

**COMMUNITY PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS:
THE CASE OF MPAMBA-CHIKWINA INTEGRATED FISH
FARMING PROJECT**

MASTER OF ARTS (DEVELOPMENT STUDIES THESIS

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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 studies have 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

To my dearest parents Lizzie Nkhanozgi and Maxwell Mezuwa Banda:
God knows I love you, Many thanks for always standing by my side!

To my fiancée Tamika Nhlema and our son Kuzgani Mezuwa: This one is
for you, you may not know it but truth is you were an inspiration in countless
ways!

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ABSTRACT

The active participation of community members in their own development is widely seen to be positively correlated to project success and sustainability. Not surprisingly, therefore, development actors in the form of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) have incorporated participatory approaches and principles into their plans, strategies and programmes. The translation of these in practice, however, has varied owing to various contextual factors.

This study sought to unravel factors that influenced the degree of community participation of an NGO facilitated project, the Mpamba-Chikwina Integrated Fish Farming Project. Adopting a qualitative research design to achieve this goal, the study assessed the extent of community participation from the pre-planning to evaluation stages; mechanisms put in place to promote participation; challenges encountered in promoting participation; and the role of various actors in ensuring community participation. The degrees and kinds of participation were determined using a framework devised to act as a reference point for categorization of various characteristics of actions and behaviours identified in the social interaction. Rich data in a descriptive and explanatory form was generated and analyzed using a content analysis method.

The study identified poor communication and deliberate distortion of information; inconsistencies in plan implementation; untimely and/or lack of responsiveness; insensitivity to social and cultural attitudes, beliefs and norms; lack of community

commitment; among others, as factors that impacted negatively on the nature of participation. On the other hand, training of farmers; setting up structures for representation; annual project reviews and distribution of project materials were seen to have promoted participation.

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LIST OF ACCRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ADC	Area Development Committee
ADP	Area Development Programme
DC	District Commissioner
DF	Development Facilitators
FGD	Focus Group Discussions
KII	Key Informant Interviews
MAC	Marketing Action Committee
MASAF	Malawi Social Action Fund
MGDS	Malawi Growth Development Strategy
MPACHI	Mpamba-Chikwina
MPACHI FFA	Mpamba-Chikwina Fish Farmers' Association
MPACHI IFF	Mpamba-Chikwina Integrated Fish Farming Project
MPRSP	Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper
NGO	Non-Governmental Organization
NSO	National Statistical Office
RCT	Rational Choice Theory
STA	Sub-Traditional Authority
T/A	Traditional Authority
WVI	World Vision International
WVM	World Vision Malawi

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

1.1.1. Adoption of a Participatory Development Philosophy in Developing Countries

There is currently growing awareness that the successful implementation of development projects and the achievement of development goals are largely contingent upon enabling the people who are affected by the development decisions to play a meaningful and active role in determining the outcome of such development processes. In the context of rural development, the rural poor are increasingly seen as masters of their own development and so are increasingly urged to take full control of their own development priorities for change. Campbell and Vainio-Mattila (2003) contended that there is no one definition of participatory development but that there are two keys to describing the concept: the actor and the meaning of participation. In terms of the actor, focus in literature has been on “people’s participation”, “people’s own development”, “community participation”, and “self-help”. The second aspect, the meaning of participation, refers to the positioning of participatory initiatives on the continuum from manipulating participation for the achievement of externally identified project goals to

the empowerment of the actors to define such goals themselves, as well as the actions required to achieve them (Campbell and Vainio-Mattila 2003).

With its strong links to the assertion of human rights, participatory development has attracted remarkable attention from and generated increased interest among development scholars, researchers and practitioners so much so that it is almost synonymous with the attainment of all development goals. The central place it holds in the development debates has reached such a remarkable extent that some of the best-known development practitioners are referring to it as a “new orthodoxy” (Henkel and Stirrat, 2001) and there are widespread claims of participatory development constituting a ‘new development paradigm’ (Chambers, 1997).

In most developing countries a reorientation of characteristically top down strategies to embrace a participatory development philosophy happened in the wake of democratization in a bid to reinvigorate rural development efforts (Chinsinga, 2003). This is strikingly in contrast to developed countries where although the emergence of “popular participation”, a major characteristic of participatory development, had a positive correlation with the rise of democratic institutions, it was particularly the growth of education and spread of communications that played a critical role in fostering its emergence (Mathur, 1986). Broadly conceived, however, in both contexts this represented a “paradigm shift” from top-down or “blue-print” approach to rural development characterized by external technologies and national level policies to the bottom up, grassroots or process approach (Rondinelli, 1986, Mosse et al 1998).

Several common themes characterized this new paradigm: particularly there was a strong emphasis on the empowerment of participants; a stress on the marginalized and the

excluded; and an incorporation of local traditional knowledge. It thus became increasingly clear in the late 1980s and early 1990s that centralized development planning, implementation and mobilization of resources as well as externally driven development agendas not only negatively affected the consumption of delivered entities of goods and services but also significantly made the development process costly and inefficient. At the same time, the forceful claims of efficiency, effectiveness, democratization and empowerment associated with participatory investments radically claimed much of the space in development rhetoric, thinking and practice. Several arguments had been advanced for associating project effectiveness and efficiency with the degree of community participation. It was increasingly known argued, for example, that community participation had the potential to lead to the design and implementation of projects that closely reflected the preferences and needs of the targeted communities. In addition, community participation was seen to have the potential of reducing the cost of providing programme benefits. All of this implied a widespread transfer of power from “uppers”- people, institutions and disciplines which had been dominant, to “lowers”- people, institutions and disciplines which had been subordinate (Chambers 1994). Ultimately, participatory development is conventionally represented as emerging out of the recognition of the shortcomings of top-down development (Cooke and Kothari, 2001).

In Malawi, the adoption of grassroots, people-driven, or bottom-up approaches came as a result of the rapid spread of criticism against the top-down strategies which were seen to have failed the poor (Chilowa et al, 2005). Particularly, the criticisms were championed by the World Bank, development practitioners, scholars and agencies that

worked to further the adoption of the new approach to development and argued persistently that the technocratic and top-down approaches to development had failed to empower and transform the lives of the masses. Tizifa (2010) asserted that the shift of approaches in the development discourse and practice demonstrates a long history of frustration with the previously popular top-down strategies to development. The participatory practitioners contended that expert-oriented and externally-imposed research, planning and projects had proved ineffective and exposed the short-comings of top-down development. Instead, the poor were identified as main actors in the processes of social change and rural development where, it was argued, their participatory role in the development process had to shift from mere provision of manual labour and locally available resources to real power in decision making processes. But in practice this has worked only to a limited extent. In many instances, the poor still lack the *de facto* authority in official decision making bodies. An independent review of Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF 1) projects of 2003, for example, revealed that decision making was a reserve of the local elites, traditional leaders and local politicians and not the poorest of the population.

1.1.2. Creating Space for Community Participation in Malawi

Paul (1987), defined community participation as an active process whereby beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects in order to enhance their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self reliance and other such values that they cherish rather than merely receive a share of project benefits. Thus there is an element of the beneficiaries gaining control over development projects that they choose themselves in the first place. In other words, if participatory development is

to be practical and achievable in rural development efforts of developing countries, it is important that the potential beneficiaries should create, claim and/or find space for their participation. In the same measure, policies, institutions, structures and instruments must provide for a conducive environment for the smooth assumption of the community's roles and their effective operation in various development initiatives. Specifically, the community must identify channels, conduits or opportunities through which it can influence the direction of development projects. The understanding is that it is only when the beneficiaries' fears, aspirations, hopes, needs and expectations are taken on board in development efforts, that poverty reduction and sustainable development can be attained.

For this to be achievable in development projects, however, there has to be a compromise reached between the hopes, expectations, needs, and priorities of the community reflected in the project's objectives on the one hand and the willingness and commitment of funders to provide resources that cannot be sourced by the community on their own. Ultimately, development management and implementation is shaped by the people's priorities and commitment. Thus community participation has been promoted by its proponents as a mechanism through which development actors can achieve legitimization, efficiency, effectiveness and sustainability of development programmes and projects while at the same time ensuring that rural people's lives undergo massive economic, political and social transformation (Williams 2004).

Community participation in Malawi has been prominently adopted in development projects as a method of delivery and in other cases as an intended outcome in itself. Chinsinga and Kayuni (2008) provided a useful detailed analysis of community development in Malawi stating, firstly, that during the pre-colonial period, community

development entailed communal development activities that were mainly agrarian in nature and took the form of communities working for the chiefs in a coercive and reciprocal manner under a system called *Thangata*. This was later abused by the colonial masters in that it became a forced exercise. During this time, community participation involved chiefs applying force to mobilize communities to participate in development initiatives apparently upon being instructed by the colonial government. Kishindo (1987) observed that it was this that altered the political atmosphere of the country in that nationalists took advantage of the discontent most Malawians had in rural areas to mobilize support for political independence.

Soon after independence, however, despite the government's perceived understanding of the value and potential of bottom-up approaches to development as reflected in policy documents, the implementation in practice quickly took the form of a top-down activities in the context of a highly centralized and coercive party structures which stakeholders argued had emerged as a result of the nature of politics at that time (Chinsinga and Kayuni, 2008). Thus up to the 1994 re-introduction of a democratic system of governance after the pre-colonial democratic system, community participation largely entailed the contribution of labour and locally available materials by the community members, perceived to be geographically defined villages constituting local people, to projects initiated, designed and controlled by agents other than the community members themselves (Dulani 2003).

From 1994, community participation also took a new form altogether. This is partly evidenced by the articulation of one of the objectives of the MASAF during its inception in 1996 which stated that MASAF was introduced to promote a new

development paradigm by involving communities in all stages of the development project cycle (Kishindo 2003). This is also against the background of a growing recognition by various scholars in the development discourse that unless local people are empowered and offered the opportunity to play a meaningful role in decisions that affect them, efforts to achieve rural development, poverty reduction, and environmental management will be rendered futile (Chinsinga 2003, White 1995, Williams 2006).

Community participation in Malawi also finds its place in participatory approaches to development and democratic governance that have in turn been promoted through the adoption of decentralization reforms effectively providing for the potential set up of local government structures. In fact, participatory local planning has assumed central importance following the recognition that decentralized government provides a necessary framework for sustainable rural development efforts and good local governance (Chinsinga, 2003). Further, Chilinde et al (2008) observe that the reforms have provided an operational policy framework for community driven development of which community participation forms an integral part. The national decentralization policy states that it is through the local government structure that community participation in development projects can be effectively utilized for development of the rural people (Malawi Government, 1998). Decentralization is thus recognized as being a vital tool in enhancing participatory democracy because it enables local people to identify and establish means of assuming control, power, representation and authority in development decision making at the lowest levels of governance.

Community participation, with all the different forms it has taken since the pre-colonial times, has been adopted as one of the most dominant approaches to poverty

reduction strategies. At the national level, policies and programmes have been formulated and implemented with clearly stated intentions of the need to promote the direct active involvement of the local people at all levels of the development process. The emphasis on community participation is to a large extent attributable to the prevailing view in government that the deeply entrenched poverty in Malawi is due to decades of top-down policies during the one party system of government (Dulani 2003). It is assumed that the bottom-up approaches to development planning would provide a basis for development projects that truly reflect people's needs.

The implementation of nationwide programmes that were focused on promoting community driven development, such as the MASAF, is testimony to the changes in approach to poverty reduction and rural development. The introduction of such initiatives as MASAF gave communities the opportunity and power to participate more fully in their development (Tizifa 2010). In addition, the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP) launched in 2002 had at its core the philosophy of empowerment, recognizing that the poor should not be treated as helpless victims in need of handouts and passive recipients of trickle-down growth but rather as masters of their own destiny (Government of Malawi, 2002). More recently, the Malawi Growth and Development Strategy 2 (MGDS 2) has spelled out clearly that efforts to achieve development are inadequate if they are not people-centered (Government of Malawi, 2011).

