

**A GENDER ASSESSMENT OF THE MPS CONSTITUENCY SERVICE AND
ITS INFLUENCE ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

MA (DEVELOPMENT STUDIES) THESIS

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UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

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MA (DEVELOPMENT STUDIES) THESIS

By

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DECLARATION

I, the undersigned, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and has not been submitted to any other institution for similar purposes. Where other people's work has been used, acknowledgements have been made.

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CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

The undersigned certify that this thesis represents the student's own work and effort and has been submitted with our approval.

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DEDICATION

I would like to dedicate this piece of work to my parents, Mr. and Mrs. Chimutu, for their financial support and encouragement in pursuing this degree. It hasn't been an easy road but it would not be possible without you. Thank you.

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ABSTRACT

This study assessed the influence of constituency service of Members of Parliament (MPs) on community development in the Blantyre rural east and Phalombe south constituencies. The study was informed by the observation that studies on constituency service have mainly focussed on the influence of community service on re-election into office. According to the knowledge of this study, there have been few studies conducted on the influence constituency service of male MPs compared to female MPs may have on community development in their respective constituencies. The study sought to further explore the influence MPs have had on community development through constituency service. While the literature has focussed on both substantive representation and constituency service, there is a gap in research in Malawi on constituency service, especially in relation to MP's performance in community development. The study was guided by the Gender and Development approach, which states that women's unequal access to legal, social, political, and economic institutions causes women's oppression and is remedied by advocating for women's equal participation in public spheres such as education, employment, and politics (Jones & Budig, 2008) as this has a big impact on development. Therefore, this allows people to assess women MPs' influence on community development through constituency service. This study was largely qualitative in its analysis, and the general findings indicated that female MP's have a substantial influence on development in their constituencies as compared to male MPs in the same constituencies.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMNS

ADC	Area Development Committee
CD	Community Development
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
CS	Constituency Service
DDF	District Development Fund
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GAD	Gender and Development
IDI	In-depth Interview
IPU	International Parliamentary Union
KII	Key Informant Interviews
LDF	Local Development Fund
MP	Member of Parliament
NGO	Non-governmental organisation
T/A	Traditional Authority
UK	United Kingdom
UN	United Nations
VDC	Village Development Committee
WID	Women in Development

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

In established democracies, the roles of MPs are associated with executive oversight, scrutiny of legislation, making of public policy or constituency representation (Lindberg, 2010). Constituency service (CS) has therefore been defined as the provision of goods and services to constituents by the representative as part of the response mechanisms for the needs of constituents in the form of public or private goods (Lindberg, 2010). Constituency service in many countries does not form part of the formal functions of MPs. While such is the case for many countries, including Malawi, constituency service is considered an informal function that is progressively an important role, especially for African countries.

According to Norris (1997), MPs invest in constituency services to gain support from voters or party selectors. While this may be the case, it is also observed that when MPs first enter parliament, they have few formal responsibilities and may find constituency service rewarding. This therefore informed the study to assess whether MP' constituency services influence community development in their constituencies through the provision of public and private goods.

It is also important to define community development and influence in the context of the study. There are many definitions of community development (CD). The most relevant to Malawi is that of the UN, which is 'a process by which the efforts of the people are united with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic, social and cultural

conditions of communities, to integrate these into the life of the nation and to enable them to contribute fully to national progress' (United Nations, 1963:4).

The essential elements in community development are participation by the people to enable them to improve their living conditions and the provision of technical assistance and other services by government agencies in ways that encourage initiative, self-help, and mutual help , and make these more effective (United Nations, 1963). Theoretically, it should be possible to achieve CD without external assistance if all needed resources are available within local communities. The reality, however, is that the paucity of resources forces them to rely heavily on outside support for major projects, a situation that has sometimes led to donors or technical experts playing a dominant role in what is to be an equal partnership (Kishindo, 1994).

Additionally, Mtapaonga and Ursula (2011) studied the effects of the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) on democratic decentralisation reforms in Malawi. The CDF was billed as the centre piece of the good governance agenda. They also assessed the level of constituent participation in the CDF as well as the methods of ensuring accountability of members of parliament in these CDF projects (Mtapaonga, N & Ursula, T 2011). One of the objectives of the Mtapaonga and Ursula (2011) study was to analyse the mechanisms for ensuring accountability of MPs to constituents. Thus, a substantial amount of focus was on ensuring the accountability of the members of parliament in the CDF projects. However, this study did not only focus on projects regarding the constituency development fund but also all projects in which a Member of Parliament is involved that had a direct impact on his/her constituents. This is because the constituency fund is one way in which members of

parliament conduct constituency service aside from other factors that might influence constituency service in their constituency.

Three types of community projects can be identified in Malawi: community-initiated projects not requiring external assistance, community-initiated projects requiring external assistance, and centrally defined projects requiring local community contribution (Kishindo, 1994). It is thus important to assess the influence MPs have in their constituency on community development, as this is also one of the methods by which communities achieve community development through their MPs' constituency service.

Influence in the context of this study has been defined through several indicators, such as the relationship of MPs with community members and their participation in community activities and development projects as well as the presence of the MP in the constituency. These indicators will aid in determining whether an MP has influenced community development in their constituencies.

The study adopts a GAD approach to gender that understands gender as a socially constructed identity, role, and expectation associated with males and females (CEDPA, 1996). As the study sought to assess the influence in which MPs' constituency service has on community development, it is important to understand that the concept of gender helps to guide how females and males think about themselves, how they interact with others, and what positions they occupy in society, as this affects the outcome of any project.

1.2 Problem Statement

According to Barkan (2010), many studies on legislators have concentrated on emphasising the collective and institutional role of legislators rather than the activities of individual legislators. He further alluded that studies in the past tend to have taken a relatively narrow view of the legislative process, which stresses how legislatures contribute to making public policy, rather than looking at other activities and functions their members perform. Beyond the formal functions of an MP in Malawi, constituency service is as entrenched as a major function of an MP, and many scholars understand CS as constituting the fourth among the principle tasks of the legislature (Barkan, 2010).

This is the case in many countries where studies have focussed on those particular roles of legislators, and when constituency service is researched, many studies in Africa and the world have mainly focussed on how constituency service has been used as a tool for MPs to aid in the re-election process for candidates. Little research has been conducted to establish the influence constituency service has had on the development of communities. On the other hand, few scholars such as Andre et al (2014), Bogdanor (1985), and Norton (2002) have also pointed out that academic attention has focused more on legislators' parliamentary face, at the expense of the constituency face (Haughey, 2017). However, over the past four decades, the number of years that US House and Senate incumbents have been able to maintain their advantage has increased dramatically. The level of constituency service provided by members of Congress has increased dramatically in the last decade. This implies that incumbents have an advantage in the upcoming elections (King, 1991).

In addition, most scholars believe that increasing levels of constituency service have given incumbents a dramatic electoral advantage over the last several decades. However, as

plausible as this theory is, only scattered empirical evidence directly supports this relationship. In fact, some empirical research indicates that increases in constituency service actually reduce an incumbent's inherent advantage, a wholly implausible finding that no one really believes (King, 1991).

From the above literature, research has focussed mainly on constituency service use as a tool for members of parliament's aid in re-election. However, studies have not clearly demonstrated the link between constituency service and its influence on community development. In other words, from the literature reviewed, there is scattered empirical evidence that directly shows that constituency service influence community development in constituencies. This study seeks to fill the knowledge gap on the influence that constituency service demonstrates on community development as studies have mainly focussed on the influence of CS on re-election. Additionally this study will fill this knowledge gap by conducting a comparative study on male and female MPs in the same constituency to establish if there is influence on Community development through CS. Therefore, the study will fill the knowledge gap on CS and community development, especially in the context of Malawi. Furthermore, with the nature of high involvement of MPs in the provision of CS in Malawi, this study therefore interrogates the extent to which MPs' constituency services influence community development.

1.2.1 Justification of the study

A number of studies have been conducted on constituency service, many of which have focussed on constituency service and its link to guaranteeing an incumbent's re-election. For example, Patel and Tostensen (2006) claimed that constituency service is closely linked to an incumbent's re-election. Additionally, the Afro barometer (2009) illustrated that African politics has been characterised as scientific, where the relationship is mutually beneficial for both constituents and MPs. While this is the case, there are very few studies that have focussed on how constituency service has influenced community development in the constituencies. As such, this study seeks to fill in the knowledge gap on the influence MPs' constituency service has on community development as there is little research that has been conducted, moreover in the Malawian context. This study is important as it examines the influence constituency service has on community development particularly comparatively with male and female MPs in the same constituencies. This is the research gap that needs to be filled. This study will therefore enlighten more scholars to look into the work that MPs conduct CS more especially in a gender comparative manner in the context of Malawi.

1.3 Purpose of the Study

Main objective

To investigate how members of Parliament's constituency service influence community development

Specific Objectives

- To examine how MP influence community development in their constituency through constituency service

- To assess constituents' perceptions of members of parliament's constituency service

Research Questions

- To what extent have a Member of Parliament influence community development in their constituency?
- What are people's perceptions of having a female Member of Parliament vs. a male MP in terms of constituency service?

1.4 Hypothesis

Parliamentarians' constituency service influences community development in their constituencies.

1.4.1 Null Hypothesis

Parliamentarians' constituency service has no influence on community development in their constituencies

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews empirical literature, which includes studies already conducted to establish the knowledge gaps that this study aims to bridge. The literature provides an overview and discusses samples of studies that explain the implications of constituency service to constituents and legislators.

2.2 Constituency Service

Constituency service has been defined as a non-legislative action of any member of parliament anywhere else, especially in electoral systems that follow the delegate model of representation (Lindberg, 2010). Note that Malawi is one example of such a system in which members of parliament are closely attached to their constituents. Constituency service is defined as the provision of goods and services to constituents by the representative as part of the response mechanisms for the needs of constituents in the form of public or private goods (Lindberg, 2010). Constituency service can be either the provision of club goods that again vary with the nature of the service, or it can be concerned with purely private goods. When legislators were entrusted with some form of local development fund (which was becoming increasingly common in Africa), these funds could be used for the provision of club goods such as roofing sheets for a school, scholarship schemes, community toilets, and electrical poles to facilitate electrification of a village. When an MP was successful in lobbying the

government to allocate resources for development projects in his or her particular constituency, the goods were typically collective goods (Lindberg, 2010).

Constituency service by a member of the legislature involves activities addressing non-policy grievances or looking out for the non-policy interests of citizens in the member's district. Because the actions were not related to government or opposition programmes they were often, though not always, nonpartisan as well. The term used to typically describe private or club goods benefiting an individual or a relatively small group within the district. It is not clear whether the provision of some public goods could also constitute constituency services such as roads or schools (Crisp & Simoneau, 2018). Note that the discussion on constituency service has been said to be demarcated by the relationship between parliamentarians and the citizens they represent. In developing countries such as Malawi, the notion of constituency service is embedded within the broader expectation of MP's as development agents for their constituencies (Newa, 2018). Additionally, another study by Raunio and Ruotsalainen (2018) from Finland explains that the electoral system in Finland provides strong incentives for MPs to cultivate ties with their constituents. The research showed that there is little variation with MPs with regard to the level and types of constituency service; hence, constituency service is a key element of MPs' work and forms an essential part of the re-election strategies. Additionally the supply of public goods as a component of electoral services raises important considerations. The paragraph poses the question of whether constituency services also include public goods like schools and roads. The evaluation of the effect of community development on constituency services is complicated by this ambiguity.

