already high levels of poverty are further intensified by climate-sensitive vector-borne and water-associated disease epidemics like diarrhoea, cholera and malaria, the lack of institutional structures to combat disasters and not enough distribution of climate-risk and long-term solution knowledge among communities (Ministry of Environment and Climate Change Management, 2012: 9).

Deforestation is another one of Malawi's development challenges. Coupled with a dense population, there is an unsustainable exploitation of natural resources (DPD, 2012: 17) due to many people competing for what little resources there are available. This means the cutting of trees for wood and charcoal as an energy source, for example, a practice which is widespread in Malawi. This practice supports cooking and burning of bricks for houses, but also has negative impacts on the country's ability to combat flooding and climate change, brought on by fewer trees available for carbon dioxide absorption (AFIDEP and PAI, 2012: 18). These activities are also sorely in need of careful management so that the country can continue to rely on forestry for its socio-economic development in the form of construction timber, industrial poles, employment, catchment conservation, fruits, mushrooms and medicinal herbs (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. 2010: 28).

Equally crippling is the health status of the country, with issues such as the prevalence of preventable diseases, limited health care services (especially for the poor), the lack of an adequate amount of drugs in hospitals and the need to curb HIV, malaria and TB (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2010: 42). These issues are also heightened by the inadequate water supply and sanitation services. Water supply needs to be addressed in the country in order to facilitate adequate sanitation services, increase hygiene, promote irrigation schemes and decrease the amount of disease transmission (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning. 2010: 54). This, in turn, will contribute to improving the country's hunger, poverty and nutrition state of affairs, which currently affects household incomes, child-feeding and care and food preparation and processing (Ministry of Finance and Development Planning, 2010: 44), as well as food security.

Food security, or insecurity rather, is one of Malawi's ongoing developmental challenges. Despite the abundance of food from the Lake, food shortage is still a problem in the country. This is also mainly because the main staple food in the form of starch is maize, whose growth is proving to be a bit difficult due to factors like climate problems, as mentioned above, that involve periods of dry times and also dry areas, therefore poor harvests. Following the last food crisis from the growing season of 2001/2002, there was a time period where most houses had sufficient food supplies due to bumper crops of maize caused by favourable climatic conditions and an input subsidy scheme implemented by government (DPD, 2012: 5; Mtimuni, 2008: 3). Fertilisers and high-yielding seeds were given to smallholder farmers and this led to the country's maize harvest doubling to 2.7 million tonnes in 2005 and 3.4 million tonnes in 2007, making it possible for the country to have a huge surplus to sell to neighbouring countries as well as the UN World Food Programme (WFP), as well as later donating 10,000 tonnes to the WFP nutrition programme for people living with HIV/AIDS (Fleshman, 2008).

This strategy of state assistance went against IMF and World Bank policies, however, and had to be phased out (Fleshman, 2008). The government decided to use its own funds to start the programme again, since most farmers were too poor to afford fertiliser on their own (Fleshman, 2008). However, another drought struck again in 2010/2011, with the most affected parts being the southern region and Malawi's surplus maize for export production came to an end (DPD, 2012: 5).

Malawi is mainly reliant on maize, but there are also other food sources such as potatoes, cassava, rice and sorghum that can be given attention in order to focus on alternatives to maize and increase food security (Ministry of Finance and Planning, 2010: 76). The over-reliance on maize is seen as one of the main contributions to food insecurity. According to the WFP, the number of food insecure people in Malawi was 0.2 million in 2011, a figure which increased to 1.6 million in 2012 and now 1.8 million according to the November 2013 assessment (WFP, 2014). In January 2013, the figure was reported as 1.63 million, which is equivalent to 11 per cent of the country's population (Tafirenyika, 2013). Unfavourable weather conditions, among other causes, have been one of the main reasons cited for the food shortage crises, which led to little harvesting of maize and a prediction that 21 of Malawi's 28 districts would suffer food insecurity until the next harvest in March 2014 (Integrated Regional Information Networks,

2013). With droughts and other natural disasters, the majority of Malawi's poor are chronically food insecure and victims of hunger and famine (Ellis, Kutengule and Nyasulu, 2003: 1498).

Babu and Mthindi (1994) wrote two decades ago about household food security practices and factors, and their analysis is still strikingly applicable to Malawi today. Most households in the country then relied on food produced from their own fields and were limited or influenced by conditions of production technologies available for crop production (such as fertiliser and pesticides) and the resource constraints in adopting said technologies (Babu and Mthindi, 1994: 274). This included fertilisers, pesticides, irrigation, improved crop varieties (Babu and Mthindi, 1994: 274), land availability, favourable weather as well as availability of seeds. Sometimes households needed to purchase food on the market and had to rely on income generated by working on other people's farms as well as off-farm and non-farm employment, in return for cash or wages-in-kind (Babu and Mthindi, 1994: 274, 276) in order to sustain their food security requirements. There were also cases where some households limited the number of meals eaten per day, in order to sustain food stocks; and even when meals were taken, there was no guarantee that the food was nutritious and so, there would be impacts on the health status of household members, particularly children and pregnant women (Babu and Mthindi, 1994: 276).

Ten years later, food security was still a topic of concern for the Malawian population. The 2001/2002 food crisis led to hunger-related deaths of between 500 and 1000 in southern and central Malawi (Devereux, 2002: 1). Flooding in these regions in February and March created a national maize deficit of 273,000 metric tonnes and decreased maize production from 2.5 million metric tonnes in 1990/2000 to 1.7 million metric tonnes in 2000/2001 (Devereux, 2002: 1). Country policies and strategies were in dire need of reform at this time. The crisis had not been anticipated by donors and the government because there had been exaggerated forecasts of roots and tuber production (such as cassava and sweet potatoes) which had been expected to bridge the food gap and decrease over reliance on maize (Devereux, 2002: 1). The fact that the IMF had previously instructed the government to sell the Strategic Grain Reserve also caused strain on policy implementation and the ability for government and its development partners to put in place food distribution programmes in time (Devereux, 2002: 1). As a result, it was realised that food security projects needed to be carried out countrywide and many donors began to fund projects that had a life-span of five years, with the hope of improving resilience in beneficiary

communities with beneficiaries being able to continue to carry out development initiatives after projects had phased out (Chizimba, 2013: 705). These would be service delivery initiatives implemented both by government and donor-funded NGOs alike.

Given limited government capacities and revenues, as well as the constraints of IMF and World Bank models, NGOs and donors play a growing role in such efforts. Currently, there are concerns about the sustainability of these donor-funded projects. Studies show that poverty rates are still relatively high and stable, with 52.4% of the population living below the poverty line in 2006, characterised by 30% of the *poor* moving *out* of poverty while 30% of the *non-poor* moved *into* poverty (Chizimba, 2013: 706, my emphases). This suggests a stagnant state of poverty, and calls for more aggressive poverty alleviation initiatives. Clearly, economic vulnerability is still a major concern in Malawi's development (Chizimba, 2013: 706). Questions arose concerning whether or not there were better ways that food security projects could be implemented to ensure sustainability; how poor farming communities could be better empowered socially and economically to sustain food security projects; and how these objectives could be achieved in such a way that decreased dependence on donor funding (Chizimba, 2013: 706).

2.3.3. Dedza District and Central Malawi

The central region of Malawi, as mentioned above, is one of the areas in the country that has been continuously affected and severely by issues of food insecurity – partly due to its geographic location and seasonally unfavourable climatic conditions. It is not near the Lake, so there is also high demand for farmed fish as a contribution to food reserves.

Dedza district is a particularly large area in the central region that has been severely affected by food insecurity. It has 56.8% of people living in poverty which is the highest percentage in the central region of Malawi (National Statistical Office, 2011: 88). It is an area that reflects the most desperate livelihood circumstances of the majority of Malawi's rural population (Ellis *et al*, 2003: 1495). Dedza is also an area that has poor dietary diversity, high levels of malnutrition and food insecurity (Concern Universal, 2010: 8). Stunted growth (also known as chronic malnutrition) is at 47% in Malawi but at 54% among children in Traditional Authority (T/A) Kachere in Dedza specifically (Concern Universal, 2011b: 17). This is why it is a common project site for many NGOs to implement food security projects in the area. Before

looking at the contribution of NGOs as drivers of development and service delivery in this matter, an overview of their role and the structures with which they co-exist shall be examined.

2.4. Service Delivery Vehicles/Agents in MW

2.4.1. Service Delivery

Service provision, or delivery, is a key vehicle of development, and there are several actors involved in service delivery today. States provide assistance to less fortunate citizens: An example in South Africa is the provision of low-cost Reconstruction and Development Programme houses. Organisations such as the UN, NGOs, and international relief and development agencies provide aid and services through measures like the delivery of food and medicines in response to crises. Community development has been seen through the organisation of community engagement programmes like clothes drives for donation to the poor – a process whereby small communities are helped by more developed communities in order to improve the former's social and economic standards of life (O'Gorman, 1995: 207).

However, it is not only the state, international financial institutions (IFIs) like the World Bank and the IMF, NGOs like Amnesty International, international development agencies like the US Agency for International Development or transnational corporations like the Coca-Cola Company that are agents of development (Power, 2003: 5). Agents are also the members of the communities being developed, that contribute to the development process themselves by participating and getting involved in the decision-making and implementation process (Power, 2003: 5). When community members get together and take part in the development process, the results are more successful than otherwise, because of the trust, respect and friendships that exist among community members (Hailey, 2001: 88). This is part of the reason why self-help, self-reliance and participation is encouraged by some development projects. Also important is to give community members the ability to learn valuable skills that help them to sustain themselves after the projects have come to an end. Examples of such skills include learning how to make long-lasting bricks for houses, how to start and sustain a vegetable garden, and how to make use of resources readily available from the surrounding environment to support a household.

2.4.2. The Benefits of Political Participation and Participatory Development

Participation of the people is encouraged to make sure that development is achievable and sustainable. A key champion of Participatory Development practice is Robert Chambers, under whose work on Participatory Rural Appraisal, the method of Participatory Development falls. He defined Participatory Rural Appraisal as "an approach and methods for learning about rural life and conditions from, with and by rural people…a process which extends into analysis, planning and action…to enable rural people to share, enhance, and analyse their knowledge of life and conditions, to plan and act" (Chambers, 1994: 953). Participatory Development is therefore also political because it is democratic by involving everyone in the community to have a say in the process of doing something to benefit them all. This is essential for development projects to be of beneficial and effective use as the people who are to be affected have decision-making power and can put things to a vote such as what courses of action to take and who to elect as their representative leaders in the management of the projects. Chinsinga (2003: 132) argues that "for a project to be sustainable, it must address those problems and aspirations which are identified by the poor themselves and it must have a management structure in which they have confidence".

The Human Development Report states that having a say in the processes that shape one's community and improve it is a basic human right, which is also essential for development (UNDP, 2002: 51). It ensures that the outcomes of development are equal for all as well. Governments can be held accountable for their actions if they make decisions that fail to promote democracy and development (UNDP, 2002: 54).

Allowing the people freedom for political participation enhances their collective as well as individual agency (UNDP, 2002: 53). This is their ability and capacity to get things done for themselves. Collectively, people are able to push for issues that are central to the development process through the formation of social movements (for example) (UNDP, 2002: 53). When they do this they realise and claim their rights (UNDP, 2002: 53), and they are thereby becoming more empowered and "developed". They have a platform to express their views and concerns about the democracy when it does not achieve development for all (UNDP, 2002: 55).

2.4.3. The Role of Government Decentralisation

States aid processes of political participation when they put in place structures that facilitate it, by way of a more decentralised government. Decentralisation is a process whereby states "(allocate) power amongst territorially defined and nested hierarchies", delegate power and authority within the state or transfer power and authority to a parastatal or non-state entity altogether (Crook, 2003: 77). The central government transfers elements of its planning, management, and resource allocation duties from itself and its agencies to lower levels of government (Work, 2002: 5). This is done in order to encourage governance characterised by a shared responsibility between central, regional and local levels of government so that better quality and effectiveness can be achieved (UNDP, cited in Work, 2002: 5-6).

It has been argued that decentralisation addresses key developmental issues such as poverty, environment, healthcare, gender, technology and education because it involves input not only from the state and civil society, but also from other actors in development such as citizens, community organisations, international aid organisations and the private sector (Work, 2002: 4). This large pool of influence is bound to yield better results when it comes to "brainstorming" but can itself prove problematic if each actor becomes determined to further their own agenda before those of the other actors, particularly the poverty-stricken whose plight is the reason for decentralisation in the first place. Originally, the whole point was to promote activity from a grassroots level in order to come up with sustainable projects designed to improve the quality of life of those in poor communities using their input (Work, 2002: 4) as they are better informed on their needs.

It is also beneficial to have channels of communication between the other actors such as civil society and the local government. Their involvement serves to increase resourcefulness and capacity to solve development issues at the local level (Work, 2002: 4). It is also worth pointing out that decentralisation initiatives require the representation of various groups in the communities in new councils or committees which is beneficial to their operation (Work, 2002: 4). Work (2002: 4-5) cites an example of how empowering women in Nigeria by involving them in participation in their communities helped to improve the poverty and economic situations in

their areas. Malawi also has a similar system in place and this shall be explored in the following pages as well as later in the findings chapter (Chapter 6).

Due to decentralisation, because it allows people to be more involved in matters that concern them, governments are then kept more accountable to people through citizen oversight and control is provided through elections (Chinsinga, 2008: 73). Ideally those in power should therefore be easily removed if the people feel they do not have their best interests at heart so there is not much room for abuse of power and resources. Decentralisation also gives people the opportunity to realise their full potential for a dignified life (Chinsinga, 2008: 73). They have the chance to spearhead and contribute insight to development projects, which is particularly important because these are initiatives meant to enhance their lives and not those of elites who are normally in charge of making the decisions on their behalf.

Malawi's opportunity to introduce decentralisation reforms came during the 1990s, when democratic reform took place, with the MCP one-party system abolished and a multi-party system put in place: the United Democratic Front (UDF) was the first party in power in the new governmental era beginning in 1994 (Chinsinga, 2008: 73). The UDF made issues of crippling poverty and policies pertaining to this matter, a point of focus for the government after the MCP regime had denied the existence of poverty in the country based on the fact that people were seen with clothes, food and houses that did not leak when it rained (Chinsinga, 2008: 73-74).

However, there has been criticism as to the success of subsequent decentralisation, with the division of labour not being clearly outlined and national politicians not implementing decentralisation reforms in a political ploy to keep a strong grip on their power (Chinsinga, 2008: 75). Any reforms implemented could be state-led and controlled as a result (Chinsinga, 2008: 76), making the policy a classic case of being great in theory and on paper, but non-existent or deeply compromised in reality.

Political decentralisation, as is the case in this discussion, involves elected sub-national forms of government such as village councils and state-level (or province-level) bodies in order to encourage accountability and transparency, and links with civil society and the private sector (Work, 2002: 6). The idea behind it is that governments can be more familiar with the people and know their needs, in order to create and implement better pro-poor policies (Crook, 2003: 77) if

there is a space created where they can hear from the very people for whom the policies are designed. It also encourages political participation in communities so that the poor have “voice” to make up for being excluded from elite politics, and so promote relevance and effectiveness in government policies (Crook, 2003: 77).

Like any new system, there were problems with the first attempt at implementing decentralisation in the Malawi. New decentralisation policy reforms were made in the spirit of a transition to democracy in 1994, and new draft decentralisation policy emerged in 1996, being adopted in 1998 and finalised with the enactment of the Local Government Act in December 1998, applied from March 1999 (Chinsinga, 2008: 79).

Lessons had to be learned and adjustments to the policy made, to try and give the locals a real chance at being in the forefront of their development. District Assemblies, consisting of elected representatives of the people, were introduced and put in charge of facilitating local governance, democratising state power, and advancing collective grassroots decision-making and participation at local and district levels (Chinsinga, 2008: 79-80). Under the District Assemblies, several other bodies follow in a hierarchy with Area Development Committees (ADCs) at the top and Village Development Committees (VDCs) at the bottom (Chinsinga, 2008: 81). This system is supported by civil society organisations, some of which use it, while others have their own versions of it (as will be discussed in the chapter on findings, Chapter 6).

The VDC is a group of representatives from a village or group of villages responsible for planning and development at the grassroots level (Chiweza, 2010: 40). Membership consists of an elected member from each village, ward representatives, four women nominated by people within the VDC, and an elected extension worker representative (Chiweza, 2010: 40). With a limit of 16 members whose term of office is 3 years, the VDC also has to elect a chairperson, vice-chairperson, secretary and treasurer (Rural Livelihoods Support Programme, 2014; Chiweza, 2010: 40). The main duties of the VDC are to be the liaison between communities and the ADC and District Executive Committee (DEC), to identify, prioritise and prepare community needs, to mobilise community resources and solicit external funding, to initiate and encourage locally funded self-help activities, to be involved in village development activities by way of supervision, monitoring and evaluation, and to report all of these ventures to the Group Village

Headman/woman (GVH), who cannot chair but can only supervise during conducted meetings (Rural Livelihoods Support Programme, 2014; Chiweza, 2010: 40).

The ADC is a body that represents all the VDCs under the jurisdiction of a T/A (Chiweza, 2010: 40), that is, a "traditional authority" in the form of a headman, chief or king, whose offices form an integral part of the administration of much of postcolonial Africa. Membership consists of the chairperson of the Area Executive Committee, VDC chairpersons and vice-chairpersons as well as representatives from wards, religious faiths, youth and women groups in the area, and the local business community (Chiweza, 2010: 40; RSLP, 2014). The main duties of the ADC are to the liaise with the relevant VDCs during monthly meetings, to identify, prioritise and prepare community needs encompassing more than one VDC and submitting them to the DEC, to be involved in development activities by way of supervision, monitoring and evaluation at the T/A level, to mobilise community resources and solicit funds, and to receive, prioritise and prepare project proposals from VDCs to submit to the DEC (Chiweza, 2010: 40; Rural Livelihoods Support Programme, 2014). The term of office is also 3 years and the T/A also cannot chair but only supervise (Chiweza, 2010: 40).

It has still been noticed though, that these structures in Malawi are still not consulted when making new policies. Decentralisation initiatives have hardly ever taken local-level input from these committees (Chinsinga, 2008: 94), so questions arise as to whether they are effective, useful at all, a waste of time and resources or if there is a need for external actors that can come in to help smooth-out the process as outsiders with a fresh perspective and not so party-politics-orientated. Civil society comes to mind as a space that would be occupied by such actors. As mentioned before, civil society organisations have been known to be in support of government decentralisation, especially since "the role of civil society – and especially NGOs – is to fill in the spaces in a healthy democracy and not to substitute for government" (Edwards, 2000, cited in Gray, Bebbington and Collison, 2006: 322).

2.4.4. The Role of Civil Society in Efforts for Development

Civil society is difficult to define because it includes so many different aspects. Gray *et al* argue that civil society exists between, and depends on, other elements of society from which it emerges resulting in it being easier and more convenient to define as "what it is not" (2006:

322). Other authors have provided definitions to better understand "what it is". Gramsci offers the notion that it lies between "coercive relations of the state and the economic sphere of production" (Abercrombie *et al*, 1984, cited in Gray *et al*, 2006: 322). Chandhoke (2002) wrote that it is "located somewhere between the state, the market and the family. Here people come together in projects of all kinds to make their collective histories" (cited in Gray *et* al, 2006: 322). Edwards (2000) gives a similar description, arguing that it is "the arena in which people come together to advance the interests they hold common, not for profit or political power, but because they care enough about something to take collective action" (cited in Gray *et al*, 2006: 322-323). All of these explanations lead to an understanding that civil society is an entity that attempts to monitor and have relations with both the state and the market in order to make sure that the people are safeguarded against the malpractices of the two.

Civil society organisations facilitate community politics and participation in development. The particular element of civil society that is of interest in this thesis is that of NGOs; organisations that have been known to simultaneously endorse and often promote local and empowering organisational and political initiatives whilst giving validity to capitalist modernising processes that try to end them (Helliker, 2009: 103). This double standard occurs due to the contradictory processes of globalisation that NGOs are implicated in (Helliker, 2009: 103) and this shall be discussed further in the theoretical framework chapter, Chapter 4. The aforementioned endorsements happen when NGOs assist people to organise themselves according to their various interests and needs or adopt such efforts when they have already been put in place by states and thereafter use this collective action to further their interests. A few examples of organisational interests are healthcare improvement, stable sources of income, youth involvement, religious awareness, trade unions for worker's rights, environmental concerns, women's representation and neighbourhood safety among plenty others. These interests are used as a basis for the establishment and improvement of development in the third world communities.

NGOs claim to play the role of watchdogs (Greenstein, 2003: 26), as an active part of a civil society that seeks to ensure that the government maintains its responsibilities to the people. They are well-positioned in civil society, because of their participatory and democratic credentials in development projects (Mercer, 2002: 6) that include service delivery, as well as

their financial resources. NGOs are not isolated in civil society: they are a source of strength for civil society more broadly because of their activities to support democratic endeavours (Mercer, 2002: 7), especially as development has increasingly come to include not just better healthcare, environmental awareness or poverty alleviation, but also issues of equality, democracy and human rights. They are also recognised as civil society organisations by key players in the international development community such as donors, IFIs and public administration theorists, which also welcome the additional fact that they are private organisations because to them, that makes NGOs superior to state organisations in general (Brass, 2010: 20).

NGOs operate in both categories of Mitlin *et al's* definition of development mentioned earlier in the sense that in as much as they take part by default in the "little d" *d*evelopment processes that enhance capitalism (since they form part of the political economies and societies in which capitalist development operates), they do so while implementing projects, generating knowledge and being political activists in the third world for the purpose of intervening in and improving the nature and effects of these capitalist processes (Mitlin *et al*, 2007: 1701, Helliker, 2009: 103). In other words, NGOs perform "big D" *D*evelopment projects which are part of, or rather are integrated into, the wider capitalist development processes of "little d" *d*evelopment in which they find themselves (Knight, 2012: 22). Unless stated otherwise, it is this "big D" *D*evelopment that shall be referred to whenever the term "development" is mentioned in this thesis because it refers to the particular actions taken by NGOs in development.