1.1.3. Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) as Development Actors

Most development agencies have recognized that some form of community participation is necessary for development to be relevant, empowering, and sustainable (Hickey and Mohan, 2004). Presently it is almost impossible to find any development

agency implementing a development project without claims of “participatory approaches” and a stress on bottom-up planning. Correspondingly, the idea of local people’s participation in identifying, planning, implementing, managing and evaluating their own development has found its way into most of their rural development plans and programmes. In Malawi, the re-introduction of democratic governance in 1994, notwithstanding obstacles in its practicality, eased restrictions on various NGOs as development actors working to bring about rural development. This multi-party era led to a liberalization of NGO activity in grassroots development. This was in contrast to the period before when the one-party system of government was very suspicious of development NGOs. Kishindo (2000) observed that NGOs such as OXFAM, ACTION AID, and Save the Children Fund (USA) have played an important role in facilitating community projects in some parts of the country.

One such development agency, World Vision International (Malawi), is an international NGO implementing a long-term community development programme in Mpamba-Chikwina area, Nkhata-Bay district. The programme consists of a fisheries, microfinance credit, bee keeping and fruit juice making projects. According to the NGO, partnership with the Mpamba-Chikwina (MPACHI) communities is designed to meet the critical needs of the communities. Of particular importance in this study was the Mpamba-Chikwina Integrated Fish Farming (MPACHI IFF) Project established in 2008 by World Vision Malawi (WVM) in the Mpamba-Chikwina Area Development Programme (ADP) to promote integrated fish farming for 1000 households during a four-year life span. The ADP is located in the area of Traditional Authority (T/A) Timbiri and Sub-Traditional Authority (STA) Nyaluwanga. The project has seen the community

constructing over 950 fish ponds in the area. During the three years of implementation of the project, 85 farmers' clubs composed of 1020 farmers (234 Females and 786 Males) were engaged in fish farming.

In pursuing project success outcomes, the NGO recognizes that successful project implementation is contingent upon the active participation of the community at all levels of the project (WVM, 2011). The organization conceptualized early and sustained community participation as a tool to achieving ownership and sustainability of the project. As a result, the initial stated intentions of the NGO were that the community would define its critical needs and suggest possible solutions. The role of the NGO, as an outside institution, was to provide financial and material resources; enhance communication and information sharing between the community and other stakeholders; and facilitate the management of the project by the community. In other words, the community would be entrusted with the responsibility of identifying the need or problem, exploring possible options to meet the need, choosing the best solution to remedy the problem, implementing the solution, management but also monitoring and evaluating the project. Thus the role of the NGO was supposed to be minimal as compared to that of the community.

1.2. Problem Statement

It is widely recognized in the development discourse that despite the widespread appeal and prominence of the notion of “participation”, there are different degrees and kinds of participation both in theory and practice (Arnstein, 1969; Pretty, 1995; White, 1995). There are equally different reasons and motives why certain kinds and degrees of participation are adopted leaving out others. The reasons and motives may also differ

between and among actors involved in a particular developmental process. White (1995), for example, observes that the interests of outsiders who design and implement development programmes in the participation of the community do not always match with how the participating communities themselves see their participation and what they expect to get out of it. But whatever interests, motives, and desires in participation are, the kind and degree of participation in practice is an outcome of factors at play that may also in turn determine whether or not the nature of development pursued is top-down or bottom-up.

With particular reference to the Mpamba-Chikwina development project, it is stated that the intentions of the NGO were oriented towards a demand driven project. In practice, however, they might have been subject to factors that might have determined the kind and degree of participation. This study sought to conduct an empirical exploration into the determinants of the degree and kind of community participation in the NGO-initiated Mpamba-Chikwina project. Malawi presents a different context altogether from other countries with its distinct social, political, economic and environmental factors that may in turn influence any development process in a different way. Most studies have focused on participation in its broadest sense without paying attention to the varying levels and degrees that are embedded in it and that may in practice mean different things to different people. Others have concentrated on investigations into the discrepancy between the rhetoric and actual practice of participatory development (Chiweza, 2005; Rose, 2003; Bloom et al, 2005).

The purpose of this study, therefore, was to investigate factors that influenced the degree and kind of community participation at different stages of the Mpamba-Chikwina

IFF project. This would add valuable knowledge to existing literature on participation and development. The study thus attempted to examine the scope of what shaped which form of participation in light of the project's stated goals, objectives and its guiding principles.

1.3. Aim

The aim of the study was to explore factors that influenced the degree and kind of community participation at different stages of the Mpamba-Chikwina Integrated Fish Farming project cycle.

1.3.1. Specific Objectives

The specific objectives of the study were:

- ¶ To investigate the extent of community participation in the process of need identification;
- ¶ To examine mechanisms that would facilitate or impede community participation; and
- ¶ To identify mechanisms put in place to ensure project sustainability.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The identification of factors that determine the nature of participation in practice and in turn its potential influence on the nature of development approach adopted is important for consideration by development practitioners, policy makers, non-governmental organizations, communities as well as researchers, among others. It is vital because if participation is seen as key to the achievement of sustainable development and the enhancement of democracy, then it must be implemented in its most genuine form; or

as expressed in this study, its “highest degree”. To do this, therefore, requires the promotion of those factors that would result into generation of such outcomes, which this study fully sought to establish. Equally, it translates into minimizing or completely eliminating those factors that result into non-participation or other related forms of it at the community level. This study, therefore, is significant in the sense that it generates potential knowledge of NGO-community relationship in defining development needs. It makes a contribution to the body of knowledge on community participation by identifying factors that influence the forms that participation takes in practice. This is an important way of gap filling in the knowledge and literature of community participation and development projects particularly in NGO-initiated and facilitated projects in rural areas of Malawi. Thus the study sought to bring to light factors, opportunities and obstacles, if any, which encourage or hinder degrees of community participation in practice.

1.5. Definition of Terms

In this study, the following are definitions of word and phrases as they are used in this study:

- ¶ ***Community Participation:*** an active process whereby development project beneficiaries influence the direction and execution of development projects in order to enhance their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self reliance and other such values that they cherish rather than merely receive a share of project benefits.
- ¶ ***Participation:*** The ability of people to take an active role to influence their activities in such a way as to enhance their well being

¶ ***Degree:*** The extent of an action or activity.

¶ ***Development:*** Positive change in the quality of life

1.6. Organization of the Thesis

Chapter 1 is the introduction which gives the background information, states the problem, objectives of the study and assumptions. Chapter 2 reviews literature related to the topic of study as well as providing the theoretical framework that guided the research study. Chapter 3 describes the study methodology. Chapter 4 discusses the study findings. Chapter 5 provides the conclusion and implications of the study.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Literature Review

2.1.1. The Contested Nature of Community and Community Development

The concept of ‘community’ remains highly contested and complex amongst various actors such as theorists, development policy makers as well as practitioners in the development discourse and practice. Paul (1987) observed that the concept was a matter on which there was considerable disagreement amongst scholars and development practitioners. Because it means different things to different people, the concept takes on different forms, meanings and interpretations. This was aptly emphasized by Plant (1974) by stating that ‘community’ was a complex and ambiguous term which reflected different values, agendas and interests. He argued that the term did not carry a uniform understanding across space. Cleaver (2001), on the other hand, claimed that in practice the concept was a myth. He contended that contrary to the view taken by proponents of participatory development, ‘community’ was not a ‘natural’ social entity characterized by solidaristic relations as they sought to imply. Acknowledging the contested nature of the term, Tesoriero (2010) suggested that it was incumbent upon anyone wishing to use the term to provide some clarification of the meaning ascribed to it.

The lack of clarity and agreement on what really constitutes ‘community’ in practice has attracted widespread criticisms and divergent views on its boundaries. Tesoriero (2010) claimed that one critical question associated with any definition of community was whether or not communities had to be geographically based and defined in terms of a particular locality. He thus made a distinction between geographical and functional communities; the former being based on locality and the latter on some common element other than locality, providing a sense of identity. Sihlongonyane (2009) associated these aspects of communities with ‘communities’ that were identified up to the 1950s and 1960s. He observed that during this period, a community was represented as a geographical area with a defined identity and a set of common values. According to him the geographical aspect provided a setting in which communities could share resources and common-hood. Cleaver (2001), however, criticized such conceptualization of the term arguing that there was considerable evidence of the overlapping, shifting and subjective nature of ‘communities’ and the permeability of boundaries. Thus the demarcation of geographical boundaries was seen to be a futile attempt in distinguishing such social arrangement.

Kishindo (2012) used the geographical description to characterize the social entity of local people involved in development efforts undertaken by the Malawi government at independence in 1964. He argued that the village in Malawi was taken as a unit of ‘community development’. In this sense of the term, communities were synonymous with a village or group of villages that operated in partnership with the state to ameliorate problems faced by the local people. They took Uphoff’s (2001) description where a community was seen to have a very visible manifestation: a set of dwellings and

associated residents clustered together or at least designated by common agreement to 'belong' to a particular village. Thus communities were geographically based and defined. On the other hand, the functional description of community entailed a social organization that might or might not be locally based but whose members share some sense of belongingness, acceptance and being valued. Tesoriero (2010) cited the academic community, religious community, and some groups of people with specific characteristics such as people with disabilities as constituting functional communities.

In a study that sought to develop an alternative model of 'community' to the Social Investment Fund (SIF), Anyidoho (2010) disclosed that despite the repeated references to the notion of community, none of the SIF publications had made an attempt to explicitly define the concept. He contended that in project-based development work, a community referred to a geographically bounded area within which there was assumed to be a clearly defined group of people with shared interests, values and aspirations. It is, however, important to note that such conceptualizations of 'community' only tend to look at the community as a homogenous grouping of people moving towards some specific goal.

But Mansuri and Rao (2004) argued that although such distinctions of 'communities' were important, the resulting forms or definitions of 'community' should not be used to denote culturally and politically homogenous social systems or one that at least is internally cohesive and more or less harmonious. In other words, the people that are seen to be a community must not be seen as being a homogenous collection because there are significant internal differences in such groups. There are within-group heterogeneities that must be taken into account in understanding the nature of

communities. Therefore, defining the conceptual and geographical boundaries of a community is not always straightforward. In addition, the unqualified use of the term obscures local structures of economic and social power that are likely to strongly influence the outcome of development projects (Mansuri and Rao 2004). Cleaver (2001) asserted that more realistically a 'community' must be seen as a site of solidarity and conflict, strong alliances and power. Thus there might be differences within the groups that may have an implication for the outcome of development projects being pursued.

The concept of 'community' is so complex that in order to bring about some clarity, Tesoriero (2010) simply set out what he considered as the basic characteristics that form the basis of understanding what a 'community' was in practice. He identified the first basic characteristic of a community as 'human scale'. In this, the argument was that for a community to be distinguished from the rest of the groupings, it had to depict the ability of its members to readily know each other, easily interact and have structures that they could not only own but also control for easy facilitation of their own genuine empowerment. This was in contrast to the large, impersonalized, and centralized structures.

Secondly, Tesoriero contended that a community was also unique in the sense that it generated or contributed to the formation of the sense of identity in individuals. The term, in this sense, was seen as incorporating some sense of feeling of belonging or being accepted and valued within a group which ultimately calls for allegiance or loyalty from its members. Sihlongonyane (2009) shared this view by arguing that identity up to the 1950s and 1960s was viewed as an expression of common interests. Thirdly, a community was identified as one with its members' obligations in terms of rights and

responsibilities to the group. The understanding was that community members should contribute to the life of the community by participating actively in at least some of the activities and at the same time contribute to the maintenance of the community structure (Tesoriero 2010). Thus community involvement or participation was mostly seen to be an active endeavor and not just passive experience.

The fourth attribute of community identified was the involvement of structures and relationships that enabled people to interact with each other in a greater variety of roles which were less differentiated and contractual and which encouraged interactions with others as ‘whole people’ rather than as limited and defined roles or categories. Finally, culture was another characteristic that distinguished a community in the sense that a community enabled the valuing, production and expression of a local or community based culture which had unique characteristics associated with that community and which enabled people to become active producers of that culture rather than passive consumers and which would thus encourage both diversity among communities and broad based participation (Tesoriero 2010). This is strikingly different from the culture that is produced and consumed at a mass level.

By extension, ‘community development’ is equally not a cohesive and unified concept but rather one that represented a repertoire of meanings which encompassed many shades of community development that were not necessarily mutually compatible but reflected particular political and social practices in the contexts in which they occurred (Sihlongonyane 2010). In terms of evolution, for instance, Sihlongonyane contended that community development has acquired different meanings, theoretical grounding and practical applications particularly in the latter half of the twentieth

century. Chinsinga and Kayuni (2008) also observed that the complexity of the notion of community development was reflected in its theoretical conception. In their view, community development was conceived as a process, method, program and even as a movement. As a process, community development was conceptualized as proceeding in stages which permitted movement from one state which was less desirable to another which was more desirable; as a method, community development was perceived as a means of accomplishing something desirable; as a programme, community development was regarded as a set of activities whose implementation facilitated the attainment of the objectives of a programme; and as a movement, community development was construed as something which might have been animated by society and communities aimed at bringing about progress.