In addition, a survey conducted for the Global Parliamentary Report 2010 indicated that parliamentarians considered law-making to be their most important role (52.3% of respondents), followed by holding government to account (17.2%) and solving constituents' problems (12.5%). However, when they were questioned as to what they thought the citizens regarded as their most important role, their responses changed. Parliamentarians believed that, in the eyes of the citizens, solving citizens' problems was the parliamentarian's most important role (36.4%), followed by law making (20.3%), holding government to account (16.2%), and promoting the interests and economy of their constituency (13.1%) (Inter Parliamentary Union , 2011).

The literature above indicates a notable discrepancy between the roles that MPs believe themselves to be most important and the roles that citizens believe to be most important. Although lawmakers prioritise the enforcement of laws and the government's accountability, citizens prioritise finding solutions to their concerns, in line with lawmakers' opinions. This underscores the possible disparity in comprehension and anticipations between Members of Parliament and their electorate. Moreover, the way that Members of Parliament responded differently when questioned about citizens' perceptions highlights how important public opinion is when it comes to representation. It begs the question of how well-suited an MP is to the demands and expectations of their constituencies if they think that residents should come first when it comes to resolving issues and offering services in their community. When evaluating the efficacy of constituency services in community development, this factor might be very important.

Furthermore, constituency service has been a very significant aspect of MP's role all over the world including Malawi. Consequently, it is imperative for this study to examine how this

role has influenced community development in their respective constituencies. Additionally, in countries such as Finland, Finnish MPs undertake constituency service in interesting ways as parliamentarians make increasing use of social media and the Internet to communicate with the citizens. They are contacted both by individual citizens and organised interests, perform various types of casework and sit in municipal councils, which keeps them connected to local politics (Raunio & Ruotsalainen, 2018). MPs often concentrate on their ‘home turfs’, especially when their parties have more MPs in the electoral district. Quite clearly, constituency service is a key dimension of the job of the Finnish MP (Raunio & Ruotsalainen, 2018). This clearly shows that MPs in many countries consider constituency service as a main function of their work, aside from casework and legislative activities with the additional use of mediums such as social media which may not largely be the part in Malawi as many constituents reside in rural areas, it is still noted that legislators exert efforts in insuring they hear their constituents. Methodological insights are provided by Finnish MPs using the Internet and social media for constituency service. The study might look at how these resources are used to interact with the public, respond to their issues, and even help with community development. Examining these techniques can teach us important things about determining the impact of constituency service.

2.3 Constituency Service in Africa

According to the African Legislatures Project, Barkan et al. (2010) confirm Lindberg’s (2010) conclusion that constituents prefer representation and constituency service from their legislators over actual legislation and oversight. In presidential democracies where MPs are elected in single-member districts using plurality rules, four core duties are typically associated with the role of the MP: legislation, executive oversight, constituency

representation, and constituency service (Lindberg, 2010). In the African context, constituency service is also important for both electoral and social reasons, but research on this topic primarily focuses on national legislators (Luna , 2015). This evidently illustrates that constituents are more interested and invested in representation and constituency service as there is a direct advantage that is shown within their constituencies, in many countries, CS is seen as a factor that determines development of communities and hence why MPs use it as a tool for re-election , scholars in this discourse have focused largely on this as such this allows the study to explore a different aspect of gender and examining the influence on community development.

According to Luna (2015, the role that political parties play in providing services to rural areas in Africa, authors such as Lindberg (2010) and Barkan et al (2010) describe how African MPs are compelled to meet constituent appeals, although this affects their ability to attend to legislative tasks in the capital (Luna , 2015), many studies have focused on legislators meeting constituency needs and how this affects their other tasks which is not surprising that most research literature has focused on this. Constituency service in Africa typically assumes that national legislators are the most important resource for constituency service, and Lindberg (2010) reports that local legislators not their Members of Parliament, will respond to their requests. Luna (2015) argues that often, constituents are more likely to turn to their local politicians for assistance, and scholarly research must distinguish between types of politicians when examining constituency service, the study therefore seeks to understand if there is. Additionally, Barkan et al (2010) in the African MPs project affirm Lindberg's (2010) finding that constituents prefer representation and constituency service from their legislators over actual legislation and oversight.

For rural Ghanaians, members of parliament are not the only avenues through which their political needs are fulfilled. These members can be difficult to contact, and they must allocate their time across competing demands. More importantly, their incentives may not align with the requests that typically arise from constituents. An MP might excel at building a road, but a local assembly member is more likely to fix that road (Luna , 2015). This emphasises that there are other ways to satisfy the political requirements of Ghanaians living in rural areas outside using legislators, and it also shows how complex the answer to these needs is. The difficulty in communicating with the MPs and their need to juggle conflicting demands on their time are just two of the obstacles that must be overcome in order to contact them. The crucial thing to remember is that the incentives provided to members of Parliament might not entirely satisfy the particular demands made by the voters. A local assembly member, as Luna (2015) suggests, is more likely to address the practical aspects of road development than is an MP, who demonstrates exceptional road construction skills. This emphasises the intricate aspects of rural development that should be considered in this study.

In sub-Saharan Africa on the other hand, constituency service has been attributed to constituency development funds, since 2002, nine African countries have created Constituency Development Funds (CDFs), two other countries have created “similar” CDFs to address the need for members of parliament to allocate budgeted funds to the development of the regions they represent(Barkan & Mattes, 2014). The CDF and its approximations exist only in countries electing legislators from the single member districts. It would conclude that the CDF and its approximations were created by African MPs in response to the ongoing and intense constituency pressure to provide private goods (such as jobs, school fees, health insurance) and public goods (such as school, road and health clinic development projects) and thus increase the prospects for re-election(Barkan & Mattes, 2014).

2.4 Constituency Development Fund and the Constituency Service

In many African countries, MPs have established constituency service, and according to Statistics from the Afro barometer (2009), the best account of the rise of CDFs is that while MPs rightly perceive the need to maintain close contact with their constituents, they wrongly assume that constituents look to them for handouts. Instead, African constituents' primary expectations of their MPs are that they regularly visit the district to learn what is on their minds, and then quite literally "re-present" or transmit these views back to the central government via the legislature. In other words, while citizens desire stronger representation of their needs at the centre, MPs respond by delivering services and favours at the periphery (i.e. the district) thinking mistakenly that the CDFs are the answer to what the public wants (Barkan & Mattes, 2014).

CDFs tend to occur in countries where MPs are most likely to perceive intense constituent demands for frequent visits and constituency service, as well as in legislatures with high levels of support for institution-strengthening reforms (Barkan & Mattes, 2014). Moreover, the study examined whether the existence of CDFs reduced MPs' perceived need to travel home and engage in constituency service. A survey was conducted to highlight the need for CS in constituencies. The responses to a series of questions about the frequency of their travel home, the amount of money they spend on travel, and other types of CS highlighted the perceived importance of CS to MPs (Barkan & Mattes, 2014). There constantly seems to be a discrepancy between the MPs' response and the main expectations of the constituents. African constituents want their MPs to visit their communities on a regular basis to learn about local issues, not to give them handouts. They expect their concerns to be effectively conveyed to the national government through legislative channels. MPs mislead the public by believing that by providing services and favours at the district level, frequently through

CDFs, they are meeting expectations (Afro barometer, 2009). Analysing how CDFs function and affect MPs' interactions with constituents may shed light on how well this strategy works to meet community development needs. In order to provide a more complex understanding of the relationship between MPs, CDFs, and community development, the study may take into account the implications of this dynamic for the larger discourse on representation and governance in Malawi as well as the study.

Furthermore, according to the Afro barometer (2009), a question asked to respondents “Which of the following do you think is the most important responsibility of your Member of Parliament:” (1) “listen to constituents and represent their needs,” (2) “deliver jobs or development projects back to the constituency,” (3) “make laws for the good of the country,” or (4) “monitor the president and his government?” The results from the study showed that all *three* countries where 60 % or more of the respondents say that MPs should “listen to constituents” have CDFs, whereas *none* of the countries with very low expectations of representation (those under 30 percent) have them or contemplate getting them (Barkan & Mattes, 2014). This also shows that in countries where CDF is present, there is a strong perception among constituents that MPs are expected to listen to their problems. These results have important implications for the investigation into how Malawian community development is influenced by MPs' constituency service. It implies that the public's view of MPs as representatives who pay attention to and act upon the concerns of their constituents is strongly related to the existence and formation of CDFs. Comprehending and evaluating the degree of correspondence between public expectations which are represented in the survey results and the real performance of CDFs in Malawi can yield important insights for the study.

In Kenya on the other hand in a study to determine the impact of project MP involvement on the completion of CDF-funded projects in the Kangundo constituency, the project was chosen and the project's funding amount was decided by the Member of Parliament. Additionally, the respondents stated that the involvement of the Member of Parliament possesses a negative impact on the project's implementation and that the Member of Parliament chose the member or members of the project management committee. Additionally, it was evident from the responses that family members of the MP were actively involved in the project's operations. These results demonstrated that the MPs' participation had a significant impact on the CDF-funded projects (Oyalo, 2015). The outcomes of the Kenyan study highlight the necessity of investigating the type and degree of MP participation in CDF-funded initiatives in Malawi. This entails evaluating how their choices affect the choice, financing, and execution of projects as well as comprehending the dynamics surrounding the make-up of project management committees and possible family involvement. These revelations can help us gain a more complex understanding of how community development in Malawi is impacted by MP constituency service, especially through CDFs.

2.5 Gender and the Constituency Service

Studies examining the attitudes and behaviour of elected officials reveal significant behavioural differences between male and female representatives (Thomas, 1991). According to a study by Richardson and Freeman (1995), a research on whether a female legislator differs from male legislators in constituency service examined that women receive more casework requests and are twice as likely to believe that they perform more casework than their state colleagues, and are three times more likely to agree that they would perform more casework if additional staff were available, even after controlling for a variety of other explanations. These findings support the sex role socialisation literature that argues that

interpersonal relation are more predominant in the motives of female officeholders than in those of men. It was concluded that women place more emphasis on casework than men. Even after controlling for a variety of alternative explanations for the differences, gender has a significant and substantive impact (Richardson & Freeman, 1995). This therefore brings a more nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in the context of community development would benefit from an investigation into whether female MPs in Malawi prioritise casework more than their male counterparts, perceive a greater caseload, and receive more requests for casework overall. Furthermore, if male and female MPs engage in different kinds of constituency service activities, the results of this investigation may have useful ramifications for improving community development programmes as well.

S Werner (1968) also revealed that most women state legislators came from traditional backgrounds of being homemakers and community volunteers and, as such, were unable to participate in traditional political responsibilities and therefore concentrated a great deal of their attention on constituency work. This also meant that many female legislators chose to specialise in areas of traditional female concern (Hollis , 1989) compared with their male counterparts. On the other hand, a study by Thomas and Welch (1990) largely squared with the expectations of the study regarding activities, performance, and priorities of women and men state legislators. Women's legislative activities became more similar to those of their male counterparts, and although this was noted, the gender differences in priorities when in office were not large. This comparative analysis may contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing the participation of male and female MPs in constituency services and their impact on Malawi's community development. Researchers can examine the role of female MPs in Malawi as they evolve, and it can be understood whether the traditional

background continues to shape the focus on electoral work and whether gender differences in legislative priorities persist or decrease over time.

