



**ASSESSING THE EFFECTIVENESS OF EXIT STRATEGIES IN SUSTAINING
LIVELIHOOD PROGRAM OUTCOMES: THE CASE OF MAKHANGA E.P.A**

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DECLARATION

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

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ABSTRACT

The study objective was to assess exit strategies and the essential role they can play in sustaining project outcomes beyond closure. It was thus expected that insufficient exit strategies contribute to the persistent paternalistic relationship between INGOs and their beneficiaries alike in the disaster-prone areas of Makhanga in Malawi. Special focus was on the WALA and the UBALE projects. Systems Theory and Social Constructionism Theory were used to guide the investigation. Qualitative data was both secondary and primary, with secondary data collected using document analysis while purposive, snowballing and focus group discussions generated primary data. A household survey was conducted using cluster and simple random sampling to collect quantitative data. While the findings confirm existence of basic exit strategies and subsequent resilience to shocks directly proportional to their strength, the strategies were largely implemented top-down by the INGOs acting unilaterally and lacked clarity. Exit was handled as a once-off activity instead of a well-planned process. Activities such as capacity building, farewell meetings and handover of assets to government agencies were emphasized more than the actual resilience-sustaining strategies. Worse still, the implementation of the purported exit strategies was untimely and haphazard. Consequently, the synergy around the noticeable livelihood improvement was not consolidated over time. It is recommended therefore that explicit exit strategies that reflect real-time exigencies in the target community be considered essential and mandatory for INGOs.

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ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADC	Area Development Committee
AEC	Area Executive Committee
AEDEC	Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator
AFOLU	Agriculture, Forestry and Other Land Use
CA	Conservation Agriculture
CARE	Cooperative Assistance and Relief Everywhere
CBO	Community Based Organization
CONGOMA	Council for Non Governmental Organizations in Malawi
CRLSP	Central Region Livelihood Security [Project
CSI	Coping Strategy Index
CRS	Catholic Relief Services
C-SAFE	Consortium for Southern Africa Food Emergency
DADO	District Agricultura Development Officer
DC	District Coordinator
DD	Dietary Diversity
DFAP	Development Food Assistance Programs
DFID	Department for International Development
DM&E	Design, Monitoring and Evaluation
DRRO	District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer
DRR	Disaster Risk Reduction
EPA	Extension Planning Area
ERM	Emergency Response Manager
FAO	Food and Agricultural Organization
FANTA	Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance
FFW	Food for Work
FFP	Food for Peace
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
FSPI	Food Security Proxy Indicator
FO	Farmer Organization
GVDC	Group Village Development Committee

GVH	Group Village Headman
HFDIAS	Household Food Insecurity Access Scale
I-LIFE	Improving Livelihoods Through Increasing Food Security
ILR	Institutional Learning Research
INGO	International Nongovernmental Organization
MF	Meal Frequency
MMR	Mixed Methods Research
NJIRA	Pathways for Sustainable Food Security
NRM	Natural Resource Management
PM	Programme Manager
PMLC	Project Management Life Cycle
PO	Project Officer
PPI	Poverty Probability Index
RRSS	Resiliency Ranking Score Sheet
SES	Socioeconomic Status
SMIHLE	Sustaining and Mitigating Impact of HIV for Livelihood Enhancement
SPSS	Statistical Package for Social Science
UBALE	United in Building and Advancing Livelihood Expectations
USAID	United States Agency for International Development
WALA	Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement
VDC	Village Development Committee
VH	Village Head

DEFINITIONS

Coping Strategy	A coping strategy relates to a short term temporary response to immediate exigencies and the victims engage in such a mechanism to ameliorate its negative effects (Davies, 1993).
Exit Strategy	An exit strategy denotes an explicit plan guiding the process of withdrawing resources from beneficiary communities (Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Report, 2016).
Extraneous Variable	Generally, an extraneous variable is any variable that a researcher is not investigating that can potentially affect or confound the dependent variable of the research study.
Livelihood Program	A livelihood program is a program that seeks to improve the quality of life of the poor by providing them with opportunities and resources to enhance their income, health and resilience. It is based on the priorities and goals defined by the people themselves and builds on their strengths and capacities.
Paternalistic Relationship	A paternalistic relationship is the relationship between a more powerful person or body and a person or body that is less so. The powerful entity often makes decisions for the other entity because they feel that the other may not understand or know what is best for them.
Resilience	Resilience relates to the capacity that ensures that communities can still thrive amidst adverse circumstances, shocks and stresses, and be able to consolidate gains and, most critically reduce their need for humanitarian aid (Cox, et. al, 2019)

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

This study was aimed at enhancing the understanding of the dynamics of the fragile livelihood situation of the disaster-prone Lower Shire sub-region of Malawi. This fragility has been demonstrated by the frequent need for humanitarian relief assistance in the area. The undertaking was done with a retrospective research lens in order to situate the sustainability of resilience-building projects beyond the lifespan of donor-driven project interventions. The study hypothetically conjectured that a weak exit strategy regimen could sustain a vicious cycle between emergency relief and resilience-building. The study was motivated by the tendency for disaster-prone areas to relapse into pre-existing fragile livelihood conditions after comprehensive livelihood resilience-building projects (Smillie, 1999 as cited in Appe, 2022). Notably, this sometimes happens at the appearance of even modest external shocks.

An exit strategy for a project has been conceived as an explicit plan outlining how a project implementing agency intends to withdraw from a beneficiary community without compromising the projects' accomplished development goals and, also ensuring more progress towards these goals will be made (Rogers & Macias, 2004a as cited in Tetteh et al, 2021). By encouraging community participation during the planning stage, exit strategies have been understood to enhance the sustainability of project outcomes beyond the lifespan of those projects (Neely et al, 2004 as cited in Borrás, 2009; Perreault et. al, 2015; Gaboury et al, 2021). The extent to which project intervention outcomes remain sustainable overtime depends on the strength of the exit strategy regimen adopted. The stronger the exit strategy regimen adopted, the more sustainable the project intervention outcome is overtime; and the weaker the exit strategy adopted is, the less sustainable the project intervention outcome is overtime.

Various research activities have explored the efficacy of exit strategies in different sustainable livelihoods project contexts. Among notable ones are, Angels (2010) in Armenia, Mkomagi (2015) in Tanzania and Samson (2020). These and more others are shown in more detail in section 2.11, under literature review. Appreciating that exit strategies do not exist in a vacuum, but rather operate in a given context, the study explored and assessed the efficacy of aid project exit strategies by Catholic Relief Services (CRS) and Cooperative Assistance and Relief Everywhere (CARE) Malawi. The two International non- governmental organizations implemented livelihoods projects namely Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement and United in Building and Advancing Livelihood Expectations Consortium (respectively) in this disaster prone-area of Makhanga in the Lower Shire. These projects were implemented between 2009 - 2014 and 2015-2019 respectively.

The main issue underlying this investigation was the empirical puzzle that donor-supported projects perform so well during their lifetime, and struggle after the implementing agency's exit. Evidence in other contexts indicates that most of their gained livelihoods outcomes tend to be short-lived (Mkomagi, 2015). This is against the background that considering perspectives of the poor and marginalized as to what affects them can go a long way in strengthening livelihood resilience (Neely et al, 2004 as cited in Borras, 2009;Perreault et. al, 2015; Tull,2020; Perreault et al, 2021).

Undeniably, social development has long been understood as the achievement of a myriad of measurable, desirable outcomes like improved food security, reduced morbidity and/or mortality rates, higher life expectancy and higher access to education measured by literacy levels (Schelling, 1971 as cited in Dodge, 2012 as cited in Glaser, 2016). Various projects, implemented by many INGOs operating in the livelihoods space, have the improvement of one or more of these qualities as their goal(s), including those operating in the disaster-prone lower Shire of Malawi. However, the attainment of these desirable goals at project closure does not guarantee sustainability beyond that closure (Rodgers & Coates, 2016).

It is arguably for this reason that emphasis is now shifting from the development that relates to the physical reality only to focusing on the state of mind of the affected people as well (Todaro & Smith, 2009 as cited in Journal of Economics, Commerce and Management Volume IX, 2021). Hence, an integrated and holistic approach to understanding the dynamics of this area was necessary to generate outcomes that are more sustainable and capable of precluding regression into less desirable humanitarian conditions once the projects are closed. Sustainability appears to be one of the most frequently used and possibly abused terms in the rural development discourse. Many INGOs working in the rural areas claim to be providing sustainable development, but whether that is indeed the reality or not, is a different matter altogether. The rural development sector appears full of unsustainable projects that often fall into disrepair, despite scholars generally agreeing that issues of sustainability are essential in community development as evidence shows mixed outcomes (Rodgers & Coates, 2016). This seems especially true for the lower Shire sub-region of Malawi, which is incidentally one of the disaster-prone areas in Malawi. This situation has confounded development practitioners who have tried to come up with all manner of permutations of program mix aimed at achieving sustainability. Their results have typically been mixed. There have been the WALA, Pathways, UBALE and many other project interventions implemented following all manner of disasters but sustainability remains tenuous.

Applying Sakichi Toyada's 5 "why's" approach has led others to believe that the INGOs have been dealing with symptoms only and finding the right answers to the wrong problem. As a consequence of the INGOs' fixation with current implementation strategies, the need for humanitarian relief assistance becomes recurrent. This usually follows disasters that come as a result of extreme weather events such as floods, droughts and/or severe pest/disease attack. Such disasters constitute a real negation of all socio-economic transformation efforts as the natives of the areas have a long history of barely surviving, and sometimes alternating between periods of bumper yields and periods of starvation (Mandala, 2004 as cited in Banda, 2017). These exogenous shocks tend to attract humanitarian aid, usually channeled through INGOs as implementing agencies. Most often this takes the form of food aid which comes in response to sudden, major

shortfalls due to droughts, pests, diseases, or floods (Madziakapita, 2008 as cited in Kapalamula, 2017 as cited in Mbewana, 2018).

This scenario has rendered the people of the area stagnated in that they fail to graduate from being recipients of relief items and begin to engage in more self-reliant, sustainable livelihood activities that would ensure resilience against such external shocks.

Further, the donors providing the resources have also, until most recently, continued to support these INGOs. It has been perceived by other development players that some of these donors tend to have ulterior motives of their own (Hayter, 1976 as cited in Michalopoulos, 2017 as cited in Ingratubun, 2021).

It has been appreciated that, for effective humanitarian assistance to take place, understanding the linkages between relief and resilience-building, and also the conceivable synergies between them is essential (Smillie, 1999 as cited in Kiratli, 2018). Generally, donor interests in project funding keep getting questioned by more and more scholars (Dollar, 2000 as cited in Mohamed et al, 2015).