Kishindo (2012) observed that in Malawi, community development was essentially a rural phenomenon. He stated that at independence in 1964, the Malawi government adopted community development as a strategy to develop the rural areas where the majority of the country's population lived. According to him, community development was officially conceptualized as a partnership between the state on the one hand and people inhabiting a specific village or group of villages on the other, to find solutions to the people's pressing needs. In a situational analysis of community development involving extensive field-work, however, the notion of community development was seen not as straightforward as it might have seemed to appear in that it meant different things to different people. In a study, Chinsinga and Kayuni (2008) demonstrated that there was no common understanding of the concept even among common development experts in the NGOs and government ministries.

2.1.2. The Nature and Limits of Community Participation in and for Development

‘Community’ and ‘participation’ are complex terms and taken together, can be interpreted differently according to the context and rationale (Rose 2003). Like the concept of community, participation, as argued by Pretty (1995), should not be accepted without appropriate clarification. This is because much of how we do participation depends on what we think it is and who we think it should be for (Gaventa 2004). Not surprisingly, therefore, there appears to be little agreement on what the term actually means as well as what its basic dimensions are despite its being popular. Cohen and Uphoff (1980) claimed that anybody dealing with the problem of participation finds the term ambiguous and that those that are studying it are increasingly under pressure to define it. Their work suggested that participation is not a thing that exists or does not exist but that two most important aspects are its dimension and context which they argued were critical in defining the good practice of any form of participation. The former primarily concerns the kind of participation taking place, the sets of individuals, actors, or stakeholders involved in the participatory process and the various features of how the process occurs. Questions of how genuine participation is in practice tend to fall within this aspect of participation. The latter focuses on the relationship between a rural development project’s characteristics and the patterns of actual participation which emerge. Context also refers to the environment in which participation takes place. Such an environment has varied characteristics that end up influencing the pattern of participation emerging from the development process.

Combining these much debated concepts, Paul (1987) defined community participation as an active process whereby development project beneficiaries influenced

the direction and execution of development projects in order to enhance their well-being in terms of income, personal growth, self reliance and other such values that they cherish rather than merely receive a share of project benefits. In seeking to establish who benefits from community participation, it is important to recognize the fact that participation is practised differently, by different actors, in differing situations and with different motives. As highlighted in preceding paragraphs, community participatory development must be analyzed with particular reference to project context. Promoting the benefits of community participation, however, requires a careful understanding of what kind of participation is necessary to achieve the same. The increasing need for this understanding has been aided by the widespread emergence and development of normative assumptions on how participation should be practised and models on how it is actually practised. These spell out the best practice of participation and the roles of actors in space. Basic to all forms of participation, however, are power dynamics in the participatory process (Tizifa, 2010).

Ultimately, development agencies and their facilitators employ certain kinds of participation to achieve their agendas and not those of the primary stakeholders. White (1995), for instance, asserted that in a nominal form of participation, facilitators simply require participation for legitimation while in a transformative form their interest is on the empowerment of the participants with an aim of raising the consciousness of the participants. Community participation may also be used as a means of reducing the cost of development process as well as ensuring that there's timely completion of plans. This is the efficiency claim of participation which Kishindo (2003) reported was the strategy

of the Malawi government in achieving community development prior to the attainment of multiparty politics.

In a health promotion research study that sought to evaluate the process of community participation in health programmes, Butterfoss (2006) pointed out factors that promoted successful participation in a large scale community based organization. He identified knowledge of community history, organizational resources, influential structures and inter-organizational networks. These factors were said to be critical especially in the planning stage and need identification exercise in which communities were engaged and influenced their outcomes. He also mentioned early identification and discussion of barriers to community change. This is ably facilitated by an understanding of the history of community initiatives and interactions in space. It is also in tandem with the idea of utilizing indigenous knowledge and complementing it with professional knowledge of what Chambers (1983) described as outsiders. Butterfoss (2006) also identified the design of clearly stated roles and time commitments for community members as empowering communities and enhancing ownership prospects. Thus where projects and programmes are community run, the community members themselves must manage such allocations. Lastly, he identified the importance of planned reinforcement and incentives for community participation. This, he argued, might involve defining the expectations of community members in participation.

Lack of community participation may be an indicator and a reason of the kind of participation taking place. In a MASAF evaluation study of participation and community management of assets, Chilowa et al (2003) reported the reasons why members of households did not participate at various stages of the development projects. It was

reported that the main reason community participation was not genuine was the fact that the community members were away or not invited during the selection of the project, election of committees, implementing and maintaining assets. Thus there was limited participation in key decision making processes and this affected the levels of community participation throughout the development processes. Those that participated reported that they considered the projects worthwhile, that the projects matched communities' needs and that they considered their participation as a community obligation.

Miraftab (2003) also examined community participation in human settlement development processes in a post-apartheid South African context. He revealed that one of the most important requirements for effective community participation was the presence of a strong grassroots movement motivated to take part in the development processes. In this line of thinking, community participation attained its higher degree when there was a strong grassroots movement than when it played a passive role in development projects that had an impact on the lives and welfare of participants. This was because taking part in development processes might have had a lot of meanings but in its genuine practical form, it involved actively defining needs, making decisions and setting up mechanisms to achieve solutions (Butterfoss 2006). Community participation has also been distinguished in terms of whether it is a means to an end or an end in itself. Miraftab (2003) described the former as involving the mobilization of communities for effective and efficient project implementation. As an end, community participation was seen as empowerment derived from the participation of the community in human settlement development where participation was seen beyond implementing a project and included defining project goals, objectives and formulating policies.

However, unless well-documented limitations of participation are acknowledged, it will continue to contain within it the seeds of its own destruction, and worse, harm those it would claim to help (Cooke, 2001). This is especially true because of the dominance and arguably monopoly, participation, as a new development paradigm, has in development discourse and practice. Participation has become an act of faith in development; something we believe in but rarely question (Cleaver, 2001). But a rigorous critical analysis of participatory approaches and the heroic claims and arguments made for participatory development reveals a broad range of limits associated with these. Questions in the development literature are raised about what participation can and cannot do and enormous evidence of the scant evidence of their efficiency and effectiveness has emerged both of which reveal the severe inadequacy of participatory development as a “new development paradigm” and as a “new orthodoxy”.

Mosse (2001) questioned the potential that participatory development approaches, with their focus on ‘people’s knowledge’, have to provide a radical change to existing power structures, professional positions and knowledge systems. He observed that to the contrary, participatory approaches have proved compatible with top-down planning systems and have not heralded changes in prevailing institutional practices of development. For instance, he contended that participatory approaches placed new demands on resources, implied a significant departure from normal procedures and decision making systems and/or are implemented by people who may as yet have little to gain from the accountabilities they signify. In short, there are often strong disincentives to adopting participatory approaches. Mosse pointed out that in India, for example, participatory approaches are still mostly pursued where external agency funding is

available to cover the perceived additional risks. In summary, therefore, the arguments presented challenge the populist assumption that attention to 'local knowledge' through participatory learning will redefine the relationship between local communities and development organizations.

Participatory development has also been attacked from a social psychological point of view. Social psychological perspectives provided critical analyses of what happens when people work together in groups. Social psychological analyses demonstrate how individuals' thoughts, feelings, and behaviours are influenced by the presence-real, imagined or implied - of others (Cooke and Kothari 2001). It was believed, from this point of departure that such claims of efficiency, effectiveness and empowerment really did not have a place of hope for development whether seen as a process or as an end in itself. Instead, problems could arise as a consequence of the face-to-face interactions that are a defining feature of participatory approaches. Cooke (2001), for example, argued that specifically decisions regarding participation had to be made that were more risky with which no one really agreed, or that rationalized harm to others, and they could be used consciously or otherwise to manipulate group members' ideological beliefs. Working in groups in coming up with decisions was seen not to be the right approach to achieving development outcomes and problem solving because of the risks associated with such an approach.

Kothari (2001) also challenged the understanding of power that is conceptualized in participatory development discourses and practice. She argued that power must not be viewed as something divided between those who have it and those who do not but rather as something that circulates. This is in stark contrast to the perception of power held by

participatory development practitioners and exponents. Chambers (1997) for instance, called for power shift and reversals in the role, behaviors, relationships and learning between outsiders and local people.

Participatory approaches were also seen in many instances as viewing power in terms of a division where the micro is set against the macro; the margins against the centre; and finally the powerless against the powerful. Kothari (2001) observed that such dichotomies further strengthened the assumption that people who wield power are located at institutional centres, while those who are subjugated and subjected to power are to be found at the local or regional level – hence the valorization of ‘local knowledge’ and continued belief in the empowerment of local people through participation. She further stated that power is everywhere and can be particularly analyzed through the creation of social norms or customs that are practiced through the society. This, therefore, it was considered, disrupts the various dichotomies in terms of macro/micro, central/local, powerful/powerless set by participatory approaches where the former are sites and holders of power and the latter are subjects of power. Instead, all individuals are vehicles of power (Kothari, 2001).

2.1.3. NGOs as Agents of Development

In an attempt to identify the dominant and subsidiary themes in rural development, Ellis and Biggs (2001) revealed that NGOs rose to prominence in the decade of the 1980s. During that period rural development was envisaged as a participatory process that empowered rural dwellers to take control of their own priorities for change. By extension, NGOs emerged as agents for rural development occurring at the same time as and benefiting from the declining enthusiasm for big governments. This

followed growing disenchantments with the performance of state rural development agencies. From this period, NGOs have penetrated into rural and urban areas working with communities to bring about development using different strategies. Over time, these NGOs were rich in their diversity of purpose and experience hence may present difficulties for attempts to classify them precisely.

Despite this challenge, Korten (1987) identified three distinctive orientations in programming strategies: relief and welfare; local self-reliance; and sustainable systems development. These differences, however, may co-exist within any NGO-local community partnership. The first orientation was primarily concerned with delivering welfare services to the poor and less fortunate such as refugees and victims of natural disasters. Limitations associated with the welfare approach as a development strategy, resulted into the emergence of the self-reliance approach which was characterized by the community development style projects such as those to do with improved farm practices and preventive health. The sustainability approach called for the involvement of public and private actors in participatory NGO-community work.

Wijayaratna (2004) contended that NGOs help to reduce government domination at local level and that when they are in operation; their primary role in integrated rural development is to facilitate institutional development and the strengthening of the community. He further pointed out that at the community level, for rural development to be effective and sustainable, the challenge is to facilitate and institutionalize a process through which local communities themselves would take control of local organizations and use them to satisfy their own local needs. This was the part that NGOs could actively play in a participatory community development where they were perceived as outside

actors. Chinsinga (2003) shared the assertion by arguing that the creation and development of local organization is important in the assertion of community rights to development. Participation as a right can, therefore, be readily achieved where the functional structures have been institutionalized for the participants to play their participatory roles. NGOs can facilitate this process by playing a catalytic role in the form of planned interventions. In the case of a development project, what this means is that community members are responsible for all the major decisions at various stages of the intervention and NGO officials are only entrusted with the role of facilitator and ensuring that local knowledge and 'expert' knowledge are blended together in a complementary manner to achieve the desired outcomes.

In a study that sought to investigate the role of NGOs in the battle against HIV and AIDS, Strain (2009) observed that NGOs have a comparative advantage over larger state structures and that they are a panacea to Africa's troubles. He stated that NGOs had inherent advantages that lend themselves particularly well to development. The first notable advantage is their access to local knowledge. This enables the NGOs to tailor their development initiatives to local realities hence increasing chances of project success. Second is the fact that the connection that the NGOs have with the communities that they serve, enables them to be sensitive to local cultures and beliefs. Third, NGOs also tend to incorporate a wide variety of actors in their work. They will, for instance, tend to include government officials, traditional leaders and religious leaders. This may ensure that certain excluded groups are represented but also enables the NGO-community partnership to generate comprehensive and holistic agendas towards achieving development goals.