On the other hand, a study by (O'Neil et al, 2016) shows that mistakes by female politicians in Southern Africa are magnified into incompetence, and expectations of excellence are impossible to fulfil. Is the yardstick different? Womanhood does not in itself lead to failure of one's personality and competence. Former males were sometimes incompetent, but their failures were regarded as normal (O'Neil et al, 2016). This also then highlights that with this study it is important to also investigate and take into account expectations place on female MPs vs male MPs in constituencies as this may also influence the level of community development.

2.6 Perceptions of the MPS Constituency Service

According to a study by Vivyan and Wagner (2015), which illustrates what constituents want from their local MPs, voters like MPs who are independent from the party line and who do not focus exclusively on national policy work but rather on constituency service. MPs' gender and experience matter far less to constituents, and overall constituents want a Parliament made up of strong-minded MPs who see their role as that of a constituency representative. The study highlighted that constituents care a lot more about MP' activities than the party label of the MP. Constituents want MPs who are not obligated to the party line but who demonstrate individuality. MPs who represent constituency preferences are viewed more positively than those who evaluate policies based more on their own personal principles (Vivyan & Wagner, 2015). Interestingly, in this particular study, when it comes to MPs' time spent on constituency and national policy work, the study also shows that voters are more realistic in their expectations. Their preference is for a three-day/two-day split between the

two activities. According to the study above, voters respect members of parliament who do not agree with their party and put the needs of their constituents above their own. This highlights the importance that legislators are involved in local issues and respond to the needs of their constituents. The analysis of the perception of independent members of parliament and the determination of the preference for representative representatives focused on the constituencies, can provide valuable insights. It additionally highlights that voters are more engaged in lawmakers' actions than in their political affiliations. This implies that the deputies are not just following the party line; rather, they want to show that they are unique individuals. To fully comprehend the dynamics of local service, it can be imperative to look into whether party affiliation influences voters' perceptions of Malawian MPs and how they regard MPs who prioritise individual representation over party alignment.

Campbell and Lovenduski (2015) expound that research indicates that most voters value constituency representation and are significantly less impressed by other aspects of MP activities. Research on MPs, based mainly on interviews and other qualitative evidence shows that MPs may not evaluate their roles in the same way that voters do, not least because of career and party pressures. While there is some evidence that MPs' interest in constituency roles has increased since the early 1990s, there is less systematic current evidence available on MP preferences. Campbell and Lovenduski (2015) demonstrates that constituency representation is a feature of parliamentarians' work that voters find valuable and that voters typically prioritise it. It is critical to ascertain whether voters in Malawi have a similar emphasis on electoral representation and whether this preference may influence how they view Members of Parliament and community development.

According to a study conducted in Australia by Studlar and McAllister (1996), MPs' views of political representation have big implications on the types of constituency activities they conduct, and this has great influence on the votes they expect to attract and provide good constituency service. Previous studies by Searing (1991) and Norton & Wood (1990) have conceptualised this in terms of time spent in the constituency and how well voters perceived the MP's constituency role (Studlar & McAllister, 1996). There is additionally, significant relationship between members' commitments to service work and their legislative behaviour. As predicted, MPs who expressed a high priority towards helping individual constituents invested more time in this work (Norris, 1997). This makes reference to earlier research that conceptualises the relationship in terms of voters' perceptions of the electorate's role and the amount of time they spend in it. Studies that examine the practical aspects of MPs' community service, such as the amount of time they spend participating in the community and how they view their roles, may offer a concrete perspective on the efficacy of community development initiatives.

Additionally, a study by Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina (1984) found that constituency service in Britain may be considered of more significance than the present impact on popular vote indicated. Therefore, according to this study, whatever the significance of constituency work for electoral behaviour today, it is considerably greater than it was two decades ago, and perhaps considerably less than it might be two decades hence (Cain, Ferejohn, & Fiorina, 1984). . This clearly demonstrates that over time, there is a possibility of perceptions on constituency changing in voters. It will be interesting to if this applies within this study as well as we shall be comparing different MPs constituency services at different timeframes.

Interviews with Canadian freshman MPs indicate that MPs' constituency service burden can be considerably alleviated by the availability of efficient and knowledgeable staff (Clarke et al., 1978). Constituency service may vary by the nature and volume of the requests made, and these can be expected to vary by type of constituency in ways too subtle to be captured by simple distinctions between urban versus rural constituencies (Clarke et al., 1978). More important, however, will be attempts to integrate analyses of the determinants of constituency service into broader theoretical concerns. Some of these concerns relate to the consequences of constituency service and others to its determinant (Clarke et al., 1978) This highlights the significance of incorporating examination of electoral service determinants into more general theoretical concerns. This means that a more comprehensive theoretical framework is needed to comprehend the factors influencing Members of Parliament's involvement in the electorate, rather than focusing only on specific cases. Examining these theoretical facets within the framework of Malawian research can facilitate a deeper comprehension of the electoral service's dynamics.

A study conducted in Turkey revealed that the most frequent requests of constituents were allocated for the service of their representatives. However, there is also conflicting evidence regarding the priority that Turkish MPs give to constituency service. Their priority with regard to CS is for the purposes of re-election, and members of parliament consider their individual activities as important as their party's popularity. They publicise their activities through the local media and the press. Second, parliamentarians spend the largest part of their time on constituency service at their own disposal. Finally, the demand for and supply of constituency service depend on the different politico-economic structures of the constituency. The smaller the constituency size, the larger will be the demand for and supply of constituency services. This is because in small constituencies, parliamentarians are more

recognisable by their constituents and the weight of personal votes is larger than in large constituencies. The economically less developed constituencies tend to generate more demand than the more developed constituencies, but they do not significantly motivate parliamentarians to provide constituency service (Hazama , 2005). The study focuses on a number of facets of MP involvement in local constituency services. According to the study, Turkish Members of Parliament prioritised electoral service and regarded personal accomplishments as significant as party popularity. Gaining insight into a member of parliament's motivations, the factors propelling their attention towards electoral services, and the effects of different political and economic structures can be very helpful when conducting comparative analyses for this research.

2.7 Constituency Service in Malawi

Constituency service is an important non-legislative activity of any Member of Parliament anywhere else, especially in electoral systems that follow the delegate model of representation as a form of electing their leaders. Malawi is one example of such a system in which members of Parliament are closely attached to constituents.

Public opinion research has shown that most Malawians feel that the greatest responsibility of their MP is to be accessible to the electorate. If you are not active in your constituency, it is impossible to fulfil this responsibility. Making yourself accessible to your constituents is one of the best methods of ensuring that you are re-elected in 1999 (Parliamentary Institution , 1999).

This highlights that constituency service in Malawi concurs with most existing literature, which says that the nature of electoral service is the main strategy for improving legislators'

personal reputation (Crisp and Simoneau, 2018). Crisp and Simoneau concluded that, in their 2018 survey, the provision of electoral services in Ireland was much larger and that Irish parliamentarians were more likely to believe that their prospects for re-election were a function of the electoral services they provided. An interesting aspect of electoral services, which attracts the context of developing countries such as Malawi, is that vulnerability increases the attention to electoral services, and a legislator is seen as a loyal constituent service.

Malawian MPs know, in accordance with standard parliamentary theories and practises exported around the world, including through colonisation that they should play three roles: legislative, government supervision, and representation (the electorate of the parliamentary constituency) (Barkan, 2009). All of them have attended their initial training and training and can happily recite these three functions with a scrupulous smile. Although they are actually members of parliament on paper, the vast majority accept that their official constitutional functions are related to their work at the political centre, in reality they are obliged to be much more concerned about their functions (unofficial) in constituencies, whatever the National Assembly or even the Constitution says (Fisher C.S,2022).

2.8 Theoretical Framework

The theoretical framework that the study is guided by is that of gender and development (GAD). This is a gender approach that stems from the approach known as Women in Development (WID). This term was coined in the early 1970s by the Women's Committee of the Washington DC Chapter of the Society for International Development. This was a network of female development professionals who were influenced by the work on Third

World development undertaken by Ester Boserup and other ‘new’ anthropologists (Boserup 1970; Tinker 1982; & Maguire 1984).

In addition, the term was adopted by the United States Agency for International Development (USAID) in the Women in Development (WID) approach. Their underlying rationale was that women are an untapped resource that can provide an economic contribution to development (Moser, 2003). This approach (GAD) originated in academic criticism starting in the mid-1970s in the United Kingdom (Young , 2002). Based on the concept of gender (the socially acquired ideas of masculinity and femininity) and gender relations (the socially constructed pattern of relations between men and women), they analysed how development reshapes these power relations (Momsen, 2010). More recently, a further shift in approach, principally in academic research, has recognised the limitations of focussing on women in isolation and has drawn attention to the need to instead look at ‘Gender and Development’ (GAD) (Momsen, 2010)

This theory was influenced by socialist thinking and was based on an analytical framework that emphasised gender relations in both the labour force and the reproductive sphere. Development affected men and women differently; therefore, men and women would have a different impact on projects. Both would have to be involved in identifying problems and solutions if the interest of the community as a whole was to be furthered. In this study, this theory was selected to determine if the hypothesis holds with regard to women’s and men’s constituency service while in office and the impact this had on development in Malawi. A study by Richardson and Freeman (1995) on gender differences in constituency service among state legislators showed that one component of legislative activity could be clearly linked theoretically with the literature on sex role socialisation. The legislators who made

constituency service a high priority placed more emphasis on personal relations and helping others. Behavioural scientists have emphasised that these areas significantly differentiate male and female attitudes and behaviours (Richardson & Freeman, 1995).

Much of the interest in studying gender differences among those holding political office was based on descriptions of females in political roles that emphasize why women approach their jobs in a fundamentally different way than men. Kathlene's (1991, 1989) theoretical perspective, which was based on comparing the behaviour of men and women in a variety of contexts, hypothesized that because of differences in socialization and life experiences, females were more concerned with interpersonal relationships and caring, whereas males focused on objectivity. Therefore, this assisted in understanding the extent to which having a female member of parliament had an impact on constituency service, especially in the context of Malawi. This included gender, whether it played a significant role or not.

2.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter presents literature on constituency service, constituency service in Africa, the constituency development fund, empirical literature on legislators and constituency service, and perceptions of MPs' constituency service. The literature has affirmed that constituency service is linked to MPs' roles in their constituents and has shown that there is an influence on community development through CDF funds in constituencies. Therefore, this study sought to determine the influence of constituency service of MPs on community development, as few studies on constituency service have researched this in Malawi.

CHAPTER THREE

METHODOLOGY

This section presents the methodology employed in the study. This section provides a description of the study's research design, sampling method, data collection tools, and analysis.

3.1 Research Approach

The study employed a qualitative approach. Qualitative research is an approach to analyse and understand the meaning given to social or human problems by individuals or groups. Research processes include emerging issues and procedures, data collected in the participant's environment, data analysis from details to general themes, and researcher interpretations of the meaning of the data. The final written report has a flexible structure. Participants in this Study support approaches to research that honour inductive styles, focus on individual meanings, and emphasise the importance of explaining the complexity of situations (Creswell , 2007).

The aim of the study is to investigate the influence of the members of Parliament on the development of communities through electoral services using comparative case study design. The qualitative methodology is suited because it enables the researcher to understand more specifically the meaning given to social and human problems in relation to how members behave in their constituencies.