This definition shows that development, unlike "philanthropy", is a deliberate attempt to address the root problems facing people, and is not just a quick "fix" of the symptoms of the challenges faced by the poor; the aim is not just to improve a situation occurring at a specific time, but to make long-term benefit possible in the lives of people. However, an agent of development can be "philanthropic" if it is funded or operated on a "philanthropic" basis. NGOs have been positioned, in relation to this concept of *D*evelopment, as alternative institutions that can be used to improve things like service delivery and project planning (Mitlin *et al*, 2007: 1701). They have been known to be providers of basic needs and services needed for human survival when states have failed, as well as enhance social awareness on environmental, legislative, human rights and economic issues amongst many others. NGOs, in this sense, have become one of the key drivers of the development agenda.

Whichever form it takes, development needs to be able to contribute to the success of people being able to build better lives for themselves (UNDP, 2002: 13). Political participation plays an important part of this process (UNDP, 2002: 14). This is because it strengthens democratic institutions and practices (UNDP, 2002: 14), which in turn will further development for all. It also ensures that human rights are not infringed (UNDP, 2002: 16) and that political practices benefit all in the society. The case study organisation of this thesis is one that has made use of the existing structures of political participation, put in place as a result of the democratic Malawian government's decentralisation reforms in order to orchestrate and implement a development project in its beneficiary communities.

2.5. Thesis Case Study: Concern Universal

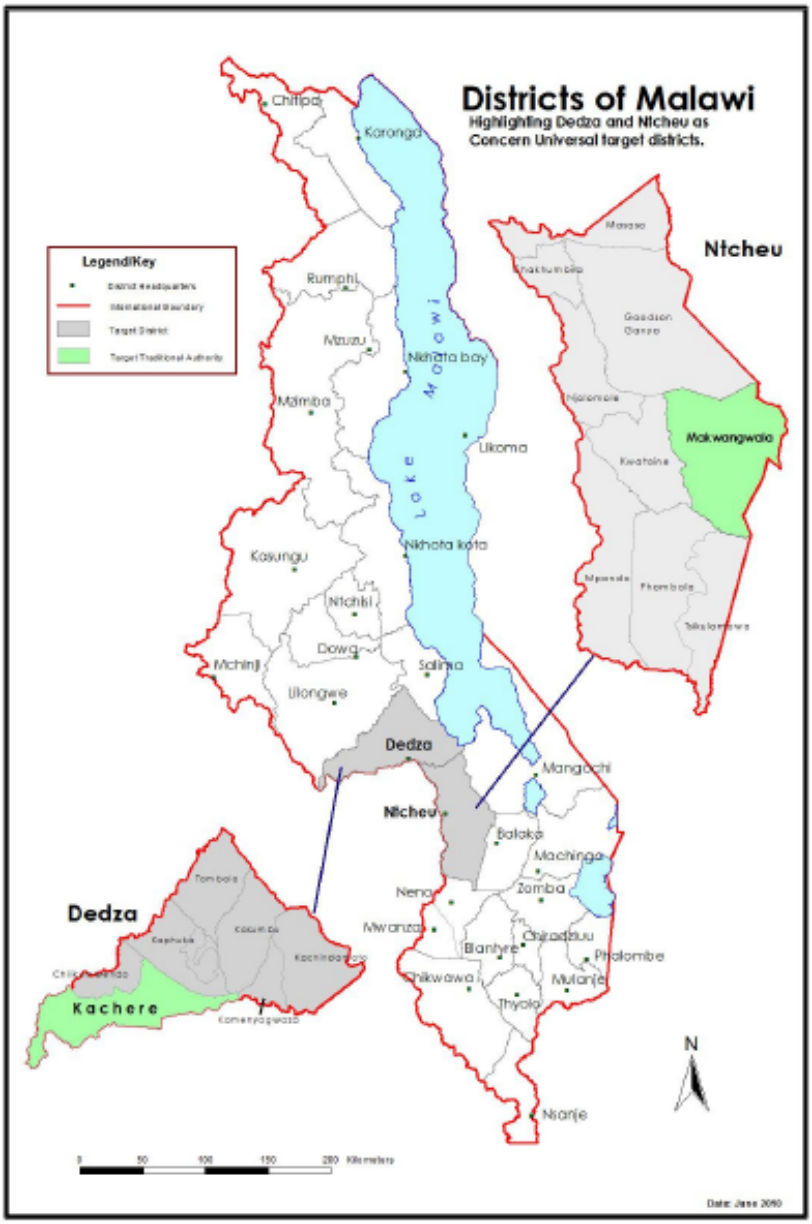
The particular result areas of the development project being examined are those which relate to food security and health. The implementing organisation is Concern Universal (CU), an international non-governmental organisation (INGO) from Ireland that has been known for promoting development and alleviation of poverty whilst incorporating local community political and practical participation in Malawi. The project being examined is known as the Local Development Support Programme (LDSP) which is funded by Irish Aid and has been carried out in two areas in Malawi, namely Chafumbwa Extension Planning Area (EPA) in T/A Kachere, Dedza District and T/A Makwangwala, Ntcheu District. The research site chosen for this thesis was Chafumbwa in Dedza, with the importance of looking at Dedza previously argued. The main goal of the study was to investigate the relationship between the work of the INGO CU, poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods in rural Malawian communities, with specific reference to CU's health, nutrition and food security result areas of the LDSP. Following from the first goal, the secondary goals included:

a) To examine the effectiveness of the nutrition and food security component of the LDSP project undertaken by CU in Chafumbwa;
b) To obtain an overview of how, if at all, the people in Chafumbwa find INGOs as contributors to the betterment of their livelihoods;
c) To examine the autonomous state (if any) of the INGO;

d) To identify the income and expenditure patterns of the INGO, and the role of its funders (if any) in these patterns in relation to this portion of Malawi; and
e) To consider whether the work of CU confirms “optimistic” or “pessimistic” assessments of the role of INGOs in development.

With the number of NGOs involved in various food security projects in the country, the question of sustainability of these programmes needs to be raised. There needs to be constant regulation of NGO practices and progress in order to see whether they are making a worthy effort. One such method of regulation is through NGO networks that require NGOs, both local and international, to register with them. These are designed to regulate NGOs and ensure that they abide by the country’s laws, are responsible and accountable, have an effective working relationship with the state and the communities where they work, and, overall, have a positive influence on development (NGO Board Malawi, 2014a; CONGOMA, 2014a). According to the latest updated lists of member organisations, CU is a member of both the NGO Board of Malawi and the Council for International Organisations in Malawi (CONGOMA) (NGO Board Malawi, 2014a; CONGOMA, 2014b).

The focus of this research is on health, nutrition and food security as characterised in result areas 1, 2, 5 and 6 of CU’s LDSP – a further analysis of these features of the LDSP will be looked at in Chapter 6. These result areas are essential for promoting household health and food security, sustainable livelihoods and, in turn, the reduction of poverty (Concern Universal, 2010: 35) by linking food security initiatives to the market and expanding the food sources of the communities. The research site chosen was Chafumbwa in T/A Kachere, Dedza District, in the central region of Malawi. Dedza district is one of the areas that reflects the desperate livelihood circumstances of the majority of Malawi’s rural population, with the other area being Zomba (Ellis *et al*, 2003: 1495).



Map 2.1: Map of Malawi showing LDSP target sites (Concern Universal, 2010: 7)

In terms of methodology, CU and its LDSP project were chosen due of several considerations. The project is a holistic project that has development initiatives in more than one result area (more information on the LDSP shall be provided in Chapter 6) which makes it an extreme instance case study that is also intrinsically interesting as an added bonus (Denscombe, 2003: 33-34). It is both extreme and interesting in the sense that typically, NGOs normally focus on a specific area of expertise such as child welfare, human rights or HIV/AIDS (for example),

whereas the LDSP has a holistic approach looking at more than one area of expertise, such as water supply, HIV, food security and nutrition, malaria, health and family planning and agribusiness.

The project sites for the LDSP are also two specific T/As in two districts instead of large areas in several districts. This means that the influence of the size can be more easily seen in the results of the LDSP than it would be in larger or more average-sized project sites (Denscombe, 2003: 33). In other words, the size factor can be used to determine whether implementing a developmental project is more effective when focused on small project sites rather than large project sites as is the norm for most NGOs. Choosing to explore the LDSP in the Dedza district for this thesis was also done as a matter of convenience (Denscombe, 2003: 34) because of easier access to the area for the researcher. There were also nearby family friends who provided accommodation and transport when needed and that involved reduced expense.

2.6. Conclusion

This chapter has provided a contextual background for the involvement of international NGOs in development projects aimed at poverty alleviation in Malawi, particularly the issue of food security. It explains the processes and challenges which led to this outcome, both historically and currently, as well as the ways in which NGOs make use of convenient structures around them to complement their efforts. It also raises questions as to the effectiveness of NGO developmental projects with regard to their sustainability and effectiveness. With this introduction of NGOs into the discussion, the next chapter seeks to explore further the concept of NGOs, what they are, how they are important and how they emerged in development discourse.

Chapter 3:
Paving the Way for NGOs in Development

3.1. Introduction

This chapter aims at exploring the world of NGOs. It begins by defining the term "NGO", then further unpacking it to highlight the various types. Following this is a discussion of the dynamics that led to the emergence of NGOs, followed by the size of the NGO sector starting from a global perspective, down to the African context and then finally the Malawian context, relevant to this thesis. It also includes a section on neo-liberalism, identifying it as one of the elements that contributed the poverty situation in Malawi, therefore paving the way for the need for outside help in the form of donor-funded, international NGOs. Malawi is a small country with a large number of NGOs operating in it, a country whose political system has remained stable since independence in 1964, with a stable multi-party democratic system since reforms in 1994 (Peiris, 2011: 38). In order to understand a case study of INGO work in the context of Malawi, we need to first locate Malawian NGOs in their larger context.

3.2. Defining NGOs

Philanthropy and giving to others besides one's own family have existed in various forms in most cultures throughout history (Lewis, 2001: 29). There is a long history of small groups or organisations of people whose work aimed at responding to the needs of people who were poor and did not have any external professional support during their times of trouble (Mitlin, Hickey and Bebbington, 2007: 1704). They performed both philanthropic activities and advocacy in a voluntary manner and were usually linked to religious groups and philanthropists, as well as larger organisations for the purposes of having a source of funding and an institutional basis (Mitlin *et al*, 2007: 1704). Philanthropy means "voluntary action for the public good" (Payton and Moody, 2008: 6). NGOs, among many other types of organisations and initiatives like charities, companies' volunteer programmes and university community engagement programmes

to name a few, are a modern manifestation and formalisation of this tendency of organised altruism.

However, care must be taken not to assume that all NGOs follow one pattern. In fact, the term "NGO" is itself "an awkwardly negative title coined by the United Nations to describe a vast range of international and national citizens' organisations, trade unions, voluntary associations, research institutes, public policy centres, private government agencies, business and trade associations, foundations, and charitable endeavours" (Archer, 1983: 303). The World Bank's definition of NGOs describes them as "private organisations that pursue activities to relieve suffering, promote the interests of the poor, protect the environment, provide basic social services, or undertake community development" (Malena, 1995: 13).

They are categorised into two main types. These are *operational* NGOs who design and carry out projects that are development related and *advocacy* NGOs who promote and defend specific causes and influence policy-making (Malena, 1995: 14, my emphasis). Many NGOs engage in both advocacy and operational activities however as they are not restricted to performing just one of the functions (Malena, 1995: 14).

Arguably, far too many types of organisations, which do many different things, have all been incorporated in this description of NGOs. For example, the two definitions cited above, that of the UN and that of the World Bank, could arguably apply to trade unions as well as many faith-based organisations, like churches and mosques. In an effort to narrow the NGO category down, Vakil provides a structural and operational definition that describes development NGOs as "self-governing, private, not-for-profit organisations that are geared to improving the quality of life of disadvantaged people" (1997: 2060). The exclusion of the word "voluntary" in a structural and operational definition highlights how NGOs are becoming more and more professional organisations and employers (Vakil, 1997: 2059).

Martens points a way out of this situation, by drawing attention to a key feature of NGOs: they are *non-profit* organised groups of people who are not involved with governmental office, but rather voluntarily get involved for idealist purposes and good causes, so that they can attempt to influence government to advance the interests of their community members and influence policy-making as best as they can (2002: 278-279). Moreover, they are *formal* institutions with

an organisational structure, offices, financial income and constitutions – as opposed to many social movements and forms of collective action (2002: 281). The non-profit criterion distinguishes them from, for example, commercial organisations or trade unions, which are also formal institutions but advance their *own* interests and those of their stakeholders, by seeking profits or better wages, respectively. Strictly speaking, NGO members would not be beneficiaries of NGO programmes. They retain therefore an element of philanthropy, since they seek the "public good".

NGOs are organisations that play their role in society at different levels, from that of community-based organisation (CBO) level, to city-based NGO level, to national NGO level to international NGO level (Lawry, 2009: 29-30). At these various levels, there are different orientations and further classifications of NGOs which determine their focus as organisations. Some NGOs are charity-orientated, undertaking relief activities after natural or man-made disasters (Lawry, 2009: 29). Examples of such organisations have been classified as philanthropic organisations and welfare church organisations or WCOs (Vakil, 1997: 2060).

These organisations may not be necessarily be aiming at development, although the results of their actions can be said to be developmental; they act in response to emergency situations and the symptoms of problems that affect people. For example, having no access to water facilities in a village or books in a school are symptoms of much bigger problems, than say, a short drought. Fundraising to install water pumps in the village and donating books to the libraries of these schools would be philanthropic actions, and the outcome would be developmental, even if the motive was short-term relief.

Other NGOs have an "empowerment" orientation where they create awareness of the social, economic and political factors that affect people's lives as well as of people's ability to control these factors (Lawry, 2009: 29-30). Examples of such organisations are social change organisations (SCOs) (Vakil, 1997: 2060) and NGOs that advocate for human rights, that is, advocacy NGOs.

Some NGOs have a participatory orientation, where their beneficiaries are encouraged to participate in and contribute materials to self-help projects (Lawry, 2009: 29-30). These can be classified as grassroots organisations (GROs) (Vakil, 1997: 2060), people's organisations (POs)

or CBOs, since they encourage people to join together to further their own interests as opposed to being intermediary NGOs like national and international NGOs that are formed for the purpose of *serving* others (Malena, 1995: 14, my emphasis). Other NGOs are service-orientated, providing services to communities (Lawry, 2009: 29). Examples of classifications of these service NGOs are public service contractors (PSCs), development organisations (DOs) and non-governmental development organisations (NGDOs) (Vakil, 1997: 2060).

3.3. NGOs Globally

The NGO sector has a notable presence in the global community (Simmons, 1998: 83). Some examples of large and very well-known international NGOs today are Save the Children, Oxfam, World Vision, Amnesty International, ActionAid, the Cooperative for Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE), and Earthwatch (Dichter, 1999: 39). The Red Cross and Red Crescent movement also come to mind, particularly, when citing effective and efficient international humanitarian aid efforts that have been quite successful (Van Rooy, 2000: 311). These are all organisations that have made a large impact on the lives of people in distress worldwide.

NGOs no longer exist only in developed nations, but have started springing up in developing nations as well. Although described as “non-governmental”, they have had a growing impact on politics, banking and trade, in challenging governments’ policies, and in forging powerful transnational alliances that try and hold states to account (Simmons, 1998: 84). With many NGOs formed to help community-based responses to government failures, some NGOs have become government targets in turn, as they are viewed as “threats” to state power; on the other hand, some are actually used by governments to do their bidding, or used as pawns during power struggles (Lindenberg, 2001: 604).

States are not the only powerful institutions working with (or against) NGOs. With economic globalisation, corporations have also started to take an interest in philanthropic endeavours, and in social and political issues, leading to links with NGOs, partly through funding by corporate donations and foundations, and partly through more directly cooperative

relations (Lindenberg, 2001: 604). At the same time, however, many corporations also avoid links to NGOs that they view as "irresponsible and naïve" in their approach (Lindenberg, 2001: 604). The NGOs that corporations do work with are embarking on various paths to tackle global poverty and campaign for better codes of conduct to be employed by corporations in less developed countries (Lindenberg, 2001: 604).

NGOs have had a great influence on public and political opinion, when it comes to issues of accountability and equitable, more environmentally-friendly, development strategies – including on the policies of organisations such as the IMF and the World Bank (Simmons, 1998: 86). They are also partly responsible for the creation of the International Criminal Court, and for ensuring that the UN Charter recognises human rights issues since 1945, as well as for boosting global awareness of population and environmental issues (Simmons, 1998: 82-84).

In addition, thousands of Northern NGOs have helped ensure new standards of global governance. They were a driving force behind the Stockholm Environment Conference in 1972, the first Women's Conference in Mexico in 1975, the Earth Summit in Rio in 1992, and demonstrations over the World Trade Organisation in 1999 – among many other achievements (Van Rooy, 2000: 307).

The global NGO sector can be seen to be expanding and as employing several different approaches in order to achieve their goals. Not only are they in partnership with private wealthy donors who prefer to link their philanthropic efforts to NGOs rather than states (Lindenberg, 2001: 604), but they also participate in activities like multilateral debt relief discussions; they also sometimes obtain funding from the World Bank and the IMF's lending projects (Simmons, 1998: 86; Aldashev and Verdier, 2010: 48). Banks and Hulme (2012: 4) argue that in the decade of 1992 to 2002, official development assistance to NGOs from all Development Assistance Countries saw an increase of 34% and the number of INGOs also grew by 19.3%, as official aid moved from states to non-state actors (see later on neo-liberalism).

It is difficult to keep track of the growth rate of internationally-oriented intermediate NGOs in the developing world but in total, Dichter estimates that the number of NGOs present, in both advanced and less developed countries, must be in the tens of thousands (Dichter, 1999: 39). The greatest number are from Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development

(OECD) countries; of these, many come from the United States, and the majority of OECD-headquartered NGOs expenses are for programmes overseas, that is, outside the OECD (Dichter, 1999: 40). These expenses are used for direct developmental programmes by these INGOs and their partners, as well as directed towards aiding the large number of emerging Southern NGOs (Dichter, 1999: 40).

With this rise in NGO activity worldwide, there is also a rise in the legal rules that apply to NGO activity in various countries, as every state's stance and reaction to the presence of NGOs is different. These laws and rules dictate what NGOs can and cannot do, the terms of their registration with the government and the financial sources upon which they may draw (Dichter, 1999: 40-41). Variation in rules and laws is shaped by economic and political differences, philanthropic traditions, colonial histories, and the importance of social action, volunteer work and civic responsibility in different countries and cultures (Dichter, 1999: 40-41). This is partly why NGO presence and activity varies across the world.

Such laws allow governments to have some form of control over NGOs and their activities, as well as make sure that they operate more efficiently; however, regulation tends to happen mainly upon the entry of NGOs into countries, with not much happening afterwards (Batley, 2006, cited in Peiris, 2011: 33-34). One goal of such regulations is to try to ensure that NGOs do not compete with state-owned companies; another is to try ensuring that NGOs and the government become more interrelated (Peiris, 2011: 33). As one can imagine, most African governments are ill-equipped to monitor NGO activity regularly, and are hindered from doing so by things like corruption, party politics, bad governance, wars and instability.

The ability, or rather lack thereof, of governments to follow through and monitor NGOs in their countries contributes to NGOs largely regulating themselves, and also opening themselves to public scrutiny, both to avoid being heavily monitored by governments and to look more legitimate and responsible in the eyes of the public (Peiris, 2011: 34). Such self-regulation does not always work: the Council for Social Welfare Services in Malawi, for example, found their attempt to increase coordination between NGOs participating in self-regulation in the form of "voluntary clubs" was unsuccessful (Peiris, 2011: 34). This was partly because self-regulation was done in inconsistent ways, and promoted a degree of insularity.

Edwards argues that funding for intermediary NGOs to spend overseas funding Southern NGOs is declining, with more foreign aid now being given directly to Southern NGOs in Asia, Latin America and Africa, because donors are increasingly confident in the capacity of these NGOs (Edwards, 1999: 27). Questions have also been raised as to whether or not Northern NGOs are absolutely necessary for the transfer of funds, since this increases transaction costs. Bilateral and multilateral donor agencies prefer to decentralise their operations to reduce expenses (Edwards, 1999: 27). That said, there are still Northern NGOs that receive funds to spend on programmes in the third world, and in Africa, many such NGOs have local sections, as well as operating and working with Northern donors to fund local NGOs to create projects.

3.4. NGOs in Africa

The NGO sector in Africa continues to experience high growth rates. Kenya saw a fivefold increase in the number of registered NGOs from 511 in 1996 to 2,511 in 2003, and Tanzania saw an even greater increase in NGOs, from just 41 in 1990 to over 10,000 in the year 2000 (Hearn, 2007: 1096). The amount of external aid brought in by NGOs rose to US$3.5 billion by the end of the 1990s, which accounted for about a fifth of total aid in the continent, and showed that NGOs had become deeply embedded in the African aid system (Hearn, 2007: 1096-1097).

As noted, NGO roles in development often go far beyond simple economic assistance. Many NGOS are known for taking part in activities that foster democracy and civil rights movements in countries such as South Africa and Kenya (Mercer, 2002: 12). In the case of South Africa, NGOs have used their power and influence to further decentralise the government (Galvin and Habib, 2003, cited in Peiris, 2011; 33) whereas in Kenya, NGOs have, among other actions, compelled the government to change its healthcare structure (Hearn, 1998, cited in Peiris, 2011: 33). These examples provide one of the reasons, argues Peiris, why governments tend to be unwilling to involve NGOs in their policy-making processes: uncertainties about the motives and intentions of NGO activities in their countries (2011: 33).

While foreign (mainly Northern) NGOs continue to surface in Africa, more and more (local) NGOs have also been created, and taken their place in the African development arena. This is often dated to the 1970s to 1980s, under the guidance of foreign NGOs, during civil wars and droughts in places like Mozambique, Angola, Chad and the Sudan (Mohamed Salih, 2002). African NGOs began to gain more independence from the state and their foreign counterparts in the 1980s to 1990s (Mohamed Salih, 2002).

Today the African NGO sector has grown enormously, but some insist that the local NGOs are largely "local spinoffs" of the "thousands of foreign NGOs" (article in *New African*, 2005, cited in Hearn, 2007: 1098). They argue that the emerging African NGOs are just a new way for Northern powers to wield global control, as they did during the days of colonisation, by controlling communities through funding (Hearn, 2007: 1098).