In terms of their work in Malawi's community development initiatives, NGOs have been very influential especially with the scarcity of government sponsored extension workers working in communities. In a study on community development in Malawi, Chinsinga and Kayuni (2008), however, contended that despite their phenomenal contribution to community development, most NGOs tended to highlight bottom-up approaches only on paper. They argued that most of the NGOs tended to be influenced by the demands of their funders. They stated that the agenda that was mostly advocated by most NGOs was that of donors and not the communities themselves whose lives community development initiatives were targeted to transform.

Hailey (2001) also criticized donors who force their agendas on to the NGO programmes without understanding the context in which these are working. He observed that most of the programmes and projects implemented by NGOs were advocated by donors who sat on some high moral ground and as such were immune to criticism. In reviewing evidence from successful South Asian NGOs in 1998, Hailey (2001) noted that in one Bangladeshi-based NGO donors simply imposed their approach to development on the development facilitators and communities resulting in NGO staff admitting that this implied that donors had lost trust in their work and relationship with communities. This according to them was one of the reasons the kind of participation was tokenism. Foucault (1973) equally argued that unless we understand why community development in general and development 'experts' in particular promote such participative approaches we will never gain a critical insight into the role and influence of donors.

2.2. Theoretical Framework

2.2.1. Introduction

This study was guided by the Rational Choice Theory and a Framework of Typologies of Participation. The theory was initially grounded in behaviorist psychology and established by George Homans (1967). This family of theories provided a critical and analytical backing of arguments explaining individual human behavior and social action as well as motivations that underpin the same. It was, therefore, best suited as an explanation for the participation of the various individual actions and social phenomena depicted in the interactions involving the different actors in the Mpamba-Chikwina IFF namely NGO officials, government officials as well as the community members and their representatives. The Framework of Typologies of Participation on the other hand was a framework specifically devised not only to place the study in the participatory development literature but also to provide a guided analysis of the results emerging from the study by using the assumptions made by the RCT.

2.2.2. The Framework of Typologies of Participation

In the framework (Table 1), the degrees and kinds of participation adopted in this study as a hallmark for reference were a combination of typologies adapted from participatory development literature (White, 1995; Pretty, 1996; Arnstein, 1969; Rose 2003). The typologies, which often tend to be normative or evaluative, provided a useful starting point for differentiating degrees and kinds of participation. These typologies were Arnstein's (1969) "ladder of citizen participation"; Pretty's (1995) "a typology of participation"; and White's (1996) "a typology of interests". The degrees were categorized into 3 levels namely; low-level degrees, mid-level degrees, and high-level

degrees. Depending on the characteristics depicted with reference to each of these levels, it was possible to categorize the various actions, behaviours and attributes of individuals and social interaction and link with the degree and kind of participation at each level. There was thus a distinct linkage between the RCT and the degrees of participation which this section seeks to demonstrate. The table also captures the function that participation serves in practice with reference to the interests of those that employ it. It must be pointed out, however, that the table or framework below does not exhaust all the characteristics of each degree and kind of participation. It simply is illustrative and not exhaustive.

Table 1. Framework of Typologies of Participation
(Adapted from White, 1995; Pretty, 1995; Rose, 2003; Arnstein, 1969)

DEGREES	FORM	CHARACTERISTICS	FUNCTION
Low-level	Nominal Non-Participation Passive participation	People told what has been decided without any listening to their responses. Beneficiaries' interest is inclusion and NGOs interest is legitimization. Participation designed for power holders to "cure" and "educate" the participants.	Display
Mid-level	Functional Pseudo-participation Tokenism	People participate by forming groups to meet predetermined objectives related to the project. Citizens informed of decisions and expected to act what has already been decided. Citizens hear and are heard but lack power to ensure that their views are heeded.	Means Efficiency
High-level	Genuine participation Empowerment Citizen Control	Ability to take part in real decision making power with all members having equal power to determine outcome of decisions and share in joint activity. People practically experience considering options, making decisions and collective actions to fight injustice. People participate in joint analysis, development of action plans and formation or strengthening of institutions.	End Transformation

In Arnstein's typology, participation has been conceived as a redistribution of power, with the amount of power to the citizens signifying a particular kind or degree of participation. Hence the different rungs on the ladder relate directly to the degree or extent to which citizens have assumed decision making power to control with complete citizen control being defined as the highest degree. Thus the degrees of participation range from the lowest level to the highest. Citizen control, delegated power, and partnership constitute what Arnstein refers to as citizen power and this is the highest level of participation. The intermediate level is identified by the depiction of consultation, informing and placation and these are in turn categorized into tokenism form of participation. The lowest level of participation is identified by therapy and manipulation and these constitute non-participation.

While Arnstein's (1969) typology looked at participation mostly from the perspective of those on the receiving end, Pretty's (1995) normative typology of participation looked at participation from the angle of those that initiate participatory processes (Cornwall, 2008). The basic argument was that the many ways in which development organizations interpret and use the term 'participation' can be resolved into seven clear types. In this typology, he prescribed the good forms, kinds or degrees of participation by also describing the bad forms. There is a clear discrepancy between the highest form of participation identified as self-mobilization and the lowest level characterized as manipulative participation with the former primarily emphasizing power resting in the hands of the community to control decisions and establish contacts that aid in the productivity of resources while the latter is chiefly concerned with participation as a pretence whereby peoples representatives have no real power to influence decision

making.

This was strikingly different from Sarah White's (1996) typology of interests in which she acknowledged functions of participation and the different forms and interests that it carries and serves respectively. She categorized forms of participation into nominal, instrumental, representative and transformational and argued that the interests of those outsiders who design and implement development programmes in the participation of others may not always match with how the participants themselves see their participation and what they expect to get out of it. As a result, she outlined the interests of these different actors in which form of participation and the function that a particular form of participation. The understanding was that apart from defining the type of participation in community development projects, a mismatch of interests might eventually create challenges and abuses in the practice of participation.

2.2.3. The Rational Choice Theory (RCT)

The RCT was built around the idea that all action is fundamentally 'rational' in character and that people calculate the likely costs and benefits of any action before deciding what to do. Individuals are seen to be rational beings and that all their actions are rationally motivated, instrumental and calculative (Scott, 2000). This view ultimately dismisses all other forms and kinds of actions no matter how irrational or non-rational a particular action may be perceived to be. The underlying assumption of the theory is that complex social phenomena can be explained in terms of elementary or basic individual action of which they are part of. Elster (1989) elaborated this assumption and suggested that if we are to understand or explain social institutions or social change, we must show how they arise as a result of individual action or interaction. Thus all analysis must start

out from the actions of individuals because all social phenomena are reducible to individual actions.

The theory also stipulated that individuals are motivated by wants or goals that express their 'preferences' and that the individuals act within specific, given constraints and on the basis of information they have about the conditions under which they are acting. However, because individuals cannot achieve all they want and all the goals they set, they must make choices in relation to both their goals and the means of attaining the goals. The theory also holds that individuals must anticipate outcomes from alternative courses of action and choose that which will give them the greatest satisfaction. Social interaction is in this theory also seen as a process of social exchange that involves the exchange of approval and other valuable behaviours. It is also seen to carry costs and rewards depending on the kind of action taken. The theory also sees the threat of a punishment after an individual's action and promise of a reward carrying the same power and influence as the actual punishment and reward. Thus threats and inducements have a motivating role in conditioning human behavior.

The continuance of the social exchange (interaction) is dependent upon whether or not both parties in the interaction are able to derive a profit from such interaction. The profit is measured by the rewards gained minus the costs incurred. This means once each participant incurs more costs than rewards, the incentive to continue with the interaction disappears. A sustained social relationship, therefore, rests upon striking a balance to achieve mutual profitability. This is because participants calculate the rewards and costs involved in the interaction and those that experience more of losses will tend to withdraw and seek alternative means of interaction in which more profits would be gained. Because

the resources that people bring are rarely equal, exchange relations are also power relations. The outcome of any particular exchange, therefore, will depend upon the relative power of the participants. This bargaining power varies with the dependence of each participant on the exchange relationship, and this dependence varies, in turn, on the extent to which there are alternatives available to them. Where there are other equally profitable alternative social interactions, the dependence of people on a particular social exchange will be relatively lower than in cases where a sole social exchange exists.

2.2.4. Relevance of the Theoretical Framework to the Study

The rational choice theory was the most relevant construction of ideas for this study as a guide in formulation and implementation of objectives that sought to understand social behavior and action and reveal the degrees and kinds of participation. The assumption held by the theory that before participating in social interaction, individuals make calculative decisions by assessing the possible costs and rewards involved in social interaction helped in understanding decisions and actions concerning participation taken by actors involved in the project. Kishindo (2003) reinforced this observation by arguing that in community participation, the benefits expected from participation are compared with the costs in terms of time and effort and people will participate willingly only when the benefits are perceived to outweigh the costs. This can be seen to be the rational aspect of all actions carried out by individuals. There was a clear connection between this aspect of the RCT and the degrees of participation in that by understanding the calculative decisions of individuals in terms of costs and rewards ascribed to their actions and behaviours, it was possible to identify the interests individuals had in the participation of others. It was these interests that in turn determined

whether the forms of participation adopted would allow for the active participation of others or not. Such interests shaped the degree of participation demonstrated in the Framework of Typologies in terms of whether it was low-level, mid-level or high-level degree.

In addition, the process of need identification in the Mpamba-Chikwina project was best assessed by what the theory terms ‘expression of preferences.’ This is the product of motivation of individuals by their wants and goals. It was, therefore, important to understand what the wants and goals of individuals were in the initial project stages in order to generate ideas on how the need was identified and how the kind of participation adopted was in turn affected by this process. In other words this understanding of preferences helped in identifying deliberate measures that had been put in place or were practiced to influence or determine certain degrees of participation reflected in the framework. Thus some degrees of participation were deliberately reinforced in order to meet the wants and goals of certain actors. These wants and goals expressed as preferences were also vital in the identification of underlying interests and motives of the WVM officials, community members and others in the supposedly participatory project.

RCT was also relevant in the Mpamba-Chikwina study in the sense that it was helpful in predicting the potential for project sustainability based on the kind of participation adopted. The explanation held by the theory was that social interaction, in this case participation, was only sustained when all parties involved acquired more gains than losses in the interaction. Where participants incurred losses, they withdrew and sought other interactions where there were perceived benefits. In the case of the Mpamba-Chikwina project, the losses and gains accruing to the participants were

assessed to determine whether or not there was potential for sustainability. It was clear, for instance, that if low-level degree of participation was the dominant form of participation, chances of the project achieving increased sustainability were minimal as compared to if genuine or high-level degree of participation was registered.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

This chapter details the methodology employed in conducting the research. It describes the area in which the study was conducted, the research design, sampling method employed, tools for data collection, data collection and analysis.

3.2. Study Area

The study was conducted in the area under Traditional Authority (T/A) Timbiri and Sub-Traditional Authority (STA) Nyaluwanga, Mpamba-Chikwina Area Development Programme in Nkhata-Bay District. Nkhata-Bay district is one of districts where there has been a rapid proliferation of NGOs working with rural communities with the aim of bringing about rural development. The area under T/A Timbiri and STA Nyaluwanga had, according to the 2008 Population and Housing Census, a total population of 43,223 people (NSO, 2009). The study area was selected because of its cost-cutting advantages as it was close to the researcher's base. It was anticipated to reduce the amount of time and money involved in carrying out the research.

3.3. Research Design

The study largely adopted a qualitative research design because of its investigative, explanatory and descriptive nature that was seen to be critical in

understanding the scope of participation in practice. The investigation was expected to involve a discovery, description, and an understanding of concepts, behaviours, actions and inactions by the NGO, the government and the community in the management of the supposedly participatory project. It also sought to unearth the relationships between these actors and the associated impact on the levels of community participation and social phenomena. The study was also envisaged to involve understanding the meanings that the people involved in the livelihoods project attached to the actions of those that they interacted with to achieve certain agendas. Thus reality in this study entailed perceptions of people which would change over time and across space. Understanding such ontological and epistemological positions demanded a qualitative research design because of its attributes that involve an in-depth investigation into reasons why people as social beings act the way they do in the social processes as well as understanding factors that shape social phenomenon.