3.2 Data collection methods

In-depth Interviews

In-depth interviews were conducted using a semi-structured interview guide. These targeted two chiefs in the constituency to obtain a balanced view on how the members of parliament worked with them at that particular level. Two members from the Village Development Committee (VDC) worked closely on development projects that were carried out in their constituency and a civil servant from the district commissioner office worked hand in hand with the constituency representatives. Two religious leaders were also interviewed because they also interacted with the constituents and thus had views on how the constituents felt in terms of how they were represented in parliament. In total, 12 in-depth interviews were conducted for the study. These in-depth interviews helped inform the study as they assist in answering the first objective of examining how male and female MPs influence community development through constituency service as these key informants have interacted directly or indirectly with the said MPs or interacted with them at constituency level or represented constituents and executive meetings.

According to Burgess (1984), in-depth interviews are often described as a form of conversation that is a method of interview as being a conversation with purpose. The study therefore conducted in-depth interviews to explore and seek further information on the constituency service offered by MPs in the two constituencies.

Focus Group Discussion

The researcher conducts ten focus group discussions, five for each constituency, with women, men, and youths from each constituency. Focus group discussions comprise of different genders except the youths (which had been put in one category). This was done to ensure that

gender and age did not influence people's willingness to contribute in the discussions, especially on issues that concerned them as well as their constituency. The focus group discussions comprised six constituency members in each group, thus making 30 participants in each constituency. Typically, focus groups involve around six to eight people who meet for a period of around an hour and a half to two hours. This format can be used for a wide range of population groups and research objectives (Ritchie & Lewis , 2003). The six respondents chosen for each group came from different locations throughout the constituency to establish a clear understanding of the problems that affected the constituents. The focus group discussions are conducted to establish findings on constituents' perceptions of the MPs, which directly answers our second objective of assessing constituents' perceptions of their male and female MPs' constituency service.

3.3 Data collection tools

A number of tools were used in the collection of data for the research. For focus group discussions and in-depth interviews, the instruments used were questionnaires and surveys, which were created and used during the data collection process. Additionally, a voice recorder and key informant interviews were also used during in-depth interviews and focus group discussions.

3.4 Study Design

The study was conducted in the Blantyre rural east and Phalombe south constituencies. These constituencies were purposively chosen because they are the only constituencies in the southern region that currently have female MPs and their predecessors were male MPs. These current MPs were re-elected for their second term. These constituencies have similar characteristics in terms of culture, background, and activities, which therefore provides a good baseline for research.

The study was conducted in two constituencies: Phalombe South Constituency and Blantyre Rural East Constituency. These constituencies were chosen because they were constituencies that were represented by male MPs from 2009 to 2014 and then changed from 2014 to 2019 to a female MP. This allowed provision of a baseline for the analysis to examine the role women played and their male predecessors in their constituencies. In Phalombe South Constituency, from 2014 to 2018, a female MP was elected and ran for office as an independent candidate during the elections. In Blantyre Rural East, they had a male member of parliament from 2009 to 2014, and from 2014 to 2018, they had a female member of parliament from the same political party. This is very important and significant as the study seeks to examine the influence of these MPs. Therefore, with our GAD theoretical framework, it is important to examine both previous and current MPs' work in the constituencies. Additionally, these two constituencies were selected because they were both from the southern region and had similar cultural characteristics that would have had an influence on the MPs and constituents in relation to the study.

The study is a comparative case study using a qualitative approach. This is an approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information (e.g., observations, interviews, audio-visual material, and documents and reports). The investigator then reports a case description and case-based themes (Creswell, 2007). In the qualitative strand, the study used narrative to explore its objectives. The case study was that of the two constituencies, which have female MPs and previously had male MPs, to examine if there was a significant influence in their community on community development due to their constituency service. The study also used indicators to assess the role of MPs in terms of constituency service. These were the performance of case work and

projects that were implemented through the CDF and those that were not. In terms of performance of case work, the study focussed on the case works that were brought to the MP from constituents and how they were handled by the MP. On the projects done by the MP, the study considered the number of projects identified and implemented by the MP. Additionally, time and presence of the MP in the constituency was also considered a big indicator.

The first research question was addressed through focus group discussions and in- depth interviews. This assisted in understanding the extent to which female members of parliament influenced community development through their constituency representation. The second research question was addressed in a qualitative manner through in-depth interviews and focus group discussions to obtain a wider view of the case from the answers.

Table 1: Objectives, data collected, sources, and analysis

OBEJECTIVE	DATA COLLECTED	DATA SOURCE	DATA ANALYSIS
To assess how MPs influence community development through constituency service	- Stay in the constituency - CDF projects conducted by MPs - Non-CDF projects -community engagement	-Constituents -Community leaders, e.g., chiefs, church leaders, and VDC members -MPs -NGOs	Thematic analysis that established recurrent themes
To assess constituents' perceptions of female and male members of parliament constituency service	- Work of an MP if gender plays a role - How constituents view MPs through their actions in Constituencies	- Constituents -Community leaders, e.g., chiefs, church leaders, and VDC members -MPs -NGOs	Thematic analysis that established recurrent themes

3.5 Sampling Technique

According to Torchim (2005), sampling is defined as the process of selecting units (for example people) from a population of interest. Choosing a study sample is an important step in any research project because it is rarely practical, efficient, or ethical to study whole populations (Marshall, 1996). This study used what is known as purposive sampling, which is a sampling tool in which the researcher consciously selects only those respondents who have important and relevant information and experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). This was because the study closely chose community leaders who are part of the constituency and members who had resided in the constituency for about ten years.

3.6 Data Analysis

The data were analysed through thematic analysis. This method is used to identify, analyse, and report patterns within data (Braun and Clarke, 2006). Themes were derived on the basis of the responses of the participants in the focus group discussions (FGDs) and the in-depth interviews, which were translated into themes that were used to analyse the data in accordance with the research questions and objectives.

3.7 Ethical Considerations

A number of ethical issues were considered during this study. The names of the respondents were not revealed, and the participants were not forced to participate if they were not interested. Consent for the interviews was sought before the interview started and participants were asked to sign a consent form agreeing to be part of the study¹. In order to protect and respect participants' privacy, all data collected will be stored in a shared drive that only be used and accessed by the researcher to ensure privacy and security. There will be no collection of

¹ See page 74 for consent form used during data collection on participants

personal information such as their name and place of birth to ensure anonymity. Furthermore, all information collected shall be used for the benefit of the study and no other reason.

3.8 Limitations of the Study

A limitation of this study was that it only focussed on the two constituencies in the southern region due to the scarcity of resources and funds for the study to be conducted. However, the study limitations did not, in any way, affect the reliability of the study. Thus, this limitation was mitigated by relying on random sampling techniques when identifying the villages in which the interviews occurred.

3.9 Chapter Summary

This chapter has presented the method used in the study. In general, the study was qualitative . The study used two districts in the southern region as cases. Since the study was comparative in nature, it chose two constituencies that both lie in the southern region and have similar characteristics in terms of culture and the people's day-to-day lives.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and analyses the findings of this study. The research findings are based on the research objectives that were set out in the proposal and other themes that emerged from the data generated from the study. Therefore, the following sections provide the findings and discussions according to the specific objectives of the study. Thus, each sub-section provides an outline of the themes from various data sources found in the study.

4.2 Examining how MPS Influence Development in their Constituencies

The MP's influence on community development at the constituency level was measured using two facets : projects done through the Constituency Development Fund (CDF), which has been defined as a government financial plan on allocation mechanism that guides specific sector of nationalised budget to constituencies of MPs to fund confined small-scale development scheme such as construction of health clinics, water supply systems and school facilities (Chesang, 2016), and non-CDF projects/casework in the constituency.

The study found that these development projects were considerably influenced by the emergence of the female Member of Parliament as compared to the male MP, which corresponded with the findings of Johnson and Carroll (1978), that women who served prioritised the public's interest when in office. This was illustrated through the FGDs and

IDIs that were conducted in the Phalombe South Constituency. For example, one participant in an FGD mentioned:

“A MP achizimaiwa amabwela mu ndela lathuli, akalewo samabwela ndipo ambilife sitimawudziwa, mwa chitsanzo kunali ma floods nthawi yinayake anabwela ndithu kuzathandiza mene iwo angathele.”

“The current female MP shows up, the old MP never showed up, most of us didn’t know who he was. For example, we had floods, and she came to assist us in any way that she could.”²

Likewise, in another FGD in Phalombe, a community member showed similar opinions on the MPs influence in community development as they illustrated that previously with the male MPs there was little change seen in their constituency but once the MP came, there have been significant changes; hence, they voted for her again:

“Tinali ndi a MP akale amene anali abambo ndipo sitinaoneko chilinchonse chomwe anatipangila, sichimaoneka ndipo chifukwa mudzi wathu uli pa boundary ndi constituency yina , pena zimavuta chifukwa ma MP enawo amakanilana kuti ndife a mbali yinayo , koma ata bwela a mayi wa , anayamba kuthandiza ndithu anthu amu dela linonso , monga apa, amanga misewu ya mudzi komanso njigo , zinthu zoti kale zimavuta.”

“We had an MP previously who was a man but we did not see anything that he did for us in the community, but also because we are on a boundary between two constituencies, the previous MPs from both sides would both deny assisting us as they would say we belong to the other constituency, but since we have had the current MP, people have been assisted for example now we have new roads in the village as well as boreholes which in the past was difficult to have”³

² This was spoken at an FDG by a participant in Phalombe East constituency on the 12th of July 2019

³ This was spoken at an FGD by a participant in Phalombe South constituency on the 12th of July 2019

The findings revealed and illustrated that the citizens perceived an increasing variation with regard to community development, especially when a female MP was involved. This is also considering that in Malawi community development is essentially a rural phenomenon as it has been used by the government as a strategy to improve rural living conditions through social service structure (Kishindo, 1994) and in this case through the MPs constituency service. The studies hypothesis ; *Parliamentarians' constituency service influences community development* in their constituencies has been established in the study as it has been clearly illustrated through findings that there is an influence on community development activities with the involvement of the MPs. It should be noted that in this study a key aspect does come out that gender certainly plays a key role in influence of members of parliaments' constituency service as female members of parliament are seen to be involved more in the development of their constituencies as compared to their previous male counterpart.

The active involvement of female Members of Parliament in community affairs, demonstrated by their attendance during significant occurrences like floods, stands in stark contrast to the comparatively low profile of their male predecessors. The perception held by the community that female members actively support their needs points to a distinct approach to electoral service (Richardson and Freeman, 1995). In addition, the comparison element becomes even more salient when considering the community's experiences with past male MPs. The challenges that were later addressed or improved by the current female MP are highlighted by the lack of noticeable positive changes during the male MP's term in office, which was made worse by issues with the boundaries of the constituencies.

Moreover, within the larger framework of studies concerning Malawi's community development and MPs' influence on constituency service, these comparative results draw

attention to possible gender-based differences in performance even within the same constituency (Welch, 1990). They imply that the MP's gender might actually influence how community development projects turn out. This realisation may have an impact on strategies and recommendations for policies that aim to improve the efficacy of constituency service, highlighting the significance of inclusive and diverse political representation for better community development.