There are several problems with this argument. One is that local NGOs are not simply the product of funders; they are shaped by local dynamics and interests. A second is that the motives of NGOs, Northern as well as Southern, often do not fit with claims that NGOs are imperial proxies. A third is that not all international NGOs are, in fact, based in Northern countries. NGOs with links to religious and faith-based organisations are a case in point. Their motives are deeply embedded in religious ideas of charity and duty, as well as proselytising.

For example, Islamic NGOs have also contributed to the rise in NGO presence in Africa and provide humanitarian and relief aid during times of famine, natural disasters and other emergencies to communities in need of them (Mohamed Salih, 2002). Islamic NGOs in Africa also partake in agriculture, health, water, education and community development long-term projects in less-developed Muslim countries (Mohamed Salih, 2002). This voluntarism by Islamic NGO volunteers is a religious duty in Islam, linked to the "call to Islam known as *Da'wa*, which is similar to Christian evangelism" (Mohamed Salih, 2002). Mohamed Salih (2002) summarises this Islamic duty as follows:

> The resource base of voluntary activities in Islam includes the following: 1) *zakat* (Islamic alms), 2) *kharaj* (land tax), 3) *sadaqat id al-fitr* (an equivalent to poll tax, which every Muslim must pay, except the absolutely poor, given on the conclusion of the

fasting month of *Ramadan*), 4) *waqf* (charitable endowments), 5) gifts and donations, 6) voluntary services (education, defence etc.) and 7) obligatory family support.

Finally, the rise of NGOs – Northern, Southern, African, Islamic, Christian and secular – must also be located in the development and humanitarian challenges of the late twentieth century. NGOs continue to expand in Africa due to livelihood, economic governance and human and civil rights crises, linked to corruption, wars, droughts, authoritarian and military states (Mohamed Salih, 2002), and economic crisis. The number of NGOs is not, however, just a reflection of the degree of social problems: because of the varying amounts of laws and rules applied by governments to NGOs, some African countries have more NGO activity than others, and since NGOs are donor-funded, numbers also depend on the donor priorities.

3.5. The NGO Sector in Malawi

The emergence of NGOs in Malawi began in the 1980s, when relief assistance was needed for Mozambican civil war refugees (Malunga, 2007: 6). Human rights NGOs also participated in the fight for, and helped give rise to, democracy struggles and so, helped lead to the end of Dr Kamuzu Banda's dictatorship (Malunga, 2007: 6). Since then, a wide variety of NGOs, both international and local, have become established in the country. Both national and international development NGOs have taken on the role of agents of development by delivering services to the poor (together with the government). International development NGOs in the country have had a head start, and, probably, the leading role: Malawi is a typical example of a country where donor governments prefer to channel development funds directly to INGOs for fear of mismanagement of funds, poor governance and corruption by the national state (Barber and Bowie, 2008: 749). Local NGOs do not receive much in the way of direct overseas funding. This situation makes it difficult for local (Malawian) NGOs to operate without funding from INGOs.

The perception in the literature is that, in order for the money to be used effectively and efficiently, these development INGOs require high-quality staff to manage their development projects (Barber and Bowie, 2008: 749), with hands-on experience in the area, able to operate in

ways that will impress donors. These country-experts are usually locals found in the higher levels of government and businesses. This poses a dilemma for development: development INGO performance goes up while the quality of civil service goes down along with confidence in and reliability of the government, because the best and most honest staff are actively recruited by development INGOs (Barber and Bowie: 2008: 749). Barber and Bowie argue that skilled graduates become less likely to join government service, preferring high-end (I)NGO work, with the result that state capacity begins to spiral downwards (2008:749). In this sense, the rise of NGOs becomes something of a self-fulfilling prophecy: NGOs emerge where the state fails, but in some cases, they also contribute to state failure by competing for scarce professional labour.

Development INGOs are set up in different countries for various reasons, and there are many different explanations as to why the people who work for them choose to do so. Some employees are leaders who are motivated to bring about change, others are devoted volunteers, some have spent their whole lives caring for people and could probably earn more money if they worked in another sector; and then there is the majority for whom working for a development INGO is just a job (Townsend and Townsend, 2004: 275).

De Waal highlights the same issue, from a different angle, with regard to INGO practices in general, arguing that when INGOs intervene and provide relief assistance in poor countries, they are also encouraging the failure of state responsibility to citizens (cited in Townsend and Townsend, 2004: 275). This includes the failure to meet obligations to prevent famine and to address rights-based issues. However, there is a quandary here: this argument raises the question of, "if not INGOs then who?" since most of these governments do not have the necessary resources to prevent things like famine, especially those with broken-down systems, large inherited debts and lack of finances.

Nevertheless, not all states view NGOs as rivals in development, nor do they automatically neglect their duty to their people and leave NGOs to undertake development, if NGOs exist. The democratic Malawian government, has actively put in place programmes designed to alleviate poverty (Chinsinga, 2003: 131). Its policy framework stresses that the government, the private sector *and* civil society (including NGOs) need to work together in a

participatory process to develop solutions to poverty (GoM, 2001, cited in Chinsinga, 2003: 131).

Malawi, like many other African nations, is riddled with development issues that are being addressed by various institutions including the state, the national University of Malawi, Western official development agencies, Western and local NGOs, religious organisations, the UN, the World Bank and the IMF. Issues that are focused on by NGOs in Malawi include the HIV/AIDS pandemic, which was the focus of Malawi's 2005 Human Development Report (UNDP, 2005), food security, environmental protection, agriculture, human rights and challenges in maintaining democracy (Malunga, 2007: 135).

However, HIV/AIDS and human rights issues receive the most attention from the local NGO sector; work on the latter comprises education and setting, and enforcing and monitoring state compliance with international standards (Smith, Pagnucco and Lopez, 1998, cited in Malunga, 2007: 136). Akinridade (2002) argues that, as in many other African countries, human rights NGOs in Malawi are pro-democracy and take part in lobbying national authorities, litigation, monitoring the state and public awareness (cited in Malunga, 2007: 136). Other developmental issues are not as attractive to NGOs due to donor constraints and interests. For example, poverty, poor water supplies and sanitation, and disabilities are part of Malawi's developmental problems, but do not receive as much attention from NGOs (Smiddy and Mkamanga, 2005, cited in Malunga, 2007: 136).

Silk (1998: 168 and 176) points out, however, that "caring for" and "caring about" are not necessarily one and the same thing: sometimes development INGOs may accept projects simply for financial reasons, that is, so that they can pay staff and secure funding, regardless of how useful the project is (cited in Townsend and Townsend, 2004: 275), or even whether its fits the NGO's original vision and mission. Although NGOs may manage to "care for" the people with their work, they may not necessarily "care about" the people because their choice of development ventures is not always in line with the people's – as opposed to the funders' – needs.

This is where debates have surfaced in the literature on whether or not development INGOs play a positive role in development with regard to the work they do, how appropriate it is

and how they arrived at the decision to do it. Tembo (2001) makes an interesting observation with regard to INGOs working in rural Malawi: he argues that despite good intentions, INGOs may actually add to the weakening of the state and look like agents of "imperialism" when their vehicles, offices and office equipment make a joke of local government offices that do not even have working telephones (cited in Townsend and Townsend, 2004: 275). Carr adds to this argument, claiming that INGOs in Malawi (as elsewhere) are often unwilling to work with the government (cited in Barber and Bowie, 2008: 749). Again, however, there is a dilemma: whether they are working with the state or without it, development INGOs *have* been very active in providing assistance in during times of crises in Malawi, and the state has often failed to do likewise, especially constrained by the influence of neo-liberalism that the state has had from loan institutions.

3.6. Effects of Neo-liberalism on Poverty in Malawi

Problems around food security in Malawi, and development more generally in the country, are, as noted, linked partly to issues of human rights abuses, poor governance and the environment. However, the neo-liberal economic strategies imposed by the IMF and World Bank have also led directly to some of the inequalities and poverty its people face today. Before adding neo-liberalism to the equation, it is necessary to first define, expand on and explain exactly what it is and how it fits into this argument.

Neo-liberalism is an ideology that came from redefining classical liberalism. Classical liberalism argued that, with the exception of law enforcement and "non-excludable goods", citizens should be left to their own devices with regard to everything else in the economy; states should play a minimal role in regulating economic activities, having instead a more *laissez-faire* (unrestrictive) position on economic policies (Thorsen, 2009: 5, 10). Harrison argues that neo-liberalism follows this approach in basically promoting "'rolling back' the state and 'freeing up' the market" (2007: 1306).

Neo-liberalism thus encourages the expansion of free markets and free trade between nations because some of the requirements of neo-liberalism include the removal of tariffs, laws

and regulations that restrict free trade (Shah, 2010). At the same time as this, neo-liberalism's other agenda is also to shape the state, society and the economy (Harrison, 2007: 1306).

Neo-liberalism is also in favour of citizens demonstrating autonomy, efficiency, individualism and entrepreneurship, and aims at removing the state responsibility for distributing resources (Ilcan, 2009: 211). As responsibility is privatised, people no longer rely on state provision but make consumer choices and compete for their own desires in markets (Ilcan, 2009: 212). Free trade is designed to allow people to find cheaper goods and resources, maximise efficiency, pursue profits and rely on comparative advantage (Shah, 2010).

Concretely, neo-liberalism aims to end extensive systems of state welfare and state regulation, so that the state concentrates less on providing *for* the people, in favour of citizens who take initiative and do not rely on the state to hand things to them, promoting a citizenry that exhibits individualism and self-sufficiency. This approach is at odds both with the Keynesian welfare states that had emerged in Western countries, and the state-led Import-Substitution-Industrialisation (ISI) that many postcolonial countries in the "third world" – including Malawi – had adopted to develop their economies. Because of colonialism, southern African countries were left with weak economies, due to colonial rule, which they sought to address before the 1980s with large-scale state interventions (Bond, 2005: 158).

As many of the countries of the South grew more and more into debt and entered severe economic difficulties in the 1970s, neo-liberal policies were promoted as the solution. In the 1980s, the IMF and World Bank stepped in to "manage" the debts, but provided finance and aid on conditions that states implement neo-liberal Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Bond, 2005: 158); private loans dried up, the IMF and World Bank became the main lenders to states through their loans which continued to be conditional on the adoption of SAPs. Even in the absence of SAPs, however, neo-liberal measures had or have become the norm in many countries.

The endorsement of this neo-liberal approach in nations riddled with poverty has severe effects on the poor population. Rolling back the state has meant rolling back state responsibility for many services. Under neo-liberal governments, states increasingly hand over their responsibility to provide healthcare, social welfare, pensions, education, water delivery, home

care, transportation and security to other providers such as voluntary organisations, private companies and NGOs (Ilcan, 2001: 211, 214). In the health sector for example, because of neo-liberalism, people have to pay for visiting clinics, many of which are privatised (Ilcan, 2001: 215). Other examples include people having to find ways to organise proper sewage systems, access to clean water, fertiliser for their crops, books for their children's libraries and many others – as state funding is cut or removed, or becomes a service that must be paid for at cost. As noted earlier, for example, the IMF and World Bank insisted that the Malawian government phase out the provision of inputs to small farmers in the 2000s.

The argument is that individual initiative will be encouraged, and that it should, in theory, promote freedom. In reality, individual initiatives that can replace state services are not so easy to undertake for people without the money, means and resources. An argument put forward by supporters of neo-liberal reform is that this should not be the case, since with neo-liberalism, there should be a reduction in unfair prices arising from protectionist policies – that is, prices should fall (Kelly, 2001: 85), leading to more money for consumers. Further, the allocation of resources should be more effective and efficient, stimulating economic growth in the process as well as increases in employment and wage income (Kelly, 2001: 85).

The problem is that in unregulated markets, the powerful can still impose prices, as key players take advantage to put in place prices that are even more unfair, in order to maximise their profits as is encouraged by free trade. Giving the example of how Mexican neo-liberal reform practices in the agricultural sector played out, Kelly (2001) shows how the vision for a win-win situation did not happen for the rural poor population in the 1980s and early 1990s. The result of reducing state support and intervention in the agricultural sector by ceasing to provide producer price subsidies, and by reducing state management of the economy and public investment, led to a decline in the prices of basic food crops upon which small farmers relied, and falling output and employment in the agricultural sector (Kelly, 2001: 97).

Neo-liberal policies here saw the increase, rather than decrease of poverty among the rural poor. Without the state regulating crop prices, farmers were not guaranteed to make any profits with the prices available on the market. Without sufficient income, they could not produce more crops and experience more economic growth. Without the ability and the means to

increase production, less people were needed to work on farms so less people retained employment. A negative trickle-down effect of sorts could be seen. Before neo-liberalism, the state agricultural policies that were in place were there to avoid things like this and ensure the realisation of income which is why removing them had some strong effects on these objectives (Kelly, 2001: 86).

To say neo-liberal policies have negative effects is not to say that pre-neo-liberal policies were without faults. Too much state involvement opened avenues that led to increased corruption, coupled with higher levels of inflation and deteriorating tax systems that resulted in less revenue and crippled growth (Huddle, 1997: 881-882). In some cases, for example, price controls were used to transfer income from small farmers to the state, which in turn discouraged output and innovation. Most ISI regimes were deeply undemocratic. By the 1980s, most ISI policies were in tatters, and ISI states were in severe financial straits.

It was clear that these older systems could no longer be relied upon and that economic reforms were necessary (Huddle, 1997: 881). This was the context that saw, from the early 1980s, the IMF, the World Bank and the G7 pushing African governments to adopt neo-liberal reform policies in order to fix the problems facing their economies (Caffentzis, 2011). SAPS were followed from the 1990s followed by the Heavily Indebted Poor Country (HIPC) and Poverty Reduction Strategy Papers (PRSPs), but each time, each initiative was seen to be a failure (Caffentzis, 2011).

SAPs in sub-Saharan African states had conditions that required the states to effectively allow IFIs to control development thinking and policy-making (Harrison, 2007: 1308). Among these policies were measures like making people pay for water, health and education. But despite the harsh effects of these measures, economies did not recover, as envisioned by the IFIs. Instead there was a 400% increase rather than a decrease in their debts, as well as a decline in the number of exports from African countries (Caffentzis, 2011).

Thus, poor growth plus harsh policies made up-top in society negatively affected those at the bottom, and questions arose as to whether or not neo-liberalism was indeed the way forward or a concept that was further crippling the continent. The removal of consumer subsidies for, and price controls of, things like fuel and staple foods often led to chaos in the streets as poor people

rioted; this led to SAPs being released together with social safety net programmes such as Ghana's Program of Action to Mitigate the Social Costs of Adjustment (PAMSCAD) (Harrison, 2007: 1308).

In other words, in order for SAPs to be successful, states had to come up with ways to counter negative effects including decline in living standards suffered by people during market "transitions" (Harrison, 2007: 1309). States also became somewhat more flexible, with the use of soft loans and aid to build infrastructure like roads, and re-introduce universal primary education in Uganda and Tanzania for example(Harrison, 2007: 1309). This can be seen as "a neo-liberal reaction to market failure" (Harrison, 2007: 1310) whereby states are having to create the conditions where people can thrive in a neo-liberal setting. Roads enable easier movement and bring markets to more remote areas, schools provide education which enables people to make more meaningful decisions with regard to the use of utilities and states enforcing stronger property laws enables people in rural areas to make better use of their land efficiently to produce more as well as to use their lands as collateral for loans (Harrison, 2007: 1310).

In these ways, the state – despite its appearance of a return to welfare – remains indirectly involved with pushing the neo-liberal agenda of having a thriving market by providing people with what they need and allowing funding from outside in the form of investment in infrastructure (Harrison, 2007: 1310). At the same time, NGOs played a growing role in filling the gaps left by state reforms. The rapid rise of NGOs from the 1980s took place in the context of both state failure and debt, and the roll-back of state actions and roles pushed by neo-liberalism.

Malawi's experience is a complex one. The agricultural sector saw a booming period of 6% annual growth due to SAPs as opposed to the 3% annual growth the before SAPs implementation (Munthali, 2004: 32). Loans were given to the Malawi government to support and stabilise the SAPs. With relation to food security, a loan titled SAL III (Cr-A-9) was given in 1987-1988 to improve food security planning and to reinforce Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation's (ADMARC) efficiency and performance by allowing the private sector to chip in with an increased role in the marketing of small holder crops (Abalu, Mucavele, N'gon'ngola, Van Rooyen, Kirsten, Van Zyl, Saasa, Simbi, Sithole and Vink, 1996: 12). A

further loan titled ASAC (CR-2121) was issued in 1990-1992 for the purposes of decreasing food insecurity and poverty and increasing sustainable growth (Abalu *et al*, 1996: 12).

However, with the World Bank's pressuring of the government to deregulate through SAPs, when the subsidies were removed in the early 1990s, it led to Malawi suffering from severe food shortages (Chibwana, Fisher, Jumbe, Masters and Shively, 2010: 2). The instability was due to the fact that the SAPs were actually not designed with attention to the possibility of the interference of external factors, such as drought, which occurred again both in 1992 and 1994 (Munthali, 2004: 33). The reality was actually that any SAP-linked growth was countered by natural disasters and the severe food shortages that ensued in turn contributed to an increase in poverty.

Thus, the growth was also a false success in the sense that farmers lost the aid they previously got through price subsidies and subsidised credit (Chibwana *et al*, 2010: 2). Although there was an increase in annual growth during the SAP period, the growth of the agricultural sector pre-SAPs was more stable than it was during the implementation of SAPs (Munthali, 2004: 32). The pre-neo-liberal period saw to it that the country was self-reliant on its maize staple (Chibwana *et al*, 2010: 2), and a grain marketing board called the ADMARC had warehouses and was in charge of selling inputs to, and buying produce from farmers (Chibwana *et al*, 2010: 5). The price of maize was also kept low so as to encourage low food prices and production of cash crops for export (Chibwana *et al*, 2010: 5).

Generally the system was quite stable, although drought and civil war refugees from Mozambique also led to less and less maize being available to Malawians, who could also increasingly not afford what was stored in ADMARC warehouses (Harrigan, 2003, cited in Chibwana *et al*, 2010: 6). Not much maize was being produced by farmers anyway for ADMARC to purchase which is why in 1987, a food crisis occurred (Sahn *et al*, 1990, cited in Chibwana *et a*l, 2010: 6) and half the children in the country experienced malnutrition (GoM, 2009, cited in Chibwana *et al*, 2010: 6). This was when the pressure increased from the IFIs pushing for neo-liberal policy reforms. As noted, enforcing low prices through compulsory state grain boards, often seen as a method of promoting growth under ISI, often discourages small

farmers from increasing outputs; it has also been blamed for promoting smuggling as efforts are made to sidestep the boards.

Subsidies thus had to be re-introduced in order to restore agricultural growth during the neo-liberal period (Munthali, 2004: 33). This was done in 1998 first using the Starter Pack Scheme (SPS) and then later the Targeted Inputs Program (TIP), which were designed to improve soil fertility, increase food security and increase agricultural productivity (Chibwana *et al*, 2010: 2). All small holder farmers were given enough fertiliser and seed to plant 0.1 hectare of maize, something which critics were opposed to and argued led to the overcrowding of the supply of these commodities (Chibwana *et al*, 2010: 2).

Nevertheless, evaluation showed that the SPS and TIP strategies *did* in fact improve short-term national food security (Levy and Barahona, 2002, cited in Chibwana *et al*, 2010: 2, my emphasis). Malawi's food insecurity-induced poverty situation continues to be up and down as in 2002 followed by 2012, two more food crises occurred after years before the country had had surplus food stores as mentioned in Chapter 2, resulting from an attempt at rebelling against neo-liberalism, which led to government implementing food policy subsidies that the IMF and World Bank were against.

3.7. Conclusion

This chapter has presented an overview of the circumstances that led to the emergence of NGOs, showing how there are various types designed for different needs in development. It has highlighted the historic circumstances that led to the emergence of INGOs as useful players in development to a certain extent. Since this thesis' case study is an INGO working in Malawi, the discussion has also included the emergence of NGOs in Africa and Malawi in particular in order to provide a contextual foundation. A background of poor politics and Western neo-liberalism as Malawi's poverty perpetuating factors is also provided in order to show why there has been a need for external organisations to rescue the country from its dire situation. The following chapter will now discuss the academic debates and theories related to NGOs and INGOs, in order to shed more light on why there is scepticism about the appropriateness of their practices.

Chapter 4:
Theoretical Framework

4.1. Introduction

This chapter is divided into two main sections. The first deals with examining NGOs, and more specifically, INGOs, by examining the local and global situations that INGOs are a part of that have an influence on their structures and practices. I highlight the ways in which INGOs do not exist and act as completely autonomous entities, but instead have to manoeuvre their way through the international development world, adopting structures and practices in response to and the relations encountered within the development industry. The second section examines one such adopted practice, the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework, which was chosen by the case study INGO, Concern Universal, based on its past practices and successes. It outlines in detail the various elements of this framework and what it aims to achieve.

4.2. Debating NGOs

Marx's method of inquiry and analysis suggests that, in order to look at the role of NGOs in development, it is necessary to examine the social relations underlying development and the development industry (Helliker, 2007: 122). It posits, further, that since social relations are contradictory, based on a mixture of conflict and interdependence, it is possible to view NGOs as existing as actors operating in the space between their constant interactions with entities such as states, global donors and the "development industry," and the pressures of their clients, the poor, within the context of highly unequal societies based on class and a hierarchical international order (Helliker, 2007: 123).

This approach provides a powerful tool to understand the dynamics of NGOs, not as an abstract category or group, defined simply by a set of philanthropic aims, but as having organisational practices and structures that are shaped by the contradictory world in which they exist, including contradictory relations between "the global" and "the local", (Helliker, 2007:

123, 125-126, 129). As Edwards and Hulme put it, INGOs operate in situations of "necessary ambiguity" and tension (1996: 260, cited in Helliker, 2009: 103) in which they sustain themselves by negotiating and manoeuvring between competing imperatives (Helliker, 2007: 125). This tension has an effect on their work as agents (of development) and on their work as intermediaries and it plays out in their organisational practices (Helliker, 2007: 121). INGOs are both victims and creators of these contradictory social relations (Helliker, 2009: 103).