3.4. Sample and Sampling

The population in which this study was interested in was made up of over 85 farmers' clubs composed of 1,020 farmers (234 Females and 786 Males) engaged in fish farming. The study adopted purposive sampling method in order to identify respondents. To identify the project beneficiaries, the approach firstly involved targeting a selected number of conveniently available community beneficiaries in terms of distance and time. The selection was based on the zones (also called Commitment Areas) from which the participants came and these were Kandoli, Luwazi, Luwawa, Mpamba, Chikwina, and Mwambazi. However, Chikwina was not included because of its remoteness which would have implied increasing costs yet the researcher was constrained financially. These

selected participants were members of the Mpamba-Chikwina Fish Farming Association (MPACHI FFA), a grouping that was formed to organize community members and select representatives, usually leaders, to represent the entire community in other fora. Attempts were made to have both male and female representatives in the selected samples. The other targeted participants in the study were key informants representing other actors and stakeholders that had interest in the livelihoods project. These included the officials or project staff from WVM, private consultants involved in initiating the project, as well as officials from the Fisheries Department who provided expert knowledge to the project. Because some of these officials were not known to the researcher snowball sampling method was used to identify them and it also assisted in getting as much available information as possible on the actual participants involved at various stages of the livelihoods project.

3.5. Data Collection

The data collection exercise was conducted over a period of 18 days. The study employed Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) and Key Informant Interviews (KII) in gathering primary data from various sources. Composition of the FGDs was based on one's membership in the project and their convenient availability. A total number of 7 FGDs were conducted with 4 involving MPACHI FFA members taken from 5 of the 6 zones mentioned in the preceding paragraph and 3 of these involved members of the clubs, the lowest level of the hierarchy (see Table 2). The clubs were also part of the project area under the Area Development Programme (ADP) and were structures established by WVM. The FGDs comprised participants with relatively common characteristics, both males and females. The common characteristics were their

membership in the project, the perceived equal income-range and engagement in the same economic activity. During the FGDs, an FGD guide (refer to the Appendix 1) was used in facilitating discussions on issues relating to the MPACHI IFF project. The researcher facilitated the discussions and a skilled and experienced note-taker was available to assist with note-taking. Prior debriefing exercise had taken place to familiarize the note-taker with the objectives of the study. The FGDs were chosen in order to benefit from the interaction that normally characterizes well facilitated FGDs and act as a reliable source of information themselves. Through such interaction the common expressions and phrases could easily be identified for better understanding of the preferred general view.

Table 2. FGDs from Selected Zones

ZONE	NUMBER OF FGDS	MALES	FEMALES
KANDOLI	1	3	4
MPAMBA	2	5	7
LUWAZI	2	4	8
MWAMBAZI	1	6	6
LUWAWA	1	3	3

KIIs were conducted with 5 WVM officials working as Development Facilitators (DFs). Other key informants were 2 officers from the Fisheries Department and the other 2 were district agriculture officers from the District Assembly. Secondary data was collected from project documents and other reports relating to the project such as the Baseline Study Technical Report produced by independent consultants in 2009 and the WVM's own Project Semi-Annual Report, among others. These tools used were critical in generating much relevant information with the targeted community as well as those

other actors on the side of WVM and government that had a stake in the participation of the community members in the livelihoods project.

3.6. Data Collection Instruments

The study used 3 different interview guides as tools for data collection involving the three different groups of respondents namely WVI officials, community members, and government officials (refer to the Appendix 2). The guides were developed to solicit information that was qualitative in nature and in a focused manner. Open-ended questions were used in the guides as a way of identifying and stimulating the generation of perceptions, attitudes, behaviours and roles of the various actors in a descriptive and explanatory manner. The questions were mainly aimed at meeting the specific objectives of the study.

3.7. Data Analysis

The study employed content analysis as a method of analyzing data generated by all the tools. Content analysis is a systematic and objective process of determining the content of published documents, written notes and other such information. In this study, the analysis involved organizing and summarizing the data collected by use of key words and themes, in terms of the basic idea emerging or predefined by the researcher, as coding units. While some codes were predefined by the researcher, others emerged as the analysis was conducted. Depending on how similar or different these were, they were categorized in a way that enables the researcher to draw inferences.

This process thus involved identifying the common expressions, identifications, characterizations and descriptions that emerged from among the various sources of data in the form of concepts, ideas, phrases, terminologies and interactions. In other words, the

ideas, words, perceptions and arguments that came out by use of the data collection tools and interactions as a general outcome, were used to build an argument of what the general commonly felt truth constituted. Thus categories and sub-categories were built to contain similar and different bits of data that were arranged according to how they could be subjected to comparison. The techniques of identifying themes ranged from quick word counts to in-depth line by line scrutiny to create the categories. These thematic categories were important because without them, investigators have nothing to describe, nothing to compare, and nothing to explain (Ryan and Bernard, 2003).

3.8. Ethical Considerations

In this study, the various standard ethics of empirical research were taken into consideration. Permission and consent were sought and obtained from various relevant authorities beginning with the Programme Manager for WVM, the community members and officials from the district council. Their participation in the study was based on the consent they had granted and the confidentiality of their input and the discussions was assured. The information sought and acquired was purely for purposes of this study and thus their identity and used tools were not open for public consumption.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1. Introduction

This chapter contains an analysis of the data collected as well as a discussion of the findings. In order to address the specific objectives of the study, practical questions were directed at various respondents seeking their knowledge, perspectives, and information. The following sections, therefore, provide the findings according the specific objectives of the study. Each sub-section provides an outline of the themes from the various data sources followed by an in-depth discussion of the same.

4.2. The Extent of Community Participation in Need Identification

A number of major and sub-themes on the extent to which the community was involved in the identification of the project as a need emerged from the various FGDs and KIIs. According to both sources, there were no attempts by the NGO to conduct a formal and/or systematic assessment and identification of the needs of the community members prior to the introduction of the project. The NGO officials claimed that this was the case because they had been motivated firstly by the fact that fish farming project had been a success not only in the Mpamba-Chikwina area when it when it was under the government's guidance but also in some parts of the country such as Nchenachena in Rumphi and Domasi in Zomba. Secondly, during their Implementation Schedule, an annual meeting where they related with the community on their various projects within

the ADP, some farmers who had not abandoned fish farming despite government withdrawal in the early 1990s requested the re-introduction of the project in the area. They also claimed that their informal discussions with community members showed that most of the community members were interested to have the project in the area. They admitted, however, that there were conflicting views as regards the informal discussions they had with the community concerning the IFF project with some not in favour of the project citing problems such as land shortages and lack of adequate starting capital among other reasons. This is aptly reported in the quote below as said by one NGO official.

*ṛTikamacheza nawo anthu ena kuno mu ma project ena
amatha kuti uza kuti a k u f u n a u l i ṛWhen we
were chatting with some people from this area they could
tell us that they wanted fish farming)*

On the other hand, according to the majority of the FGD reports, the project was built on an earlier initiative of fish farming in the area that had been started by the government in the 1980s and was abandoned immediately after the change of government in 1994. When WVM came to the area, they organized a public gathering where the idea of fish farming was announced and a number of lead farmers were identified. These farmers (33 in number) were particularly those that still practised fish farming despite government's withdrawal. They received training at Nchenachena in Rumphi where fish farming was already established. Upon coming back they were given fingerings, feeds for fish and had their fish ponds rehabilitated with assistance from WVM. As a result of this initiative and the success that followed on the existing farmers in terms of income generation and household food availability, many other community members became

interested in the project as they also wanted to achieve what the pioneers had. The general view of the FGDs was that the community did not have the opportunity to make a choice on the project and how it had to start. They stated that they received everything for free from WVM and so could not say they did not want the project for fear of losing the free stuff they received. A few others reported that although they had wanted to have the project they had not been consulted by the NGO to have their input taken on board.

*ñ A t i p a s k a n g a v y a w e z i s o n u t e n g
z a k u s a n k h a , m k a (They were giving us h a c h a ò
free things so we did not have the power to choose, a
poor person does not choose)*

Initially, a baseline study had been conducted by independent consultants “to provide baseline or benchmark information on fish farming in the Mpamba-Chikwina ADP upon which subsequent fish farming initiatives could be compared and monitored” (WVM, 2011). This Technical Report revealed that WVM already had within its ADP in the district a very strong fish farming component. The report further indicated that during the study, the community had identified its most prevailing challenges related to participation which included limited availability of land for pond construction, insufficient water supply, lack of technical knowledge in fish farming and scarcity of highly nutritious fish feeds.

On the role of the community in the project it was reported that the community members were simply listening to the advice given by WVM officials especially on the benefits to be derived from the IFF project if they accepted it and receiving various materials and resources from the NGO. According to the community members and the DFs, participation in need identification was restricted to the informal discussions the

latter had held with the community. Officials from the Department of Fisheries also argued that the major reason the project did not involve the community in identification was because, according to them, fish farming was already being practiced by the communities after it had been introduced by the government. This meant that all that was needed, therefore, was just to re-ignite the project by providing resources and technical assistance which WVM did.

According to project's semi-annual report some farmers were only interested in accessing fingerlings, livestock and fruit seedlings. To ensure full adoption of the integrated fish farming as a package, therefore, the Program Management had to devise incentives for farmers who were expected to adopt the integrated package as an incentive to for high adoption rate.

There was reportedly increasing demand following high expectations of receiving free stuff from the NGO. This forced WVM to request community members to form clubs for easy mobilization and distribution of fish farming materials and other inputs. In addition, the NGO introduced an exercise where participants (the community) had to compete for them to receive the livestock by constructing standard ponds.

*ñ a n t h u k u n o a n a z o l o w e r a k u t i a W
 amapereka zinthu za ulere ndiye ife tinawauza kuti
 tipereka mbuzi, ma fingerlings, ndi lime kwa amene
 atakumbe dam osati za ulere, umenewu unali
 m p i k i (people in this area are used to receiving free
 things from World Vision so we told them would only
 give goats, fingerlings and lime to those that would
 construct fish ponds and not just for free, this was a
 competition)*

The whole idea behind the “competition exercise” was to woo them into joining the project. In the competition, those members that constructed standard fish ponds were

rewarded with 5 goats for each. Pigs and ducks were also used in some cases. Ideally, the livestock in the form of pigs, goats and ducks but also fruits and vegetables were supposed to be components of an integrated farming where the livestock provided manure for planktons which were food for fish and manure for vegetable and fruit growth. It was understood that because the community was not clearly about the purpose of the goats, the message that was sent was that the goats were a reward for constructing the fish ponds. The NGO said it thought the goats had to be used as a way of attracting members of the community to accept the project. One project official, a development facilitator, had this to say as a response he gave to the interested farmers who sought clarification:

*ñ We w i l l n o t g i v e t o t h e o n e
b u t t h e o n e w h o h a s a d a m w i l l r e c e i*

Community members from Kandoli Zone reported that for most community members the common reaction to the competition was the following:

*Tiyeni tibakumbiyi ma damu ngawu, ifwi atipaski mbuzi
zidu zo (Let us construct them their dams so that they
give us our goats)*

WVM also distributed working materials such as hoes, picks, shovels and tractors but also resources such as lime, pipes, and cement. Those that could not construct the fish ponds on their own such as women, the old and the sick, were expected to employ manual laborers or use communal labor to construct the fish ponds. This is reported in the quotation below.

*Pakuti ndengavi mwana mnthurumi, kweni so ndenga
kutali nalu kopara, ndinguvwanana waka ndi anyangu
kuti tichiti chibikizga (I did not have any son to help me
construct the fish ponds, neither did I have any money to*

employ someone so I resorted to working with my fellow women to pay the labourers cooked food among ourselves in a rotational way)- A female participant from Luwazi Zone.

It was also reported in the FGDs and KIIs that after slightly over 600 fishponds had been constructed, WVM stopped distributing the livestock. By this time, most of the goats that had been given out to the community had died of different diseases and also because they could not acclimatize to the new environment because most of these had been bought by WVM from as far away places as Nkhotakota and Mzimba. Community participation at this stage of project design was limited to the provision of labour in the implementation of certain activities such as distribution of materials to the community and purchasing of goats. The MPACHI FFA members also reported that they participated in meetings and trainings that were related to the running of the project.

Some members of the community were then taken on trips to be trained in Integrated Fish Farming (IFF) management where, among other things, the role of livestock in integrated farming was discussed. This was after most of the community members had lost their livestock to diseases and some had sold them off. Community members from the area were also taken to business training workshops where, among other things, profit maximization strategies were taught. When the community went to Domasi and Chingale for seminars, they learnt how their colleagues had formed an association of community participants and borrowed the idea that eventually resulted in the formation of the Mpamba-Chikwina Fish Farmers Association (MPACHI FFA) representing all the clubs at the ADP level. This was the beginning of the community organization that at the time this study was conducted had over 90 representatives.