Furthermore, constituents in Phalombe south showed sentiments that giving women a platform to perform in the public sphere for the larger public has crucial benefits to society as a whole, as one respondent mentioned:

If a MP awa nde taona kusitha kwambili, ndizoonadi kuti chifukwa mene nzimayi amakulila , amkhala wachikondi ndipo ofuna kusamalila anthu ake , amakhala ndi khalidwe lapamwamba lofuna kutukula dela lake ndithu.

“Here with this MP we have seen a very big difference. It’s true what they say that because of women’s upbringing, they are very loving and see the need to take care of her people. They have good values of wanting to develop people in the community”⁴

Additionally, the respondents in FGDs and in-depth interviews narrated that there had been significant development in the constituency since the current MP took office in 2014. The MP actively participated in CDF-related projects such as construction of roads and bridges as well as non-CDF-related projects such as buying a community ambulance and nursery school construction projects, which are projects that are eligible for maintenance and rehabilitation under the CDF guidelines from the Malawi Government (Ministry of Local Government and Rural development , 2014). A respondent in an in-depth interview mentions:

⁴ This was spoken at an FGD by a participant in Phalombe South constituency on the 13th of July 2019

“Kuli Misewu ingapo mudela lino lomwe a khonzedwa kuchokera mu CDF, fund yomwe mbuyomu sitima dziwa ngati ikugwilitsidwa ntchito”

“There have been many roads that have now been maintained through the use of the CDF, a fund that in the past we were not sure if was being used at all”⁵

Another respondent in an in-depth interview said:

“Komanso ikakhala kuti ndalama yamu CDF sikwanila kupangila chitukuko china, anthu amatha kusokha munjira yina komanso a MP anthu amatha kupita ku ma bungwe ndikupezako chithandizo china”

“Also when we have a situation where the funds from the CDF are not enough to do a project activity, we as people may also contribute, but our MP may also find ways to involve non-governmental organisations and find some assistance”⁶

The interviews carried out in the Phalombe South constituency shed light on how MPs handle circumstances in which CDF funding is insufficient for a project. The respondents pointed out that in such a situation, the community and the MPs could both contribute, and that the MPs could enlist the help of non-governmental organisations. This is in line with a wider finding by Barkan and Mattes (2014) that MPs are able to address constituent requests for localised services and benefits when they feel that CDFs are the answer to public expectations.

This therefore illustrates that CDF is used as a tool by which MPs influence community development in their constituency. This is similar to what the Community Wealth Parliamentary Association reported: individual constituencies can supplement CDF financing with other revenues. Such revenues would be sourced from appropriations from the sub-

⁵ In-depth interview with a VDC member at Phalombe South Constituency on July 12th 2019

⁶ This was spoken by a key informant in an in-depth interview in Phalombe south constituency 13th July 2019

national state and local governments, external grants, and other non-governmental or grassroots organisations that assist the constituency (Commonwealth Parliamentary Association, 2016).

During the comprehensive interview, participants mentioned that building roads via the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) and working with non-governmental organisations fit within the larger framework of Barkan and Mattes (2014). This is due to historical doubts regarding the CDF's efficacy, although interviews suggest encouraging developments in this area. The Afro barometer (2009) presented the rationale behind the creation of CDFs in African nations, Malawi included. According to a 2014 study by Barkan and Mattes, legislators frequently take note of the strong desire from voters for regular visits and election services. This opinion is supported by study respondents, who also emphasise the CDF's responsibility for road maintenance, which directly affects community members' daily lives.

The study furthermore established that there were many community development projects whose implementation had been influenced by the MP, whose constituents reported that if the female MP was not in office, the projects would not have materialised a project identified was the introduction of a community ambulance that community members are free to use in times of emergency, as highlighted by the respondent:

“Anatipatsa ambulance imene imathandiza anthu pa mavuto , zinali zovuta kale pamene tinalibe ambulanceyi , anthu pano amatha kupeza chithandizo ku chipatala mwachangu.”

“She gave us an ambulance that helps people in times of problems. It was very difficult for the people in the community before we had this ambulance, but now people can get medical attention quickly unlike before”⁷

⁷ This was spoken by a respondent in an FGD in Phalombe south constituency 12th July 2019

These sentiments were supported by other members of the community who highlighted the impact of this ambulance on the community. A respondent in an FGD said,

“Monga Mayi anga anadwala pakati pausiku,, tinali ndimatha kwambili koma tita tumiza uthenga kwa atsogoleri, tinathandizidwa pakuyitana ambulance imene inatitenga kuchipatala anakalandila chithandizo”

“For example, my mother fell sick in the middle of the night, and we were all worried, but we sent word to the chief who managed to have the ambulance come and collect us to rush to the hospital where she received help.”⁸

Another respondent mention;

“Pano zikumatheka kupeza chitandizo nthawi ya dzidzidzi chokafika ku Chikapatala zikavuta zimatheka pena ndi ambulance.”

“Right now it’s possible to get assistance, especially when it’s an emergency. Help to get to the hospital when the situation is bad is sometimes possible with the ambulance.”⁹

This therefore shows that due to the MPs’ influence in bringing services such as the ambulance, there has been significant community development in the constituency. Additionally, it can be noted that this influence has been through projects that have also been funded by the CDF. According to Malawi’s CDF guidelines, these projects should not be projects that are for personal gain to individuals such as funerals, bursaries or personal allowances (Ministry of Local Government and Rural development , 2014), but rather construction of bridges, schools, road construction connecting to the nearest health centre terranes, fixing the borehole and food supplies were also mentioned as part of the projects that the MP had implemented.

⁸ This was spoken by a respondent in an FGD IN Phalombe south constituency 12th July 2019

⁹ Spoken by a respondent in an FGD in Phalombe south constituency on 12th July 2019

The projects conducted in the constituency were categorised as those with constituency development funds, non-CDF, and NGO funded, as listed in the table below:

Table 2: Projects conducted in the Phalombe South Constituency by male and female MPs

GENDER MP	CDF PROJECTS	NON -CDF	NGO
Male (2009-2014)	Road fixing, agriculture	Funeral assistance	Food distribution,
Female (2014-2019)	Road construction, bridges, mountain ridges and terranes, clinic, school CDSS, agriculture	Ambulance, food distribution, funeral assistance, borehole repairs, sports	Nursery, livestock, food supplies, housing at CDSS

This is similar to the findings of the Inter-parliamentary Union, which stated that in the eyes of the citizens, solving the citizen's problems was the most important role of parliamentarians (Inter Parliamentary Union , 2011). As such, community development projects such as building bridges, roads, and boreholes are deemed of much importance to them. It should correspondingly be noted that other constituents interviewed reported non- tangible activities that the MP was involved in, for example;

“Tinali ndi chilala, anabwela kudzafufudza kuti zikukhala bwanji, ndipo anathandiza modzela kumabungwe kuti anthu alandileko chithandizo. Ndife anthu osangalala kwambiri kuti tinasankha kukhala ndi MP wachizimayi amene taona kusintha kwambiri mu dela lathu”

“We had famine, food was scare, and she came here to enquire what was going on, and she did assist with the help of NGOs because people should receive

some assistance. We are very happy people that we accepted the opportunity to have a female MP and have seen a very big difference in our community”¹⁰

As noted for services such as food and transportation to the hospital, the distinct themes that the study noted were; an ambulance, construction of a road, integrity, maternal health, appreciation for women, and providing assistance on problems relating to women. These themes were not tackled by the former MP, who was male. To this viewpoint, Hollis (1989) suggests that, in contrast to their male counterparts, female legislators might decide to focus on issues that are traditionally of concern to women. This idea appears to be supported by the study's themes, especially those that deal with maternal health and helping women with their issues. It suggests that female Members of Parliament might offer a distinct viewpoint and emphasis to their constituency work, tackling subjects that their male counterparts might have missed or neglected. This, therefore, demonstrates that there was significant influence on community development because of the election of the female MP in the constituency. As such, this agrees with our theoretical framework, which acknowledges that women's participation in the public sphere of politics benefits people as a whole. As such, it would be more impactful to allow women to take part in leadership roles as it benefits society (Ackerly, 2001).

The study additionally acknowledged that both female and male constituents were of the view that the current female Member of Parliament had significantly contributed to the development of their constituency through the CDF projects and case work projects that the MP participated in, such as food distribution, construction of mountain ridges and terranes to assist during rainy seasons, and construction of bridges. This is similar to a study by Flammang (1985), Antolini (1984), and Johnson and Carroll (1978), which found that women serving in local government emphasised the public interest (helping the community or

¹⁰ Spoken by a participant in an FGD in Phalombe south constituency on 12th July 2019

pursuing civic goals). However, the study discovered that there appeared to be a disconnection between the MP and the youth of the constituency. From the findings, the youth appeared not to have benefited much from the MPs, in terms of aspects that directly affected them. One respondent from an FGD with youths said:

“Ngakhale a MP anthuwa athandiza dela lathu kwambiri anthu a mudzi, ife achinyamata tikuonabe kuti sanatifikile kwambiri, chitukuko chomwe tinaona atathandiza ndi kupeza funding ndi mabungwe kuti amange school, koma palibenso zina zomwe anatipangira.”

“Despite our MP being very helpful with many people in the community, we youth feel she did not reach out to us as much. The only development we can mention that she assisted was in finding funding for the school, but there isn’t anything else that she has done for us.”¹¹

As stated above, the only project that had been implemented for the youth that the MP, as reported by the Phalombe constituents, was the school. This illustrates that the majority of the community projects that have been implemented mainly benefited the men and women in the constituency, but the youth felt side lined, which has shown that youth lack access to most of the processes through which adults can articulate their concerns. Therefore, as stated in the World Youth Report, they lack the power of large commercial lobbies to wield influence on government and local leaders. The cultural assumption that young people must not challenge their elders or express their views even when their rights are being violated only increases their vulnerability and may lead to dangers of economic exploitation (World Youth Report 2003).

In Blantyre East Constituency, the research used the same facets to determine influence through CDF projects, non-CDF projects, or case work that the MPs had. Below is a table

¹¹ Spoken by a respondent with a Youth Focus Group in Phalombe south constituency on 13th July 2019

that illustrates the projects conducted in the constituency by MPs in the constituency. The table below highlights results from focus group discussions (FGDs) and In depth Interviews (IDIs) It is clear that from the table below, whether its CDF projects or not, the female MP tends to have conducted more projects as compared to the male counterpart. This brings us back to the nuanced understanding of gender dynamics in the context of community development, this illustrates this female MP prioritise casework more than their male counterpart (Richardson & Freeman, 1995). Furthermore the study highlights male and female MPs engage in different kinds of constituency service activities, the results of this investigation shows that female MPs may conduct similar CS work with their male counterparts but will continue to do more CS work, this may have useful ramifications for improving community development programmes.