The outcomes of these contradictory and global-local processes, in which NGOs are embedded and implicated (Helliker, 2009: 121, 124), are closely tied to debates in the literature about the intentions and effects of NGOs' promotion of development. There is an "optimistic" view that NGOs provide a solution to development deadlocks, in the face of state failure, but this is challenged by a more critical or "pessimistic" assessment. Some "pessimistic" writers like Shivji suggest that NGOs were born within a neo-liberal paradigm, are constructed like, and run similarly to, global capitalist corporations, and function as means of providing small-scale charity in the wake of cuts in social welfare (2007: 30). If operating in this way, providing charity on a small scale and standing by in the face of cuts in social welfare, NGOs completely fail to influence policy-making in the interest of the communities in which they work (Martens 2002: 278-279), and instead become complicit in or powerless to change the neo-liberal policy framework.

Other "pessimistic" writers (see Manji and O'Coill, 2002: 560 for example) suggest that many NGOs are agents of Western imperialism, pushing the agendas of donors rather than the people they claim to serve, treating these people as inferiors who need to be "developed"; by promoting false solutions, they supposedly weaken struggles of emancipation from economic, political and social oppression. They are said to be doing this by promoting "little d" *d*evelopment with development aid meant to infuse Western values to further manipulate beneficiaries in the third world (Brett, 2003 and Mosse, 2004, cited in Knight, 2012: 23), and avoid raising "big D" *D*evelopment issues about how the larger society works.

In addition to this, it has been argued that global processes always have a local component (Helliker, 2007: 124). For example, the social relations within the NGO sector have been criticised as being donor-created, with ideologies of development, resources and authority

coming from the West (global process), while information and legitimisation are received from the third world (local component) (Tvedt, 1998, cited in Townsend and Townsend, 2004: 273). In order to sustain themselves, Tvedt argues that INGOs do this by bringing to the first world images from around the globe of needy people and their realities to obtain legitimisation for themselves, as well as for the first world to see and provide them with more funding (Tvedt, cited in Townsend and Townsend, 2004: 273; Barber and Bowie, 2008:749). In this way, globalisation encourages the application of global initiatives and strategies to local contexts (Helliker, 2007: 125), and poverty provides a fundraising resource for those who claim the ability to solve poverty.

NGOs in general – including the philanthropic NGOs – have certainly come to play a central role in modern development studies and efforts. This is in part because development theory came to a standstill when dominant theories of development, such as the modernisation theory and the dependency theory, seemed to lose their appeal; NGOs emerged as apparently practical alternatives for development thinking and action (Lewis, 2001: 30). Governments – the main actors in traditional development theory, as in, for example, ISI – were widely seen to be performing poorly with regard to poverty reduction; NGOs became a key policy "voice" and option for many people (Lewis, 2001: 31). This "optimistic" view however also resembles the neo-liberal times highlighted in the pessimistic view of NGOs, as it was in these times when governments were no longer seen as the main driving force behind development that NGOs rose to the occasion.

4.3. The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework

At the end of the day, there are many diverse global-local processes taking place in today's modern world, creating what are known as "*glocal*" situations of which INGOs are a part of by default, and express in both their form and organisational practices depending on what kind of organisation they aim to be (Helliker, 2007: 125). At the same time, INGOs also balance and manage the tensions that arise from the various clashing *glocal* demands by reshaping and reinforcing the ones they exist in towards a particular direction based on the practices they choose to implement in their work (Helliker, 2007: 125).

CU is no exception to this situation, and it, too, chooses to implement particular strategies and practices as an organisation. In its proposal for the LDSP, CU highlighted that based on close to two decades of experience in Malawi, the strategy that would be used to base the community component of the project would be the Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (SLF) to ensure sustainability (Concern Universal, 2010: 33). The project adopts a holistic approach as informed by the framework which shall now be discussed extensively in the following section.

The SLF, as defined by Ashley and Carney, is "a way of thinking about the objectives, scope and priorities for development, in order to enhance progress in poverty elimination…help(ing) poor people achieve lasting improvements against the indicators of poverty *that they define*" (1999: 6, my emphasis). Because this stresses the supposed beneficiaries' *own* definitions of "poverty" and "development," and what they think they should prioritise in order to become "developed", this provides a powerful tool to assess whether the work of CU *is* "developmental" in the first place. The thesis thus touches on alternative understandings of development and poverty.

In order to fully understand the SLF, one has to break the term down and also recognise the history of its emergence. The term "sustainable livelihood" comprises the two words "sustainable" and "livelihood". The word sustainable is defined in the *Oxford Dictionary* as "able to be maintained at a certain rate or level" and the word livelihood is defined as "a means of securing the necessities of life". Using these definitions, a basic understanding of the term "sustainable livelihood" can be understood as the ability to secure and maintain basic necessities needed in peoples' lives at a desirable rate or level.

The Department for International Development (DFID) (Britain) and the Institute of Development Studies (IDS) have come up with and adopted a standard definition of SLF, sourced from Chambers and Conway (1992) and others:

> A livelihood comprises the capabilities, assets (including both material and social resources) and activities required for a means of living. A livelihood is sustainable when it can cope with and recover from stresses and shocks maintain or enhance its capabilities and assets, while not undermining the natural resource base (Scoones, 1998: 5; Solesbury, 2003: 1).

Historically, there have been attempts to study rural livelihoods that have had significant impacts on development studies discourse, although there have been many contestations on how to approach the study of rural livelihoods (Jowah, 2009: 38). The interest in the livelihoods of people living in rural areas emerged when peasant protests occurred; people sought to understand the reasons (Popkin, 1979: 5).

A moral economy approach was initially proposed, which asserted that the peasantry protested capitalism because they felt a loss of security, welfare and subsistence (Popkin, 1979: 5). Moral economists argued that peasants were against buying and selling, against markets and against private property, as opposed to the common property they were used to (Popkin, 1979: 5).

However, Popkin notes that this approach was not informative on the matter of how "morality" was maintained in pre-capitalist societies, how resources in villages were distributed, how work-sharing was determined, how need was determined and who should help the needy and so forth (Popkin, 1979: 16). These were all aspects of people's livelihoods that were not captured, leading to the need to find a different way to understand people's livelihoods.

This was when Popkin (1979: 16-17) came up with the theory of the "rational peasant", where the focus shifted from the entire village to the individual peasant, and the capability he/she has to make their own choices and decisions, choose to follow some norms and reject others, as well as under what circumstances an individual was willing to bend the rules, break the norms and take risks.

The individual was no longer seen as a victim of traditional culture or the "idiocy" of village society (Colburn, 1982, cited in Jowah, 2009: 40). The fact that they were poor did not mean they were opposed to making calculated risks and short- or long-term investments (Popkin, 1979: 18-19): the theory of the rational peasant actually showed that the poor had a system where they allocated seeds, manure, land, water, labour and other resources efficiently amongst themselves (Adams, 1986, cited in Jowah, 2009: 40). Rational decisions to invest in children, land, animals, welfare programmes and village improvements were also given as examples of the efforts made by rural community members to improve their livelihoods (Popkin, 1979: 19).

Arguing against this theory, critics held, however, that peasants could not be seen to be purely rational because they lived in a world of uncertainty without access to adequate information; there were also other factors at play that influenced livelihood decision-making such as families, personalities, individual motivation, intelligence, weather changes, government policies, and the social and economic characteristics surrounding peasant communities (Adams, 1989, and Lipton, 1968, cited in Jowah, 2009: 40). Each family was different and some may have adopted practices that were rational in the sense that they provided better security for individual households, but were not rational in an economic sense of maximising gains and minimising costs (Jowah, 2009: 41).

Further, it was argued that both the rational peasant and the moral economy theories sought to put peasants in one box: *either* rational *or* moral, without regarding the contexts and circumstances of individual peasants and this was where the SLF came in, merging the two approaches, to take into account peasants' changing social and economic characteristics, as well as the varying contexts in which rural households operated (Jowah, 2009: 41).

Robert Chambers and Gordon Conway are the two authors seen as primarily responsible for the emergence of the SLF, in a 1992 discussion paper that highlighted three main areas that needed to be addressed in the study of livelihoods: enhancing capability, improving equity and increasing social sustainability (Solesbury, 2003: 6). From then on, various donors tried to re-shape their practices in line with this framework, more empirical research was conducted, more papers were written, and agencies began to work together in an effort to improve livelihoods based on this framework (Solesbury, 2003: 6-13).

The SLF has five components. These are the livelihood assets or resources, the vulnerability context and conditions, the livelihood strategies, the policies, institutions and processes (PIPs) and lastly, the livelihood outcomes (Haidar, 2009: 6-8, Scoones, 1998: 4). Using these components, the SLF outlines how depending on various contexts (shocks, conditions, trends and/or seasonality), different combinations of livelihood assets or resources (human, social, physical, natural and financial "capitals") are used to implement different livelihood strategies (migration, agricultural intensification or extensification and livelihood diversification) that lead to people achieving various sustainable livelihood outcomes (Haidar, 2009: 6; Scoones, 1998: 3). Facilitators of the strategies which people are able to carry out are

the formal and informal institutions and organisations who have in place policies that lead to processes designed to help to achieve the desired outcomes (Scoones, 1998: 3). These are what Haidar refers to as PIPs as mentioned earlier. The five elements of the SL Framework are expanded on further below.

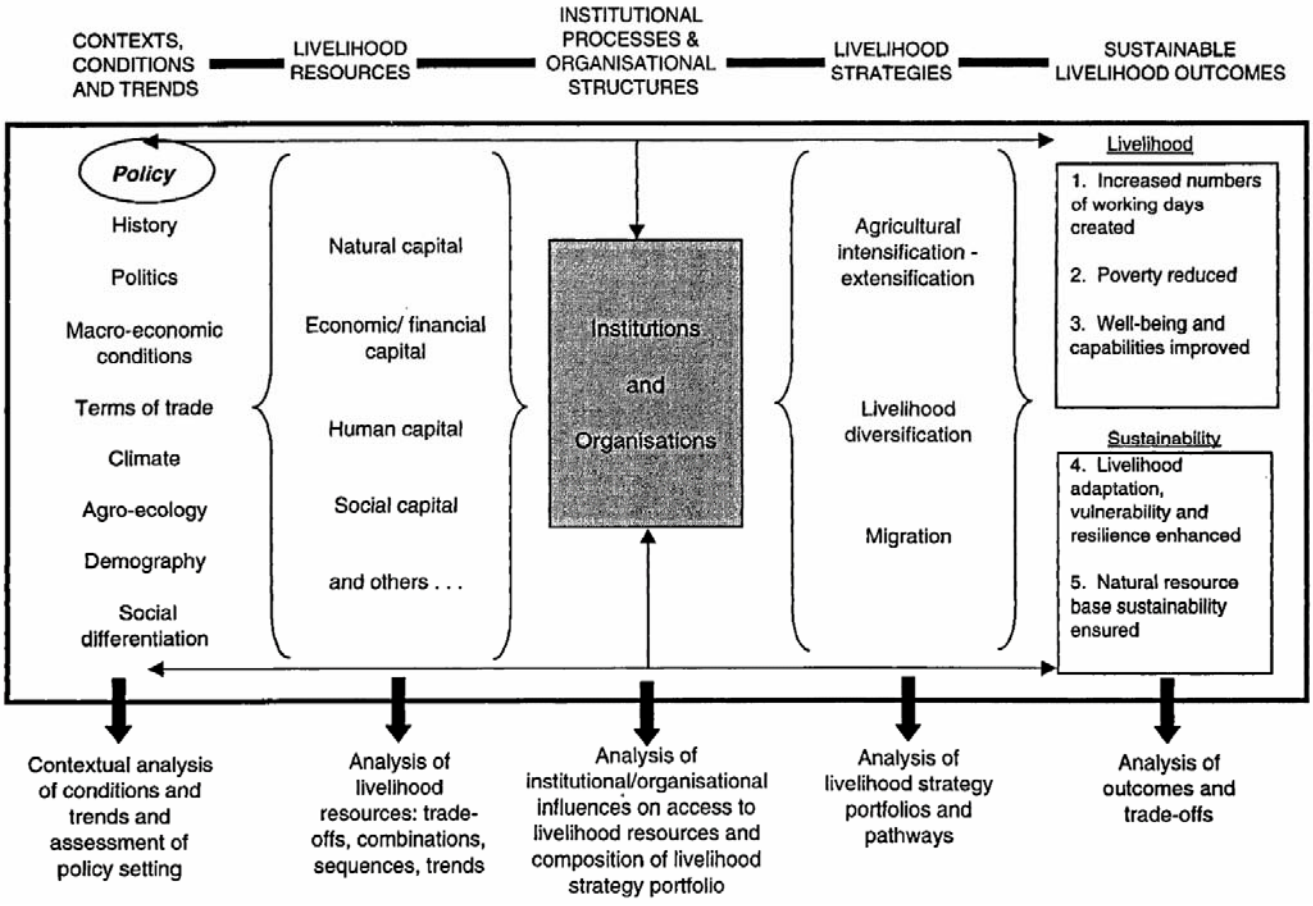


Figure 4.1: The Sustainable Livelihoods Framework (Scoones, 1998: 4)

i. The Livelihood Assets/Resources

In order for people to be able to execute various livelihood strategies, they need to have access to a resource or "capital" base of assets that enable them to do so (Scoones, 1998: 7).

There are five main “capitals” that are needed for this according to Scoones (1998: 7-8) and Haidar (2009: 6):

- Human capital: the knowledge, skills, health, physical capability and ability to work;
- Natural capital: the natural resources (such as water, land, forests, air, soil, and fisheries) and environmental services (such as pollution sinks, the water cycle, and the nitrogen cycle) which enable the flow of resources and carry out services that are useful for aiding in people’s livelihoods;
- Social capital: the social resources (such as informal networks, social claims, membership of formalised groups, social relations, affiliations, associations and relationships) which people rely on in order to cooperate and pursue various livelihood strategies that involve coordinated action;
- Physical capital: the basic infrastructure available to people (such as water, sanitation, schools, roads, hospitals, ICT, and shelter) as well as producer goods (such as tools and equipment) that can have an effect on the status of people’s livelihoods;
- Financial or economic capital: the capital base or the financial resources that people have access to (such as cash, savings, credit/debit, employment income, income from trade and remittances) as well as other economic assets like production equipment, technologies and basic infrastructure which enable people to pursue livelihood strategies.

These are the main elements of the resource base but other elements have been added since the formation of the framework. The most significant one is

- Political capital: power and capacity that individuals may or may not have to influence decisions that enhance their livelihood strategy pursuits (Haidar, 2009: 6). Being a village elder or village chief could be an example of this.

All in all, people need to be able to combine the capitals they have access to and control over in order to pursue their livelihoods and this all depends on tangible assets (material resources and stores/supplies), intangible assets (that they have claims and access to) and their personal capabilities (Chambers and Conway, 1992, cited in Scoones, 1998: 8).

Another set of circumstances to take into consideration are the availability of capitals: whether one needs a certain type of capital in order to be able to gain access to others (sequencing), whether some capitals can be substituted for others (substitution) or whether a combination of various capitals is needed and having one type does not guarantee access to others (clustering) when trying to achieve various livelihood strategies (Scoones, 1998: 8). In Malawi, a good example of this is when people have access to produce for sale such as firewood, beans, carrots, nuts, and potatoes amongst many others, and a form of transport is needed in order to get the merchandise to the market places. Here, both natural and physical capitals are needed in conjunction with each other.

ii. Vulnerability Context

This refers to the possibility of capital assets being created, or even destroyed, based on the shocks, trends and seasonal changes in the vulnerability context in which people live (Haidar, 2009: 6). The trends include the availability of types of livelihood resources, the ability to access them, the depletion and accumulation (by whom) of resources, and the types of new resources that are emerging as a result of economic, environmental as well as social change (Scoones, 1998: 8).

These are economic and resource trends (Haidar, 2009: 6) and can involve a wide range of factors such as climate change, politics, demographics and many others. The shocks include health shocks, natural shocks, economic shocks, and conflict (Haidar, 2009: 6). Examples of these shocks are plagues and pandemics (health), drought, tornadoes, floods and earthquakes (natural), recessions and currency devaluations (economic), and war (conflict); all of which have the ability to create or destroy livelihood resources. Floods, for example, create a resource when they leave behind fertile soil for crop growth yet they also destroy infrastructure.

The seasonal changes include seasonal employment opportunities, seasonal fluctuations in prices, seasonal production and changes in health (Haidar, 2009: 6). Lake Malawi is a good example of this because it is a tourist attraction site as well as a provider of both food (fish) and income (fishing), which means that it has peak and off-peak seasons. The vulnerability context is influenced by external factors that are beyond the control of the people which is why they are then dependent on policy makers, institutions and development practitioners to enable the poor to

have access to livelihood resources by putting in place and implementing policies that are sympathetic to the needs of the poor (Haidar, 2009: 6). This thesis focuses on one such initiative by looking at an international NGO's efforts, in line with an international government donor agency's development policy, to equip rural Malawian communities with practices that enable the people to improve their health and nutrition.

iii. Livelihood Strategies

This component of the SLF is about the various activities that people carry out in order to maximise their potential to achieve their livelihood strategy goals. As mentioned before in the livelihood assets/resources section, these activities are linked to the availability of capitals, access to them as well as combinations needed or substitutions of capitals acceptable to achieve livelihood strategies. The three main clusters of livelihood strategies are migration, agricultural intensification or extensification and livelihood diversification (Scoones, 1998: 9).

Agricultural intensification involves the improvement of agricultural productivity (including livestock rearing, aquaculture (fish farming) and forestry) which allows one to gain more of their livelihood from agriculture (Scoones, 1998: 9). This is done through processes of intensification either by increasing labour or by increasing the production output per unit area through capital investments (Scoones, 1998: 9). In other words, one could work longer hours in the field, they could start using fertiliser or pesticides for example, to make sure their crops yield more or they could change the diet of their livestock to ensure bigger and stronger animals.

These are all examples of increasing labour and increasing production output by making capital investments. These capital investments are often a form of support, stemming from policies or external sources and the labour factor usually involves the individual and their social resources (Scoones, 1998: 9). Government policies such as fertiliser coupons are an example of the former and friends and family members are an example of the latter. Agricultural extensification involves making use of more land for cultivation (Scoones, 1998: 9). There is of course the issue of problems concerning land ownership and laws that are meant to regulate it but are not implemented properly.

Livelihood diversification involves partaking in off-farm activities that bring in an income (Scoones, 1998: 9) so that a family does not entirely depend on agriculture and farming

as their main source of income since (as mentioned before), that source of income is at risk of being hit by seasonal changes, shocks and trends. Diversification allows for people to combat these different types of shocks and come up with reliable coping mechanisms for common shocks (Scoones, 1998: 9) People diversify for various reasons. It could be a temporary response to some misfortune or other, it could be a permanent change to replace failed livelihood strategies or it could simply be for the purpose of accumulation and re-investment (Scoones, 1998: 9). Sometimes people may feel they need to relocate to "greener pastures" or they could simply have grown tired of staying in one place and are accustomed to moving after a certain amount of years.

Ellis (1998) is of the opinion that diversification also involves on-farm and non-farm activities in addition to off-farm activities (Jowah, 2009: 46). Farm diversification activities are made up of crop and livestock income, consumption of own farm output and cash income form sold output (Ellis, 1998, cited in Jowah, 2009: 46).

Off-farm diversification activities comprise of money earned from labouring on other farms (a common occurrence in Malawi often referred to as *ganyu*) or just the exchange of labour as well as harvest share systems as a form of labour payment (Jowah, 2009: 47). Non-farm diversification activities consist of rural wage employment, rural self-employment, property income such as rents and both national and international urban-to-rural remittances (Jowah, 2009: 47). Examples of this can be someone having a tailoring or cobbler business in the village, as is common in Malawi, or relying on family members who send money for them to be able to build houses in the village or pay *ganyu* workers to help them during the planting season.

The second example actually shows a combination of on-farm diversification by the employer, agricultural intensification in the form of increased labour, social capital since in a Malawian village the *ganyu* worker often has some sort of relationship or association with their employer and the off-farm diversification conducted by the *ganyu* worker for the increased income of his/her own family. Off-farm and non-farm activities are useful for providing alternate sources of income to meet household needs (Haidar, 2009: 7). They also help a person gain skills that can be useful in future.

Migration involves moving away seasonally or otherwise temporarily, or even permanently, to seek a livelihood in another region or urban centre (Scoones, 1998: 9; Haidar,

2009: 7; Jowah, 2009: 47). It could be voluntary or involuntary, it produces outcomes such as common patterns of movement to or from different places and it also has various effects such as re-investment in enterprise, agriculture and consumption at the home or migration site (Scoones, 198: 9). To further expand on this, voluntary causes could be opportunities available elsewhere and involuntary causes could be natural disasters like floods or drought which make it difficult to sustain a livelihood in a particular area.

Migration also affords people the opportunity to be innovative and start something new in a new place, or be able to practice agricultural forms of income again which they could not do before due to reasons such as lack of enough land, irrigation or fertiliser for example, or a multitude of other reasons as well. Resources in rural areas are often limited and people have to compete and rely on development support that also needs to ensure that the livelihood strategies of future generations are not disadvantaged by the activities of the present generations (Haidar, 2009: 7). Social protection programmes are a good way of helping those who are unable to compete for these limited resources due to lack of access to assets (Haidar, 2009: 7). There is, however, the possibility that some people could over-rely on these and not make any effort themselves.

iv. Policies, Institutions and Processes (PIPs)

This component of the SLF refers to the social structures and processes involved in achieving desired livelihood strategies, the institutions that make this possible and the policies that enable them to do so. This also encompasses the social, economic and political contexts within which individuals pursue various livelihood strategies (Haidar, 2009: 7). All of these elements are inter-connected and interact at global, national, regional, district and local levels (Haidar, 2009: 7), having an impact on the livelihoods of people.