4.2.5. Discussion of Findings on the Extent of Community Participation in Need

Identification

To a large extent, the degree and kind of participation exhibited during project planning, initiation, and designing was low-level. As it is clear from the preceding data sources, there was no formal and systematic process to identify the needs of the community members. Correspondingly, the community was not actively involved in the identification of the project. Equally indicated in the independent consultant's Baseline Study Report, the NGO already had plans within its ADP programmes to introduce the project among the MPACHI members. The plans were further reinforced by the fact that some of the community members abandoned by the government in a similar project were in need of support to rehabilitate their fish ponds and resuscitate their farming.

The community, however, increasingly became interested to participate in the project because of, among other things, incentives used by the NGO such as provision of free working materials, tractors, fingerings, fruit seeds as well as training workshops and sensitization meetings that carried with them monetary incentives for participants. The NGO used tricks to gain community cooperation, a practice not acceptable if participation is to be genuine. While such kind of participation has been discouraged by Mathur (1986:12) because according to him, using tricks to gain cooperation is equal to non-participation, White (1995) suggested that such kind of participation where NGOs or other such development actors are only interested in the number of beneficiaries that would make a project legitimate should be referred to as nominal participation as opposed to transformational participation.

The attraction of community members towards free goats distribution is also to an extent be a reflection of resource imbalance. Resource imbalance between the community and the NGO resulted in disempowerment of the community to demand participation and representation during the conceptualization and design of the project. This is because the community's lack of resources in terms of adequate information, money and time made it susceptible to manipulation and therefore received whatever was offered by the NGO. Such kind of participation, it was argued, serves the interests of inclusion on the part of the beneficiaries by keeping their names in the project books. In other words, beneficiaries simply benefit by way of being included as readily available registered members of the NGO in case opportunities and benefits become available specially designed for registered members alone. White (1995) further argued that such a project only served the function of display implying that the whole agenda of the project was not to transform the lives of the beneficiaries but simply show off that the project existed and was operational although in a different way from what it officially claimed to be implementing and achieving. Arnstein (1969), using her ladder of participation, referred to this degree of interaction as non-participation.

What also emerged from the results was the fact that despite the potential usefulness of livestock in an integrated fish farming activity, the understanding of the community upon receiving the livestock was that the goats, ducks and pigs distributed were meant to be a reward for constructing the fish ponds. Poor communication and deliberate distortion of information to win community support for the project thus resulted in low levels of community participation. The information the community received from the NGO was that the livestock distributed meant to be a reward for

construction of the fish ponds while in reality the actual intended purpose was that the livestock would be an important component of the integrated fish farming. This was also the major reason why the community participated in the initial stages of the project. It was also because of the fact the community were not interested in the integrated fish farming project that community members sold out their livestock instead of using them for the integrated fish farming project. It was clear from the sentiments by the community that they were much more interested in receiving the goats and not in the integrated fish farming project.

By not conducting a needs identification exercise as admitted by the NGO officials, it can also be argued that the NGO officials presented themselves as being more knowledgeable about the community's needs than the community members which might not be the case in reality. This is especially true because the NGO officials also reported that they had witnessed a similar project being successful in other areas. There were thus misconceptions by the officials that outside knowledge was superior to indigenous knowledge and a strong belief that projects successful in some contexts or settings would be transferrable to any other project areas both of which influenced the NGO to implement the project and create negligence of the role of community voice or knowledge. In participatory development, actors are expected to play the role of equal partners with each willing to learn from the other and give up their strongly held knowledge. This was not the case in this project such that eventually there did not see the need for community participation in the identification of the project.

It was also evident from the report that the absence of both a formal and informal participatory community organization that would have provided a forum for the

community to participate in the designing of the project, also contributed to low level of community participation. Formation of a self-governing institutional structure among community members would have been critical in promoting cooperation among themselves, enhancing their shared interests as well as working towards achieving their shared goals. In addition it would have created opportunities for community members to be empowered by developing organizational capacities and skills. The role of the NGO was thus to facilitate formation of such a community organization, formal or informal, so that the benefits of social capital were delivered to the community members both as individuals and as groups. In contrast, the community did not have any organized representation to engage with the project staff at the point of starting the project. In essence, therefore, the community lacked a self-enabling character and cooperative spirit to enable it deal with the common challenge facing community members.

The community might have also been attracted by the inherent benefits that were said to have been awaiting them. These included promise of a ready market for their fish business as well as relish in their households. In rational choice theories, such behaviours and actions of the community could be perceived to be “rational” and are said to be the most common of all among human beings. Rational Choice theorists explicitly argue that promise of reward or threat of punishment motivates people as much as the reward or punishment itself. Applied in this case, what it simply means is that the community was particularly interested in the promise of benefits that they would derive from engaging in the project.

4.3. Mechanisms to Facilitate or Impede Community Participation

In order to identify mechanisms that facilitated or impeded community participation, the study sought to capture the community's understanding of the concept of participation. This was meant to draw parallels with this study's adopted definition of community participation whereby community participation was seen as an active process in which communities influenced the direction and execution of development projects in order to enhance their welfare (Paul, 1987).

In the MPACHI IFF project, the most commonly shared outcome amongst the community members was that where there was community participation, the community identified the project, decided how the project would be run, community members were present at each and every activity affecting the community and the NGO or the government only provided funding and audit of the funds. The community had to take up leadership positions and all authority on what to do, when to do it and where to do it, had to come from the community so that the project would be owned by the community. Further, it was argued that where the community failed, the NGO or the government as partners only had to provide advice during consultations and not force solutions on the community.

On how it was actually practiced the community members reported that they were only trained and expected to listen, learn and receive and all decisions had to be made by the NGO. They claimed that it was the NGO that had all the authority on how the project had to be implemented.

ñ n d i w u w e n e c h u , w e a d v i e r s n t h a z i ò (i t a l i a n)
of the project who have the power)

On their part, the NGO officials reported failure and lack of interest by the community to take a leading role in their own development as being responsible for this control orientation. They also admitted that they were not always there to meet the needs of the community whenever they received their proposals, requests and decisions because this usually meant that they had to consult their regional office for approval which took time. The community members saw this as a lack of NGO interest in addressing their needs. A community member from Mpamba had the following to report in an FGD, a view that was shared by the majority of the respondents;

*ñ a t i tya kuti talembe ma proposal kweni asani
talembe atitimuka cha nyengu zinyaki ato nyengu itali
k u m u k a , t i g (they always write proposals
but when we write they do not sometimes respond to us
they take a lot of time to respond, we are disappointed by
them)*

Most respondents from the community claimed that they were advised by the DFs to make proposals whenever they wanted to be helped or when they felt they had important issues to be attended to. However, whenever they made such proposals and requests, most of them were reportedly not responded to. In cases where they were responded to, they took a long time and often when the need was no longer there. All of this was attributed to the long chain of command and bureaucracy that affected NGO operations because they were often seen as not committed to meeting the community's needs. They also mentioned that sometimes the demands made by the project beneficiaries were not realistic.

Community participation was also said to be only limited to provision of labour for manual work towards construction of dams and a project building that was to act as a

storage and market facility. Such participation took the form of moulding bricks, ferrying sand and fetching water for construction of project buildings. They reported that they did not take part in the budgeting and procurement of project materials and that community decisions were overruled by predetermined decisions of the NGO through *alangizi* (development facilitators).

Both the NGO and the community acknowledged that the participation of the community at this level was negatively affected by the community's lack of involvement in planning (budgeting) and procurement. In procurement, the NGO claimed that the community had, in another project, shown signs of corruption when they were entrusted with money to purchase project materials. This forced them to limit the direct involvement of community members in monetary matters. Besides, the NGO had taken over all procurement activities after it set up its own internal procurement committee that was responsible for purchasing goods and services required in different projects within their ADP.

FGD reports also indicated that the community had lost interest in participating in the project for a number of reasons. Firstly the community no longer trusted the NGO because, among others, they had started demanding that the community had to make monetary and material contributions to the activities and training workshops conducted and yet, according to them, donors had already provided money for the running of all such activities. In response, however, the NGO accused the community of only expecting to receive things for free and that whenever it was engaged in development activities the community members expected incentives in terms of monetary allowances. This was summarized in the quote below captured from one NGO official.

*ñ a n a z o l o w e r a k u l a n d i l a z a u l e r e ,
adzingopats i d w a z i n t h u o s (They are li r a n t c h i t o
used to receiving things for free, they do not want to
work for things)*

According to them, this affected the development process because the NGO had adopted a self-help and sustainability approach (called “exit strategy”) that emphasized on communities building their own development activities with their own local resources and had to be only assisted at a minimum by the NGO.

It was also said that widows did not have the same opportunities as others in accessing land for construction of fish ponds because the land tenure system followed meant land could only be owned by male members of the society in this case the father and sons in a household. What was mostly reported as affecting community participation was the requirement that whenever there was a meeting or training workshop within the community, they had to provide maize flour and firewood for their own meals as one way of encouraging the sustainability of the project. A strongly shared view of the community respondents was as follows:

*ñ N d i n g a p i n g a u f w a c h a i n i , n d i n i c h
ini, anthukazi ndiwu apinga ufwa n d i v y a k u k a t i v y o s i ò
(I cannot carry m a i z e f l o u r , t h a t i s a w o m e n ô s
women carry maize flour)*

Most male members of the community saw this as outrageous claiming it was the duty of women to make such contributions. They believed that there was money set aside for their meals but that it was being used by the NGO staff in their own ways. They also said it was for this reason that development facilitators tended to be based in town for fear of being noticed to be misusing the project money. Most respondents argued as follows:

*ñ A j a m t a u n i a n g a n y a w o , a k u z e n g a v i m a
 ndi makopara ngidu, chechosi che mwenimo, endi
 vimagalimotu v a k a w a n a c h a ò (t h e y s t a y i n t
 have built mansions and own a lot of cars using our
 money)*

On their part, the development facilitators explained that they demanded contributions from the community in terms of maize flour and cash because if achieved this would serve as a means of ensuring that the community attains a sense of self-help and ownership of projects. They were, however, quick to mention that this requirement had put off a lot of community members from participating in the development activities carried out.

The DFs also claimed to have put in place measures that facilitated participation such as the establishment of MPACHI FFA and its pending official registration as an important means of ensuring that the community was represented actively. They said this and the other structures such as the Marketing Action Committee (MACs) and clubs enabled the community to have one voice in presenting their problems and concerns to the NGO. They also stated that sensitization training and awareness meetings that had been organized were meant to equip the community with knowledge of community organization and empower them to participate actively in matters that affected them at community level.

The other thing they mentioned as having been put in place to promote participation was allowing the members of the community to participate and be represented at the ADP structures of the local government where according to them they would also be empowered to own their projects. The distribution of livestock and working materials for the fish ponds as well as fingerings had also been mentioned as

initiatives that were used to encourage the participation of community members in the project.

Furthermore, the WMV Project Semi-Annual Report of 2009 stated that quick benefits from development interventions such as the livestock and working materials were a source of inspiration for community participation. It also reported that there was an overwhelming farmers' response to the project which was partly due to quick benefits and the realism of the project in addressing people's needs. According to the report, the development intervention that came as a package also proved easier to implement than stand alone interventions. In the view of the NGO, this resulted in committees and MPACHI FFA being fully empowered as evidenced by the ability of committees to conduct meetings on their own without being pushed or waiting for the ADP office to support them.

4.3.4. Discussion of Results on Mechanisms that Facilitated or Impeded Community Participation

Based on the data collected on mechanisms that facilitated or impeded community participation, this study found out that how community participation had been practised in the IFF project was not in line with how they had understood the concept. To a large extent, the form that participation took during the project implementation phase ranged from low-level to mid-level although mid-level participation dominated. This was particularly manifested by people's ability and opportunity availed to them to form groups or structures but did not have the required leverage to influence major decisions affecting their lives and livelihoods. This was a mid-level form of participation because decisions made in such groups were only to meet predetermined objectives of the project.

In addition, community members were heard but did not have the power to ensure that their views were heeded to. This form of participation in the project was influenced by a number of factors.