1.2 Problem Statement

The central problem investigated in the study was the persistent livelihoods fragility of the disaster-prone Makhanga Area, despite numerous sustainable livelihoods resilience programs taking place there. The fragility was demonstrated by the frequent relapsing into pre-existing emergency states, necessitating a return to relief assistance during the disasters that devastate the area now and then. This has created a paternalistic relationship that appears at play in the lower Shire sub-region of Malawi. Benefactor INGOs and their beneficiaries appear to be entangled in a relief-development vicious cycle (Madziakapita, 2008 as cited in Carlson & Sein, 2020). This raises serious questions as to the effectiveness of the subsequent sustainable livelihood programmes that follow their relief assistance (Smillie, 1999 as cited in Kiratli, 2018).

INGOs such as World Food Programme, Oxfam, Care Malawi, Save the Children, Red Cross and Catholic Relief Services, among others, have often been compelled to render emergency relief in response to the humanitarian situations with increasing frequency.

Further, at the the end of the humanitarian response, some of these INGOs have also felt duty-bound to design sustainable livelihoods programs aimed at building the livelihoods resilience of this area. Such programs like the WALA program (2009-2014) and the UBALE program (2015-2019) were implemented after the C-Safe relief response program in 2005-2008 (Gardener et al, 2005).

However, despite the interventions of such seemingly sound and technically comprehensive resilience-building programs, the area continues to display fragility at the onset of even modest shocks like mild flooding or drought, undercutting any progress thus far made in the way of recovery as facilitated by INGOs. This happens even despite the obvious and indisputable successes of such programs at their closure (Rodgers &Coates, 2016). This sometimes leads to the mere transposing of one unsustainable project intervention by another. Critical to this phenomenon is the fact that, while there might be some distinct overlaps between livelihood improvement and resilience, the two are not primarily the same thing or interchangeable, with resilience primarily reflecting the coping capabilities to external shocks (Fang et al, 2018). In such a framework, the contemporary understanding and use of the word “sustainable” becomes too shallow to be a project goal, and therefore void of any specific meaning. Hence, as a basis for the study, the researcher conjectured the role and dynamic that exit strategies put in place during the lifespan of such programmes feature. Exit strategies can affect a programme’s direction by their very nature in terms of comprehensiveness, how their implementation has been executed and also how the challenges that were experienced during the lifespan of the programme have been managed.

Available literature reveals that several studies focusing on exit strategies have been conducted regarding how they affect the sustainability of programme outcomes beyond their closure. Such works as the study by Angels (2010) in Armenia, Mkomagi in (2015) in Tanzania, Rodgers &Coates (2016) in Bolivia, India, Honduras and Kenya (as indicated in section 2.5) reveal some insights on exit strategies in light of outcomes of livelihoods programming. However, a researchable gap still exists in the role that exit strategies can play in enhancing the outcomes of sustainable livelihoods programmes that

target disaster-ridden communities with interventions aimed at building livelihood resilience borne out of emergency humanitarian relief. Scholarship devoted to the dynamics of these areas has been scanty and this study addresses this important gap by positioning such areas as a unique focus area begging special scholarly attention as far as exit strategies are concerned. The voices of these underrepresented beneficiaries as well as those of their benefactors needed to be heard. This gap arose from multiple sources (Miles, 2017). Debates over the relevance of certain INGOs in certain contexts had suggested that INGOs may not be interested in ending poverty, rather only promoting their own ulterior motives in the process. This, coupled with the real-life experience of the Makhanga disaster-prone area which has seen a plethora of INGOs flocking to the area over the years motivated the study. Without a solid understanding of this reality, the INGO becomes more of an inhibitor than an enabler. These INGOs have entered the area with either humanitarian relief assistance, resilience-building or both. Besides, none of the previous researchers had cast exit strategy as an extraneous/intermediating variable in their analysis framework as outlined in section 2.5.

1.3 Hypothesis

The research questions were designed to test the following hypotheses:

- i) Exit strategies are not essential to the perpetuation of post intervention period outcomes by INGOs in disaster-prone areas.
- ii) Levinger and McLeod (2002) preconditions is not essential in ensuring satisfactory effectiveness of exit strategies in INGO Programming in disaster-prone areas.

1.4 Study objective

1.4.1 Main objective

The primary research objective of the study was to assess the effectiveness of project exit strategies on livelihood resilience beyond closure in the Makhanga disaster-prone area.

1.4.2 Specific objectives

The specific secondary objectives were:

- (i) To assess the nature of the exit strategies employed by INGOs operating in the disaster-prone lower Shire sub-region of Malawi.
- (ii) To determine the effectiveness of exit strategies in sustaining the outcomes of sustainable livelihoods programs in the disaster-prone Makhanga Area
- (iii) To analyze challenges experienced in implementating exit strategies in sustainable livelihoods programs in the Makhanga Area .

1.5 Research questions

Three principal research questions are identified and addressed in this study.

- (i) What is the nature of the key exit strategies instituted by INGOs in their resilience-building projects in the Makhanga area?
- (ii.) How effective are those INGO exit strategies in sustaining livelihoods resilience in the Makhanga area?
- (iii) What challenges are faced during the implementation of exit strategies in livelihoods projects in the Makhanga area.?

1.6 Significance and relevancy of the study

This topic is relevant in that it touches the essence of livelihood fragility in Makhanga area, exploring an issue that has a bearing on the future of the inhabitants of this sub-region.. Specifically, their frequent need for humanitarian support, the burden that befalls Malawi government and other stakeholders in general. Besides it is a current issue globally, regionally and locally within Malawi The findings and recommendations will

influence the life trajectories of the people in the area and also extrapolate to other parts of the world experiencing similar shocks .

The stakeholders involved in sustainable livelihood programming in this area (INGOs, government agencies, community structures as well as households, who are the primary beneficiaries) need to appreciate the dynamics of the exit strategies that are engaged in sustainable livelihood projects in an area frequently devastated by adverse weather. Understanding of exit strategies is not only justified, it is essential. It will help that the outcomes of such sustainable livelihood project interventions are not compromised after closure. Furthermore, it will help them all to leverage on and gain more impetus from the literature exposition of this study.

1.7 Thesis Outline

This thesis has two sections made up of five chapters in total. Chapter One gives an extensive introduction to the study that builds a logical case for the problem statement, background information, research perspective, statement of the problem, study objectives, research questions and hypothesis, justification and significance of the study. Chapter Two defines exit strategy which is the key concept underpinning the study and other closely related concepts, discusses approaches to exit strategies, designing and implementation of exit strategies, proponents of exit strategies, existing scholarly research on exit strategies, social science theories in which the study is situated and the theoretical and conceptual framework of the study.

Chapter Three provides a thorough description of the study area and its socioeconomic-demographic characteristics, the design of the study in terms of method, sampling technique, sample size calculation, ethical considerations, data collection methods, data cleaning, data analysis and interpretation of results.

The second section has chapters four and five. Chapter Four presents findings of the study and their meaning. What the qualitative research findings say and how they lead to the identification of the variables that constitute the subsequent quantitative study is reported here, and how the findings bear on the hypothesis is also given.

Chapter Five outlines the policy implications of the findings, what has to be done going forward as well as the scholarly gaps still existing and begging further academic research. The references that were used in interacting with relevant literature during the study as well as appendices are given at the very end.

1.8 Conclusion

This chapter has provided the background to the study, laying the foundation for the succeeding problem statement. Research question research objectives, hypothesis and importance and relevance justifying the study have also been provided. Finally, a chapter outline of the entire thesis has been given.

Chapter two focuses on literature review situating the study within the scholarly work on exit strategies existing.

CHAPTER TWO

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

2.1 Introduction

This chapter presents a review of the relevant literature relating to exit strategies. The key concepts, theoretical underpinnings of exit strategies as well as empirical studies carried out by various scholars, their methodologies and findings are reviewed. The gap that exists in literature is also highlighted. The chapter ends by highlighting the conceptual framework of this study, indicating how the different variables that come into play interact and relate to each other.

2.1.1 Operational Definitions

This section presents the definition of exit strategy, which is the key concept underpinning the study, and other closely related concepts.

i. Definition of Exit Strategy

As alluded to in section 1.1, an exit strategy for a project is a specific plan describing how a sponsor intends to withdraw from a region while ensuring that the projects' achieved development goals are not jeopardized and that further progress towards these goals will be made (Rogers & Macias, 2004a as cited in Tetteh et al, 2021). Alternatively, an exit strategy has been defined as an explicit plan guiding the process of withdrawing resources from beneficiary communities (Food and Nutrition Technical Assistance Report, 2016). This definition looks at an exit strategy as a process while the one by Rogers & Macias, 2004a (as cited in Tetteh et al, 2021) is a means to an end.

As a concept, according to the Institutional Learning and Research (ILR) division, exit strategies were firstly conceived in the corporate world community, moved to political,

military and more recently, into humanitarian, relief and development discourse (ILR,2005). Stakeholders keen on external evaluations and reviews of development programs have often identified exit strategies as crucial components for the sustainability of development programs and projects hence, their recent prominence in development discourse (Davis & Sankar, 2006 as cited in Mkomagi et al , 2022; International Fund for Agricultural Development, 2009 as cited in Khan, 2021).

Worthy of note is that exit strategies are not just a set of practices that can be universally applied, but rather, an approach that involves different elements embedded in local contexts. It is not a one-size fits all approach.

In the present study, exit strategies are conceived as a form of moderating variable affecting the direction and/or strength of the relationship between the independent and dependent variables (Thomson, 2006 as cited in Chae, 2018). These are unmeasured variables affecting the cause-effect relationship operating in real-life situations that may affect changes in the dependent variable. These factors may increase or decrease the magnitude or strength of the relationship between independent and dependent variables (Sing & Kumar, 2020).

The actual project intervention on the one hand is the independent variable, while resilience is the dependent variable on the other. The exit strategy is the moderating or extraneous variable and is conjectured to modify the original relationship between the independent and dependent variables. This is demonstrated in figure 1 below.

Elements of exit strategies

According to Levinger and McLeod (2002 as cited in Samson, 2020), an effective exit strategy has six elements. These elements include plan for exit from the initial stages, developing partnerships and local linkages, and building local organization and human capacity. Additionally, exit strategies also mobilize local and external resources, stagger the phasing of activities and resources; and allow roles and relationships to evolve. Ideally, these six elements of an effective exit strategy should be integrated as part of the overall approach by planning it from the design stage and revisited during the

implementation to assess progress so as to maintain benefit streams in the future (Levinger and McLeod, 2002 as cited in Samson, 2020) This is what makes an exit strategy a critical element missing on the Project Management Life Cycle (PMLC).

Davis and Sankar (2006) stressed the importance of operationalizing exit strategies by stating that there exists four stages in an exit strategy that correspond to stages in the project management life cycle. These four stages of exit strategy operationalization exist at the development, implementation, monitoring, evaluation stage, and transition stages. According to Davis and Sankar, these four stages culminate into phasing over or phasing out of the project. According to them, during the project development stage, the foundations are being set, the project is defined, expectations are spelled out and the processes required to implement and review the projects are developed. In the same development period, an exit strategy is also formulated so that project staff get to know what the future will look like. This in turn helps to refine project activities. Likewise, formulating exit strategies at the inception of projects provides a way to test the logic and assumptions made about projects.