Social structures involve formal and informal social relationships and the power dynamics behind them (Scoones, 1998: 12), as well as the way that culture, religion, history, kinship, religion, gender and ethnicity affect people and their livelihoods in a community (Haidar, 2009: 7). An example of this is how certain religions forbid the consumption of pork for instance. Therefore in that community, people belonging to this religion cannot buy meat from establishments that sell pork for fear of contamination. It could be difficult to find such places in

an area which now means that people have to find alternative sources of meat far away. This affects that group of people's livelihood in the sense that they sometimes have no access to meat for their diet, or they have to make more effort than others to include it, but may not always have the means to do so. This is a common occurrence in Malawi with people belonging to the Islamic faith or to the various denominations of Christianity.

Processes involve social rules and norms, democracy, power and authority figures who partake in decision-making and service-delivery by the state and private sector agencies that provide basic necessities such as water, sanitation, health and education (Haidar, 2009: 7). These processes can be effective or ineffective, efficient or inefficient as well as existent or non-existent in any given area. The reason for saying this is that in some cases there is inadequate management of services provided in an area. For example, a member of parliament for a certain area may see to it that a clinic is built in a village but does not follow up on its maintenance. Another organisation such as an NGO might be the one to end up doing this.

Institutions are comprised of both the organisations (players in the game) and the institutions (rules of the game) which are not fixed objects or bounded social systems, but rather are part of a process of social negotiation (Scoones, 1998: 12). In other words, organisations are the players such as the government, IFIs, donors, NGOs and village committees to name a few. Institutions are the "regularised practices (or patterns of behaviour) structured by rules and norms of society which have persistent and widespread use" (Giddens, 1979, cited in Scoones, 1998: 12). Because institutions are fluid and ambiguous, with power relations often embedded in them (Scoones, 1998: 12), they are not fixed; they are often subject to change. They are the different social norms, customs and behaviours that determine people's access to resources (Haidar, 2009: 7). An example of one of these can be the practice adopted by IFIs whereby developing countries are able to receive loans based on the condition that they implement certain laws and policies in the countries.

Policies are the rules and laws in place that are designed and implemented with the desired effect of having an impact on people's livelihoods (Haidar, 2009: 7). This is also where the issues of governance, power, government systems and structures, efficiency, effectiveness, rights and representation come into play (Haidar, 2009: 7). Some may be embedded in a national Constitution, others may not. Policies can be made that declare that proper sewage systems be in

place in all inhabited areas for example, or that every child is entitled to free primary education as is the case in Malawi. These two policy examples ensure that people live in a clean, sanitary environment (which is a basic human right) and that children obtain a foundational education that provides them with knowledge and skills that most children in the developing world do not have the opportunity or access to.

Livelihoods approaches such as the SLF are one of the reasons why donors are starting to provide development aid to fund projects based on country-led development strategies with the aim of putting in place PIPs that are "informed by, and directly linked to, the complex reality of poor people's lives" (Haidar, 2009: 7) since they show a reflection of what is really happening in these places and what the people need the most help with. Of course the SLF has its limitations however, and these will be discussed at a later stage in this chapter. This thesis focuses on such a project, based on the Irish government's Country Strategy Paper (CSP) for Malawi and the INGO CU (which is an Irish NGO) which has been implementing developmental practices in rural areas in Dedza obtained from both the Malawi government's developmental polices as well as the policies outlined in the Irish CSP.

v. Livelihood Outcomes

These are the end goals; the results of the livelihood strategies (Haidar, 2009: 8). Haidar lists a number of examples of such outcomes as follows: increased income, increased well-being, improved security, reduced vulnerability and more sustainable use of natural resources (2009: 8). She also notes that livelihood outcomes play an important role in figuring out why people choose particular livelihood strategies, what peoples' priorities are, what kind of results can be obtained from livelihood strategies in particular contexts, and how people respond to opportunities and constrains they are likely to face (2009: 8). Scoones also adds to this assessment by arguing that the sustainability of livelihood outcomes is equally important. They should be able to provide employment, improve peoples' well-being and capabilities, help to reduce poverty, help to improve the sustainability of natural resources as well as improve peoples' ability to adapt, be less vulnerable and more resilient (Scoones, 1998: 5-6).

An example of a livelihood outcome can be a person who has been able to build a house for their family, and who continues to better provide for them using income obtained from

selling produce that they have farmed. Another example can be when a family migrates to an area with a school, children are able to obtain knowledge that they can share with their family such as the importance of using ash to wash their hands and prevent illnesses like cholera and diarrhoea. This example also highlights and supports a point argued by Ellis (1999) that a livelihood outcome can be greatly improved by access to education, as one of the indicators of poverty is low levels of education.

4.3.1. Limitations of the SL Framework

Like any framework for development, the SLF has had its share of critiques from various scholars. There are features of development which when the SLF is "unpacked" and "operationalised" are neglected (Ashley and Carney, 1999: 33). These include gender relations, power relations, and the impact of markets and the private sector, all which have the potential to be lost during the course of "transforming structures and processes" (Ashley and Carney, 1999: 33). These features play a part in whether or not livelihoods *can* be sustainable, particularly because they have an influence on the fluctuation of prices in the market for example. The existence of power imbalances within households resulting from gender and other variables also has an impact on access to assets and strategies (Ashley and Carney, 1999: 35). Other variables include social status and age (for example). The young son of a chief would be in a better position to secure resources than someone his age that does not have an equal social status.

It is also not clear whether sustainable livelihoods have an impact on, or a relationship with possible poverty elimination because poverty is not explicitly mentioned in the SLF model (Ashley and Carney, 1999: 33, 36). This leaves room for the possibility that these initiatives can be applied to activities that enhance both poor and rich people, instead of being appropriately and adequately pro-poor and poverty-focused (Ashley and Carney, 1999: 36). It is therefore not enough to simply *assume* that SLF approaches improve the efforts of development actors such as donors, governments of developing countries and NGOs, but the approaches also need to be revised to take findings into account (Ashley and Carney, 1999: 36, authors' emphasis) and precautions must be put in place for measurement of progress. It is easy to ignore these concerns considering the fact that SLF initiatives are widely known to target poor communities but steps need to be taken to address their effectiveness towards poverty alleviation if the framework is to be used to measure effectiveness of poverty alleviation. This can be done in the form of reports

and reviews conducted by all the actors in play such as auditors, donors, NGOs themselves as well as governments; an effort which has only recently started to be made.

There are also debates on what exactly it is that ought to be, and what in actual fact is "sustained" in the first place. To elaborate further, Ashley and Carney (1999: 34) argue that although the framework incorporates social, economic, environmental and institutional elements, it also suggests that combinations of assets and activities need to be made in order to reach a variety of outcomes. No single component is destined for sustainability as if it is alright for the construction materials of a "sustainable livelihood" to be altered as long as the "sheltered structure" of a sustainable livelihood is maintained (Ashley and Carney, 1999: 34).

4.4. Conclusion

Both sections of this chapter have highlighted features of INGO existence, such as the local and global situations in which they exist at the same time, which needed to be examined in order to give a theoretical basis on the findings of the thesis which shall be discussed in the next chapter. The first theory, a Marxist approach to theorising NGOs, has shown how the development industry is a contested space for INGOs, where they find themselves finding a balance between being governed by loyalties to themselves, their beneficiaries and their donors in an effort to do their jobs well and effectively. The second theory, the SLF has also been examined as it is the theory that informed CU's LDSP. A major strength of this SLF is that it has a bottom-up approach, ranging from what people have in the form of assets obtained from the environment around them to the strategies adopted to make use of these assets, as well as the formal and informal institutions involved in the livelihood processes and outcomes of the development project. CU, to reiterate, is an Irish NGO that is funded via Irish Aid. The following chapter will now discuss the research methodology applied in the study, in order to obtain the findings presented in Chapter 6.

Chapter 5:

Research Methodology

5.1. Introduction

The field research involved six weeks in Malawi, from mid-April to the end of May 2014. A few days were spent in Lilongwe to conduct interviews with Irish Aid workers, the project donor of CU's LDSP. The rest of the time was spent in Dedza, either in the field or at the CU office. I visited the villages in the programme, together with CU staff, whenever they were going to conduct project activities. The arrangement was convenient because CU provided me with transport to the field and back, introduced me to project beneficiaries before both my interviews and observations took place and let me get on with my fieldwork while they worked. This chapter provides information on the processes that were involved when conducting the research in the field. It also includes discussions on methodology, the sampling of research participants, data collection and analysis, as well as ethical considerations.

5.2. Research Approach

The research was qualitative. The qualitative approach allows the researcher to study, in-depth, the real-world and contextual conditions of people's lives, as well as obtain views and evidence from multiple sources (Yin, 2011: 7-8). The qualitative method happens in a natural setting, is interactive and allows for questions to change as new themes are discovered (Creswell, 2003: 181). One key reason this approach was chosen is because "'poverty' is a complex, multi-dimensional concept, the very causes of which are contested" (Crook, 2003: 78). This makes it a structural condition and not an objective phenomenon, as it involves personal human agency and experience by those who are victims of it, as well as those who make the decisions within INGOs and donor agencies as to how to channel funds, where to channel funds, where to set up projects

and what projects to set up with the aim of alleviating poverty. This approach will help to explain and understand the circumstances of the people involved. The experience and complexity of poverty is best captured by a qualitative approach. Further, a qualitative approach provides rich, thick data that is not always available from other sources.

The criteria required for the selected NGO were that it should be international, donor-funded, focus on development and poverty alleviation and work in a poverty stricken area in Malawi, a developing country. This was to ensure that it could be related to the debates over the history and role of NGOs that concern this thesis. Furthermore, the choice of Malawi was also linked to the researcher's interest in that country, including personal and family connections in that country. Such connections also provided, as noted earlier, an element of convenience; they made it easier to conduct the research within available budgetary constraints.

Several organisations were contacted and the only organisation that responded with an agreement for me to conduct my research based on one of their programmes was CU. NGOs in general are difficult to study because they are fairly closed spaces, linked to donors; many refuse to have academic studies undertaken on their projects. NGOs are "often protective, defensive and resistant to criticism" (Edwards, 1993, cited in Helliker, 2007: 131). Some of the organisations that were contacted did not respond at all, while others responded saying that they did not allow academic studies to be conducted on their work, the ostensible reason being that accommodating a student or a researcher would be unduly disruptive of their daily proceedings.

With regard to validity of the study and generalisation of its findings, this study makes no claim that the results derived from the fieldwork are in any way representative of INGOs in Malawi, or elsewhere, particularly also given the variation between expertise, methods and practices adopted by different NGOs. Qualitative research is also particularistic and involves studying specific contexts and conditions in-depth, making it difficult to generalise findings to a broader set of conditions (Yin, 2011: 98).

Nevertheless, even though a single case study was used, all studies are limited in the amount of data they can collect; even if true generalisation is not possible, it is possible to draw out implications that go beyond the collected data and to use a case study to build and engage with larger theories and debates (Yin, 2011: 98). The results of this study are, for example, useful

in demonstrating any possible points of reflection and consideration that can be taken into account by other NGOs with regard to their developmental initiatives and practices in the country.

5.3. Research Participants

Three villages were visited. These were Kafere Village under the Kafere VDC, Kambadza Village under the Chimkwita VDC and Kutsanja Village under the Kutsanja VDC. There was a variety of participants who took part in the study originating from four groups of stakeholders (CU, Irish Aid, project beneficiaries and local government) and they were as follows:

- Direct beneficiaries of the LDSP which included both male and female headed households;
- Two pairs of Community-Based Distribution Agents (CBDAs) who were trained volunteers from the villages themselves;
- One head of a Village Savings and Loans (VSL) group;
- One leader of a Community-Based Childcare Centre (CBCC) CBO created for the purposes of community cooking for under-five children in a Positive Deviance (PD) Hearth programme;
- The heads of the Village Development Committees (VDCs);
- CU LDSP staff;
- A representative of Irish Aid; and
- A senior Health Surveillance Assistant (HSA) employed by the GoM's Ministry of Health.

It was in Kambadza Village, while conducting observation for the study, that an opportunity arose when I came across the HSA, who just so happened to be working in that particular area on that day so I interviewed him as well. In Kafere and Kutsanja villages, a pair of CBDAs took me to different households to conduct interviews. In Kambadza, I observed 10

women taking part in a nutrition training programme led by the HSA (with training from CU) in the form of a food processing and preparation/cooking demonstration.

5.4. Sampling of Participants

Apart from the three CU staff, the HSA, the Irish Aid representative, the two VDC heads, the two pairs of CBDAs, the VSL group head and the PD Hearth leader, a combination of purposive sampling and random sampling was used to select the household participants for interviews in the beneficiary communities. Purposive sampling was used in the sense that these households were households that the CBDAs I was with were assigned to in the villages for LDSP practices and activities. This principle allowed me to focus directly on known active participants of the project according to the CBDAs and obtain the most relevant data (Denscombe, 2003: 15; Yin, 2011: 89). Random sampling was used in the sense that the households that were interviewed were chosen at random (Denscombe, 2003: 12). This sampling strategy was used because there was quite a large number of households to choose from and so a sample chosen at random would offer results that might be deemed a *representative* cross-section of the whole (Denscombe, 2003: 12, author's emphasis).

This combination could be a limitation since it shows results obtained from the jurisdiction of only one pair of CBDAs in each village and not from other areas in the villages assigned to other CBDAs. Nevertheless, future evaluation of projects of this nature can take into account the insights obtained from this sample. It should also be noted that the beneficiary communities visited had two types of participants: those that were interviewed in Kafere and Kutsanja villages and those that took part in the nutrition training programme at Kambadza Village, who were not interviewed, but rather observed.

5.5. Gender of Participants

Out of the CU LDSP staff, two were female and one was male. Both VDC heads were male. The VSL group head was male and the PD Hearth leader was female. Both pairs of

volunteers had a male and a female working as partners. The Irish Aid representative was male and so was the senior HSA. Five female headed households were interviewed and five male headed households. The relevance of the gender dimension in the sampling is that the research site, and Malawi as a whole, is riddled with gender disparities resulting from cultural, social and behavioural norms which significantly disadvantage women and young girls (Concern Universal, 2010: 8).

Further, gender inequality has now become a key concern for development processes, with inattention to gender being one of the key criticisms of the original SLF approach. It was important to see the difference, if any, in household vulnerability and/or well-being between female and male-headed households participating in the LDSP as well as to obtain information from both male and female practitioners of the project with decision-making and implementation capacity.

5.6. Data Collection

Three methods of data collection were used. These were in-depth interviews, observations and primary documents in the form of reports provided by CU. The reason for using different methods of data collection was so that an understanding could be gained from different sources and perspectives in a method known as triangulation. Triangulation involves finding a true position on a matter by referring to two or more different sources or coordinates (Denscombe, 2003: 133). Yin (2011: 81) further elaborates on triangulation by writing that if three methods of data collection are used in a study, such as seeing something with one's own eyes (observation), hearing about it from someone who was there (verbal report such as a recorded interview) and reading about it in a report that was written by someone else (a document), then the researcher should have confidence in their findings. Not only are they richer, but they are more valid. This triangulation of methods was used to look at the links between the international donor community, local government structures, INGOs in Malawi and development efforts aimed at targeting health and food insecurity to reduce poverty.

All three of these methods offer insight from different points of view which can make the analysis of a study less biased and very informative. Denscombe argues that although there is no proof that the data collected or data analyses as a result of this method are absolutely correct, triangulation enhances the *validity* of the collected data and ensures that findings are not biased based on one source or method of data collection (2003: 133-134, author's emphasis). The processes that were involved in each data collection method are outlined below:

a) In-depth interviews

To be able to fulfil the main goal there needs to be meaningful engagement with community members, NGO practitioners involved in the LDSP project and members of the donor community that fund NGOs. In-depth interviews allowed for probing questions about perceptions of poverty, poverty conditions and experiences, the various meanings of development, and how CU as an INGO fits into creating effective poverty-reducing strategies. Sixteen interviews, conducted individually, in pairs, or in groups, were conducted with 27 people. The large number comes from some households in the beneficiary villages having three household members participating in the interview, making it a group interview, whereas in other households, only the head of the household participated. The volunteers were also interviewed in their pairs. The rest of the interviews were individual ones. They took place in the following categories:

- LDSP beneficiary households: fourteen people, ten interviews;
- VDC heads: two people, two interviews;
- CBDAs: four people, two interviews;
- VSL group head: one person, one interview;
- PD Hearth leader: one person, one interview;
- CU staff: three people, three interviews;
- Representative of the donor (Irish Aid): one person, one interview
- Senior HSA: one person, one interview.

It is important to note that the VDC and VSL group heads, the volunteers and the PD Hearth leader were interviewed both in their capacity of holding positions of authority as well as

also being beneficiaries of the LDSP. Their contribution in their aforementioned capacities provided insight as to how the LDSP functioned in the absence of constant CU supervision and presence, which provided a "skeleton" for the information obtained from speaking with ordinary members of beneficiary households who had no positions of authority.

All the interviews were semi-structured and open which allowed for flexibility and more wide-spoken responses from interviewees (Denscombe, 2003: 167). I had a set of guideline questions but I was also able to ask follow-up questions that were not part of the interview structure in light of interesting information obtained from the answers to previous questions. This made the interviews feel more like a relaxed conversation, than something rigid and formal, and allowed for me to skip some questions and formulate others.

In the case of interviews held in the beneficiary communities, it was good that I had both male-and female-headed households in my sample because I found that the women in the male-headed households did not participate much in the interviews but let their husbands do most of the speaking. Occasionally however, there were some questions related to the well-being of the babies for example, that the women would respond to so they did have some input in the discussions.

Interviews of CU staff were conducted at the Dedza CU office, the Irish Aid representative interview was conducted at the Irish Embassy in Lilongwe and the rest of the interviews were conducted in the beneficiary communities in the households/compounds of the beneficiaries or near the site of the nutrition training programme in the case of the HSA. As mentioned before, language barriers were not a problem as I am part Malawian and can speak Chichewa so communication with project beneficiaries was not difficult. Before each interview, I introduced myself and explained my research and the purpose for the interview.

I sought permission to record the interview from the interviewees and asked whether or not they would be comfortable with being quoted. I explained that it would be helpful for a recording to be made so that I could also take down notes at the same time. A voice recorder on my smartphone was used to record the interviews whilst I took down notes on a writing pad. The notes were helpful in keeping record of things like aspects of non-verbal communication during the interview (Denscombe, 2003: 175) such as gestures and facial expressions that can contribute

to further understanding the responses. These were useful to use in conjunction with the audio recordings. Only one interviewee refused to be quoted, but allowed for a recording to be made nonetheless.

In the case of the beneficiary interviews, I was accompanied by a CU staff member to the meet the volunteers (CBDAs) who would take me to various households. At each household I would be introduced and offered a place to sit so we could begin with the interview. It was also clarified that my presence in the community would not hinder access to CU assistance, but that it was in fact, also for the purposes of a practical report that CU requested, which they might find useful for post-project analysis.

After introductions were made, I would re-introduce myself to the people and further elaborate on what my mission there was so that they understood that I was not as a CU employee, but a student conducting academic research on the LDSP with the consent of CU. Thereafter, I would implore them to ask me any further questions they might have in order to put them at ease and conduct the interview like a relaxed conversation. It helped that I was fluent in Chichewa and that I also come from a similar village in a different part of Malawi because I did not come off as a complete outsider.

At the end of all the interviews with all the participants, I asked them if they had anything more they wanted to add and thanked them for their time and for sharing their experiences with me. Some interviewees in the beneficiary villages did not have much to add, but instead offered me groundnuts or sweet potatoes which, they insisted, was a way of thanking me for choosing to do my research based on CU's efforts to improve their ways of life. Other interviewees had a few points of concern that they wanted to add; these will be explored in the next chapter which documents the findings of the research.

It is important to note that semi-structured interviews allowed for some themes to emerge more strongly in some cases than others, depending on the respondents. Different types of participants, for example, had different priorities, showing that, indeed, different meanings are given to "development" by different stakeholders (Knight, 2012: 18). The interviews were

structured to allow consistent coverage of themes, but the depth of data on different themes, from different interviewees, differed considerably.

b) Observations

Observations were carried out in order to witness CU's LDSP activities and obtain the responses of the community. Metsämuuronen (2006) writes that there are four different categories of observation as a researcher and these are 1) pure observation without any participation, 2) observer as participant, 3) participant as observer, and 4) complete participant (cited in Kostiainen, 2012: 35). I visited households in villages and saw their living conditions; here I was a pure observer. I was also able to interact with beneficiaries and partake in the nutrition training programme at Kambadza Village, learning a few things myself, and I spent time at the CU Dedza office and was also allowed to attend and contribute in one of the weekly meetings; here I was a participant as an observer.

c) Primary documents

Primary documents were obtained from CU. Documentation consulted included CU's 2011-2016 Malawi Strategy, the CU Impact Reports, the CU's LDSP proposal and other project reports (annual sample survey, mid-term review conducted by a consulting firm, response from management, work plan and budget). This documentation was useful in order to understand CU's ideologies, policies, methodologies and objectives. In other words, it provided information and evidence within which the study could be framed at least empirically.

5.7. Data Analysis

The interviews were transcribed and thoughts, comments and reflections on the data and field notes were written as advised by Denscombe (2003: 272). These, coupled with information obtained from the primary documentation, were categorised into several themes containing interrelated information and they were revisited and adapted in order to refine the understanding obtained (Denscombe, 2003: 272). Relationships between different variables were also identified. These included variables such as the perceived importance of various project

activities, participation, perceived effectiveness, complaints, events (only one in this case in the form of a training programme) sites or locations of interviews, types of people who partook in the research, and issues that arose – all of which contributed to the analysis of the data obtained. Beneficiaries in the communities permitted me to take pictures, which were used to support the findings of the interviews and the primary documents obtained from CU. The findings are in the next chapter where they have been linked to the research questions, the literature review and the theoretical framework.

5.8. Research Ethical Considerations

Research ethics and upholding values of decency, trustworthiness and professionalism are important in social research. As such, certain steps were taken to ensure all ethical research was undertaken. In the interests of informed consent, all the research participants had the full details of the study explained to them before they agreed to participate in the study. They were also informed that should they wish to withdraw from the research, they may willingly do so. Anonymity and confidentiality were guaranteed unless individuals gave their consent to be quoted. CU will also be issued with a summary of the findings in the form of a 20-25 page report with images as this was their request upon agreeing to allow me to conduct my research based on a project conducted by their organisation.