Table 3: Projects conducted in the Blantyre rural east constituency by Male and Female MPs

GENDER MP	CDF PROJECTS	NON-CDF/private donations	NGO Projects
Male MP (2009-2014)	Road and bridge fixing	Funeral assistance	Food distribution
Female MP (2014 to 2019)	Road construction, bridge construction, mountain ridges and terranes, tree planting, school blocks, water shades/reforestation	Food distribution, moving of food distribution center, borehole fixes, rural electrification programme assisting women groups, funeral assistance	Nursey school, assisting vulnerable girls/boys return to school, food distribution

In Blantyre Rural East Constituency, the research discovered that there were many projects in which the current female MP worked directly with the constituents. These were in two wards: *Chilaweni* and *Mudi*. Outstanding projects in the wards included bridge construction projects where over 10 bridges had been constructed, such as the *Ngumbe*, *Mulombwa*, *Mulombodzi*, and *Ngongoma* bridges. There were others that were still under construction and had been directly influenced by the MP and were in compliance with the CDF guidelines, which state that under the CDF, priority shall be given to short-term and immediate intervention micro projects or programmes whose benefits accrued to communities or groups of individuals rather than just individuals (Ministry of Local Government and Rural development, 2014). For example, a respondent said in an FGD:

“A MP athuwa athandiza kwambiri, kwamagidwa ma bridge ambiri mu ward yathuyi monga bridge yapa Ngumbe ndi Mulombwa ndipo moti pano anthu savutika kwambiri makamaka kukakhala mvula. izizi sizinakatheka bwino kupanda a MP anthuwa chifukwa kale mavuto ama bridge a MP amuzidwa koma palibe zomwe zimachitika.”

“Our MP has helped a lot. There have been many bridges that have been constructed in our ward, for example the *Ngumbe* and *Mulombwa* bridges, and right now people do not have troubles any more, especially when it rains. This would not have worked properly if it wasn't for the MP as such problems have been reported before to previous MPs but not much was done.”¹²

The results in the Blantyre Rural East Constituency, where the sitting female MP actively collaborated with residents on a range of projects, most notably the building of bridges, are consistent with the larger background of Kenya given in Oyalo, (2015). Although the emphasis is on Members of Parliament (MPs) being involved in the implementation of constituency projects in both cases, there are differences in the nature and impact of this

¹² Spoken by a respondent in an FGD on 29th July 2020

involvement. The current MPs direct participation in projects like bridge construction is seen as advantageous and beneficial to the community in the Blantyre Rural East constituency.

Projects are characterised as being directly impacted by Members of Parliament (MPs) and adhering to the Constituency Development Fund's (CDF) guidelines, which prioritise micro-interventions that have immediate, short-term effects on the communities. During the focus group discussion, participants conveyed their appreciation for the deputies' proactive involvement in fulfilling community needs. They specifically mentioned that the deputies' positive outcomes were not as noticeable as those of their predecessors. However, the Kenyan study by Oyalo, (2015) highlights the possible drawbacks of MP involvement in CDF-funded projects.

In Kenya, the MP was heavily involved in choosing the project, deciding how much money it would receive, choosing the members of the Project Management Committee, and even allowing family members to work on the project. There are drawbacks to the MP's degree of direct involvement in the project's implementation. The MP's level of involvement can be used to explain why the two cases' outcomes differed. The MP in Blantyre Rural East is portrayed as actively collaborating with voters on projects to address community needs and exhibit a positive, community-focused commitment. The Kenyan study, on the other hand, suggests that legislators have a more direct and possibly problematic involvement in project decisions and execution.

These findings highlight how crucial it is to look into the type and extent of MPs' involvement in constituency projects. Similar to Blantyre Rural East, proactive, community-focused involvement can yield favourable outcomes; however, as Kenya's study by Oyalo,

(2015) reveals, excessive control and unfavourable MP influence can obstruct the project's successful execution. In order to guarantee that electoral development projects actually address community needs and promote sustainable development, it highlights the necessity of openness, accountability, and community-oriented approaches in project management.

In addition, the study found that road construction was also key in the constituency through the Public Works Program. In this programme community members constructed roads and received payment for their labour from the Constituency Development Fund. The constituents were fully involved in the process, ensuring that the community was aware of the initiatives. This concurs with the study conducted in Rumphi District in Malawi by the Rumphi Civil Society Network (RUSCN) in 2017. It stated that community members had a right to all pieces of information on any projects taking place in their localities. MPs, councillors and members, and technocrats from the District council were required to exercise their constitutional obligations to inform community members on how financial resources had been allocated and used on any CDF project (RUSCN, 2017). This additionally is similar to what Kishindo (1994) states that community development can also have community members actively participate with additional funds from other sources, which, in this case, the MP assisted in sourcing.

In addition, when participants in the study's FGD were asked as to why they were of the view that the female MP had influenced an increasing number of development projects through the CDF as compared to previously, despite the fund being available the whole time, they stated that the fund had been mismanaged in the previous term. That is the reason why only a few development projects were implemented. For instance, a respondent mentioned:

“A MP a akalewa ndalama ya fund imeneyi tikukhulupilira amatenga chifukwa tikafuna kupanga zitukuko zambiri , amanena kuti ndalama sanalandire kuchokera ku boma”

“The previous MP, when it came to the CDF, we believe they were pocketing the money because when we wanted to do projects, they would say there are no funds available from the government”¹³

They stated that the former MP would frequently inform them that there were no funds available, which left many constituents frustrated such that they did not re-elect him to office for another term. Lazarus and Steigerwatt (2018) reiterated the same in a study conducted in the U.S. where they found evidence that women outworked their male counterparts in the U.S. House of Representatives. The study affirmed previous studies that showed that female members were more likely to “bring home the bacon” in the form of earmarks. This is also in line with Chiweza’s (2010) observation that there was generally resentment towards the CDF. It was widely perceived by the communities, chiefs, and other actors as not promoting participatory decentralised decision making but rather as serving only the needs and partisan interests of the MP and loyal party members. With the emergence of the female MP to office, these generally perceived notions of how the CDF had been mismanaged have been reduced in the constituency.

Furthermore, Lazarus and Steigerwatt (2018) indicated that despite many people being aware of the legislative work that female members do, the members also worked on assisting constituents directly on personal issues. Moreover, in a key informant interview with the chief from the constituency, the study found that funds sometimes came from the MP’s pocket. For example, when the construction of a bridge was underway, the MP contributed quarry stone and the community contributed sand. This has been seen more recently where

¹³ Spoken by a key informant in an in-depth interview on 30th July 2019

there is little public money in Malawi for investment and service provision. Thus, if an MP is unable to secure public investment, as is often the case, they use their own resources (O'neil et al , 2016).

When asked if they felt it was appropriate for the MP to use her own finances, most respondents did not see anything wrong with it, one respondent said:

“Ndi a MP Athu, akuyenera kuonetsetsa kuti anthu awo amene anawa votera kuti alibwino”

“She is our MP, she has to ensure that the people who voted for her are alright”¹⁴

They believed it was part of the MP`s duty and role. It is seen that most Constituents often grow a feeling of entitlement towards the duties of MPs and this has been shown to be a general challenge to all MPs. It does not, however, help improve society`s understanding of the role of an MP, and it disfavours women MPs in particular (Amundesen & Kayuni, 2016) as those that may not have such resources may not be perceived as good MPs. The MP in Blantyre rural east commented on this by saying:

“People expect you to do everything for them even if it’s from your pocket. They don’t understand that we can only help with assistance from other sources. It becomes difficult as you can be painted as a bad MP.”¹⁵

This corresponds with a study by Nawa (2018), which highlighted that in developing countries such as Malawi, the notion of constituency service is embedded within the broader expectation of MPs as development agents for their constituencies. Therefore, this is perceived as a role that the MP is expected to play during their term despite having other duties according to the constituents.

¹⁴ Sentiments from a respondent in an FGD in Blantyre rural east constituency on 29th July 2019

¹⁵ Sentiments from the MP from Blantyre rural east constituency on 19th December 2019.

Many participants in the study repeated that the relocation of the food distribution centre from Chilaweni and the road construction initiatives by the village committees and associations have made a big impact in their constituency. For instance, a respondent mentioned:

“Timayenda ntunda wautali kwambiri kupita ku Chilaweni, koma atabwera a MP awa anathandiza kuyisuntha centre pafupi , moti pano sitivutikanso pa nkhani za ntunda.”

“We used to walk long distances to go to Chilaweni, but when this MP came, she assisted us in moving the centre here, and now we don’t struggle anymore in terms of distance”¹⁶

The constituents would walk miles to receive coupons. Sometimes, if there was a food distribution initiative by the government or an NGO, it was difficult for them to travel. However, through this initiative, the travelling distance of the constituents has been greatly reduced, which is evident as constituency associations provide a means for MPs to learn of the needs and preferences of their constituents, which is very key as members work together to achieve these goals (Koop, 2012).

Furthermore, according to the FGDs, the study determined that the initiative would not have been implemented if the female MP had not taken office. This also demonstrated that the female MP has had a major influence in terms of community development in accordance with the International Development Strategy for the Second Development Decade, where development means "to bring about sustained improvement in the well-being of the individual and to bestow benefits on all." This is a clear illustration of the notion. The MP has played a significant role in influencing such changes in the constituency.

¹⁶ Spoken by a respondent in an FGD in Blantyre rural east constituency on 29th July 2019.

Likewise, a key informant interview with the member of parliament of the constituency highlighted that the centre was moved because of her persistency with the district council, which did not have enough funding, as well as the pressure from her constituents.

“The constituents had been wanting the centre to move for a very long time, but we had to make sure we consulted the district council and kept following up until we had it done.”¹⁷

The MP would sometimes use some personal funds for transportation, and according to the KII, the MP needed to have the centre moved as constituents expected this as one of her responsibilities being their representative at the city council. This brings concerns that have been raised about the expectations from MPs constituencies, where MPs are expected to provide for things not related to their mandate (Amundesen & Kayuni, 2016). These include buying coffins for bereaved families, paying school fees for children, and providing food and other necessities such as tea and blankets to the older adults (Amundesen & Kayuni, 2016) . This therefore puts a lot of pressure as it influences the informal ‘family head’ institution onto the MP role, and this therefore puts enormous pressure on office holders to be responsive to constituents ‘needs and priorities (Lindberg, 2010).

The study also established that the introduction of the rural electrification programme in Blantyre Rural East has ensured that most areas in the constituency have electricity, such as the UKhahlamba and *Ngongoma* areas. This was achieved through the influence of the MP to bring electricity to the constituency through the Malawi Rural Electrification Program. The focus group discussions of the women and men as well as key informant interviews all

¹⁷ Spoken by the MP of Blantyre rural east constituency on the 19th of December 2019.

highlighted that this was one of the main reasons the MP was re-elected from 2019 to 2024.

For example, a respondent said:

“Pano ndithu ma nyumba ambiri kunabwera magesi ndipo idzi zinachitikanso ndi chithandizo cha a MP kudwera mwa a rural electrification.”

“Now houses have electricity, and this has also happened with the assistance of the MP with the rural electrification program.”¹⁸

Based on an Irish survey, Crisp and Simoneau's (2018) literature indicates that electoral services play a major role in both the success of elections and the personal reputations of legislators. Particular emphasis has been placed on electoral services in circumstances where their significance has increased due to vulnerability. Basic services like rural electrification are an expression of electoral services in Blantyre Rural East and other developing nations like Malawi. These services can significantly affect voters' perceptions and help a member of parliament win reelection.

Likewise, It is clear from the constituents' comments that many community development projects were implemented during the tenure of the current MP, but community members also commented that this influenced them to vote for them again because of the service conducted . Arter (2017) argues that motives behind particular forms of political behaviour are rarely straightforward, and the activity of constituency service is no exception. Many MPs will use projects in rational and instrumental terms that may be undertaken by a member of parliament with a view to ensuring re-selection or enhancing the prospects of re-election. Additionally, findings by Lazarus and Steigerwatt (2018) clearly indicate that gender matters, such that women more heavily emphasise constituent-oriented activities than men. This effect is not limited to women's issues; rather, it appears that across the board, ranging from education to

¹⁸ Spoken by a respondent in an FGD on 19th of December 2019

agriculture to defence. This thus concurs with our gender and development approach as women and men are expected to both have influence in projects that they choose to work in the community.