According to Levinger and McLeod (2002 as cited in Samson, 2020), Davis and Sankar (2006), House (2007 as cited in Samson, 2020 and Hart et al 2020), there are three basic approaches to exit strategies. These include phasing down, phasing out and phasing over. Whichever approach eventually gets adopted is informed by the specific program mix and the contextual setting.

Phasing Down

Phasing down is a gradual reduction of program activities, utilizing local organizations to sustain program benefits while the original sponsor (or implementing agency or donor) deploys fewer resources. Phasing down is often a preliminary stage to phasing over and/or phasing out (Gardener et al, 2005 as cited in Kinsbergen et al 2023). This is a stage where the agency slows down in its direct involvement and relies more on local institutions like Community Based Organizations (C.B.Os), and Village Development Committees (V.D.Cs to sustain the project activities.

Phasing Out

This refers to a sponsor's withdrawal of involvement in a program without turning it over to another institution for continued implementation. Ideally, a program is phased out after permanent or self-sustaining changes are realized, thus eliminating the need for additional external inputs (Gardener et al, 2005 as cited in Kinsbergen et al 2023). At this stage, the agency-led intervention stops completely, according to the pre-set timeline and wrap-up meetings are held to mark the end ceremoniously,

Phasing Over

In this case, a sponsor transfers program activities to local institutions or communities, during program design and implementation, emphasis is placed on institutional capacity building so that services can continue through local organizations (Rogers& Macias, 2004a; Gardener et al, 2005). This is done from the beginning where a local institution is identified to work with the agency as an empowerment process.

In the present study, the two projects of WALA and UBALE were assessed in their exit strategies with respect to these elements as is shown in table 4 (Tactics for phase-over within the Project Management Life Cycle). The two projects are jointly displayed, one to the other.

ii. Defining Resilience

Resilience has been defined as “the capacity that ensures stressors and shocks do not have long-lasting adverse development consequences” (Constas et al, 2021:6).

Further, resilience aims at ensuring that communities can still thrive amidst adverse circumstances, shocks and stresses, and be able to consolidate gains and, most critically, reduce their need for humanitarian aid (Cox et al, 2019).

In this context, resilience is conceived as an end goal itself, rather than an intermediate outcome that facilitates the accomplishment of a more basic aim associated with a more permanent developmental destination (Bene et al, 2014 as cited in Grafton et al, 2019). This definition has considerable consequences for project outcomes that appear positive

at closure as shown in section 4.3.2.2.1 –Findings on Coping Strategy Index (CPI) Variables.

iii.. Defining Livelihood Sustainability in Context

Livelihood sustainability appears to be one of the most frequently used and possibly abused terms in the rural developmental discourse. Many INGOs working in rural areas claim to be providing sustainable development, but whether that is indeed the reality or not, is a matter of serious debate. The rural development sector is full of unsustainable projects that often fall into disrepair, despite consensus among scholars that it is not possible to discuss development without considering questions about sustainability and sustainable development as evidence shows mixed outcomes (Rodgers & Coates, 2016). This is especially true for the Lower Shire sub-region of Malawi, which is incidentally one of the disaster-prone areas in Malawi. This situation has confounded development practitioners who have tried to come up with all manner of permutations of program mix aimed at achieving livelihood sustainability. Their results have typically been mixed. There have been the WALA, Pathways, UBALE and many other project interventions implemented following all manner of disasters but sustainability remains tenuous.

2.1.2. The impact of El Nino on livelihood sustainability in the Lower Shire

The 2015 El Nino adverse weather which provided a real test of the purported resilience so gained, was used as a reference point for measurement for WALA while Cyclone Idai of 2019 was used for UBALE. This is in line with the observation that unless development projects result in changes that remain durable and self-sustaining after closure, the impact remains meaningless (Rodgers & Coates, 2016).

It has been observed in some instances that displaced people are assisted by relief agencies that have a misplaced conception of poverty (Nyasulu, 2010). This is further perpetuated by the spurious assumption that disaster-prone areas cannot achieve sustainable resilience, yet there is ample evidence that while poor peasant farmers are not to be regarded as entirely rational by a professional's standards, the decisions made by peasant farmers are indeed rational, at least within the parameters of their understanding and experience (Schultz, 1982 as cited in Adams, 2016).

For example, in 2003, CARE Malawi led the Consortium for Southern Africa Food Emergency (C-SAFE) consortium in distributing food relief items in various areas in Malawi. This relief intervention graduated into the WALA and later UBALE project.

These two projects set the platform for studying exit strategies in the area owing to their special focus on facilitating resilience in disaster-prone areas persistently relying on humanitarian assistance.

i. The Context for WALA

This was a consortium led by Catholic Relief Services. WALA was an USAID-funded integrated food security program in southern Malawi. It engaged farmers in initiatives aimed at commercial marketing to improve household incomes and food security. It emphasized watershed development to achieve food security and resilience. It targeted low-income, dryland contexts experiencing climate uncertainty and extreme weather in the study area. According to Amadu et al, 2020 climate-smart agriculture (CSA) under WALA led to 53% increase in among its adopters in southern Malawi. WALA paved the way for another project known as I-Life and later UBALE. Previously, CARE Malawi had implemented the Central Region Livelihoods Improvement Project which graduated into the Sustaining and Mitigating Impact of HIV and AIDS for Livelihood Enhancement Project. All these projects had roughly similar objectives, and more brutally, focused on more or less the same impact areas. The trend is that implementing agencies like CARE Malawi, either are more keen in demonstrating their ability and capacity to implement project intervention activities successfully, and not necessarily enhancing the resilience of their beneficiaries to shocks; or have neither the time nor the inclination for such indulgencies as exit strategies. In other words, the importance of an exit strategy is considered marginal. Hence, their efforts towards the same are only perfunctory, at best (FANTA Report, 2016 as cited in Hayman & Lewis, 2018). This study therefore intended to evaluate exit strategies to understand how the inclusion or exclusion of such strategies promote livelihood sustainability and resilience in the Lower Shire.

ii. The Context for UBALE

The 2015 flooding in southern Malawi had caused displacement of an estimated about 230,000 people, damaged about 64,000 hectares of land, effectively destroying the asset wealth of many (Cholami et al, 2022).

UBALE hence came about as a response to this devastation. It was a consortium led by CRS and implemented in the three poorest and disaster-prone districts in Malawi—Chikwawa, Nsanje and Rural Blantyre for five years under the USAID/FFP-funded Development Food Assistance. It was managed by CRS-Malawi.

Driven by an appreciation of forecasting food insecurity levels and targeting vulnerable households as a priority for humanitarian programming, UBALE implemented overlapping interventions aimed at addressing climate change-driven food insecurity and build resilience. Such interventions as agriculture, livelihood nutrition and community disaster risk reduction activities formed the hallmark of UBALE.

In 2018, an ex-post evaluation study of the UBALE consortium by Amadou found that “on average, CSA adopters obtained yield and household income of 90%” (ii)

2.2 Conceptualization of Exit Strategies

The conventional PMLC typically used by INGOs to guide the implementation of their project interventions does not intrinsically and expressively provide for project exit strategies (Angels, 2010). According to Angels, this relative neglect of exit strategies can and does lead to serious post-intervention problems of communities relapsing into pre-existing fragile livelihoods conditions, usually with a negative net effect requiring relief assistance and hence, reinforcing a hand-outs syndrome in some cases. This formed the point of departure for this study.

While this study did not try to re-invent the paradigm, it sought to confront the flaw created by the non-consideration of exit strategies inherent in the same, and also sought to inspire and encourage development practitioners to rethink conventional development practices and be persuaded to a more realistic view.

The study conjectured that it is not necessarily the technical conception of the program mix that accounts for the dismal post-closure performance of resilience-building projects in the lower Shire. Rather, the problem could largely lie elsewhere, conceivably in the area of poor implementation of exit strategies, which are either instituted as an afterthought or done in a scanty, shambolic way, or that the strategies themselves are mediocre, leading to failure to sustain the project activities beyond the life span of the donor-funded projects. As such, the projected transformation has been conceived as a snowballing way out of the vicious cycle of disadvantage (Snow, 2001 as cited in Hopper, 2003).

This research therefore intended to treat the ‘resilience-building project interventions’ as the independent variable or change variable that is intended to bring about the desired change in resilience levels, while the outcome variable or effect is the supposed sustainability and the exit strategy was treated as the extraneous variable. Climatic or economic conditions were treated as the confounding or intervening variable. As an extraneous variable, the exit strategy has a strong contingent effect on the independent variable-dependent variable relationship. This relationship can be positive or negative. Figure 1 depicts the relationships.

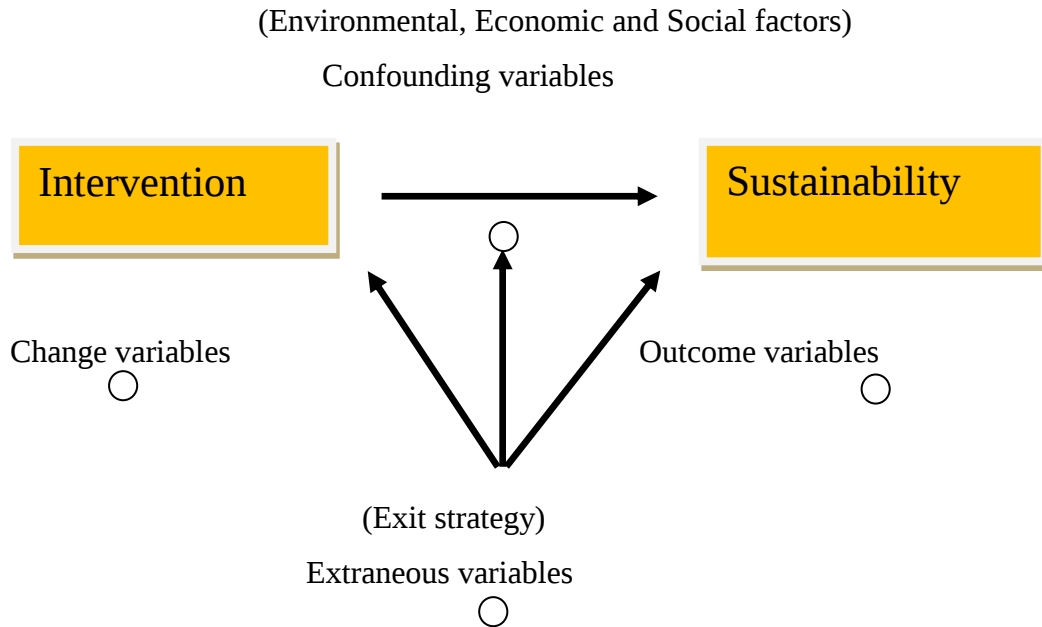


Figure 1: An Illustration of the Interaction of Variables in the Framework

Source: Sekaran and Bougie (2021)

2.3. Proponents of exit strategies

Several players have emerged to underscore the importance of exit strategies in influencing the sustainability of projects beyond their lifespan. Among the earliest proponents of exit strategies were IFAD (2009 as cited in Bikara, 2023); Gardener et al; Rogers & Macias (2004b). These proponents of exit strategies note that the goal of an exit strategy is not limited to just maintaining benefits so far achieved, but also enables further progress toward the projects' development goals. Ideally, an exit strategy puts in place a system whereby the benefits expand beyond the original beneficiaries and their communities (Rogers & Macias, 2004b). Having an exit strategy, it is strongly argued, provides clarity, focused programming work, enables better planning by available human and financial resources and gets people to think about the end at the beginning of the program (Davis & Sankar, 2006; Rogers & Macias, 2004b).