Although most interviewees gave their permission for me to use their names in quotations, I have opted not to do so, for consistency purposes because other individuals did not wish to be quoted by name. Instead I have referenced beneficiaries by numbers and the rest of the interviewees are referenced by letters. For example, Participant 1 and Participant A. Care was also taken not to deceive the participants or to make any misleading promises (Denscombe, 2003: 54).

As mentioned before, some household interviews in the beneficiary villages were group interviews where individuals under the age of 16 also participated, as opposed to only the head of the household. In these cases, permission was obtained from the parents to interview the whole family, to allow them to participate (Denscombe, 2003: 54).

Also to be noted with regard to the interviews conducted in the beneficiary villages, is my appearance. I wore a *chitenje,* which is a rectangular cloth that was wrapped around my waist for the purposes of covering up my legs and/or trousers underneath so that I was dressed in a respectable manner, according to rural conventions. The appearance and presentation of a researcher needs to be neutral and it is important not to upset the participants (Denscombe, 2003: 171), by dressing inappropriately (for example).

5.9. Limitations and Challenges of the Study

One challenge of this study was that I was a first-time researcher with limited experience in the field and in research, meaning that I relied on guidance from my supervisor as well as knowledge gained from academic courses on various aspects of both development and research. Being unfamiliar with the territory, it was very helpful that CU facilitated access to the research sites. However, this reliance also came with a challenge: sometimes I was not always informed in time of CU site visits, and this meant that I did not go to the field as much as I would have liked, during my time in Malawi.

A limitation of this study was that during the beneficiary interviews in Kafere Village, apart from the CBDA and VDC head interviews, a CU staff member was present and chatting to some other household members in the compound for the duration of three household interviews. Yin (2011: 127) points out that the presence of a host during a site visit can possibly bring about uncertainties with regard to the responses from participants, whereby they might change their demeanour or respond artificially during their interview. It is difficult to determine whether or not the presence of the staffer affected the response given by the interviewees since they were at quite a distance and not within hearing range – but they were still there regardless. All other interviews comprised just myself and the participants.

Another point of note is that although it was explained several times by myself and by CU staffers that I was not a CU staff member, but a postgraduate student conducting research for academic purposes, some of the participants of interviews in the beneficiary villages viewed me as something of a “messenger” who could obtain and convey any feedback, thanks and woes

they might have to CU. This was noticed during interviews where participants would say the phrase "*mukawawuzeko aConcern kuti…*" ("please go and tell the people from Concern (Universal) that…") when asked if they had anything else they would like to add. It was at this point that I, as a researcher, had to ensure that I did not involve myself too much, sympathise with the participants and become biased as a result; I also had to reiterate my role as an observer rather than as an actor. Bernard (2000, cited in Mokatsa, 2009: 45-46) argues that too deep an immersion in semi-structured interviews can be unhelpful, because the interviewer might find the data warped by self-reflection; however, some reflection and clarification is important because it gives respondents the opportunity to open up more, and provide information that could prove useful to the study.

A second limitation of this study was that the household beneficiary participants in the two villages where interviews were conducted were under the jurisdiction of one pair of CBDAs, meaning that their views cannot be assumed to be representative of those of beneficiaries in the villages under other CBDAs. To put this issue in another way: it was not possible to isolate the impact of differences between CBDAs on the data; without this, the possibility of such impacts must be considered and, therefore, care must be taken not to generalise unduly.

5.10. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the various stages that were involved in the research of this thesis, including the duration of the fieldwork, the locations visited, research methodology, data collection and analysis, ethical considerations as well as the challenges and constraints encountered during the fieldwork. This information has provided a foundation for the findings chapter, as it shows the various steps that were taken in order to arrive at conclusions that were made and can be used to determine whether or not they were necessary, sufficient and/or relevant for this research. Despite these challenges and constraints, efforts were made to conduct the research as best as was possible. The following chapter will now discuss the findings of the thesis based on the input from this and previous chapters.

Chapter 6:
Concern Universal in Dedza

6.1. Introduction

In order to understand the work of CU in Chafumbwa EPA and its relationships with the beneficiaries, the state and donors, this chapter presents the research findings of this thesis, and links these to the literature. It begins by providing profiles of CU and its LDSP, followed by the findings which have been organised into themes. The discussion includes information on CU's methodology and project implementation, monitoring and evaluation. Critical analyses of the data obtained, as well as some commentary by the researcher (where relevant), are also included.

6.2. Concern Universal (CU) Profile

Concern Universal is an INGO that started working in Malawi in 1988, in response to the Mozambican refugee crisis in Dedza (Concern Universal, 2011a: 5). Today, the organisation works together with District Councils as well as with communities to provide "sustainable development" interventions in their programme areas (Concern Universal, 2011b: 4-5). Besides cooperation with the Malawian government, CU also works with, and obtains its funds from international organisations. Its main funding partners in Malawi are Irish Aid, the European Commission, DFID, the United States Agency for International Development (USAID), The Fondation Ensemble (French), The Cooperative Group, Solidaridad and AusAid/AFAP (Concern Universal, 2011a: 5).

According to CU's 2011-2016 Malawi Country Strategy, CU's work is based on its vision, mission and values. These are justice, dignity and respect for all, partnering with others to provide practical solutions for poverty and inequality that enable people to improve their own lives, and promoting the core values of human dignity, integrity, partnership and community focus (Concern Universal, 2011). Project staff for the studied component had a variety of qualifications ranging from diplomas to degrees in agriculture, nutrition, community

development and community nursing, with from five to thirteen years of experience in the NGO and development sectors.

6.3. The Local Development Support Programme (LDSP) Profile

The LDSP is a 1+5 years project implemented by CU, with the aim of combating vulnerability and poverty by strengthening the service delivery capacity of local governments and improving health, food and nutrition security and incomes to boost local development (Concern Universal, 2010: 8). The LDSP is envisaged as a holistic, integrated livelihoods project that makes use of existing government structures in order to strengthen capacity, as well as to benefit the targeted 12,000 households under 19 VDCs and about 202 villages in Chafumbwa, Dedza (Participant A, 22/05/2014). It aims to achieve the following results:

1. Increased quantity and productivity of agribusinesses and off-farm enterprises;
2. Improved delivery of malaria prevention and control, nutrition education and services, and reproductive health and family planning;
3. Increased access to and utilisation of HIV prevention, care and support and impact mitigation services;
4. Increased access to safe water supply, sanitation and hygiene education;
5. Increased crop and livestock production and natural resource management;
6. Increased capacity and functionality of district, area and village level structures and extension services;
7. Increased CU capability to learn, document, disseminate and influence (Concern Universal, 2010: 8).

Although spearheaded by CU, the LDSP also reflects and addresses issues of concern highlighted by various policies and organisations such as the UN's MDGs; the GoM's Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MGDS), Food and Nutrition Security Policy, National HIV and AIDS Policy, Social Support Policy, and National Adaptation Programme of Action; Irish Aid's CSP; and CU's CSP (Concern Universal, 2010: 8).

6.3.1. Project Design of the LDSP

The design of the LDSP involved creating a research proposal in line with both CU's and Irish Aid's CSPs to ensure that the CU's work contributed to the goals of the Papers. CU also identified problems cited in the district by consulting, and aiming to also contribute to, the goals of the following government documents: the District Implementation Plan and the Socio-Economic Profile (Participant A, 22/05/2014). These are the intervention documents for the districts which every NGO and government sector refers to, and they show the gaps, limitations, expected interventions and target groups.

After obtaining approval from the donor, CU went to the beneficiary communities to obtain their inputs and re-shape the plans based on the community needs, in a way that was still satisfactory to the donor (Participant A, 22/05/2014). Involving the community in developmental projects is very useful because it can raise money and labour, because communities know what their needs are and what points need to be addressed immediately in order for them to benefit from the projects (World Bank, 1983: 93). Participation significantly empowers the community (O'Gorman, 1995: 206).

The project was designed in such a way that it reflected villager needs, CU's values and donor interests, as well as making efficient use of donor funding and effectively including local government. There are ten impact areas identified for the project, these being 1) malnutrition and food insecurity; 2) dietary diversity; 3) family planning, maternal and reproductive health; 4) malaria and respiratory infections; 5) agricultural management practices and low/erratic productivity; 6) environmental degradation; 7) HIV/AIDS vulnerability and prevalence; 8) hygiene and sanitary conditions that lead to severe cases of diarrhoea; 9) under-funded and under-staffed government services such as in health, education, and agricultural extension; and 10) access to markets and financial services (Concern Universal, 2010: 8). The LDSP is organised in Dedza office in a structure based upon these impact areas.

6.4. The LDSP in Chafumbwa EPA Dedza

6.4.1. Identification of Beneficiaries

Beneficiaries were identified by an assessment conducted by CU that identified the most vulnerable. There is no specific mention of what criteria made a household qualify as being "vulnerable". CU had a plan for the project and consulted T/A Kachere to find out what areas were most in need of assistance and had approached and requested it from the T/A (Participant B, 09/05/2014). Chafumbwa EPA was identified. CU had previously only worked in one area in Dedza, known as Lobi.

6.4.2. Implementation of the LDSP

Further strategies, policies and documents consulted included the Irish Government's Hunger Task Force, the Food and Nutrition Security Joint Task Force (FNSJTF) and Malawi's National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan (Concern Universal, 2010). The values and aims of these, and of other policies mentioned earlier, could be seen in actual CU practice, which stressed government and community capacity-building as well as holistic sustainable livelihood activities; this was evident in the project implementation.

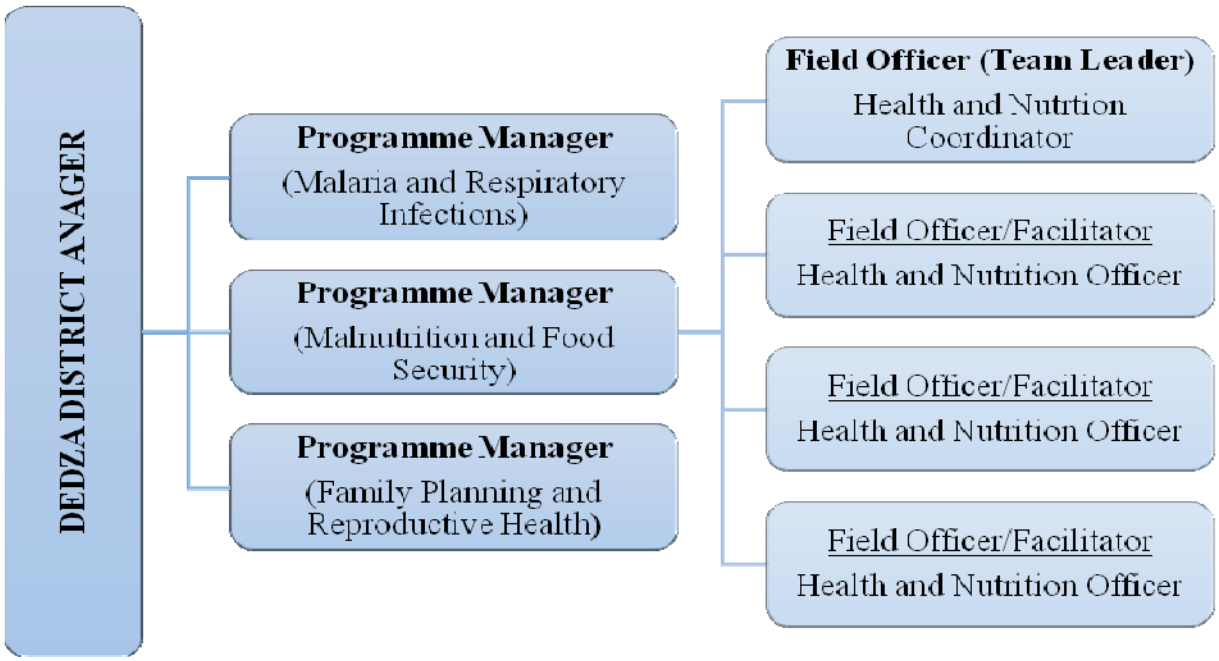


Figure 6.1: Partial LDSP organisational structure for Chafumbwa EPA

As mentioned, CU made use of existing government structures that had been put in place for enabling community participation, when implementing the LDSP. Part of the District Development Planning System, these are decentralised structures that are aimed at reducing poverty by being participatory, people-centred, bottom-up and district focussed (Chiweza, 2010: 40; also see section 2.4.2. in Chapter 2). According to CU staff, this approach allowed for the effective inclusion of the communities: CU did not come in as an entirely different and alien entity, and therefore did not struggle to initiate the project, since it worked with and through existing structures. The structures most closely related to the LDSP project were the VDCs and the ADCs: these were where much of the community participation took place and where the project and its aims were introduced to the people. These structures, in other words, provided the PIPs component of the SLF, which informed the CU's LDSP.

For each component of the LDSP, there were government extension workers with which the CU facilitators worked, such as staff from the Agricultural Department (in the case of LDSP agriculture initiatives); indeed, state employees do most of the work, while CU staff mainly facilitate and enable project activities (Participant C, 12/05/2014). This way of implementing the LDSP allowed for various areas to be addressed, among them empowering the poor; community participation; economic activity and income enhancement; improving the quality of life; and redistribution of resources (Crook, 2003: 78-79).

It is important to note, however, that there are times when mobilising communities for community participation can cause problems for the success of development projects. The LDSP introduced VSL groups, for example, designed to promote increased household income through interest acquired from shares and access to loans for the purposes of starting small businesses (Bota, Kamoto and Mayani, 2012: i).

However, challenges often exist within such systems of participation. Sometimes a dominant local group takes over the community organisations and restricts the involvement of lower groups, or sometimes certain members make the projects suit their own needs (World Bank, 1983: 93). The LDSP saw an example of the latter challenge where, in one VDC, there were members of a VSL who were borrowing large amounts of money such as K40, 000 when they had only made K5, 000 contributions (Mpezeni, 2014: 21). This led to breaking up of the

VSL and seizure of property and gardens from those who could not repay loans (Mpezeni, 2014: 21). Such incidents, which could be seen as an abuse of power, discourage other community members from participating in the projects.

However, it is also important to note that the LDSP was based, from the start, on a participatory approach: the project was planned with the beneficiary communities; CU did not just enter into communities assuming they knew the communities' needs. Beneficiary communities were approached via their VDCs and then consulted to find out their needs (Participant 2, 30/04/2014; Participants 8, 9, and 13, 26/05/2014). Every three months, there are quarterly meetings where CU facilitators obtain feedback from the beneficiaries (Participant B, 09/05/2014; Participant 14, 26/05/2014). This is seen as particularly important as it contributes to CU's ability to provide better services and more effective interventions.

6.5. Food Security, Nutrition and Health Result Areas of the LDSP

Food security, nutrition and health result areas were chosen because – in a holistic programme such as the LDSP – these are the areas that speak most directly to the barest necessities of poverty alleviation. The starting point in alleviating poverty is strengthening the human body itself, before any other endeavours can be taken into consideration (Participant D, 26/05/2014). A healthy person able to perform various kinds of work can contribute to their own development, whereas as an unhealthy person, always sickly and in hospital, is unable to perform any kind of work and remains thereby impoverished (Participant D, 26/05/2014).

In order to promote and facilitate food security and a healthy lifestyle in beneficiary communities, this component of the LDSP was designed to complement "several of the Malawi Food and Nutrition Security Policy objectives which fall under the broad themes of 1) Sustainable food availability, 2) Sustainable access to food (access by individuals to adequate resources to acquire appropriate food for a nutritious diet), 3) Food utilisation (to achieve satisfactory nutritional status, food must be effectively utilised), 4) Stability in food and nutrition (to be food secure, a population, household, or individual must have access to adequate food at all times, 5) Food and nutrition information systems, monitoring and evaluation" (Concern Universal, 2010: 21).

In addition to this, Malawi's 2006 National Adaptation Programme of Action priorities like increasing resilience of food production systems to erratic rains by promoting sustainable small-scale irrigation systems and improving crop production through appropriate technologies were also key LDSP starting points in attaining these result areas (Concern Universal, 2010: 23) in an effort to address the vulnerability context of beneficiaries. Below is a more detailed outline of the actual practices put in place by CU to enhance sustainable livelihood outcomes.

6.5.1. Food Production

CU assisted communities with livelihood assets and resources in the form of start-up materials in the form of crop seeds and livestock. Training involved capacity-building in terms of how to grow those crops, how to keep those livestock and how to share food (Participant B, 09/05/2014). This was done through implementing crop-diversification and conservation agricultural projects, to safeguard beneficiaries in the December-January period when food reserves normally start depleting, although beneficiaries said shortages still occurred. Examples of crops include orange-fleshed sweet potatoes, beans, maize, groundnuts, *kholowa* (sweet potato leaves), *nkhwani* (pumpkin leaves), *mpiru* (mustard leaves/greens), *kachewele* (a variety/type of Irish potatoes), soya beans, cassava, and sweet potatoes, as well as *chidede* (Roselle fruit) which grows wild in the surrounding environment (Participants 3, 4, 5, and Participants 10, 11, 13 and 14). A pass-on scheme for livestock was also implemented, where some beneficiaries were given goats, chickens and pigs and trained on their upkeep. There were unforeseen negative developments however, similar to those identified in Knight's (2012) study of World Vision's work in Umzingwane in Zimbabwe, where seeds were stolen at a demonstration plot (Mpezeni, 2014: 22).

Figure 6.2: Goats and chickens roaming around one of the beneficiaries' compounds in Kutsanja Village.

Figure 6.3: Shelters prepared for pigs outside a beneficiary house in Kutsanja Village, which were scheduled to arrive a week after this image was taken.

This scheme was aimed at raising the baseline figure of people who owned livestock by 30% by the end of the project yet at mid-term stage, the figure had gone down from 71% to 69% (Bota *et al*, 2012: 27). Inasmuch as the addition of animals contributed to food diversification, not all beneficiaries received livestock, as this was a "pass-on" scheme. Some were still waiting during the time of the research and would only get a chance once other people who received animals had offspring to pass-on. This made the pass-on scheme an initiative where value for money was hard to achieve, because it was very costly and it only reached few people (Participant E, 28/05/2014).

The question of appropriateness and sustainability of NGO development initiatives arises here. Even with the crop seed distribution, CU had put in place a trickle-down effect system that saw not all beneficiaries were satisfied:

> Basically, because not all of us received something during the first round of seed distribution, we were told to wait for the first rounders to plant and harvest what they got and produce say 10kgs of nuts or soya beans for example, then deliver some of this produce to the VDC where others could then go and fetch some out of that and then go on to farm themselves (Participant 9, 26/05/2014, author's translation from Chichewa).

The livestock option was also faced with challenges such as high death rate of animals, poor management in treating, feeding and housing as well as unhealthy young that needed a lot of energy and resources in nursing them to health and point of maturity (Bota *et al*, 2010: 28). These results resemble those of Knight's (2012) study of World Vision in Umzingwane (Zimbabwe), which seem to be the general trend with initiatives of this kind.

Regardless of such issues, most beneficiaries still expressed satisfaction with the contribution made by CU in their food diversification and security condition. Agricultural training sessions were held with the VDC, and were open to entire communities. In some cases, however, only a selected number of beneficiaries were selected for a training session and were expected to then return to their communities and train others. The project site is very large and beneficiaries argued that it was not realistic to expect one or two people to travel the entire

length of a VDC zone of 17 villages to teach others what they had learned at training (Participant 14, 26/05/2014).

CU staff argued that not many people showed up for training so there was an issue of apathy, although beneficiaries countered this claim by expressing their dissatisfaction with the fact that only one training session was held in a particular impact area per year:

> Not everyone can make it for these sessions at a given time so the turn out ends up being just two or three people which is why when it comes to starting the actual activities, most of us are just blank (Participant 12, 26/05/2014, author's translation from Chichewa).

Low turn-out was blamed on people having other priorities or circumstances that prevented them from attending, such as sick children or a day to be spent in farming in their fields. Further, government extension workers are few and do not reach all the households so they cannot be relied on to fill in the gaps. This poses problems for continuity of project interventions in a future post-LDSP.

6.5.2. Nutrition Interventions

The food production and diversification mentioned above contributed to the nutritional status of the beneficiary communities. Prior to LDSP interventions, the nutritional status in large parts of Chafumbwa was very low, with many children under the age of five being both underweight and suffering from malnutrition (Participants 3 and 5, 30/04/2014; Participants 7 to 14, 26/05/2014; Participant D, 26/05/2014). Households with these characteristics were targeted as beneficiaries of Community-Based Childcare (CBCC) and Positive Deviance (PD) Hearth initiatives. These were nutrition training and cooking sessions for households, where nutrition volunteers in the beneficiary villages were also trained to run the programmes. Mothers were taught how to prepare food for children under the age of five, using resources contributed by the participants themselves.

Foodstuffs had to be contributed by the beneficiaries themselves for a training session and the only CU contribution were the methods and practices for the food preparation (Participant D, 26/05/2014). Various foods were prepared during the session using different methods. The various delicacies made are either consumed at home or sold at the market so beneficiaries benefit from having variety in their diet as well as generating an income from the produce. Some beneficiaries cited this intervention as being a source of income that could be used to purchase other basic necessities, such as soap, sugar and eggs, from the markets.

Beneficiaries were taught to ensure that their diet included foods from the following six food groups: 1) staples (filling foods such as maize, sweet potatoes, Irish potatoes and cassava), oils/fats (oily foods such as the vegetable oil used for cooking), 3) vegetables (green leafy vegetables in particular such as *nkhwani*, rape, *mpiru* and *kholowa*), 4) animal foods (such as fish and meat), 5) legumes (such as beans and groundnuts) and 6) fruits (such as mangos, bananas and oranges) (Participant B, 09/05/2014; Participants 5 and 6, 30/04/2014; Participants 8 and 9, 26/05/2014). Food items that were normally contributed by participants included *kholowa*, *mgayiwa* (unprocessed maize flour), and *nsinjiro* (crushed groundnuts).

Figure 6.4: Family removing maize kernels from cobs before taking the grain for milling to produce maize flour in Kutsanja.

Figure 6.5: Shelling groundnuts so they can be ground to make *nsinjiro* in Kutsanja.