First was the establishment of such participatory structures as MPACHI FFA, MAC, and clubs which was a major starting point towards promoting the participation of the community in the running of the project. By allowing for the community to be organized in groups, project facilitators set a good foundation for people's participation in the management of the project. Obviously, this instilled a sense of empowerment because among themselves, the community members elected leaders who acted as their representatives.

On the other hand, this establishment of the structures did not serve the purpose of enabling community beneficiaries to influence the outcome of decisions that affected their needs and interests because some of the important decisions and activities such as planning and procurement were still subject to NGO authority. The NGO was only interested in the formation of these structures so as to be able to initiate the mobilization of community collective action for the easy implementation of the project objectives. Eventually, instead of community structures acting as channels for the participation and representation of the community, they ended up legitimizing NGO crafted decisions. The NGO claimed that this was the case because most of the demands, proposals and decisions that the community made were unrealistic as they often required huge amounts of money and sometimes these were outside the project plans. This compelled the NGO to have the final say and authority over decisions made.

Second, the distribution of incentives such as livestock, working materials, fingerings, and monetary allowance by the NGO amongst the farmers was also a factor that promoted mid-level degree of participation. This necessitated community participation in terms of provision of manual labour for dam construction. The community also participated passively by, among other things, simply attending meetings and training workshops over which they could not influence the outcome; mobilizing and organizing human and other material resources. The study found out that the main reason the NGO distributed the incentives was particularly to increase the project beneficiary base so as to legitimize the project to show that they were “doing something” and this was significant in gaining financial and other support from donors. It also used participation as a co-opting practice to increase project efficiency by mobilizing local labour and in the process reduce costs of running and managing the project. At the same time the community was only interested in the incentives distributed and not the actual dam construction. This was evidenced by the community’s description of the project dams as “their” dam and the distributed goats “our” goats as well and partly by the lack of interest by other community members to construct the dams upon realizing that the NGO had stopped distributing the incentives.

Thirdly, the implementation of annual project evaluation meetings; trainings; and workshops that the NGO staff organized was an important means for the facilitation of mid-level degree of community participation. The meetings provided an opportunity and a forum in which the community was able to air their views and give a voice on the running of the project. Thus the project’s annual review process, for instance, gave the

community a chance to meet and discuss project challenges and suggest possible solutions.

Although such initiatives were interactive and involved shared decision making, the main reason this did not amount to genuine participation was the fact that despite the community being heard, the decisions were often already made by the NGO staff as external agents and not the community members who were supposed to own the project for sustainability purposes. The community was not given the opportunity to control the final outcomes of such meetings hence rendering the discussions empty as far as genuine participation and community empowerment was concerned. This was because the NGO believed the community did not have adequate capacity to manage the project as evidenced by accusations against the community as being unrealistic in their demands, proposals and decisions. This also applied to the training workshops that were meant to equip community members with project management and leadership skills. These structures had thus turned out to serve a degree and kind of participation called “pseudo-participation” which involved a consultative process whereby citizens were merely kept informed of developments and were expected to accept decisions that had already been made. In other words, the participation displayed was simply a ritual that in the end did not see the community’s role and voice having an impact in any way on the outcome of a development process. This was of great benefit to the NGO because it enabled them to have them to have the predetermined plans be effected without dissent. Community participation was seen to be delaying and blocking quick progress because even where the community members were involved in decision making, their decisions were seen to be not practical enough to be adopted.

Despite the deliberate institutionalization of steps to portray participation in action, several factors were identified as responsible for impeding the active and genuine participation of community members in the running of the project. First was the lack of and/or untimely NGO responsiveness to community needs, requests and proposals. The NGO failed to effectively translate the community's voice into influence. Its responsiveness to community's voice was contingent upon institutional changes and political will to convert professed commitment to participation into tangible actions. By pushing the blame on its bureaucracy and long chain of command, the NGO also partly indicated that project planning took a top-down approach where the NGO was the one in charge of defining the needs of the communities and deciding how best they could be met. Thus although the community was able to articulate their needs, there was a perceived lack of willingness and commitment to addressing these felt needs eventually resulting in non-participation due to loss of interest and eventual withdrawal of community members from the project. Such consequences were inevitable because there was growing frustration among community members upon realizing that the NGO ignored their input in the project running and their needs. However, such actions also demonstrated that the community failed to collectively build strategies from below to exert pressure for change because they were not organized and empowered from the bottom. They had failed to build and utilize their social capital to generate a sense of cooperation and empowerment amongst themselves. They were only preoccupied with immediate and tangible project benefits as individuals and not as grouping.

Second, community participation was also affected by the growing mistrust and suspicions between the community itself and the NGO emerging from allegations of

mismanagement of funds; lack of transparency and accountability. These were the reasons the community members could not be allowed to take part in the budgeting and procurement of project materials. But seen in terms of participation, this only resulted into lack of opportunities for active community involvement in the budgeting for activities and procurement of project goods and services, a characteristic of low-level degree and kind of participation. Again, it not only discouraged community participation but also reduced the community's capacity to handle finances, make decisions, gain exposure and be empowered. As argued by rational choice theorists, a social interaction process in which one set of actors incurs more costs than rewards results in the withdrawal of the losing actors. This explains the reason why some members lost interest and withdrew from the project hence affecting the sustainability of the project.

Third, participation was also impeded and restricted to a low-level degree in the project because of the failure by the NGO to incorporate marginalized groups of the society such as widows. There were no deliberate explicit efforts or mechanisms to identify predetermined vulnerable, disadvantaged and voiceless groups whose voices could be considered and interests addressed. This failure also reflected a lack of shared learning, planning and consultation in project planning. The NGO did not provide opportunities for these members of the community to actively participate in the decision making processes during the project planning process because their voice would have been considered earlier and not seen as ignored as was the case during implementation. This total exclusion can as well be equated to outright non-participation. The exclusion of widows was there because they could not own land under the patrilineal land tenure hence could not participate in the construction of the fish ponds. By implication, they did

not participate in a project that was portrayed as being intended to transform lives of the most vulnerable and poorest in the society. The NGO was insensitive to the community's traditional and socio-cultural beliefs, attitudes and practices that resulted into total exclusion of these community members from the project.

The other instance of insensitivity was the demand from community participants for contributions towards organizational meetings and trainings in form of maize flour, firewood and relish. This was seen to be culturally and socially wrong amongst male members of the community. This also reflects the lack of shared planning between the community and the NGO where such issues would have been discussed for the mutual benefit of both sets of actors. It must be stated, therefore, that although the requirement by the NGO for the community to make contributions was an attempt to facilitate self-help and self-reliance, the idea to come up with such a strategy was not consultative in the first place and the voices of the community members were not heard hence resistance by male members to carrying maize flour, relish and firewood in public. Marthur (1986:30) argued that one of the reasons beneficiary participation was of critical importance in the initial stages of any project was because it enabled the communities themselves to take an active role in determining the possible contributions whether in cash or kind they could make to the running of the project. He stated that if communities were to be active partners in designing projects and in working closely with agencies in implementation, monitoring and evaluation, they had to make a resource commitment either in cash or kind. This, it was argued, would among other things make the contributors more concerned for the success of the development project than otherwise

might have been and would provide an indication of how interested such communities were in the development.

4.4. Mechanisms Put in Place to Ensure Project Sustainability

To understand the potential for sustainability, the study sought to capture perspectives, experiences and opinions on how the project would be sustained at the end of the project phase. The respondents reported that there were some reasons that made them think the project would be sustained at the end of the project phase but also others that countered this belief. From the community members, the most expressed reasons for project sustainability were that by the mere fact that they had constructed the fish ponds, it was not possible for them to turn the land into its former state again. This, according to them, therefore only forced them to maintain the community organization so that they could share problem solving skills as a community and work together to explore opportunities such as identifying markets.

According to the development facilitators, the most noticeable reason why the project could be sustained was because they had set up structures for community participation that enabled the community to meet, discuss and plan on how best they could run the project. This, to them, was also seen as one of the main ways in which the community had been empowered to run the project. This was agreed over with the community members who particularly considered the registration of the community association with the government as an important step that would enable them to lobby for government support of the project. Mention was also made of the storage building that was built as it was seen by the community as a place where they could meet, plan and decide and would have an office for management team.

However, there were also reported possibilities of the project failing to be sustained despite the establishment of structures because the community members claimed that they did not have power over finances and did not have the capacity to handle organizational funds or how to source such funds. A Kandoli Zone project member had the following in echoing these shared sentiments;

*ñ T i k o n d a l a m a c h a i s i , c h e c h o s i k u t
n d a l a m a , i s i t i l i v i ò (W e d o n o t h a
everything to work out it needs money, we do not have
the money)*

As a result of this position they held, the community members felt they did not have the capacity to run the organization on their own without the NGO. They also claimed that WVM had not made efforts to establish networks between the community and some community based organizations that would have assisted them to learn from others how other organizations were run and how problems were solved. The NGO agreed to this assertion by stating that lack of financial capacity to run the organization would affect its operations. They said much as it was easy for the community to make contributions towards the running of the organization; the community was not informed about this at the beginning of the project. As a result, they grew suspicious of the idea to promote self-help and self-reliance.

The NGO also complained that the government was not willing to work with them because its extension workers always wanted to get incentives in form of monetary allowances. They, however, did not want to encourage this because they felt it would make the government pull out when the project phase had come to an end. The other reason they gave was that the government was not willing to work with the community

and the NGO because, according to them, the NGO could not give the government monetary allowances as incentives to motivate these extension workers. The community members also complained that they were not involved in making decisions and plans on how the project had to be run. They also claimed that there were no markets they had been introduced to as promised by the NGO at the beginning of the project.

Another reported bottleneck on sustainability was that the project area was too large and this would affect their coordination as they could not easily follow up on members because they did not have means of transport. The WVM staff also bemoaned on the same, arguing that as an organization, WVM tended to be over-ambitious with projects. They claimed that work with the community and emphasis on community participation was affected by this because they could not manage working with a vast community that formed the group of beneficiaries. One development facilitator had the following to say on this point.

*ñ We are too broad but shallow . I m a g
as development facilitators but working with over a
thousand farmers with over 950 fish ponds constructed,
how do you expect us to work better with the community
i n s u c h a n e n v i r o n m e n t ? ò*

There were also perceived weaknesses of the NGO that were reported to have the potential of negatively affecting the project. The first was that the adoption of a sustainability and self-help strategy was hurried and that the community was not involved in deciding about it. The community was said to have been used to receiving free things from WVM and the sudden change requiring their contributions to run the organization disturbed them. They also said that the community did not trust them because they were not staying with them in the community and were resident in town.

The other weakness the organization was said to have was that it allowed development facilitators to overstay in project areas. According to the officials, this affected their work with the community because it tended to remove creativity in the officials working with the community. In addition, they also claimed that they were not motivated by the NGO in their work and this affected their work with the community. It was also reported that misplaced and untimely activities by the organization tended to affect community participation because the community was always taken unawares and this affected their participation and performance. It was also mentioned that WVM often implemented projects because of their reported success in some other project areas. It was said that once projects had been seen to work in certain countries, districts or communities, WVM believed they would also work wherever they wanted without considering different challenges they could face.

The blame for community withdrawals was also put on the transition from the ADP to the ADC which was said to have influenced members who lost positions to discourage others from taking part claiming that the NGO was not good to work with. The transition had been aimed at combining work so that the ADC took over the operations previously carried out by the ADP as a way of enhancing collaboration of projects because within the ADC there had been a number of other projects apart from the integrated fish farming. This resulted in massive withdrawal of the community members from the project.

The key informants from the Fisheries department had different views on the sustainability of the project. Their mostly held view was that there were strong indications that the project would not be sustained because, according to them, the NGO

did not involve them in most of the project activities and when they did they did not provide any incentives. They argued that incentives motivated them but also facilitated their work because as a government they were not always able to provide all the goods and services due to resource constraints especially in terms of finances and human resources. This meant extension workers needed to be motivated by “clients” (individuals or organizations needing their services) in terms of monetary allowances. This, they said, was also the reason why extension workers were almost absent in the area.