Another proponent was Gardner et al (2005) under C-SAFE (2005:4 as cited in Tull, 2020) which conceived an exit strategy as a sustainability plan for a program, which has inherent benefits irrespective of the timing and context (C-SAFE, 2005:4 as cited in Tull,

2020). This is a plan describing how the program intends to withdraw its resources while ensuring the achievement of the program goals (relief or development) is not jeopardized and that progress towards these goals will continue. C-SAFE has deemed that exit strategies, when planned with partners in advance of close-out, ensure better program outcomes and encourage commitment to programme sustainability. The goal of an exit strategy is to ensure the sustainability of impacts after a program has ended. It could be defined in a broader sense as a program's 'sustainability strategy', which could be accomplished through staggered graduation from specific project areas, simultaneous withdrawal from the entire program area, or transitioning to be associated with programming in selected areas (C-SAFE, 2005:5).

2.4 Theoretical Framework

Various researchers have used different theories to situate their study of exit strategies in different contexts. Such theories have ranged from Systems Theory, Principal Agency Theory, Social Constructionism Theory and Participatory Ladder Theory, among others. This research was guided by Systems Theory and Social Constructionism theory in situating exit strategies within the framework of the PMLC, which exposes the non-consideration of exit strategies in INGO-led development discourse.

2.4.1 Systems Theory

Systems Theory is concerned with the interplay and interaction between different parts of a system. Proposes that no one part, or element, of a system should be looked at in isolation, but rather must be looked at holistically by considering all elements that make up the system and the interaction and interdependence between them. It is systems theory that guides systems approaches in community development adopted by most INGOs.

The characterization of systems approaches as outlined by Teater (2020:4+256 as cited in Paula Beesley, 2020), illuminated the understanding of the dynamics of the Makhanga area throughout the research.

The inhabitants of the lower Shire disaster-prone area are thus viewed as a community and as a system with numerous elements or subsystems that interact together to make a functional whole. Their special characteristics, sources of livelihood, coping strategies in

adverse conditions and belief systems being the different parts or elements of that core system.

As a system, the community under study has a boundary that makes it distinct from other systems in that it has its own value and belief system. Yet this boundary is permeable in that it is susceptible to change and influence from other systems. Hence government and INGOs can adjust these frontiers and pave the way for resilience-building for a people who are facing trauma or so debased by poverty such that even their confidence has been eroded.

It is to be appreciated that the core community under study cannot compromise on their belief system and any efforts to bring about change in the area would face some resistance as the community needs to have a balance within and among the systems where they can foster positive growth and development.

2.4.2 Social Constructionism Theory

The theory holds that a service user's reality is not constructed in isolation but is shaped by and influenced by his or her culture and the society in which he or she lives (Greene & Lee, 2011 as cited in Berg-Weger & Tyse, 2023).

The people of the lower Shire sub-region are thus viewed as being socially constructed by the reality of their geographical environment and the resultant attention they have gotten from government and the INGO community. The following premises of social constructionism apply:

The different individuals, families and clans occupying the area under study have their way of viewing the world and are hence bound to respond to stimuli in their way. This relates to the relief aid that comes as a response to the humanitarian situations that arise in the region now and then, with INGOs perpetually working in the area. Whatever experiences they have had has a history and cultural context in which they have operated over the years and the limitations placed by such factors are identifiable.

The present reality can thus be challenged and modified so that relief can progress into sustainable resilience- building.

Overall, the focus had to be on the collective nature of these culturally and socially constructed ways of acquiring knowledge.

2.4.3 Convergence of the two theories: An integrated Approach

While the systems approach has the advantage of being comprehensive, and flexible and emphasizes linkages between elements, it has retained the shortcoming of being too broad and lacking focus. In such a framework, it becomes hard to isolate the particular element that requires specific attention. This weakness is cured by the recognition and postulation advanced by social constructionism theory to the effect that human beings are active participants in the creation of their knowledge and reality, with the creation and meaning- making being influenced by the environment (such as family, community or society).

Converging the two theories allows social constructionism the opportunity to complement systems theory in situating and contextualizing the dynamics of the study area vis a viz the various stakeholders.

2.5 Existing Research on Exit Strategies

Several studies exist in the literature on exit strategies. These have been initiated by non-governmental organizations as well as individual researchers in development projects in several parts of the world, and at different levels. These levels are identified as global, regional and national levels. Each of these levels has been considered:

At the global level, several scholarly studies have been conducted. Angels (2010) conducted a rigorous empirical examination of the role of exit strategies in sustaining the benefits of a United States Agency for International Development-funded livelihoods program beyond closure in Armenia Republic. This was based on a database ,collected through document analysis, expert sampling and questionnaire survey. A path analysis technique was applied to test the proposed framework on relationships between the variables. Among the key findings in this study was that building the local organizational

capacity proved important to the phase-over, but building human capacity proved essential.

Rodgers & Coates (2016) of the Gerald J. and Dorothy R. Friedman School of Nutrition Science and Policy Tufts University, conducted a study involving exit strategies. This study was conducted in the four countries in which the project was run namely Bolivia, India, Honduras and Kenya. The study found that evidence of project success at the time of exit did not necessarily imply sustained benefit over time and vertical linkages for phase-over. It also found that a gradual transition from project-supported activities to independent operation was important for sustainability. Most notably, the study found that providing free resources can threaten sustainability unless the replacement of those resources both as project inputs and as incentives has been addressed.

In 2020, Samson, investigated how exit strategies were applied in humanitarian contexts involving American military activity. This study was conducted in Australia. It was found in this study that little study has been done in exploring exit strategies in humanitarian interventions, exit decisions are under-theorized and under-examined and also that normative expectations are not taken seriously in considering when and how to withdraw a humanitarian intervention.

To the best knowledge of the researcher, only one scholarly study has been conducted at the regional level. Mkomagi (2015) evaluated the effectiveness of exit strategies in two World Vision International projects in Chipanga E.P.A in Bahi district, Tanzania in 2013. It was found in this study that the exit strategies had been designed three years before project phase-out; strategies were neither refined nor assessed before implementation; partnerships with other stakeholders were too weak to ensure successful exit strategies. It was further found that the establishment of partnerships with both private and public institutions was generally weak with the consequent result that food security never improved, it had levelled off as a matter of fact.

In Malawi, no systematic research had been done but observations were made by C-SAFE and I-LIFE Projects in 2005 that Non-Governmental Organizations tend to put much emphasis on Community Based Organizations (CBOs) as their exit strategy institutions. However, this research observes that the said CBOs tend to lean towards receiving and distribution of relief items as well as catering for orphans as distribution conduits. This is particularly grave in the disaster-prone area of the lower Shire.

2.6 Gaps in Empirical Studies

According to the present researcher's knowledge, none of the studies as shown in section 2.5 above had a specific focus on disaster-prone areas with an reinforced hands-out syndrome trying to graduate to resilience building. The focus was rather on projects running in a pristine physical environment. Hence, this was deemed to be a case of an information gap and not just a knowledge gap.

The present study has brought a specific, different dimension to the same issue. This is in the sense that it is considered the dynamic of a disaster-prone area that frequently seeks recourse to humanitarian aid. Compared to the pristine physical environment the previous researchers had focused on, the disaster-prone area presents fresh challenges to the benefactors and beneficiaries of the subsequent livelihood projects alike as they operate in a terrain that is desolate and arid in one season and submerged and inundated in another. A researchable gap still exists in the role that exit strategies can play in enhancing the outcomes of sustainable livelihoods programs that target disaster-ridden communities with interventions aimed at building livelihood resilience borne out of emergency humanitarian relief. According to the present researcher's knowledge, none of the studies as shown in section 2.5 above had a specific focus on disaster-prone areas with a reinforced hands-out syndrome trying to graduate to resilience building. The focus was rather on projects running in a pristine physical environment.

2.7 Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework of this research assumes that the adoption of exit strategies leads to more sustainable and resilient livelihoods. This sustainability and resilience would be improved by exit strategies.

Figure 2: Conceptual Framework

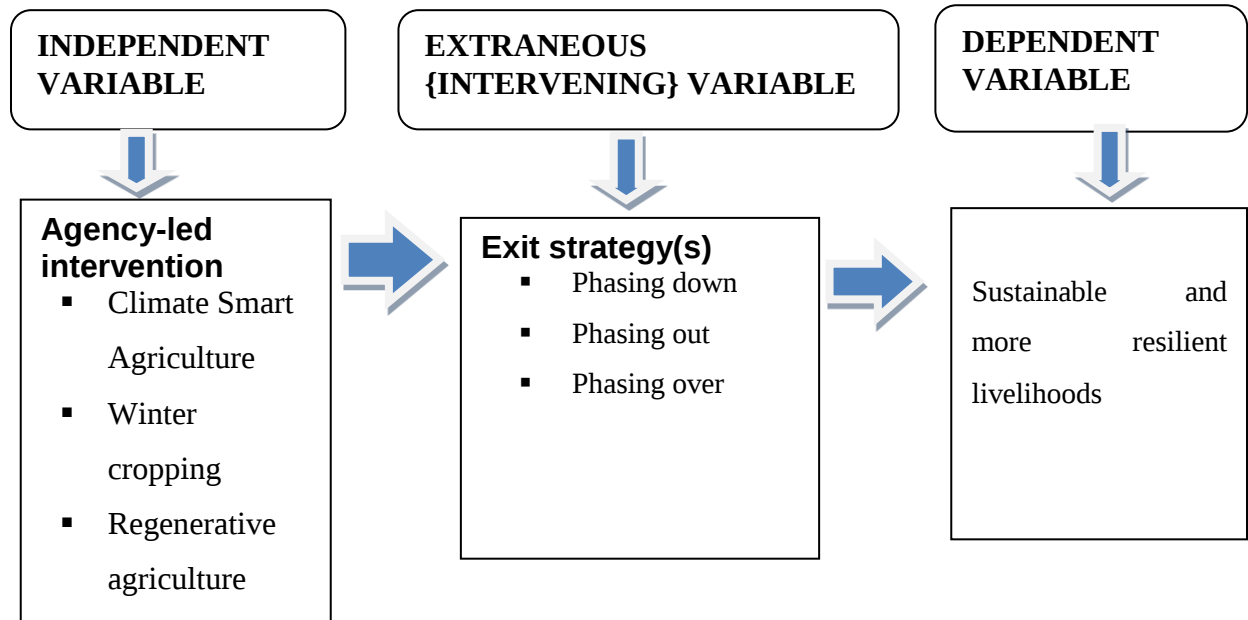


Figure 2 shows the conceptual framework of the study. The specific agency-led project intervention is the independent variable while sustainable and resilient livelihoods are the dependent variable. The intervening variable is the exit strategy regimen which could take any of the three forms of phasing down, phasing out and phasing over.