The LDSP's dedication towards under-5 children's malnutrition status was evident (more than 90% of people had access to under-5 services) (Bota *et al*, 2012: 10). According to LDSP staff, previously, most mothers were dependent on hospital supplementary feeding programmes at the health centre where most mothers used to go every 2 weeks for their children to access "Likuni Phala" whenever it was being offered. This was an OTP (Outpatient Therapeutic Programme) where they received ready-to-use therapeutic foods (RUTF) to boost nutrition. Among the projects that were introduced by the LDSP, CBCC cooking for under-five children was done using the method known as PD Hearth: foodstuffs were gathered together and women cooked porridge for the children. Specific ways to prepare food were taught in order for beneficiaries to obtain the best possible nutritional value from their food intake.

> We used to just make porridge with a little salt or sugar and then that was it. But now we know how to prepare it differently. We prepare "*phala lakasakaniza*" (mixed porridge). For the ingredients, we take maize, groundnuts, and soya, and then all of that is ground at the mill. We then cook porridge out of the mixture. On top of that, we also grind any leafy vegetable such as *nkhwani* or crack an egg or two and mix them into the porridge for the children to eat. On other days we'll cook porridge made from sweet potatoes. Other days it's pumpkin or butternut porridge. Every day we must make sure to alternate and not repeat the porridge made the day before. After that, we give the children a fruit (Participant 10, 26/05/2014, author's translation from Chichewa).

Some of the ingredients of the CBCC under-5 children's mixed porridge

Figure 6.6: *Nsinjiro* (crushed groundnuts) drying in the sun on the roof of a village hut in Kafere.

Figure 6.7: *Mgayiwa* (unprocessed maize flour) straight from the mill drying out in the sun on reed mats in Kafere.

Figure 6.8: The beginning stages of cooking the special mixed porridge on a fire in Kambadza.

Figure 6.9: Orange-fleshed sweet potatoes also used to make porridge to alternate with maize flour porridge in Kafere.

This type of cooking incorporates several food groups and therefore contributes to a good, nutritious diet. For adults, similar rules are still applied. For example when cooking food, oil must be added and if not, then at least the vegetables must be *masamba otendera* (vegetables with *nsinjiro* added) because groundnuts are legumes that also have oil. In this way three food groups, legumes, vegetables and oil, would be incorporated (Participant B, 09/05/2014).

It could not be established from the fieldwork however, whether or not these new practices were consistently implemented in the home or they were only done during and soon after the training sessions. What does seem clear is that the initiatives helped decrease the cases of child malnutrition in the beneficiary communities: “when children are properly fed and they have enough food, they will grow up healthy, develop mentally and they will start understanding issues better” (Participant B, 09/05/2014). The households that were visited during the research appeared to be proof of this indication of a decrease in malnutrition. Parents reported that these were results of adopting CU practices, such as having vegetable gardens in their households, to support their new diet.

Such interventions, however, also faced challenges with regard to the policy of relying on community contributions. Sometimes people did not bring food items to the group. Three reasons were cited for this: some households simply did not have anything to contribute; some beneficiaries did not like the idea of having to share what little they had with the rest of the community to go towards feeding other people’s children; and, some mothers seemed to prefer to

let their children reach a bad state of malnutrition and then simply go to the Nutrition Rehabilitation Centre in Chimoto to receive free RUTF in the form of Likuni Phala (Participant A, 22/05/2014).

LDSP staff found themselves having to coax beneficiaries at their households during their regular check-ups to see how beneficiaries were adapting to the six food group initiative so that they contribute what little they had, even if it was only a handful of *nsinjiro* (Participant B, 09/05/2014). Cooking training programmes conducted by the local government HSA in Kambadza Village for adult nutrition did not seem to experience the same type of problems, however. The reasons are not entirely clear.

In addition to this, some of the community volunteers for these programmes dropped out because they had expectations that were different to what they were given. Although they knew it was voluntary, they thought they would receive cash in the form of allowances; the LDSP use of the government system meant that cash would not be given to community members and they were at liberty to stop at any point (Participant A, 22/05/2014). This raises issues of concern for the success of the project in beneficiary communities with regard to continuity, reluctance, dependence, and capacity-building.

Figure 6.10:
Covering cooked red beans.

Figure 6.11: Unpeeled orange-fleshed sweet potatoes and *kholowa* vegetables.

Figure 6.12: *Mpiru* (mustard greens) before addition of *nsinjiro* to make *mpiru wotendera.*

Figure 6.13: "Soya chips" (fried soya beans).

Figure 6.14: *Chidede* juice and the remaining squeezed fruit pieces (used to make relish).

Figure 6.15: Steps in making Soya milk: pounded soya beans are boiled, sugar is added then the milk is cooled.

6.5.3. Health Outcomes

The nutrition interventions mentioned above contributed to the health status of the beneficiary communities in various ways as a result of the different nutritious foods reducing the risk of preventable diseases. One of the LDSP nutrition facilitators was a former community nurse who contributed to the design stage of the LDSP to ensure there was a link between nutrition and health in the LDSP. "In proposing the activities which we would do in the community, my input was that if we go to the community, we were going to do family planning, malaria, and nutrition education." (Participant B, 09/05/2014). As mentioned before, an HSA from the local government implemented the nutrition training in Kambadza Village to make certain there was a link between nutrition efforts and health outcomes. The GoM has been stretched for man-power lately, adding pressure on existing HSAs. HSAs are no longer limited to research and administration only, which are formally their primary functions, but also have had to carry out other health-related duties such as nursing (VSO Malawi, 2015) and nutrition training.

Other health contributions of the LDSP included a malnutrition watch where CBCC volunteers were trained on how to use the scale which they would obtain from the local health centre every 12 days after the PD Hearth cooking for under-5 children (Participant 13, 26/05/2014). They were to monitor the progress of children's health status. CBDAs made rounds to other households regularly to train them in health practices:

> As CBDAs, we visit different families and households. We sit with them, about three or four people and discuss matters relevant to that family. For example, if there is a pregnant mother in a household, we discuss the importance of her going "to scale" (antenatal care at the clinic) until the child reaches two years of age. We also discuss how to practice family planning methods and teach lactating mothers the importance of breastfeeding. We also discuss healthy eating practices, cleanliness and how to prevent malnutrition. We teach them about the six food groups we learned about from CU and from the Health Department (Participant 6, 30/04/2014, author's translation from Chichewa).

CU also improved the ability for the community to be better equipped to take care of the sick until recovery through community-based care. This has been done through local Home Based Care (HBC) facilities because the nearest hospitals are equally very far, the two options being the hospital in Mitundu which is close to Lilongwe or the hospital in main Dedza town where the district headquarters are located. Beneficiaries added, however, that the supply of drugs was limited and that they were finished quickly:

> CU set up a HBC facility for us where doctor's came and advised us on basic health practices. CU gave us boxes of medicine to keep there. Even now if a child were to get a fever or get hurt in some way, we are able go there and get medication because we have access to it. In case someone is really sick, CU also left several bicycles there so that we can have a means to travel. When children are crying, we also know how to tell the difference between crying because they are sick or just crying which helps them to develop and have stronger lungs (Participant 8, 26/05/2014, author's translation from Chichewa).

Beneficiaries raised concerns about Kutsanja Village's CBCC building, which they said was small and needed to accommodate over 55 children:

> There is a need for proper pre-schools in the village. Currently what we have is our CBCC which is quite small and children do not learn adequately. Sometimes we sit with the children when it's raining and they get wet. The children are many but the building is small (Participant 12, 26/05/2014, author's translation from Chichewa).

People living with HIV/AIDS also benefitted from the LDSP food security and nutrition interventions:

> Looking at the issue of people living with HIV, their immune system is low. They need to take nutritious food for them to be healthy and if they are healthy, they will be able to participate in development activities. They will be able to work in their gardens, they will be able to participate in any work that can bring income in their lives and this will improve their condition of living (Participant C, 12/05/2014).

Other areas of health addressed in the LDSP included reducing preventable diseases such as cholera, diarrhoea and vitamin deficiency-related sicknesses. This was done by ensuring that beneficiaries had access to safe drinking water, proper bathrooms, proper toilets and practiced basic hygiene principles. Supplies of "Water Guard" or bleach were distributed and beneficiaries were shown how to use them to make water safe to drink:

> We used to go to the *dambo* (wetland) to drink water. It was very worrying for us because we would sometimes get sick. CU constructed boreholes for us after we told them this. They also give us chemicals to put in the water to make it safe. That same *dambo* we used as a toilet as well. Or otherwise the bushes or trees somewhere. But now we have proper slab toilets; we make the slabs ourselves. They might come and give us cement in future (Participant 9, 26/05/2014, author's translation from Chichewa).

Figure 6.16: Borehole put in place by CU in Kafere Village.

6.6. Impact of the LDSP on Socio-economic Welfare

Beneficiaries said that they had benefitted from LDSP activities, especially in the form of income-generation. They were able to produce a variety of foods and they had surplus in their households as well as enough produce left over to sell and have extra money. That money was used for an assortment of things ranging from purchasing other foods from the market that were not readily available at home such as *usipa* (a sardine-like type of fish) and eggs (Participant, 14, 26/05/2014) to even buying ox-carts, motorcycles or building houses after saving up money made from selling cassava (Participant 1 and 2, 30/04/2015). This was the case for four beneficiaries in Kafere Village.

However, some beneficiaries were of the view that they were not benefiting to the full extent because some training programmes were held in another district altogether (in Zomba), and they were only taken there once and returned without being able to stay and learn further. They were then expected to remember the sessions and teach others back home which was almost impossible, as they would have only picked up one or two concepts which they could barely remember themselves (Participant 14, 26/05/2014). As a result, they could not make use of these training sessions for developmental outcomes.

Some beneficiaries also argued that going for training in other districts was not worth it because they did not receive any allowances. If they did, they would be able to budget and make sure there was at least some money left to return home with to use to pay for things needed in or for their households (Participant 11, 26/05/2014). This would be helpful because CU did not pay volunteers who worked at the CBCC, and they needed money to be able to hire *ganyu* workers to help them around the house, since CBCC work was as time-consuming as a full-time job.

However, the CU's mid-term review stated the opposite, claiming that CU *did* give allowances to volunteers attending training outside their area, which was cause of concern because the amount was large and there was risk of an "allowance syndrome" developing, which could affect the volunteer spirit and impinge on service delivery effectiveness (Bota *et al*, 2012: 31).

Most beneficiaries mentioned growing unity amongst villagers and in village life due to LDSP activities, which involved frequent meetings and group activities attended together. Others were also happy to be in positions of leadership where they were either members of the VDC or various CBOs, and were required to write reports for quarterly meetings. They said they had gained social status in their community. CU staff and Irish Aid also viewed the LDSP as successful, in general, based on the progress reports conducted by the former and received by the latter. Community members had adopted many LDSP practices and there were differences noted compared to baseline figures in the ten impact areas.

Beneficiaries also expressed an interest in participating in further programmes and being trained so that they could travel the rest of the district and teach other villages what they had learned. They said that although other organisations such as the World Bank and Land O'Lake had been there before (the former to implement paying schemes for CBCC volunteers and the latter to donate milk, plates and cups to CBCCs), these initiatives had been fruitless – yet CU had made a mark in their communities:

> The World Bank never returned but we would hear on the radio where they had gone to other villages and had put in place the payment schemes. Land O'Lake also said we could no longer go to the Dairy in Magomero and collect milk because they had had a conflict with the owners there and had stopped doing

> business with them. They said if it ever got resolved then we could go back (Participant 13, 26/05/2014, author's translation from Chichewa).

6.7. Challenges of the LDSP

LDSP staff cited the Dzalanyama Forest as a concern because it was on the way to the project sites and the dangers and crime rates there were high. Sometimes they would go via Mitundu as if going to Lilongwe to avoid passing through the forest. They also cited problems with implementing the project effectively due to fuel and transport costs, as well as the exchange rate. "Cash flow is an issue. The money comes in Euros so the exchange rate and the devaluation of the currency comes into play" (Participant C, 12/05/2014).

With regard to the implementation of the LDSP itself, agricultural interventions were negatively affected by climate change conditions. Many areas were affected by issues of soil infertility. Also, government extension workers sometimes refused to go for training because there were no longer allowances being given for training, but instead only a guarantee of accommodation and food. They argued that five days away for training was not worth it without an allowance:

> They would say to us, "How will I buy the soap? How will I buy the Colgate? It's better that I don't go for the training." This affected our working relationship with the local government and affected the implementation of the LDSP because most of the work is done by them and the beneficiaries. We are just facilitators (Participant C, 12/05/2014).

However, the issue of lack of participation due to not receiving allowances is both questionable and understandable. It is questionable in the sense that the items being listed as things that one would need in order to attend training were basic items that a person should have anyway. Surely soap and toothpaste do not need to be bought off an allowance for *every* training session. Regardless, it is understandable in the sense that, as mentioned before, the GoM has been short of person-power lately and it only goes to say that there is probably shortage of adequate salaries too. Perhaps this is why extension workers were reluctant to do more work with

no reward. The decision to stop giving allowances came from the international consortium of NGOs where NGOs met with donors and it was agreed that allowances should no longer be given (Participant C, 12/05/2014).

6.8. Performance of CU

6.8.1. Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation of the LDSP was carried out by CU itself, as well as by Irish Aid and an independent consulting firm, the Development Training and Research Consultants, at various stages of the project. When asked about how the feedback mechanisms in place for the LDSP were conducted, LDSP staff outlined three methods: reports from quarterly meetings which were held between CU and beneficiaries where complaints were also made, quarterly meetings between CU and Irish Aid as well as quarterly meetings held between VDCs and ADCs. Meetings with beneficiaries were theme-based and were held with committees involved in various areas like agriculture, CBCC, HIV/AIDS support, and so on. A full report for the annual review could not be obtained since at the time of this research, the project was still in progress; it is only scheduled to end in June 2015. Irish Aid also sends whole teams to monitor progress on the ground and compare it to the reports they get from CU (Participant E, 28/05/2014).

There was also mention of meetings by CU held with local government which would take place when the LDSP had been phased out. CU's approach stresses capacity-building and strengthening of local government decentralised structures (result area 7) in order to empower and prepare these authorities to take over the development activities after the LDSP. At these meetings, the findings from CU's monitoring and evaluation, as well as recommendations would be presented to the District Council.

Ultimately, continuity of the initiatives will be left in the hands of local government, and not the beneficiaries directly which may pose problems since most beneficiaries cited that local government never used to come to their areas and do anything for them, despite LDSP staff

saying that CU always made sure they left vehicles (when available), motorcycles and computers for local government to use whenever they left a project site when it had phased out.

6.8.2. Issues of Accountability in Chafumbwa

Based on CU's approach of involving both beneficiaries and local government structures in LDSP implementation, it appears that the LDSP has been financially sustainable overall, minus the concerns raised by staff earlier. There has been effective use of funds from Irish Aid to implement strategies designed to be long-lasting in the beneficiary communities.

Nearly all the beneficiaries interviewed expressed immense gratitude towards CU and wished there would be more organisations coming after them so that there is continuous flow of knowledge and developmental practices in their villages. The planning was bottom-up, although to a limited extent (see below). It is also clear that there was ongoing interaction with state authorities. Certainly there was little here to confirm claims that INGOs are simply part of a neo-liberal, corporate and charity paradigm (Shivji, 2007: 30), without real impact on pro-poor policy-making (Martens, 2002: 278-279), or are agents of imperial power (Manji and O'Coill, 2002: 560). This is not to say that *some* NGOs or INGOs may not act in such ways, or for such purposes, but simply to say that such labels do not fit the work of CU and the LDSP very well. Indeed, this particular INGO's work seems to confirm the "optimistic" view, that NGOs provide a solution to development deadlocks, in the face of state failure or weaknesses.

Although this is encouraging feedback, it also raises questions as to whether or not the LDSP had ensured resilience in communities and reduced the beneficiaries' dependence on outside aid. Inasmuch as they would "continue to practice what (they) had learned, it would be nice if CU added maybe just two or three more years to their project so that (they) continue to benefit from them", said one (Participant 4, 30/04/2014, author's translation from Chichewa).

With regard to accountability to beneficiaries, CU staff cited that the communities were the ones to which they were ultimately accountable. One staff member said it was particularly good that there were youth in the villages who had been trained to be local journalists who report local development initiatives in the newspapers as this encouraged CU to stay on their toes and make sure theirs was a project that was written about in a good light (Participant B, 09/05/2014).

Efforts of accountability were shown in CU's approach of beneficiary participation from the design stages of the project (although not initially, since proposal approval from Irish Aid was needed first), to the empowerment-based programmes such as the various CBOs where beneficiaries held positions of authority. This is similar to Knight's (2012) World Vision case study, where it was found that projects had no real or meaningful beneficiary input at project design stages until funding from the donors was actually granted. What it means is that while local people have an input, final approval rests elsewhere, with donors, and NGOs have to undertake a balancing act between the two. Thus, to understand NGOs "from within" (Helliker, 2009: 105-106), it is important to understand the competing imperatives they face.

With regard to accountability to their donors, CU staff responded that they were accountable to them but only to a certain extent. Inasmuch as they had to make sure they implemented projects that were in line with Irish Aid objectives so that they were seen to be putting the money to good use and satisfying the donor, the projects were ultimately for the beneficiaries and targeted the impact on their lives (Participant A, 22/05/2014). To support this claim, the staff member also argued that that the LDSP was not only contributing to Irish Aid's CSP but also to the GoM's District Implementation Plan and the Socio-Economic Profile (Participant A, 22/05/2014). This is a slightly different opinion to the way NGOs are portrayed in the literature where NGOs are seen as completely donor-driven and shaping their projects without beneficiary input but with donor interests only in mind.

With regard to accountability to the government, CU made use of existing decentralised state structures meaning they did not impose them on government, and undermine government systems in the process. Although one might argue that donation of vehicles after phasing out a project constitutes undermining the state, it can also be considered as a way that equal partners in development help one another. CU staff and government extension workers appeared to have a good working relationship (except when tensions arose over the issues of allowances for government employees). This good relationship improves the ability and capacity of local government to manage and sustain the developmental activities post LDSP-phase out. CU also had in place structures that would contribute to policy making.

> CU not only has a future role in Malawi's development, but it also has a significant current one. As we are implementing, we sometimes come up with

> some solutions that can be implemented at national level after we interact with policy makers here at the local levels where we have been assisting. These can maybe advocate change in some national policies. We have a unit that is in charge of that in CU Malawi Office. So whatever can come from the LDSP, we share it with them and if it is an issue of taking it to policy makers, we have the coordinated structures within our organisation that can do that (Participant A, 22/05/2014).

With regard to its relationship with CU, Irish Aid stated that they were ultimately accountable to the Irish government and so the choice to fund CU was made based on the fact that CU's LDSP worked at the local level, meaning that some of the lessons learned could also be applied at national level. This would inform Irish Aid's engagement at national level on different policies. This is one of the main criteria for choosing an organisation to fund as well as its alignment with the objectives of Irish Aid's CSP and its reputation and past programmes (Participant E, 28/05/2014). Irish Aid also reflected a good working relationship with CU, which allowed for the flexibility in adherence to the original proposal plans when approached by CU with concerns about strategies that seemed to not work well and needed different directions.

6.9. Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the findings of the research, including the various relationships involved and the policies, methods and activities undertaken by the LDSP. It has shown how participatory development was put into action and how the responses to the people's requests that were made prior to development of the project were addressed. The methodologies implemented by CU resulted in either favourable or not so favourable results (as was the case with the unsuccessful pass-on scheme for livestock). What emerged the most from this chapter however, was how the food production, health, nutrition and income-generation statuses of the community, which were primary concerns for beneficiaries, showed significant signs of improvement as a result of the project.

Also of significant note is how discrepancies, although few, affected the effectiveness of the project activities. The issue of an erratic number of training programmes in the communities, apathy of government extension workers to conduct them due to disputes over lack of allowances, lack of training in how to keep livestock, as well as incidences where beneficiaries needed to be coaxed to follow through with an activity partially negatively affected some result areas. The following chapter provides overall conclusions that were obtained from the research.

Chapter 7:

Conclusions

7.1. Overview

The overall analysis of the study shows that the general consensus from all the interviewees of the study was that this component of the LDSP had contributed to the betterment of beneficiaries' livelihoods due to the various combinations of livelihood assets in relation to the vulnerability context of climate change. Particularly commendable was the fact that CU was the only organisation to ever have implemented a full-fledged local development project in this area so distant from district facilities such as hospitals according to both project staff and beneficiaries.

Although CU rose to the occasion as the main actor of service delivery in Chafumbwa in the context of state failures, it did so in cooperation with state structures and the involvement of state employees – not in isolation from or in competition with the state. As was revealed in the literature (Work, 2002 and Chinsinga, 2008), the results of decentralisation contributed to increased resourcefulness and capacity in the implementation of the LDSP. Factors such as the involvement of government extension workers trained by CU to conduct community training sessions, and the existence of ADCs and VDCs where beneficiaries remained in control through electoral processes ensured representation, government service delivery and government accountability. These structures represent the PIPs element of the SLF and although ideally, they should expand up to top-level policy-making participation from inputs at the local level, this remains a challenge and has yet to be fully realised in Malawi's decentralisation execution.

CU's contributions to policy-making, and its planning, were also made with close attention to issues and points of concern raised by prospective programme beneficiaries in project site areas. This also confirms CU's claim of the use of the SL Framework, as poverty indicators were defined by individuals of the communities themselves prior to implementation. It also confirms the Participatory Development element in the project whereby beneficiaries had a say in processes that would affect them at the end of the day. There is further evidence of CU's

application of SLF in the development of capital bases that were established by the LDSP in the beneficiary communities:

- Human capital in the form of the skills and knowledge (basic farming and health practices for example) and health gained by beneficiaries as a result of LDSP activities.

- Social capital in the form of the VDCs, VSL groups and other CBOs put in place where social relationships and informal networks developed.

- Natural capital in the form of the various natural resources that beneficiaries began to make use of that they did not used to before (examples include farming in the land and eating the produce from it such as fruits, groundnuts, sweet potatoes, and *chidede* growing in the wild).

- Physical capital in the form of the boreholes, local HBC facilities equipped with medicines, bicycles for transport, a CBCC building and proper slab toilets.

- Financial and economic capital in the form of loans obtained from VSL group loans for starting small businesses, as well as trade and income generated from selling excess farmed produce.