From the FGDs and in-depth interviews for the Blantyre Rural East constituency, the study discovered that there was a clear picture and indication of development through the influence of the MP. One aspect that stood out from the study in this constituency was that there was construction work that had been implemented once the MP started her term. It was very evident that many projects had been implemented once the MP began her term. This was through constituent' responses, as one constituent mentioned:

“With this lady, we have worked on many things together. First, our constituency of Blantyre rural east has two T/As, T/A Makata and T/A Machinjiri, which was also divided into Chilaweni and Mudi wards. In terms of chilaweni in terms of the works that have been done for the past five years, the works that have been done a lot more, even in comparison with the previous MP. First, in terms of road construction, people also get a little something (za nthandizi). In the beginning, they were working on the roads from kweni to army secondary school via namwilo. That road has also been worked on by the people known as anthu a thandizi , from the project of LDF. Also, on the road coming from half way to army secondary school via Namwilo, they are working on this through the nthandizi people. We have seen so much change with this MP”¹⁹

This clearly demonstrates that constituency service has a high impact on the citizens. This concurs with the concept that constituency service is a vital role, as Barkan (2010) highlighted. Apart from the three main formal functions members of parliament perform, constituency service was engrained as a major function to constituents, and many scholars understood that constituency service was a fourth function among the legislature.

¹⁹ Words from a Participant in an FGD On 26/07/19 in the Blantyre rural east constituency.

It was also observed that when the researcher asked the respondents how often the members of parliament attended CDF meetings and DDF meetings, it was noted that the MP attended CDF meetings more than the DDF; for example, in an in-depth interview, a respondent mentioned the following:

“A MP ndithu ma meeting ambiri okhudzana ndi fund ya CDF ama pezekapo mogwirizana ndi anthu a mudzi ndi ama committee osiyana siyana , makamaka tikakhala kuti chitukuko chake chasakhidwa ndipo ntchito ikuyenela kuyamba”

“The MP is indeed present to many meetings involving the CDF and in collaboration with community members and representatives from different committees, especially when the project has been chosen and is about to start.”²⁰

Moreover, most meetings that the MP attended were those in which she collaborated with the NGO`s to bring development to the constituency. This corresponds with the guidelines set by the Commonwealth Parliamentarian Association (2016), which stated that the success of the CDF`s was contingent upon an inclusive process of consultation that fosters co-operation among constituents, MPs, and technocratic experts. The CDF initiatives were designed to respond to local developmental needs. Thus, the CDF requires channels of input for local citizens and civil society at all steps in the decision-making process. In this study, this had been clearly alluded to frequently by the respondents in the constituencies. The study also found that the MP did not attend any DDF meetings due to administration. The MP was not part of it, despite some funds being allocated to the constituency. This is also similar to the findings from Phalombe where the participants stated that the MP was most likely to attend meetings set up by herself or meetings that she was directly involved in rather than meetings that were set up by different individuals.

²⁰ Words from a key informant in an in- depth interview on 27/07/19 in Blantyre rural east constituency

In addition, the constituency development fund appeared to be the main source of funds that the members of parliament used to implement the developments carried out in the constituency. This contrasts with the fact that previous MPs did not use the funds allocated by the government for development activities, as reported by the FGDs. This concurs with Newa (2018) 's study which stated that MPs in Malawi and elsewhere, where the CDF is operational, regarded it as the only fund that constituents can easily access development through. The CDF in Kenya was established to fight poverty at the grassroots level (Romero, 2009). However, this is a justification as to why the fund in many countries is grossly supported despite it not having proper guidelines, lack of involvement of beneficiaries in decision making, and selective application of development projects in the constituency (Newa, 2018). Hence, service must be recognised as a function of MPs that has tremendous significance, especially for constituents.

Furthermore, in Blantyre Rural East Constituency, the research through FGDs with youths and VDC members found that MPs were involved in community development for youths. This was through the fixing of classroom blocks and provision of assistance in helping vulnerable boys and girls who expressed interest in returning to school. In key informant interviews with VDC members, participants mentioned that the MP had also assisted in obtaining scholarships for students at a college of higher education. This was in stark contrast to the Phalombe South Constituency. The MP for Blantyre rural east assisted many youths in the constituency by providing access to higher education and other opportunities, while in Phalombe south constituency, the MP only assisted youths minimally according to the findings. This therefore provided an invaluable insight as it illustrated that there were differences as well as similarities with regard to how the female MP's handled different matters relating to community development in their constituency.

4.3 Assessing the Constituents' Perception of Having a Female and Male MP on the Constituency Service

Constituency service performed by MPs in the constituency influences how their constituents perceive their MPs in their constituency. This is mainly due to the undertakings conducted by the MP. Therefore, Teele et al. (2018) found that respondents had a slight preference for women candidates, *ceteris paribus*, because many perceived women as care givers. The respondents evaluated men and women candidates with the same traits similarly. For example, one respondent reported that

*“MP wachizimayi amakhala ndi chifundo, amakhala ovesetsa mavuto amanene anthu amudela amakumana nao”*²¹ (a female MP is very considerate, she has empathy when it comes to the problems that the constituents face).

In a focus group discussion, some participants commented as follows:

“Tikamalira ama lira ndi ifeyo, ndipo amakhala nafe limodzi, ndi osadzipatula ndipo azimbambo zimawabvutirapo” (when we mourn she mourns with us, and embraces us by taking part and does not side line herself, this is something that men struggle with).²²

These perceptions agree with what Kathlene (1991) conveyed: because of differences in the socialisation and life experiences of men and women, females were more concerned with interpersonal relationships and caring, whereas males focussed on objectivity. The findings illustrated that the constituents' perceptions of their female MPs were largely informed by the idea that women play a caregiving role.

In the Blantyre Rural East constituency, the participants viewed their current MP as an individual who was capable of doing more. Some respondents referred to having a female

²¹ Words from a respondent in Phalombe East Constituency FGD on 12th July 2019

²² Words from a respondent in Phalombe East Constituency on the 12th of July 2019 in a KII and FGD

MP as the same as having a mother, who is caring and is willing to take on the role of making sure people are well taken care of. As noted by O'neil et al. (2016), women MPs who were surveyed in their study who had been re-elected in 2014 both exhibited a strong belief in their own ability to lead combined with willingness to comply with gender norms when interacting with constituents.

This is essential as they would like to see their MP as one who is also part of the community and has been shown to be very key when a female MP is involved. The study also found that when the question was posed on how the constituents felt about having a female MP in comparison to having a male MP, in 90% of all FGDs in both Blantyre Rural East as well as Phalombe South many alluded that due to the changes in their constituency such as the building of bridges and active participation of their current MP in community activities they preferred having a female MP. One aspect that was noted was that constituent's perception of the female MP was highly influenced by how she interacted with the community members, more especially how the MP carried herself around during events such as funerals and formal functions, another example is during an FGD on respondent mentions:

“Tikakhala ndi zochitika monga Maliro amayi wa sadzipatula , amakhala nafe adzimai ndipo timapanga zonse chimodzimodzi mene adzimai tikakhala kumaliro , zimenezi ife zimatirimbikitasa kuti ngakhale ali a MP atha kukhala nafe pamodzi”

“When we have functions like a funeral, the woman is there with us together, she is with us, and we do activities that women do at funerals together. This is very encouraging for us because even though she is our MP, we know she can interact with us properly.”²³

²³ Spoken by a respondent in an FGD in Blantyre rural east constituency on 27/07/2019

This highlights that gender norms and how women are perceived in public play a very important role, and as MPs, it is important to adopt a strategic approach to gender norms and expectations in pursuit of political or electoral gain (O'neil et al. 2016) as this is important for how constituents are willing to accept you as their leader. The study noted that gender appeared to be a factor or reason behind the phenomenon. This is similar to Clayton et al. (2019), which stated that Malawians had a slight preference for hypothetical comports. This therefore additionally aligns with our framework, which maintains that differences between women and men are not based on biology, which basically represents reproduction differences. Hence, women should have the same rights as men, including the same educational as well as employment opportunities (Enyew & Mihrete, 2018). As such, despite women having more of a caring role and being expected to conduct in that manner, they can still equally contribute to the public sphere, as in the case of the two constituencies. As such, the study demonstrated the stubborn and socially engrained nature of gender bias. Yet despite these findings, women appeared to be making remarkable progress in national substantial politics.

Another aspect that also contributed to the perceptions of the people towards their MPs was that their MPs resided in the same district. That is to say, that the MP for Phalombe South Constituency stayed in Phalombe District, as such they had a personal connection with her constituents. Lazarus and Steigerwatt (2018) noted that women in office devote more time and attention to their constituents. Similarly, the MP for Blantyre Rural East resided in the constituency as well, making it very easy for the members of her constituency to communicate with her. For instance, a respondent said,

“Ndi zosavuta kuyakhurana nao a MP monga iwo amakhalira mu constituency yomweyi, mau amatha kuopeza ku nyumba yao mwasanga ndikulandira uthenga, izi dzinali zosatheka kale kuli a MP ena chifukwa samakhala kuno”

“It is very easy to communicate with the MP since she stays in the constituency. Words can easily be sent to her house and she will receive the message. This was not possible before as the previous MP did not reside here.”²⁴

This appeared to have a significant impact on how MPs were perceived. In the Phalombe South Constituency, the MP left a very big impression on the constituents. Participants articulated that they had seen a very big difference in terms of what the MP had done in the constituency. According to the MP, there is pressure as a female MP to perform right as an MP, which is very difficult at times as women have fewer assets and less social capital than men, but voters expect more of them and judge them more harshly (O'neil et al. 2016).

Furthermore, regarding what an MP was meant to do for their constituents, the people were of the view that constituency service, other than legislation and making policies, was something that needed to be considered significantly in terms of what constituents expected from their MPs.

Moreover, the participants felt that having a female MP assured them that their grievances would be heard. The constituents had a personal connexion to her fostered by what the MP had done for them. In most FGDs, the participants reported personal encounters of how the MP had helped them; for example, one respondent said the following:

“MP anandithandiza kutabwera ma floods, tinalibe chakudya koma atazaona , timapezeka kuti chikudya chinatumizilidwa kwa anthu”

“The MP helped me when we had floods, we did not have food, and when she visited, some food had been sent to assist people”²⁵

²⁴ Spoken by a respondent in an FGD in Blantyre rural east constituency on 12/07/19 P

²⁵ Participant in a focus group discussion at Phalombe south constituency on 12th July 2019

There was an agreement among all respondents; women, youths, men, and key informants, that they all preferred having a female MP. This was because of the assistance that the MP provided in the constituency. These were physical developments and initiatives that the constituents claimed to have been initiated by her. This demonstrated that despite women's under representation in politics in Malawi and other countries such as Japan and Brazil (Aguilar & Desposato, 2015; Kage, 2018), there was still a lot of support for them in terms of having female MP's (Clayton, Robinson, Jonhson, & Muriaas, 2019).

Interviews with key informant from NGO's that work on governance heightened the awareness that there were also some activities that they did to change the perceptions of constituents on women. Some of them were community-based campaigns in which the participants were sensitised about gender in general and why it was important that women also become leaders.