In the study, these issues were designed into the interview guide and in the questionnaire. A 5-point Likert rating was used to gauge the community perspective.

To study the extent to which exit strategies in aid development projects correlate with post-exposure project success or failure, the role played by an exit strategy regimen was depicted in figure 2. The extent to which project intervention outcomes remain sustainable overtime depends on the strength of the exit strategy regimen adopted. The

stronger the exit strategy regimen adopted, the more sustainable the project intervention outcome is overtime; and the weaker the exit strategy adopted is, the less sustainable the project intervention outcome is overtime.

As an extraneous variable operating between intervention activities as the independent variable, and sustainability as the dependent variable on the other, the exit strategy either positively or negatively affects the influence of the independent variable on the dependent variable . If indeed exit strategy influences sustainability of project outcomes beyond closure, that would be reflected in the communities' reduced fragility in case of disaster.

2.8 Conclusion

The chapter has highlighted theoretical postulations of exit strategies, the social science theories illuminating the study, the context for the two projects anchoring the study, and the adverse conditions that provided that provided a reality check for them have also been discussed.

The chapter has further explored previous studies conducted by previous scholars on the same topic and the variations of their focus. This has allowed the exposition of the existing gap in literature and how this study proposes to address this deficiency in insights in resilience building in disaster-prone areas. Finally the chapter has presented the conceptual framework guiding the study.

The next chapter focuses on the research design and methodology adopted to collect and analyse data in order to answer the research question.

CHAPTER THREE

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Research Design and Approach

To address the research question, both qualitative and quantitative strands of data were used in this study. This was under the Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method Research (MMR). Hence, qualitative data were collected and analyzed first and from the emerging themes, a quantitative research instrument was developed to further explore and understand the perceptions around exit strategy effectiveness in the area (Bougie & Sekaran, 2021).

These data sets were initially analyzed sequentially, followed by interpretation-level integration to link the two (Berman, 2017 as cited in Tarnoki & Puentes, 2019).

For the qualitative research, purposive and snowballing sampling were used to generate the non-quantitative data while a household survey through cluster and simple random sampling was done to generate quantitative data. Figure 3 depicts this flow.

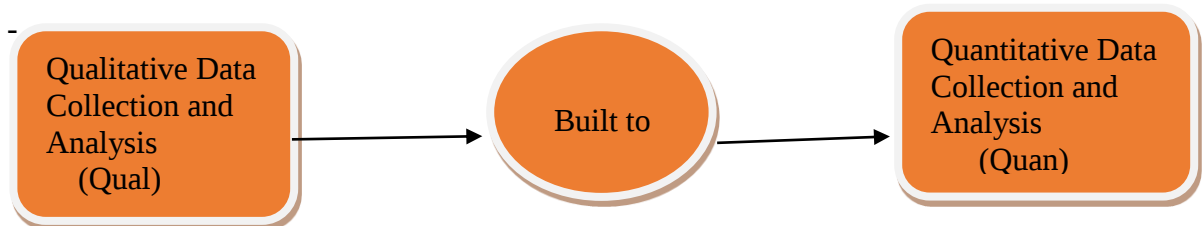


Figure 3: The Exploratory Sequential Mixed Method Framework .

Adapted from Creswell, 2003.

This design helped achieve two critical things related to the study. The first one was to establish the projects outcome in terms of livelihood status at project closure. The second was to assess the effectiveness of exit strategies in sustaining those outcomes up to the point when external shocks of El Nino and Cyclone Idai respectively devastated the area.

Given below are the different types of data that were used throughout the study.

3.1.1 Secondary Data Collection

Researching the topic commenced with already existing data in the form of document analysis. These were published reports.

In this study, several documents were comprehensively analyzed. These included DODMA reports, WALA and UBALE Project Design as well as Monitoring and Evaluation reports. The extent of the disaster in this area in terms of nature, frequency and identity of the INGOs that usually respond to them was appreciated; the design, nature of intervention and design of exit strategies that were used for the WALA and UBALE projects were analyzed and appreciated. Monitoring and Evaluation reports of the two projects provided insight into implementation and tracking of exit strategies throughout the projects implementation and even closure.

3.1.2 Primary Data Collection

After the document analysis indicated in section 3.1.1, the study proceeded with qualitative data collection.

3.1.2.1 Qualitative Study

Non-quantitative data was generated first in this MMR study and, appreciating that different stakeholders would have different claims, concerns and perspectives shaped by their context-specific values, the data came from multi-level sources: primary stakeholders (beneficiary households), secondary stakeholders (community structures i.e CBOs, farmer organizations and the like) and external stakeholders (INGOs and government agencies). This was in line with the fact that qualitative research is more flexible and largely uses open-ended questions that generate detailed perspectives and views of the issue being investigated (Wadams & Park, 2018). In this qualitative study, key informant interviews (KIIs) and focus group discussions (FGDs) were used with a purposeful sample (N=41).

This approach allowed the researcher to get appropriate data from those presumed most informed and knowledgeable about the issue at hand (Andrade, 2021).

An interview guide was developed in English and translated into the Sena language. In-depth interviews were then conducted. The discussions focused on their understanding of the design, implementation and challenges associated with exit strategies as conceived by INGOs operating in the area. Figure 5 below depicts a focus group discussion in progress at the Makhanga E.P.A. office.

Key Informant Interviews

The first activity was to conduct a brief inquiry into the entry and exit strategies used by INGOs operating or that have operated in the Makhanga area. This was sought from Malawi government officials as well as the INGOs themselves. These are shown in table 1.

Table 1: Key Informant Interviewees

No.	Institution	Designation
1	Nsanje District Agricultural Development Office	DADO
2	Nsanje District Council	DRRO
3	CARE Malawi	DM &E Coordinator
4	Goal Malawi	ERM
5	World Food Program	DC
6	Catholic Relief Services	PM
7	Makhanga Extension Planning Area	AEDEC

The qualitative data collection process involved obtaining a catalogue of INGOs that had implemented both relief as well as resilient-building livelihoods interventions. These were collected to gain an insight into the design of their project interventions, particularly focusing on their exit strategies, and when and how they were implemented.

All of this was aimed at gaining an understanding of how shifting from distribution of relief items and/or cash transfers into recovery and resilience-building has fared so that

in future communities can become more self-reliant with minimal recourse to relief in case of disaster striking again. A knowledge gap in such a framework would potentially perpetuate the recourse to relief assistance in the community. This shift is depicted in figure 4.



Flood victims receiving relief items at Makhanga

Flood victims receiving sweet potato vines as a recovery process

Figure 4: Shift from Relief to Resilience Figuratively:

Thus, the sampling proceeded as snowballing where the District Agricultural Development Officer was approached first at the district level and moved to Relief Rehabilitation Officer and INGOs in a cascading manner. The minimum requirement of 30 participants for qualitative research (Creswell, 2013 as cited in Sarfo et al, 2021) was well passed and the actual saturation point was established at the point where the categories/themes no longer sparked new insights or properties (Charmaz, 2006 as cited in Phillippi & Lauderdale, 2018; Kumar, 2011). Table 2 shows the categories.

Qualitative Study Sampling Technique

As indicated in section 3.1, purposive and snowballing sampling were used as the study intended to carefully seek out those individuals, institutions and structures that were best

placed to provide critical and valuable information (McNeish & Kelly, 2019). The study targeted those who were likely to have more knowledge on the topic and conduct of INGOs in the area. Specific members of the District Executive Committee (DEC), notably the District Agricultural Officer, District Relief and Rehabilitation Officer, NGO representatives as well as key community leaders were contacted for this purpose. An interview protocol was used to guide the discussions. This is detailed in table 2:

Table 2: Categories of Qualitative Research Participants

Category	Level	Structure	Official(s)	#
Government	District Level	District Agricultural Development Office	Project Officer	1
		District Relief Rehabilitation Office	District Relief Rehabilitation Officer	1
	Area Level	Extension Planning Area	Agricultural Extension Development Coordinator	1
Non-Governmental Organizations	District Level	CARE Malawi	Monitoring and Evaluation Officer	1
		World Food Program	District Coordinator	1
		Catholic Relief Services	Project Manager	1
		Goal Malawi	Resilience Manager	1
Community	Traditional Authority Level	Area Development Committee	Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and 2 members	5
		Community-Based Organization Network	Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and 2 members	5
		Farmer Organization	Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and member	4
	Village Level	Village Development Committee	Secretary, Treasurer and member	10
		Community Based Organization	Secretary, Treasurer and member	10
		Total		41

This was done in such a way that an interview guide was prepared in English by the researcher and translated into the local Sena by a native Sena speaker. It was then pre-

tested as indicated in section 3.3.1. Respondents were given general guidance on what information was required at each stage of the discussion. The discussions revolved around their understanding of the design, implementation and challenges associated with exit strategies as conceived by INGOs operating in the area. Specific consideration was on:

- a.) delivery manner of the exit strategies.
- b.) contents of the exit strategies and their relevance to the target population.
- c.) adequacy and quality of training provided.
- d.) resources made available and their management.

Owing to its emphasis on strengthening local institutions, the criteria used followed the proposition by Gardener et al (2005) and Rodgers and Marcia (2004):

- a.) whether the structures developed and organizations and individuals that were trained or empowered by the program continue to function effectively.
- b.) whether the relevant activities are continued in the same or modified format.
- c.) if the program impact has been sustained, expanded or improved at the end of the intervention.

The responses were recorded in writing. Clarifications were sought as the researcher engaged in analytic induction so that what appeared to be glaring contradictions were pointed out and clarifications made.

Focus Group Discussions

To obtain a first-hand appreciation of the situation in its totality, the researcher also had discussions with several stakeholders, especially those that work directly with the INGOs at several levels: community beneficiary representatives like GVDCs, VDCs, CBOs,

FOs like Cooperatives and Associations, ADC and AEC members. These serve basically as secondary beneficiaries.

These categories are shown in table 3.

Table 3: Focus Group Discussion Categories

Focus Group Category	Name of Community Structure	Participants
Focus Group 1	Area Development Committee	Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and 2 other members
Focus Group 2	Community-Based Organization Network	Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and 2 other members
Focus Group 3	Farmer Organization	Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and 1 other member
Focus Group 4	Group Village Development Committee	Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and 10 other members
Focus Group 5	Community Based Organization	Chairman, Secretary, Treasurer and 10 other members

General Focus Group Procedure

An interview guide was prepared in English by the researcher and translated into the Sena language by a native Sena speaker. It was then pre-tested as indicated in section 3.3.1.

Respondents were taken through by a native Sena speaker though some, being government frontline staff who have worked in the area for a long time, were conversant with English.