- Political capital in the form of the democratic voting processes that take place when electing VDC and ADC leaders, as well as the decision-making processes where beneficiaries identified their developmental concerns.

The LDSP had a holistic approach, which meant that there were many areas of focus in various sectors. The components examined in depth in this study were but a part of a range of impact and result areas. The component of the LDSP studied was viewed as appropriate to the needs of the beneficiaries, who stressed that the project made a great improvement and difference in their livelihoods. CU's participatory style, capacity-building at village level and in local government structures, and project implementation methods and practices, are commendable. In general, CU's LDSP bears out the "optimistic", rather than the "pessimistic", view of the developmental role of NGOs, including INGOs.

At the end of the day, the role of international NGOs as agents of development needs to be analysed and examined within their individual and unique contexts. In the case of CU in Chafumbwa, CU manoeuvred its way through competing imperatives, in such a way that, if at times compromised, also ensured the organisation's ability to stay true to its own values and strategies as well as to honour its obligations to the donor. Although CU was able to select project sites and design the LDSP project with villagers, the final design still had to incorporate donor interests ultimately, which are the interests of the donor government that sponsors Irish Aid. This was where the contradictory *glocal* relations discussed in the theoretical framework came into play: as an INGO, CU practices were still influenced by an outside entity that controlled funding. The contradictory element could also be seen in the different stances that the country (Malawi), the donor (Irish Aid) the implementing organisation (CU) and the beneficiaries may have had in their notions of what would be best for development. CU tried to balance this out by involving beneficiaries and government policies however, and CU staff also pointed out that unlike with other donors, Irish Aid actually allowed for changes to be made that were different from original plans, and that overall decisions on patterns of spending were left to CU. This feat expands on the literature that limits donor-NGO relations as being inflexible, and was proven to work in the results chapter of the research.

7.2. Noted Shortcomings and Recommendations

As in all situations, there are areas that can be improved. It can be argued that the LDSP was perhaps too broad in its mandate. As compared to other NGOs with a specific and narrower area (or areas) of expertise, CU might wish to focus on fewer areas, to build excellence in those areas rather than be subject to the pressures of having to deliver successes in a wide range of different areas of development.

There is also a problem of continuity in the project that needs to be addressed. This problem is a common one for NGO development projects. While many beneficiaries said they would be able to continue LDSP activities even after CU withdraws and the project phases out, many also said they did not have full training in the different impact areas. In some impact areas, only one training session was held and attended by one or two individuals, and CU itself

complained of apathy in larger training meetings. Such outcomes may not be enough to make a significant impact on, and change in livelihoods. In others, CU limited the number of participants, but several of those were selected as trainers in this way, and were expected to teach the rest of the villagers, expressed a lack of confidence in their ability to do so. More training sessions need be put in place, perhaps after quarterly meetings so that issues raised during those meetings could be addressed in the next training session. Training should remain open to everyone for all impact areas.

Inconsistency on the issue of allowances for volunteers also needed to be addressed. A mid-term review of the LDSP by Bota *et al* (2012) stated that allowances were given to volunteers yet, in the villages visited for this study, volunteers said they never received any allowances at all and expressed a wish that they did. Certain CU staff interviewed also stated that allowances were never given because the LDSP was designed to be in line with government policies which stated that volunteers should not be given allowances, otherwise they would not be motivated to carry out development of their own communities without payment. This is an issue of strategy that needs to be revised and one practice adopted for the purposes of consistency and fair measurement of project success. The view that no allowances can be paid seems a bit unreasonable, given the amount of time that volunteers are expected to contribute -- an amount of time that could affect their *own* livelihoods.

It is therefore possible that the LDSP did not realise its full potential due to the issue of insufficient training; beneficiaries conveyed a sense of excitement over LDSP practices policies, but were dismayed by the limited opportunities for training, requesting a longer-term LDSP project and/or frequent refresher training sessions. Such measures would potentially greatly increase post-project continuity and sustainability. For example, the training problems also affected the operations of the costly animal pass-on schemes. According to an internal report by Mpezeni (2014), various households owned a diverse range of animals, but according to beneficiary interviews in the villages visited in this study, beneficiaries were given animals after a training session on their upkeep that only lasted a week. This is surely not enough time to fully and adequately master the complications involved with keeping new livestock and deal with issues of animal health, reproduction and so forth – all of which are essential if any “passing on” can be done.

Concerning the issue of contribution apathy and unevenness in the PD Hearth programme carried out in CBCCs, it might be useful to consider putting in place a rotation system for participating members so that people can plan ahead and know when it is their turn to bring something to the group. As mentioned by CU staff, not every member has something to contribute every time, and this might be entirely due to the fact that they really do not have anything in their households. However, there is also the possibility that there was simply an issue of poor planning and reluctance, since it was also highlighted by CU staff that sometimes mothers were just not willing to bring food to feed other people's children. If there was a system in place that required a certain level participation as a condition of membership as well as enabling a rotation of contributions, these issues could perhaps be tackled.

Regarding the number of households taken care of by CBDAs, the number was found to be too large. CBDAs expressed the difficulty of being able to travel to and visit all the households to which they were assigned, sometimes only two servicing very large areas. There should therefore be a reasonable increase in the number of CBDAs per designated area, that they can perform their duties more efficiently and not be demotivated enough to quit. It is recommended that this be taken into consideration when designing a project of a similar nature so that there is an increased capacity and effective use of this element of village level structures.

7.3. Conclusion

CU, through the LDSP, can be said to have a carried out a very successful developmental project, aimed at improving rural community living standards and not purposefully perpetuating them as insinuated by critics in the literature. Useful frameworks and structures were employed and taken advantage of to provide a holistic local development poverty alleviation project to a most remote area in dire need of service delivery efforts. The project did not run longer than the intended period of time and there were signs of resilience and continuation of project practices post-implementation that were indicated by beneficiaries during conduction of fieldwork. This is the most important feat of a developmental project as it ensures that the first step at local level has been taken care of and the next phases in development practice can focus on the district, and later national, levels to ensure country-wide successful and sustainable development for all.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE (CONCERN UNIVERSAL LDSP STAFF)

1. What is your name?
2. When did you join Concern Universal (CU)?
3. Can you tell me a bit more about yourself?
    a. Checklist: make sure to get age, background in terms of education, nationality, length of time in NGO sector, and in development sector
    b. Checklist: jobs before CU
    c. Follow up: Why did you join this line of work?
4. What is your current position in the organisation?
    a. Can you briefly describe what this job involves?
5. What other positions, if any, have you held at CU before this one?

The Local Development Support Program (LDSP)

6. When did CU's Local Development Support Program (LDSP) start?
    a. Does this programme run in other countries besides this one?
    b. If so, when did it start in these other countries?
7. Briefly describe your understanding of what the LDSP
    a. Aims to achieve
    b. Who its intended beneficiaries are
    c. Administration: how does it actually get run?
    d. Follow up: what are the methods it uses to achieve its goals?
    e. What, if anything, makes this different to other development or NGO programmes?
8. How much of the design and implementation of the LDSP was contributed by:
    a) CU itself?
    b) The donors or funders?
    c) The intended beneficiaries?
9. What, if any, was your own involvement in the proposal and implementation of the LDSP?
10. What is the justification for choosing the area in Dedza for the LDSP?
11. What are the main sources of funding for the LDSP? (names of main donors or funders)

12. Does CU have other means to support the programme?
13. What would happen to the programme if the funding were to be reduced or withdrawn?
14. In your view, has the LDSP achieved its objectives so far? Or not?
15. Can you explain why you have answered in this way?
16. What, in your view, led to these achievements (and/or difficulties)?
17. Are there any other challenges that the LDSP faces that you would like to mention?

Health, Nutrition and Food Security (HNFS) Component of the LDSP in Chafumbwa, Dedza

18. Can you explain, to me as a layperson, the role of access to food and nutrition for successful development and the reduction of poverty?
19. What was the food and nutrition security situation in Dedza at the start of this programme?
20. What is the current food and nutrition security situation in Dedza?
21. How many people or households were identified as possible beneficiaries of this programme?
    a. How were they identified?
22. Earlier you provided a general evaluation of the outcomes of the LDSP. I'd like to narrow things down a bit here: in your view, has the HNFS component of the LDSP achieved its objectives or not? Please leave aside other elements of the LDSP here.
23. What, in your view, led to these achievements (and/or difficulties)?
24. So, just so that I am clear: what have been its successes for the economic and social welfare of its beneficiaries in your opinion?
25. So, would you say the HNFS component has contributed to poverty alleviation and development? Or not?
26. Why do you say this?
27. And what have been the limitations?
28. What, in your view, led to these achievements (and/or limitations)?
29. What could have been done differently? And perhaps better?
30. In your view, is the HNFS component financially sustainable?
31. What OTHER challenges has CU faced in the implementation of the HNFS component of the LDSP and how have they been tackled?
32. It is sometimes argued by critics that aid makes people dependent on aid providers. Do you agree?

33. And to be more specific, do you think that aid dependency is possible in the CU LSDP programme?

Performance of CU and other organisations in tackling issues of food insecurity

34. One of the areas that interests me, is comparing different approaches to development. Are there any other organisations, working in Dedza, that implement programmes similar to those of CU? These could be governmental, nongovernmental, private, public, faith-based, or others.
    a. How would you compare CU's HNFS component of the LDSP to the similar endeavours of other organisations in terms of
        i. Outcomes
        ii. Methods
        iii. Impacts
        iv. Beneficiaries
    b. If you can be so blunt, do you consider CU's outcomes to been more successful than those of government and other organisations' activities?
35. Are there organisations, working in Dedza, that implement programmes DIFFERENT to those of CU?
    a. Follow-up: if so, different how?
36. Does CU have any relationships with, form part of a network with or work together in some capacity with any of these other organisations? Regardless of whether similar or different?
37. How do you see CU's future role in tackling Malawi's development issues?
38. How do you think CU can improve its current activities and operations?
39. In your opinion, to whom is CU accountable to at the end of the day?
40. Is there anything else that you would like to add to this discussion?

APPENDIX 2: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE (BENEFICIARIES)

1. What is your name?
2. Can you tell me a bit more about yourself?
    a. Checklist: make sure to get age, background in terms of education, nationality, job, role and status in village, family conditions
    b. Follow up: what do you see as some of the problems that the people of the village face?
3. When did Concern Universal (CU) start implementing projects in this village?
4. What projects have been implemented so far?
5. Do you know what the aims of the LDSP are?
6. Did your village contact CU or did CU approach the village?
    a. Checklist: if village contacted CU, how was this decided, by who, and who was given job of contacting CU?
    b. Checklist: if CU contacted village, who did they contact, and how was the decision made (in the village) to get involved with the CU project?
7. Were you involved in planning the projects?
    a. Check: were you consulted by CU to find out what the problems in this village were prior to them starting the project?
    b. Check: if you had input, then what EXACTLY was your input or participation in the LDSP? Any role in
        i. design stages
        ii. implementation
        iii. administration
        iv. changing programme once implementation began?
8. In your view, has the LDSP addressed issues that have been of high concern in the village?
9. In your view, have there been any problems with the actions of the CU in the village?
10. In your view, has the LDSP had positive effects on any of the following (please explain your answer):
    a. Your livelihood?
    b. Living conditions in the village

c. Relations in the village, between the village people?

11. Are you aware of where the funding for the LDSP comes from?
12. To whom in your view, are the programmes by INGOs like CU accountable?
13. To whom in your view, are INGOs like CU accountable?

Health, Nutrition and Food Security (HNFS) Component of the LDSP

14. Can you tell me about the situation of food and health in this area before the CU's LDSP started?
    a. Checklist: did people lack food? Did people lack good nutritious food? Did people eat enough every day? Did people worry about a lack of food every day? Did people have access to adequate healthcare? Did people have healthcare concerns?
15. What exactly has the CU's LDSP programme put in place?
    a. Checklist: what exactly has changed in terms of resources and practices?
16. Has the CU LDSP changed the situation? If so, in what ways?
    a. checklist: less or more hunger, less or more quality food, less or more worry
17. Is the situation worse or better, regarding food and health, since CU's programme? Explain your answer.
18. What other effects has CU's programme had on the village?
    a. Checklist: jobs, contacts, skills, relations between people, impact on culture and village "life".
19. Do you feel that there are things that CU could improve on that would enable you to better your livelihoods?
20. If CU were to withdraw their support in this village, what would be the effects, if any? Explain your answer.
21. Overall, do you feel that the HNFS component has improved the poverty situation in your village and contributed to better lives? Explain your answer.
22. Does the HNFS address the major problems facing the village? Or are there other problems that need more attention?
23. Have you faced any problems with the implementation of the HNFS component of the LDSP?
    a. If so, how have you dealt with them?

b. If so, how could such problems be avoided in future?

24. What changes, if any, do you think would improve programmes like the HNFS?
25. What changes, if any, would you like to see in the way that CU operates?
26. Have you had experience with other INGOs, besides CU? Are they different or similar in how they do things? Explain your answer.
27. How is the work of CU similar to or different from governmental interventions?
    a. Which have you found more effective? Explain your answer.
28. Is there anything else you would you like to add that you feel is relevant?

APPENDIX 3: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE (DONOR)

1. What is your name?
2. When did you start working at Irish Aid?
3. Can you tell me a bit more about yourself?
    a. I would like to know your age, nationality, educational qualifications and length of time spent in the development sector.
    b. What jobs did you have before you started working at Irish Aid?
    c. Why did you decide to work in the development sector and at Irish Aid in particular?
4. What is your current position in the organisation?
    a. What does this job entail/involve?
5. What other positions have you held at Irish Aid before this one?

Information about Donor

6. What kind of organisation is Irish Aid and what kind of work do you do?
7. How long has Irish Aid been in Malawi?
8. What kind of organisations in does Irish Aid fund?
    a. What are the criteria for selecting these organisations?
9. In your view, what are Malawi's developmental issues?
10. Has Irish Aid been able to achieve its aims and visions for Malawi's developmental issues due to working with these organisations?

Relationship with Concern Universal

11. Briefly describe your understanding of what Concern Universal (CU) as an organisation aims to achieve.
12. How long has Irish Aid been working with CU?
    a. Does this relationship exist in other countries?
    b. If so, when did it start in these other countries?
13. What was the reason behind the start of this relationship?
14. During this time, how has Irish Aid chosen the types of projects carried out by CU that you wish to fund?
    a. What are the reasons behind selecting these particular projects?

15. Have your collaborations with CU in Malawi been successful over the years? How so/not so?
16. Have there been any challenges in your relationship with the organisation CU and if so, how have you managed them?
17. In your opinion, do you feel that CU has been a beneficial factor in the development of the communities that they implement projects in?
18. Based on CU's background, track record and reputation, how do you see CU faring in the future with regard to Malawi's development issues?

The Local Development Support Program and its Health, Nutrition and Food Security Component

19. When did CU's Local Development Support Program (LDSP) start?
20. Briefly describe your understanding of what the LDSP
    a. Aims to achieve
    b. Who its intended beneficiaries are
    c. Administration: how does it actually get run?
    d. Follow up: what are the methods it uses to achieve its goals?
    e. What, if anything, makes this different to other development or NGO programmes?
21. What was Irish Aid's contribution, if any, to the design and implementation of the LDSP?
22. What were the main reasons for choosing to fund the LDSP?
23. What was the justification for choosing Chafumbwa in Dedza for the LDSP?
24. Have there been any factors, favourable and/or unfavourable with regard to the performance of INGOs such as CU that have influenced or affected your decisions with regard to funding?
25. Are you given feedback on the progress of the LDSP?
    a. Is there any attendance by a representative of your organisation to monitor progress?
26. In your opinion, has the Health, Nutrition and Food Security component of the LDSP achieved or not achieved its objectives so far?
    a. Can you explain why you have answered in this way?
27. Has this component had any positive or negative effects on the economic and social welfare of its beneficiaries in your opinion?
28. How appropriate and/or sustainable has the implementation of the LDSP been in your opinion?

29. In your opinion, how important is access to food and nutrition for successful development and the reduction of poverty?
30. In your opinion, do people tend to become dependent on donors and INGOs such as CU and projects like this?
31. During its running, have there been any areas that Irish Aid feels need improvement in the LDSP?
32. Have there been any areas of the LDSP that Irish Aid has seen to be commendable?
33. As a donor, does Irish Aid view the LDSP as a project designed to ensure resilience in the communities if, say, your organisation were to discontinue supporting CU?
34. As a donor, who are you accountable to at the end of the day?
35. Is there anything else you would like to add to this discussion?

APPENDIX 4: INTERVIEW GUIDELINE (LOCAL GOVERNMENT)

1. What is your name?
2. When did you start working for the local government?
   a. What is your current position?
   b. What other positions have you held in local government before this one?
3. In your opinion, who is the local government accountable to?

Working Relationship and Partnership with International NGOs.

4. When did the local government in this area start partnerships with international NGOs (INGOs)?
5. What were the reasons for starting these relationships?
6. How successful have projects that have been implemented by INGOs been?
7. Have there been any difficulties and/or challenges experienced by local government when working with INGOs?
8. What kind of outcomes have been experienced by local government when working with INGOs?

Relationship between Concern Universal and Local Government

9. How long has the local government had a working relationship with CU?
10. How successful or unsuccessful have projects that local government has worked on with CU been?
11. Has this partnership been more beneficial to communities than if you were to attend to service delivery in these areas without the help of such a partnership?
12. What have been the positive and negative effects in the communities where CU implements projects?
13. Would you be able to carry out similar initiatives such as those carried out by CU without their assistance?
    a. Why is this so?
14. Do you feel that organisations such as CU have contributed to alleviating poverty and enhancing development in these communities?

a. How so/not so?

15. Based on CU's background, track record and reputation, how do you see CU faring in the future with regard to Malawi's development issues?

Local Government and the Health, Nutrition and Food Security component of the Local Development Support Program

16. Was local government a part of the formation and implementation of the LDSP?
    a. How did the process of implementing the LDSP occur?
17. During its running, have there been any areas you feel need improvement in the LDSP?
18. Have there been any areas of the LDSP that have been commendable?
19. What has the situation in Dedza been like with regard to health, nutrition and food security in the past?
    a. What is the situation like now?
20. How much of the area has been affected by issues of inadequate healthcare practices and food insecurity both in the past and in the present?
21. How much of this component has played a part in the current health, food and nutrition security state of affairs in this area?
22. Did local government take any part in this programme from its design stages up to its implementation?
23. In your opinion, how important is access to food and nutrition for successful development and the reduction of poverty?
24. If CU were to discontinue projects in the area or when this particular one finishes would local government be able to continue to provide these services to the people?

APPENDIX 5: MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Memorandum of Understanding

Between

Concern Universal Malawi

And

Khadija Sungeni Mussa

Master of Social Science Student (Development Studies)

Rhodes University, South Africa

Background.

Ms. Khadija Sungeni Mussa, a Master's student studying in South Africa has requested Concern Universal Malawi to provide non-financial support to her during her field work element of her studies. This MoU outlines the objectives of the study and respective expectations of both parties, this is a non-legally binding agreement.

Overview.

Concern Universal with funding from Irish Aid is implementing the Local Development Support Programme (LDSP) in T/A Kachere, Dedza and T/A Makwangwala in Ntcheu District. The LDSP aims to achieve the following Goal and Objectives:

Goal: The Goal of the Programme is to contribute to poverty and vulnerability reduction through local development.

Objectives: The objectives of the Programme are: (A) Enhanced capacity of local government to plan and provide effective services in Dedza and Ntcheu districts; and (B) Improved food and nutrition security, health, income and access to services to 32,000 households in Chafumbwa Extension Planning Area (EPA) of Traditional Authority (T/A) Kachere in Dedza and T/A Makwangwala in Ntcheu.

The programme will achieve the Goal and Objectives by focusing on, local government, food and nutrition security, agribusiness, health, HIV and AIDS, water and sanitation, disaster risk

reduction, malaria, family planning and reproductive health, cross cutting issues (gender, HIV and AIDS, environmental management, rights and participation and capacity building).

Rationale for the research.

The main goal of the study is to investigate the relationship between the work of the INGO Concern Universal (CU), poverty alleviation and sustainable livelihoods in Malawian communities, with specific reference to CU's nutrition and food security component of the Local Development Support Programme (LDSP) project in Chafumbwa, Dedza District. Following from the first goal, the secondary goals include:

f) To examine the effectiveness of the nutrition and food security component of the LDSP project undertaken by CU in Chafumbwa;
g) To obtain an overview of how, if at all, the people in Chafumbwa find international NGOs (INGOs) as contributors to the betterment of their livelihoods;
h) To examine the autonomous state (if any) of the INGO and;
i) To identify the income and expenditure patterns of the INGO, and the role of its funders (if any) in these patterns;
j) To consider whether the work of CU confirms "optimistic" or "pessimistic" assessments of the role of philanthropic NGOs and INGOs in "development."

Agreement.

Concern Universal agrees to provide Ms. Khadija Sungeni Mussa with:

- A desk and a chair in a shared work space in the CU Dedza office,
- Access to any non-confidential records, work plans, reports, evaluations, other documents etc. as requested,
- Freedom to interview and discuss our projects with all CU staff,
- Transport to and from project sites if a vehicle is going and a seat is available,
- Introductions to project stakeholders as agreed with the LDSP manager,
- Any reasonable requests for support as approved by the LDSP manager.

Concern Universal will not cover any costs incurred in undertaking the study e.g. transport (unless provided by Concern Universal), accommodation, food, field allowances, subsistence costs e.g. unless specifically approved by the LDSP manager.

Ms. Khadija Sungeni Mussa agrees to provide Concern Universal with:

- Regular updates on work and travel plans,
- Regular updates on work progress,
- Inform the LDSP manager of any issues arising from her primary and secondary research that may have a positive or negative impact on Concern Universal,
- A copy of the final complete report,
- A bespoke 20-25 page report with photographs focusing on the effectiveness of the nutrition and food security component of the LDSP project undertaken by CU in Chafumbwa, as negotiated with the LDSP manager and the PIU manager,
- Any reasonable requests for information or reports made by the LDSP manager.

Ms. Khadija Sungeni Mussa agrees to abide by the rules and standards of behaviour expected of Concern Universal staff and to conduct herself in a manner befitting a representative of Concern Universal both within and outside of normal working hours. This MoU can be terminated at any time by either party or by mutual agreement.