Additionally, through these interviews, NGO's such as Oxfam and UN women demonstrated that their focus was on the retention of female members of parliament in office. This was done through the provision of assistance during the campaign period, but this has received some criticism that the government, CSOs and development partners in Malawi, as well as women MPs, all recognise that improved support to women's representation, substantive as well as descriptive, requires support to be more coordinated and to extend beyond the election year (O'neil et al 2016).

4.3.1 Presence of the MP in the Constituency

The findings additionally illustrated that whether an MP resides in a particular constituency or not has significant influence on development in constituencies. According to FGDs and

IDIs from constituents from Phalombe South Constituency, the current female MP resides in the constituency while the previous male MP did not reside in the constituency. For example, in an FGD, a respondent mentioned the following:

“A MP amakhala mu dela lathu yomweyi, ndipo izi zimapangitsa kuti tiwa dziwe ndipo pakakhala vuto mu dela lino lima fika mwachangu, kale sankakhala kuno ndipo zinali zovuta kuti anthu tiwaziwe ndipo ma vuto amawapeza mochedwa.”

“The MP resides in the constituency, and this has made us know the MP better, and when we have a problem, it reaches her in good time. The previous MP resided outside the constituency and it was difficult for constituents to reach them when there was a problem.”²⁶

Voters emphasised in Vivyan and Wagner's 2015 survey that Members of Parliament are impartial across party lines and committed to providing constituent services in addition to working on national policy. The residents of Phalombe south constituency appear to agree, emphasising the beneficial effects of the current MP's residence. The findings that highlight the useful advantages of having a local MP who lives in the area are consistent with the electorate's greater concern for the MPs' actions than for their party affiliation.

Similar to the case of the Blantyre rural east constituency where the MP also resides in the constituency and therefore constituents have easier reach to her. A respondent in the Blantyre rural east constituency said:

“A MP awa tikakhala ndi vuto timakumana nao mosavuta, sizimavuta ndipo kwambiri ndi chifukwa choti amakhala kuno. A MP kale ankakhala ku Chigumula nde dzimapangitsa kuti tisaone ndipo pamakhala zovuta kuti amve mavuto amudela, taona zitukuko zosiyana chifukwa chosankha munthu okhala konkuno.”

“With this MP, when we have a problem, we can meet her without any difficulties, and mainly it's because she stays here. The previous MP used to

²⁶ Participant in focus group discussion in Phalombe South Constituency on the 12th

stay in Chigumula, and this made it very difficult to meet him and hard for him to understand the problems in the community. We have seen many developments because of choosing someone who resides in the constituency.”

From the FGDs, it is clear that the MPs have also been able to significantly influence development in the community through their frequent interactions with community members by being available to constituents through residing in the constituency and working with different community structures in the process such as the VDC and ADC committees who report different problems in the constituency. This is similar to a study by Ong (1976), who states that the rural MP tends to work within the traditional system by maintaining close and regular contact with the locals who are structures in the constituency. This has had significant implications on development activities in the constituency. Similarly, this study heavily illustrates that the presence of the MP has a significant influence on development activities in the constituency.

4.4 Chapter Summary

Therefore, this chapter highlights the findings of the study and discusses the findings in line with the objectives of the particular study. The chapter affirms the assertion by Barkan et al (2010) that constituents prefer representation and constituency service from their legislators. The study has highlighted that there is a vast difference between male and female MPs constituency service and the influence it has on community development. In the constituencies studied it is clear that works that the current female MPs have focused on areas such as building of bridges, roads and food distribution that has influenced community development in their constituencies.

CHAPTER 5

CONCLUSION AND POLICY IMPLICATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the conclusion and policy implications. Section 5. 1 provides the study's conclusion; 5.2 states the policy implications; and finally, section 5.3 recommends areas for further study.

5.2 Conclusion of the study

The study's overall objective was to assess the influence of MPs' gender on constituency service. The study established that there is some influence from female MPs in their constituencies in community development through their constituency service compared to the previous male MP in the constituency. Influence is seen as the role the MP plays in assisting or initiating many community development projects.

According to the findings of the study, female MPs are involved more in constituency service, which influences development activities in their district communities. This has been seen consistently in both constituencies where constituents narrate on programmes such as those funded by CDF and non-CDF funded programmes that they took part in and their previous male predecessors did not.

The study also established that female MPs faced many challenges; constituents' perceptions of what MPs should do during their term showed that female MPs fall to a higher standard than their male counterparts. This is illustrated through the demands constituents make to the

female MP to assist with personal problems rather than male counterparts. This is because it was established that both female MPs in the two constituencies both resided in the constituency while the previous male MPs did not. As such, constituents always felt the need to ask for help from the female MPs, which may not be related to any community development aspect.

The conclusion is, therefore, that according to the findings of the study, gender has been shown to play a major role in MPs' constituency service and its influence on community development. Female MPs tend to shine more in terms of CS and how it influences community development.

5.3 Policy implications

The findings of the study have some implications for policy development. Gender has been illustrated to play a major role in development programs, which should be taken as an important aspect to consider regarding different development projects. These may be community-based development projects either through government bodies or NGOs. For both, it is essential that gender and inclusivity are highlighted in projects to ensure that there is better impact as well different perspectives across the board. An additional implication that has been noted is that in re-election, MPs could learn and leverage the impact of their influence on community development and thus use it as a tool for re-election.

Additionally, in many elections across Malawi, especially on legislators, women may lack resources to campaign and compete amongst their male counterparts due to lack of access to resources and cultural factors. With the study findings in mind, it is important that the

government recognises the importance of having equal numbers of legislators in parliament to ensure that genders are represented well in policy development.

5.4 Areas of further study

This study was conducted in two constituencies in the southern region of Malawi. An area of further study would be to conduct similar research in the central and northern regions of the country to determine if the results of this study would also be similar in those regions. Additionally, a similar study could be conducted for ward councillors to ascertain if there would be a similar finding for comprehending the impact of gender dynamics in politics and its influence on community development as well as on policy development.

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ANNEXES

Annex 1: Survey tool for Members of Parliament

Section 1: Basic Information

Name of Respondent: _____

Gender of Respondent: _____

District of Origin: _____

Constituency: _____

Highest Level of Education: _____

Occupation at the time of First Election: _____

Source of Permanent Income: _____

When did you first become an MP? _____

Are you a sitting MP? a) Yes b) No

Section 2: Questions for MPS

On assessing how MPs influence community development

1. For how long have you been an MP?
2. What are some of the activities that your constituents expect you to do for them?
3. What projects can you say you have worked on directly with your constituents?
4. What projects are funded the most through the constituency development fund and could you name them?
5. Are you directly involved in these projects?
6. What other projects can you say you have worked on through individual funding or funding from other sources?
7. What are people's expectations when they vote a member of parliament into power?

Examining the constituents perceptions on having a female or Male MP

8. What are the constituent's perception on what an MP is to do for them in the constituency?

9. In your view, what would you consider to be the main reasons for which you were elected as an MP for your constituency?

10. Last Comments for the Respondent.

We have come to an end our discussion. But you may have your last word. May I give you time.

11. What are the challenges did you face when serving your constituencies?

Annex 2: Survey tool for NGOs

Questions for NGOs working with women in politics

Section 1

Basic Information

Name of Non-Governmental organization?

Name of Respondent?

Position in organization?

Districts currently working in?

Section 2: Questions for NGOs working with women parliamentarians

On assessing how MPs influence community development

1. What is your mission as an organization in relation to politics?
2. What activities does the organization conduct that directly involve women in politics?
3. What can you tell us about female Member of Parliament's performance in terms of constituency service over the past four years as compared to the previous MP?
4. How many members of parliament have you worked with directly that have made a significant contribution to the development of their constituency?

Examining the constituents perceptions on having a MP on constituency service

5. In what way has your organization contributed directly to change the perceptions on how women are viewed in politics by their constituents? What about male MPs?
6. What are the main functions of MPS Vs what are people's perceptions of what MPs are to do for their constituents?

Annex 3: Survey tool for constituents

Section 1

Gender of Respondent: _____

District of Origin: _____

Constituency: _____

Age: _____

Section 2: Interview guide for constituents (focus group discussion)

On assessing how MPs influence community development

1. How often does your MP visit the constituency?
2. Who does the MP meet during the visits?
3. How many committee meetings do you hold in the area? Which meetings does your MP attend?
4. In what areas has your MP assisted you?
5. Did you seek assistance from your MP when you have problems with NGOs and Government?
6. How did the MP assist you?
7. Have there been any differences in how you have been assisted between the current MP and the Previous MP at hand?
8. How many projects have been implemented under the CDF in your constituency before this MP and now?
9. What type of projects have been implemented under the CDF? Then and now?
10. How were the projects identified?
11. Who were involved in identification of the projects?
12. How many projects have been implemented through other means in the constituency?
13. How was the MP involved in this project?
14. What were the projects identified?

Examining the constituent's perceptions on having a MP on constituency service

15. How do you as a constituent view having a female MP?
16. What were the reasons the constituents selected this particular MP?
17. What criteria do constituents use when selecting a MP in their constituency?

Annex 4: Survey tool for key Informants

Section 1

Gender of Respondent: _____

District of Origin: _____

Constituency: _____

Age: _____

Section 2: Interview questions for key informants (VDC, CHIEFS, CBO, and RELIGIOUS LEADERS)

On assessing how MPs influence community development

1. Have you worked directly with an MP in this constituency?
2. If yes, on what projects or initiatives have you worked with the MP?
3. Where these projects sponsored by the MP personally or through other funds?
4. In what ways has the MP personally assisted certain people in the community?
5. Has there been a significant difference between how a male MP addressed these problems vs how a female MP has addressed them?

Examining the constituents perceptions on having a MP on constituency service

6. What are some of the reasons that people voted for this particular MP?
7. How do people view having a female MP in the constituency as compared to a male MP?
8. What are some of the expectations constituents have from their MP, more especially their female MP? What about their expectations on the Previous Male MP?
9. Have there been any benefits of having a female MP vs a male MP?

CONSENT FORM FOR SURVEYS/QUESTIONNAIRES

The following informed consent must be mandatorily obtained from any person invited to participate in a research study in the form of a survey or questionnaire.

1. **TITLE OF RESEARCH:** A GENDER ASSESSMENT OF THE MPS
CONSTITUENCY SERVICE AND ITS INFLUENCE ON COMMUNITY
DEVELOPMENT
2. **RESEARCHER:** Vanessa Rita Chimutu
3. **For this study, you will be completing a short survey about :** examining the influence of MPs constituency service as well as the perceptions community members may have on them and the effects it may have on community development
4. **If you have any questions before you complete this survey, please contact me at** vanessachimutu@gmail.com or 0995314188
5. **All responses you provide for this study will be completely confidential.** When the results of the study are reported, you will not be identified by name or any other information that could be used to infer your identity.
6. **By clicking “Yes” below, you acknowledge that you have read and understood that:**
 - Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may withdraw your consent and discontinue participation in the project at any time. Your refusal to participate will not in any way adversely impact upon you.
 - You have given consent to be a subject of this research and respond to the survey / questionnaire(s) as truly as possible
 - You do not waive any legal rights or release the researcher from liability for negligence or misconduct.
7. **Do you wish to participate in this study?**
 - **Yes, I am consenting to participate**
 - **No, I am NOT consenting to participate**

.....
Signature

Participant number

Date