These structures were jointly probed on the level of satisfaction with the work done by INGOs in the area, and also their conduct in terms of exit. Specifically, the focus was not just on the immediate results but the sustainability of the interventions introduced by resilience-building INGOs. These included the nature and comprehensiveness of the exit strategies put in place by the INGOs. Figure 5 depicts a focus group discussion session at Makhanga E.P. A.



Figure 5: Focus group discussion involving joint ADC/AEC members at Makhanga E.P.A offices

Responses were recorded in writing by the researcher who was present throughout the discussions. Analytic induction was employed throughout and clarifications sought.

3.1.2.2 Quantitative Study

Quantitative data that uses deductive aspects from a selected sample to conclude issues was collected in this aspect of the study. This data set emphasizes quantification in the collection and analysis of numerical data (Bougie & Sekaran, 2021).

Informed by the findings of the qualitative study, a decision was made to investigate variables associated with the coping strategy index (CSI) as a metric related to livelihood

security. This is shown in section 4.2. To do so, a household survey (HHS) survey was deemed appropriate. Hence, the quantitative study took the form of a survey.

In this study a household survey was conducted in randomly selected households in carefully selected villages in GHVs placed in 3 clusters. These households are part of the beneficiary communities of the C-safe, WALA and UBALE project interventions that operated in the period spanning 2004 to 2019.

Makhanga E.P.A catchment area has 39 GVHs and over 19000 households. Appendix iv in the appendix section at the end shows the names of GVHs and VHs from which the sample of 109 was drawn. The survey was meant to generate a Resilience Ranking Score Sheet (RRSS) for the entire area. A total of 109 households were interviewed using likert scale questions.

The quantitative study proceeded as follows:

- a.) coping strategy questionnaire designed in English.
- b.) coping strategy index questionnaire translated into Sena, the local language spoken in the area.
- c.) Research Assistants chosen and trained.
- d.) The questionnaire was pre-tested for validity and reliability.
- e.) Household Interviews were conducted in selected villages.
- f.) Responses were recorded in Sena and later translated into English.
- g.) Data checked by the Main Researcher.
- h.) Data entry and analysis.

i.) Quantitative Study Sampling Technique

As indicated in section 3.1 above, the study used purposive, snowballing, cluster as well as simple random sampling techniques. Purposive and snowballing have been discussed in section 3.1.2.1.

Cluster sampling and simple random sampling were used to select households that would constitute the sample to conduct household in-depth interviews for the quantitative study.

In categorizing and grouping the households from which to sample, cluster sampling was preferred over stratified random sampling owing to its ability to offer more heterogeneity within groups and homogeneity among groups while stratified sampling does the opposite (Sekaran & Bougie, 2016 as cited in Sarker & AL-Muaalemi, 2022) The study considered the distribution and sizes of the 39 GVHs in Makhanga E.P.A, and the number and sizes in each GVH. Finally, the number of households in each GVH was considered. At the discretion of the researcher, 3 categories of GVHs were generated and weighted accordingly as shown in table 4.

The weighting for each GVH picked hence reflected the size of that GVH and accordingly, its category, in a 70: 20:10 fashion in favor of the largest GVHs.

Simple random sampling was used to get in-depth perspectives of households on the variables associated with the Coping Strategy Index (CPI) identified in the qualitative study as shown in section 4.3.2.

ii.) Sampling Size Calculation

For the quantitative study, Slovin's formula for sample size calculation shall be adopted as follows:

$$n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$$

Where n =sample size
N=Population size
e=margin of error

There are a total of 39 GVDCs, 474 VHs and 19850 households (Makhanga E.P.A Households Summary, 2021) in T/A Mlolo in which Makhanga E.P.A falls. Since *the unit of* consideration for structured household survey was deemed to be a household, the sampling frame and study population was the total number of households in the area, 19850.

Applying the formula above with an error term calculated at 10%, $n = \frac{N}{1 + Ne^2}$

$$= n = \frac{19850}{1 + 19850(0.1)^2}$$

$$= 99.5$$

This was rounded off to 100 households to form the sample

Simple random sampling was used to get in-depth perspectives of households in each of the VHS picked. However, since some GVHS have a larger number of VHS than others, the researcher used some discretion to categorize the GVHS into 3 clusters, A, B and C as shown in table 4: Such categorization ensured a more balanced representation of the clusters in the final sample.

Table 4: Weighting of Clusters in Sample Size Composition

Cluster	Total # GVHS	Total HHs in Category	# of HHs to form Sample from each VH	Sample Weighting %
A≤699HHs	27	≈3	27*3 = 81	10%
B≥700	8	≈2	8*2 = 16	20%
C≥1001	4	≈3	4*3 = 12	70%
Total	39		109	100%

Source: Author's survey (2021)

In conducting the individual household survey, a quasi-panel data approach was chosen in order to generate a more communal perspective, thus contrasting it with previous studies with similar objectives conducted by Goal Malawi in 2015 and 2008 using panel data

3.2 Study Area

The research was conducted in Nsanje district, specifically the Makhanga E.P.A catchment area. This area is under the jurisdiction of Traditional Authority Mlolo.

Several areas in Malawi are categorized as disaster-prone, among them the Limphasa Dambo Catchment Area in Nkhotakota district, the Lake Chilwa Lowland Catchment Area in Machinga, Zomba and Phalombe districts and the Lower Shire River Basin in Chikwawa and Nsanje districts. DODMA reports were reviewed and it was revealed that

Nsanje district experienced the most frequent and extreme disasters, alternating between flash floods and droughts. Hence Nsanje district was chosen.

Within Nsanje district, the study focused on the catchment area of the Makhanga E.P.A, in the East Bank of the Shire river. The Makhanga E.P.A catchment area was chosen because it lies at the confluence of the two major rivers in the lower Shire, the Shire and the Ruo rivers. The Ruo river is a tributary to the Shire and has its source in Mulanje mountains where heavy downpours upland tend to trigger flooding in the area as it struggles to offload into the Shire. This is so since the Shire is usually already full owing to rising water levels in its source -Lake Malawi- and so many other tributaries like the Mwanza, Lisungwi and Rivirivi rivers flowing directly into it upland. In those circumstances, the Ruo is unable to fully offload its waters into the Shire and it just expands and swells into farms and villages, swallowing crops and households, even washing away livestock besides denaturing eco-systems and destroying infrastructure, sometimes irreversibly so.

3.3 Data Collection and Research Instruments

Several appropriate research instruments were developed and used to collect data in this study. The overall aim was to create a Household Food Insecurity Access Scale (HFIAS). Such tools were an interview guide for the qualitative aspect of the study, questionnaires and Likert Scales for the quantitative aspect. The interview guide and survey questionnaire were both translated into the local Sena language.

3.3.1 Pre-testing

To gauge the potential effectiveness of the entire research process, the research instruments were pilot-tested. This was aimed at identifying errors that could arise from phonetic as well as vocabulary variations so that the entire instrument could be refined. The setting of this exercise was Nzunde E.P.A which did not form the sample of the study population but is similar to and shares great homogeneity with Makhanga area in all key aspects under consideration. These are; experiencing regular shocks in the form of flooding and droughts, socioeconomic as well as ethnicity. It was observed, however, that

the Sena that is spoken in Nzunde is purer than that spoken in Makhanga which has been adulterated by Lhomwe/Khokhola dialect influences of south-eastern Thyolo. Appropriate adjustments were hence made. For example, salt is referred to as *munyu* in Nzunde while in Makhanga, the Lhomwe term of *mwinyu* is readily accepted.

3.3.2 Validity

To ensure that the research instruments measured what they purported to, each of the tools was subjected to a rigorous validity test. Validity refers to the extent to which an empirical measure adequately reflects the real meaning of the concept under consideration (Zena Abo et al, 2022)

To do so the interview guide, questionnaires and Likert scales were tested for credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability (Mohajan, 2018).

3.3.3 Data Recording

Narrative Recording was used for qualitative data. Brief notes were taken by the researcher to record the qualitative information during the KIIs and FGDs. These were later transcribed into fair copies. The Hawthorne effect that would arise was minimized by analytic induction which the researcher engaged in throughout the investigation. This was done to prevent the respondents from modifying their behavior as a result of being aware that they were being observed (Sujatha et al 2019). Further, the researcher motivated the respondents by explaining clearly and in simple terms the objectives and relevance of the study for future INGO programming in their affected areas.

Quantitative data was recorded using ranking scales and categorical recording. A three-dimensional scale was used and the error of central tendency was minimized by having an even number of up to four or six levels in the likely areas. This was done in order to discourage the raters from simply placing most items in the middle of the rating scale (Wilcox & Keselman, 2003 as cited in Delacre et al, 2017)

3.3.4 Data Analysis

The raw data collected was edited and cleaned to ensure that it was free from inconsistencies and incompleteness. Then it was collated using appropriate tools before being transformed into numerical values.

Qualitative data was coded and such codes as resilience-livelihood enhancing activities initiated by INGOs, coping strategies employed by communities during shocks, nature and design of exit strategies employed by INGOs and implementation challenges of exit strategies.

The codes gave an insight into the experiences of community structures as well as households of interest to the study. Particular categories that emerged from the codes formed the themes reflecting the study objectives. All of this was done using Microsoft Word and Microsoft Excel.

Analysis of qualitative data was done manually to identify the emerging main themes.

Quantitative data was analyzed using SPSS computer software.

In order to fully address the research question, the two data strands were compared and integrated to discover points of contention and areas of convergence between the two. This was done with a view to drawing out meta-inferences that new insights over and above the sequential data protocols when considered severally (Teddlie & Tashakori, 2008 as cited in Berman, 2017 as cited in Tarnoki & Puentes, 2019)

3.4 Ethical Considerations

Appreciating that poorly designed research is inherently unethical as it wastes researchers' and subjects' time and energy if the results are less than useful, special commitments were adhered to in the course of the study as follows:

Permission to carry out the study was obtained from the University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC). After satisfying the requirements and paying the necessary fees, an authorization letter was issued to the researcher. The researcher committed to undertake the following:

3.4.1 Gatekeepers

Those who control access to respondents, otherwise known as gatekeepers, were duly and formally approached and permission to interview respondents sought. Nsanje DADO, Makhanga E.P.A AEDEC, Traditional Authority Mlolo, Mlolo A.D.C, and Makhanga C.B.O Network Coordinator were visited and informed of the impending study.

3.4.2 Informed Consent

The researcher duly endeavored to obtain an informed consent by securing written permission from any respondent prior to the discussion, and after being briefed about the purpose, nature and procedures of the study as well as its impact on them. In this regard a consent form was prepared and duly administered to each respondent.

3.4.3 Anonymity

The respondents were assured that their identity would not be disclosed to anyone. Since some of the views would conceivably amount to an indictment of the practices of certain INGOs and community structures, certain respondents would not be comfortable with their identities being disclosed. Where applicable, it was made clear that despite the best efforts of the researcher, anonymity may be compromised. This may be in regarding to reasonable requests for access to the data and materials by others for purposes of further research.