4.4.4. Discussion of Results on Mechanisms Put in Place to Ensure Sustainability

The mid-level degree of community participation that dominated in many aspects of project implementation consequently threatened the sustainability of the project. Firstly, by limiting the participation of the community to problem solving issues that did not involve money, the NGO demonstrated its disdain for capabilities of the project beneficiaries. It also demonstrated that the DFs felt uncomfortable working with methods that involved consultations on monetary matters and in the process missed out on empowering the community to manage resources. Participation here was used only as a means of securing local actions and resources and not enabling the people to take command and do things themselves. Participation is only genuine if the beneficiaries take an active and influential part in making decisions at each and every stage of the project cycle. In addition, the practical experience of the community members being involved in such financial decisions would have increased the community’s confidence in their ability to handle scarce resources (money in this case) and to make a difference.

From a rational choice point of view, such a difference in terms of who has power over resources and decisions affecting their allocation, determines the outcome of any

particular social interaction. It is argued that power relations emerge because the resources that participants bring to their social interactions are rarely equal. Participants that have more resources, a lot of information and better social status are likely to have more power, authority and control in any social interaction or decision making. With reference to the theory, it was understandable for the community members to withdraw because no exchange continues unless both parties are making a profit. In simpler terms, unless each set of participants found it profitable, the interaction would not continue. The participants who experienced losses would find the interaction more costly than rewarding and thus would find the incentive to withdraw. In such a case, therefore, it was less likely that the project would be sustained at the end of the project phase. This was because the community members were the primary actors and stakeholders of the project whose involvement in the project was critical for its success.

Secondly, the mid-level degree of participation was promoted and in turn affected the sustainability of the project due to the community's and its representative leader's inadequate financial capacity and the NGO's lack of transparency over information and network of contacts. Information sharing in particular is critical in promoting participation because transparency over certain kinds of information opens up the possibility of collective action in monitoring the consistency of rhetoric and practice of certain elements of the project such as objectives. It was also partly as a result of this inadequacy of the financial capacity that the NGO had more power over decisions and resources. This is because the two sets of actors could not plan, negotiate and work as equal partners because of the resource imbalance that made the community vulnerable to accepting every resolution made on its behalf. Linked to this aspect was the lack of

community commitment, disguised in inadequate financial capacity and material resources, to supervise and follow up members of the community involved in the fish farming exercise. This resulted in passive community participation.

According to RCT social interaction would only be sustained where all parties involved acquired more gains than losses in the interaction. Where participants incurred losses they withdrew and sought other interactions where there were perceived benefits. In many instances the low-level degree of participation in the project management signaled that chances of the project achieving sustainability were minimal as compared to where the genuine participation was practised. In the first place, low-level degree of community participation was influenced by the poor communication and deliberate distortion of information by the NGO that was designed to win community support for the project. The most outstanding case was the community being poorly informed about the transition of the ADP into ADC resulting in community's own misinterpretation of the situation. This was also a form of lack of consistency and consultations in the implementation of plans and project activities which resulted into community frustrations and eventual withdrawals from the project. It further reflected a lack of active participation of the community members in major decisions of the project. This had bad prospects for sustainability because community members could not own such new activities and programmes as their own.

Low level of community awareness was also a factor that contributed to reducing the potential for sustainability and active participation. The community was not aware of the services that the government was supposed to provide for them because the government did not interact with them directly but through the development facilitators.

This lack of information reduced the effectiveness of the community's participation in the running of the project. There was also a lack of authority on the part of the community and devolution of powers from development facilitators to the community leaders. It was also evident that the government lacked incentives to work with the poor in facilitating the development project for sustainability at the end of the project cycle.

There was also low-level degree of participation that resulted in no sense of project ownership by the community. This was the case because of several factors that came into play. First, the NGO failed to utilize the community's knowledge of its local setting. It was the community itself that had valuable prior knowledge about the physical and geographical context of the impact area hence in a better position to tell in the first place whether the area was too vast for monitoring purposes or not. This, therefore, further reflects the fact that there was no active community participation during project design and planning stages. This was also in the light of the fact that the NGO was over-ambitious yet poorly funded or equipped with the DFs lacking incentives and motivation to reach all project areas. The NGO behaved in this manner because its primary interest was simply to have a large number of community members registered hence a popular base that would be critical for obtaining external financial, personnel and other support. This was one of the major challenges for project sustainability because it presented the project as unmanageable in the face of what the community perceived as "owners". Sustainability could not be achieved where local capacity was not built up. This called for early inclusion of community members in project decision making and activities.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

5.1. Introduction

This chapter of the thesis provides the conclusions and implications of the study and implicitly offers possible recommendations for practice and further research on the topic. It also restates the significance of the study as well as the difference that the results of the study would make

5.2. Conclusions

The overall objective for conducting this research study was to investigate factors that influenced the degree and kind of community participation at different stages of a development project cycle initiated by World Vision Malawi as an NGO operating in Malawi. Generally, this study found out that there was no genuine participation of the community throughout the project life cycle. In the first place, there was clear evidence that that there was no active community participation in the process of need identification. The community did not influence and share control over the decision to have the MPACHI IFF project as their need. The community was not put at the centre of the whole scheme of things that entailed need definition because none of the community members had an opportunity availed to them to define their needs and be in control of all processes aimed at achieving their supposedly self-articulated goals. This is because the NGO already had in its ADP plans the idea to introduce the project as a community need.

As social beings who are calculative and motivated by wants and needs as per assumptions of RCT, community members were left out of the need identification exercise at the very beginning of the project thereby increasing suspicion and diminishing the potential for community ownership of the project. There were also no meaningful attempts by the NGO to promote genuine community participation and to strengthen the community's role in setting the agenda of the project. This was primarily because the NGO did not trust the capacity of the community amidst allegations of making unrealistic demands. Thus the need identification process took a "low-level" degree of community participation that was passive in terms of its form.

In seeking to examine mechanisms that would facilitate or impede community participation, the study found out that there were no deliberate strategies, plans and institutions that would have promoted genuine participation where the community participants would have assumed control over major decisions that affected their well-being. Most of the mechanisms that were put in place promoted low-level and mid-level degrees of participation in which the community's participation was primarily aimed at legitimating decisions already made by the NGO. The participation that was promoted was, therefore, limited because the NGO still retained a lot of power in making decisions regarding the design of project objectives, their implementation as well as monitoring and evaluation of project activities. Broadly conceived, the major reason for this control orientation was to enforce NGO's predetermined objectives whose successful implementation would be hampered if community participation was to be enhanced.

The study also found out that although there were certain mechanisms that would have promoted the potential for sustainability, there were serious challenges that

threatened the sustainability of the project at the end of the project phase. Guided by the RCT the study concluded that chances of the project being sustained beyond the project cycle were minimal because the in the interaction between the community and the NGO the community obtained more losses than gains hence establishing grounds for their withdrawal. Among others, factors that promoted sustainability were such mechanisms the establishment of project structures for the participation of the community in the running of the project as well as the demands for the community participants to generate its own resources for the running of the project. These, however, were met with obstacles with the former being affected by the fact that the NGO was not willing to give up any effective decision making powers to the community. The self-help initiative also failed to materialize because the idea to come up with the same was not approved in a consultative manner with the community. It was simply imposed on them hence resulting in lack of interest by on the part of the community members. Generally, the most serious challenge to project sustainability was the fact that there was no sense of project ownership by the community. Lack of space for the community's active participation from the start resulted in the project largely being conceptualized as owned by the NGO.

5.3. Implications

At the very beginning of the NGO-initiated and facilitated project cycle it is vital that the process of needs identification and assessment should take place in a systematic manner involving all stakeholders of the project. The DCs using their relevant departments, for instance, should ensure that no project facilitated by NGOs is started without community input in terms of decision making and priority setting. This is even beneficial to the government because at the end of the project phase, the sustainability of

the project partly rests on the relationship between the community and the government. By the time the MPACHI IFF project cycle will be phasing out, for instance, community members are likely to look up to the government for extension services support hence the need for a good relationship cultivated from the early stages of the project.

Slightly related to the idea of systematic needs assessment process is the timing of preliminary sensitization meetings with communities. Decisions must by all means be made jointly to have an informed influence from the communities. They should also be adequately informed of their roles in the project and the concept of participation must be clearly articulated in NGO plans and strategies in a way that is understood by all stakeholders. Thus both local people and NGO staff must understand that community participation is necessary for project success from the pre-planning exercises, to the development of plans, the design of implementing mechanisms and the actual implementation. The beneficiaries must thus be in a position to demand their rights and responsibilities in the running of projects.

Finally, considering the importance that imparting skills plays in the participation of marginal groups in development projects, NGOs also should emphasize on training that is relevant to promoting the participation and empowerment of the people they work with. It was revealed in the study, for instance, that despite the training that were conducted with the rural population they still were not able to take charge of their own development project. Training that is useful is that which imparts major skills that build up the local capacity for participation. The most important skills, among others include managerial skills; internal organizational management skills; economic management resource skills; political skills and leadership skills. NGO staff should also be oriented

towards a fruitful collaboration with rural communities by equipping them with skills that relate to promotion of local people's active participation. In addition, the skills imparted in the community can only be useful if the people are given opportunities to exercise the skills acquired hence it should be upon the facilitators to allow communities to take charge of their lives and livelihoods by employing the acquired skills.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1. FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION GUIDE FOR COMMUNITY PROJECT BENEFICIARIES

Group Details

Group Number é é .

Zone é é é é é é é é é é é é ..

Discussion Questions:

1. How did the MPACHI IFF project was start?

Kumbi ulimi wa somba uwu ungwamba uli kunu kwidu?

2. What specific roles did you play in the project identification process?

Mungutopu lwandi uli pakusankha chinthu chenichi?

3. How do you understand the concept of participation?

Kumbi kubapu pa chitukuku kung'anamuwanji?

4. How has community participation been practised?

Ubapu winu wakho uli pa chinthu chenichi?

5. How will the project be sustained at the end of the project phase?

Chinthu chenichi chilutiliyengi uli?

APPENDIX 2. KEY INFORMANT INTERVIEW GUIDE

Key Informant Position: WVM Regional Manager é é é é é é é é é é
Programme Manager é é é é é é é . . é é é é
WVM Development Facilitator é é é é é é é é é é .
Other é é é é é é é é é . é é é é é é é é é é

Discussion Questions

1. How did the project start?
2. To what extent was the community involved in the identification of the MPACHI IFF project?
3. What have you done to promote community participation?
4. What is your development philosophy?
5. How has your development philosophy been translated into practice?
6. What are the weaknesses of your organization in relation to community participation?
7. How will the project be sustained at the end of the project phase?

APPENDIX 3. REQUEST FOR PERMISSION

To: The Regional Manager
World Vision International (Malawi)
Post Office Box
Mzuzu

10th September, 2012.

REQUEST FOR PERMISSION TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH STUDY

I am a student pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies at Chancellor College, University of Malawi. I am intending to carry out a practical academic research on the factors that determine the nature of community participation in NGO initiated and facilitated development projects, particularly using the case of the Mpamba-Chikwina Integrated Fish Farming Project. The study is designed to commence on 12th September, 2012 and end on 25th September, 2012. I, therefore, request your permission to let me undertake the study within this area of your organization's operation.

I wish to get as much relevant information as I can from my interaction with the project's officials as well as the community beneficiaries, among others. The sought information is solely to be used for academic purposes. Participants will not be forced in any way to take part in the study and confidentiality will be highly valued and maintained.

Your favorable response will be highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

HOPE MEZUWA

APPENDIX 4. VERBAL CONSENT FORM

My name is Hope Mezuwa and I am a student pursuing a Master of Arts Degree in Development Studies at Chancellor College, University of Malawi. I am carrying out a research on the factors that determine the nature of community participation in NGO initiated and facilitated development projects, particularly using the case of the Chikwina-Mpamba livelihoods project. I wish to get as much relevant information as I can from my interaction with you. I have obtained permission from World Vision International (Malawi) Regional Headquarters in Mzuzu.

You have been selected as one/some of the people who can give me information on the topic of study in question. I would like you to participate in this study. You are not forced to participate if you do not feel like doing so and your decision not to participate will not affect your life or welfare in any way.

I wish to assure you that everything that we discuss or what you say on this issue will be treated with ultimate confidentiality. As we discuss I will be taking notes of the deliberations. The purpose for doing so is to keep proper record of what we discuss.

Do you have any question on what I have said? Yes/No

Are you willing to participate in the discussion? Yes/No

Signature of the Interviewer.....

Date.....

APPENDIX 5. MAP SHOWING STUDY AREA