3.4.4 Confidentiality

Where appropriate, respondents were assured that the data from certain research respondents would not be shown in a form that would allow the respondent to be identified. Since some of the respondents would conceivably be beneficiaries of some of the project interventions by the INGOs, and the INGOs may also have negative sentiments about certain stakeholders, they may both not be comfortable with certain findings/data being traced to them.

3.5 Scope and Limitations of the Study

This study was more about how INGOs conduct themselves during and at the time of project closure. It touched on delicate areas involving INGOs' relevance and integrity. In such a framework, documents for secondary data were not readily available and were scantily released. Beneficiaries appeared uncomfortable about the conceivable likelihood of relief aid being curtailed in case of resilient livelihood project success. This limitation was mitigated by an explanation and assurance by the researcher that the findings would not affect the beneficiaries in any negative way as the study was purely academic. It was further clarified that relief had to be put in its proper perspective for development to

become more sustainable as political interest might lie beneath some aid assistance (Hayter, 1971 as cited in Michalopoulos, 2017 as cited in Mustafa et al, 2019 as cited in Ingratubun, 2021).

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the research design and methodology that the study adopted in order to collect both the qualitative and quantitative data in order to answer the research question. How the research instruments that were used to collect that data were developed and pretested. Study population and size, Sample size calculation and sampling methods, ethical considerations in terms of contacting appropriate gatekeepers, issues of consent, anonymity and confidentiality of respondents have been outlined. Finally, analysis of the data protocols as well as scope and limitations of the study have been given.

CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION OF THE STUDY FINDINGS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents and discusses the study findings of the process as outlined in section 1.7. The results are presented in text, frequency tables, pie charts, and bar charts. A brief discussion follows each finding while a comprehensive overall critical discussion is given at the very end in section 4.4.

4.2 Presentation of Research Findings and Results

The section that follows presents the actual findings, indicating the relevant research question. The sections below give the findings as indicated by the relevant structures.

4.2.1 RQ 1 Findings on the key exit strategies instituted by NGOs in their resilience- building interventions aimed at building on relief programs

The INGOs, government partners, community structures and the beneficiaries do not have a very comprehensive understanding of what constitutes exit strategies such that those cited do not align well with how exit strategies have been defined and conceived in literature. Those cited are only partially implied, such as:

- i.) Handing over of project equipment such as vehicles, motorcycles, office equipment like computers, printers, furniture and the like:

‘A good number of the vehicles we have and even office equipment are donations given to us by NGOs as they wind up their interventions here’ Nsanje DADO, Mr. Fole said

- ii.) Involving government agencies while implementing interventions

- iii.) Refresher capacity- building trainings aimed at empowering local institutions and volunteers
- iv.) Introduction of soil conservation, drought resistant crops; wetland utilization; re-afforestation and other climate smart agricultural practices; livestock pass-on programmes as well as Village Savings and Loans groups:

“generally, emphasis is on Village Savings and Loans Groups as well as livestock pass-on programs as sustainability of their activities” Makhanga E.P.A said
- v.) Linkages to other service providers like markets and agriculture extension services
- vi.) Project closure briefing meetings

4.2.2 RQ 2. Findings on the extent of household and community resilience to shocks that was enhanced by these exit strategies?

The communities have a distinct perception that they have gained resilience over the years that INGOs have been operating in the area. This perception is evidenced by a noticeable upward movement in their day to day livelihood on account of:

- i.) Increased crop harvests due to modern methods of farming such as land conservation, Sasakawa, winter cropping and wetland utilization introduced by INGOs

“Food availability has noticeably improved with the modern farming technologies such as Sasakawa, land conservation and wetland utilization” an ADC member said.

ii.) Increased livestock levels due to the pass-on programs introduced by NGOs. A VDC member could testify:

“The population of livestock has increased and keeps increasing because of the pass-on programs introduced here. Milk and meat consumption has improved and cash from livestock sales does help cushion against food shortages”

iii.) Reduced malnutrition especially for children with improved diet especially protein from livestock products like meat and milk, which has in turn reduced morbidity and mortality rates

“move in these communities, you hardly see malnourished children even at the health center the number of children on Chiponde peanut butter program has gone down drastically”, the voice of C.B.O. secretary

4.2.3 RQ. 3. Findings on challenges experienced in the implementation of exit strategies.

Several challenges were highlighted during the study bordering on conception, focus and priorities during the lifespan of the various projects. Key among those were:

i.) Lack of explicitness and clarity in the definition and institutionalization of exit strategies affect their implementation and timeliness.

“They just mention that they have put in place ways of ensuring continuity of the interventions when they close but we don’t see or understand what those ways are”, a VDC member said

ii.) There seems to be more focus expended on achieving immediate benefits of the projects to demonstrate impact over institutionalizing sustainability techniques.

iii.) More often than not, one project intervention is succeeded by another with more or less similar objectives and activities hence an assurance that further assistance will be made available from either the same or a different INGO.

- iv.) The handouts syndrome is still alive such that self-sustaining initiatives are not taken very seriously, especially with sporadic disasters now and then providing convenient justification.

“Some people still believe that they deserve to receive food aid and other items and that they don’t need to take their food production seriously”

4.2.4 Appropriate Ways for measuring the implementation of an exit strategy? WALA and UBALE projects

Three indicators as proposed by Gardner et al, 2010 (as cited in Engels, 2010) are commonly used: Sustained, expanded and improved.

If a project intervention’s impact has been sustained beyond closure, it is reasonable to claim that the exit strategy employed was successful. Sustainability has been understood as generally encompassing the components of environmental, social and economic development (Sachs, et al 2021); however, if the purported impact is both sustained and expanded to other areas or beneficiaries beyond those initially targeted by the project intervention, then the impact is also larger.

These were the parameters through which the two projects of WALA and UBALE were checked. It summarizes the findings on the key aspects of exit strategy planning, developing partnerships and local linkages, building local organizational and human capacity, mobilizing local and/or external resources, staggering phase-out of programs and resources as well as allowing roles and relationships to evolve. The findings are not exactly as phrased by Levinger and Macias, but their resemblance or variants were accepted as fulfilling the same purposes.

The two projects of WALA and UBALE have been illuminated through these lens; whether the intervention outcomes were environmentally, socially and economically sustained beyond closure. And the findings are reflected as such.

Table 5: Tactics for Phase-over within the Project Management Life Cycle for Each Project- WALA and UBALE)

L&M Tactics Project Phases	Exit Strategy Planning	Developing Partnerships and local linkages	Building local organizational and human capacity	Mobilizing local and/or external resources	Staggering Phase-out of Programs and Resources	Allowing roles and relationships to evolve
Project design	X None		X Ò Ò			
Implementation		X Ò Ò	X Ò Ò	X Ò		
Mid-term assessment		X Ò	X Ò Ò	X Ò		
Phase-over			Ò	X Ò	X Ò	
Project closure		Ò Ò	X Ò Ò	Ò Ò	X Ò	X Ò Ò
Post-phase over					X	X Ò Ò

Wellness and Agriculture for Life Advancement (WALA) Project 2009-2014

And United in Building and Advancing Livelihood Expectations (UBALE)

(X is according to Levinger & Mcleod; Ò for WALA as observed in this study)

Adapted from Engels, 2010:274

4.2.5 Discussion on qualitative study findings

Clearly from the above discourse, both INGOs and beneficiary communities have a perverse and distorted conception of what constitutes exit strategies. The INGOs do not have a comprehensive understanding of exit strategies as some of those indicated above as exit strategies are as good as the normal livelihood activities that are implemented during the lifespan of the project intervention. Equally vague are the beneficiaries themselves who tend to confuse livelihood activities with exit strategies aimed at enhancing sustainability beyond project closure. Capacity building, working with government agencies, wetland utilization, soil conservation, re-afforestation activities and handing over of equipment, and livestock pass-on are just ordinary livelihood enhancement activities and viewing them as exit strategies is a perversion. They narrowly consider those activities done towards the end of the project intervention as exit strategies. This finding confirms what Mkomagi (2013) found in Tanzania regarding the lack of clarity of exit strategies as indicated in section 2.5. Overall discussions are indicated in critical discussion in section 4.4 below.

4.2.6 Rationale for Coping Strategy Index Focus

As outlined in section 3.1, the qualitative study findings would lead to the identification of variables to constitute the subsequent quantitative study.

In this study, the qualitative study finding narrowed down the coping strategy index as the most proximate variable to form the focus of the subsequent quantitative study. This was so after a consideration of such estimators as the Poverty Probability Index (PPI), Coping Strategy Index (CSI), Food Security Proxy Indicator (FSPI), Meal Frequency (MF) and Dietary Diversity (DD).

Owing to its versatility and encompassing qualities, the CSI metric emerged as the most appropriate variable, to form the quantitative research focus to triangulate the qualitative research findings in this context. This is a short-term temporary response to immediate exigencies (Davies, 1996 as cited in Drysdale, 2019). Victims of a phenomenon engage in a coping mechanism to ameliorate its negative effects. This was adjudged to be the most appropriate mix of variables to quantitatively capture the resilience supposedly

acquired by the communities in the target area. This is on account of its ability to blend several qualitative and/or quantitative measures, to give a contextual reflection of the issue under consideration more holistically (de Almeida et al, 2020).

4.3 Quantitative Study Findings

The preceding qualitative study identified variables associated with the CSI as the ones around which the quantitative study was to be built as outlined in section 3.1.2.2. The Coping Strategy Index was defined by Davies (1996 as cited in Drysdale, 2019) as a short-term temporary response to immediate exigencies. It is basically what victims of a given phenomenon engage in to ameliorate its negative effects, and involves food security proxy indicators, meal frequency and dietary diversity among others.

4.3.1 Findings and Discussions

The following section presents and discusses the exhibits and tables that present the actual findings.

4.3.1.1 Personal Information

Table 4.4 contains findings on the personal information of the survey participating households.

Frequency Table

Table 6: Age of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	16-30	23	21.1
	31-45	26	23.9
	45 and above	60	55.0
	Total	109	100.0

Table 6 shows that 21.1 percent of the interviews were in the age range 16-30, 23.9 percent were in the range 31-45 and 55 percent were aged 45 and above. This implies that

any livelihood situation has more to do with external factors and not effort due to young or old age.

Table 7: Gender of Respondents

		Frequency	Percent
Valid	Female	64	58.7
	Male	45	41.3
	Total	109	100.0

Table 7 shows that 58.7 percent of the interviewees were females while 41.3 percent were males. This is critical as it has a bearing on one of the key variables in the coping strategy index which is the migration of male members of the community to fend for the households under conditions of stress in food availability. While males were slightly lower than females, their presence is still significant indicating that not too many males had migrated to other areas for piece works.

4.3.1.2 Marital Status of the Respondents

The study showed that 61.47 percent of the respondents were married, 23.63 percent were female headed households (divorced or never married), 10.6 percent were male headed (divorced men or men that had never married) households and 4.3 percent were child headed households. This shows that there are more households with both parents than otherwise who would jointly manage shocks and stressors.

However, there is still a considerable size of single or child headed households. This has a bearing on livelihoods especially female-headed and child headed households that are more prone to livelihood insecurity and less able to cope with shocks and stressors. More implications on this are given in the critical analysis in section 4.4.

Figure 6: Education Attainments of Respondents

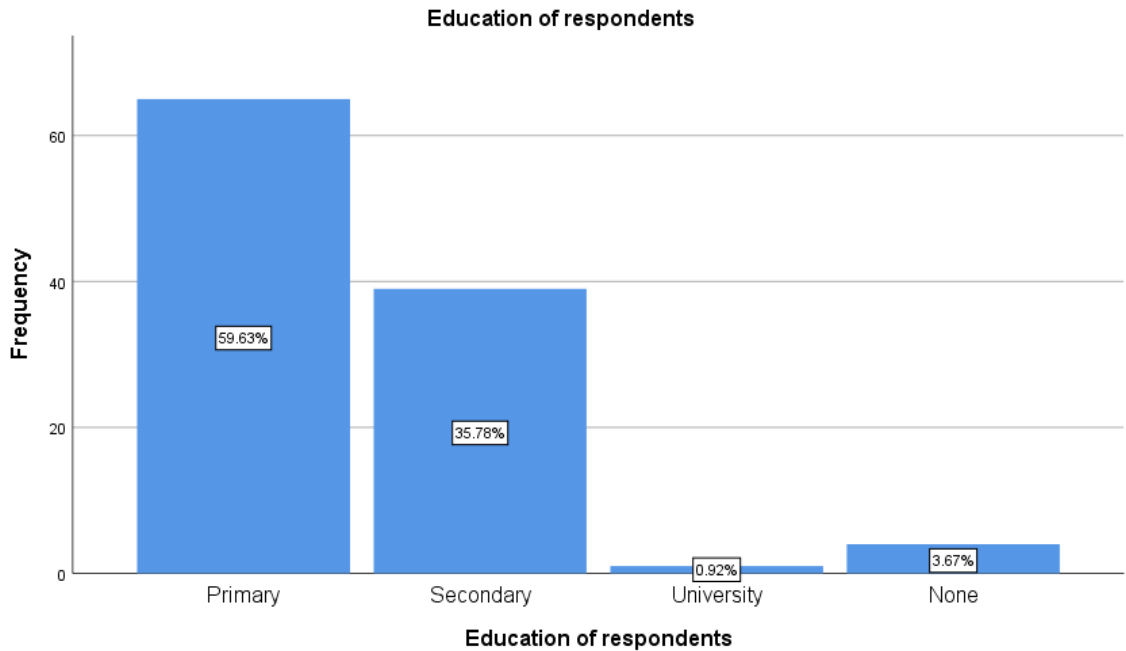
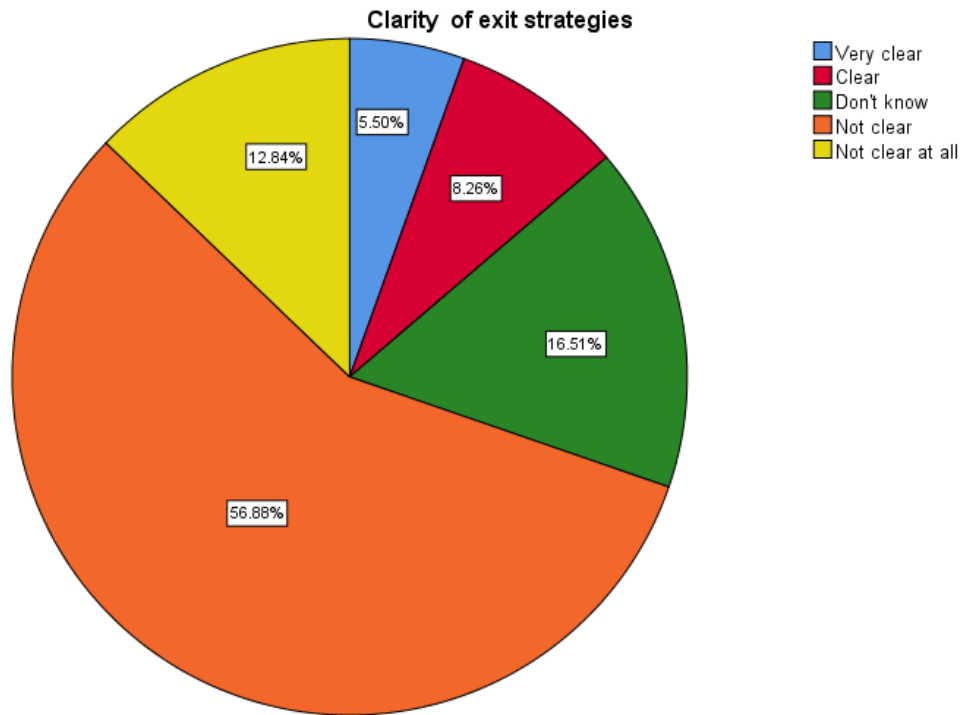


Figure 6 shows that 59.6 percent of the interviewees had only attained primary level education, 35.8 percent had attained secondary education, 0.9 had attained university education and 3.7 percent had no formal education at all. This has implications for the proportion of the household heads that could have reasonable access to formal gainful employment that would cushion their families from starvation when shocks strike. It has been observed that improved access to education does contribute to poverty reduction (Buarque, 2006)

4.3.2 Research Focus Findings

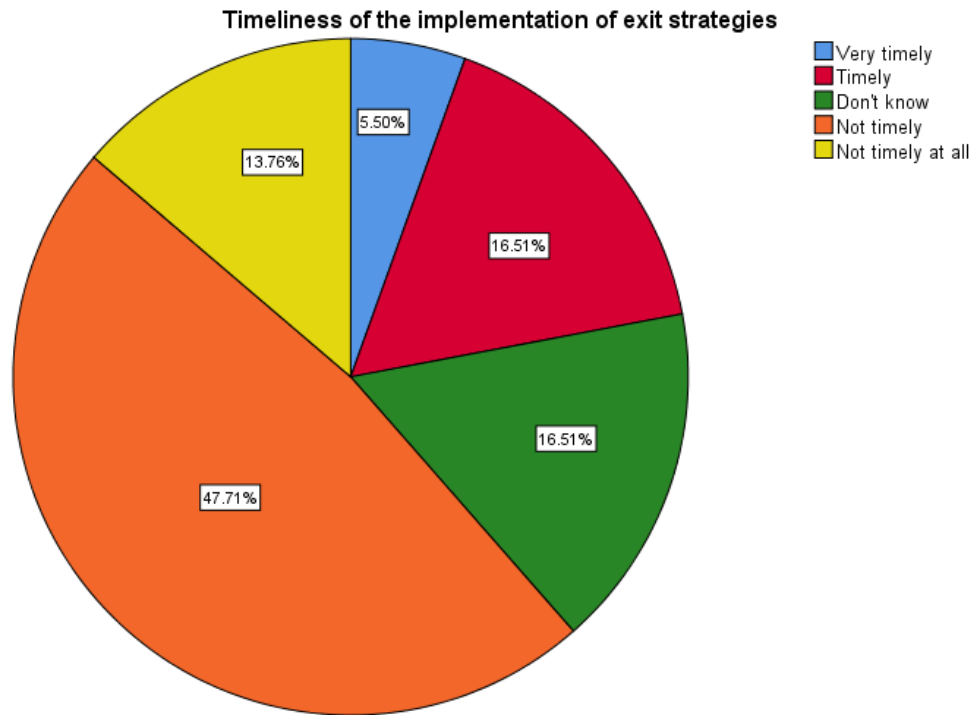
4.3.2.1 Findings on Key Exit Strategies

Figure 7: Clarity of Exit Strategies



Pie chart 1 shows that 56.88 percent of the interviews felt that exit strategies were not clear and only 5.5 percent indicated that exit strategies were very clear. This has implications for the success of exit strategies as it is very difficult if not impossible for communities to give their buy-in support, much less implement anything that appears vague to them.

Figure 8: Timeliness of Implementation of Exit Strategies



Pie Chart 2 shows 47.71 percent of the interviewees felt that the implementation of exit strategies was not timely and only 5.5 percent and 16.51 percent felt that exit strategies were implemented in a very timely and barely timely respectively. It is also critical to note that 16.51 percent were not sure at all while another 13.76 percent were of the view that the implementation of exit strategies was not timely at all. This means that up to 77.98 percent (47.71 not timely, 13.76 not timely at all and 16.51) were not positive about the timeliness of the implementation of exit strategies by INGOs. If exit strategies are not implemented on, it implies that their success could be limited.

4.3.2.2 Findings on Effectiveness of Exit Strategies

Figure 9: Effectiveness of Exit Strategies

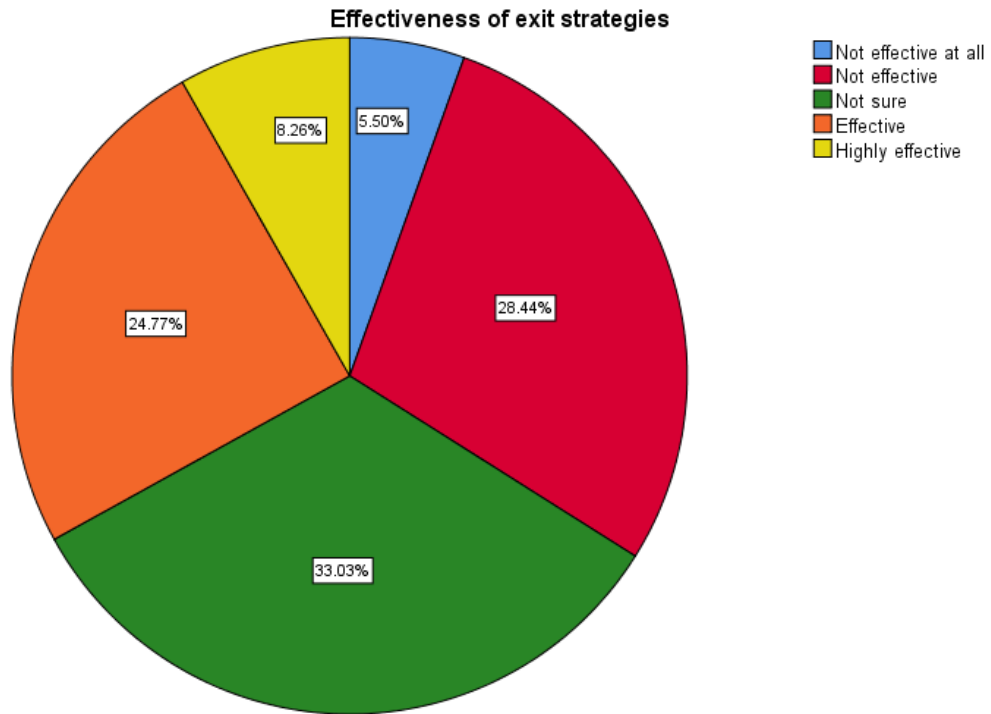


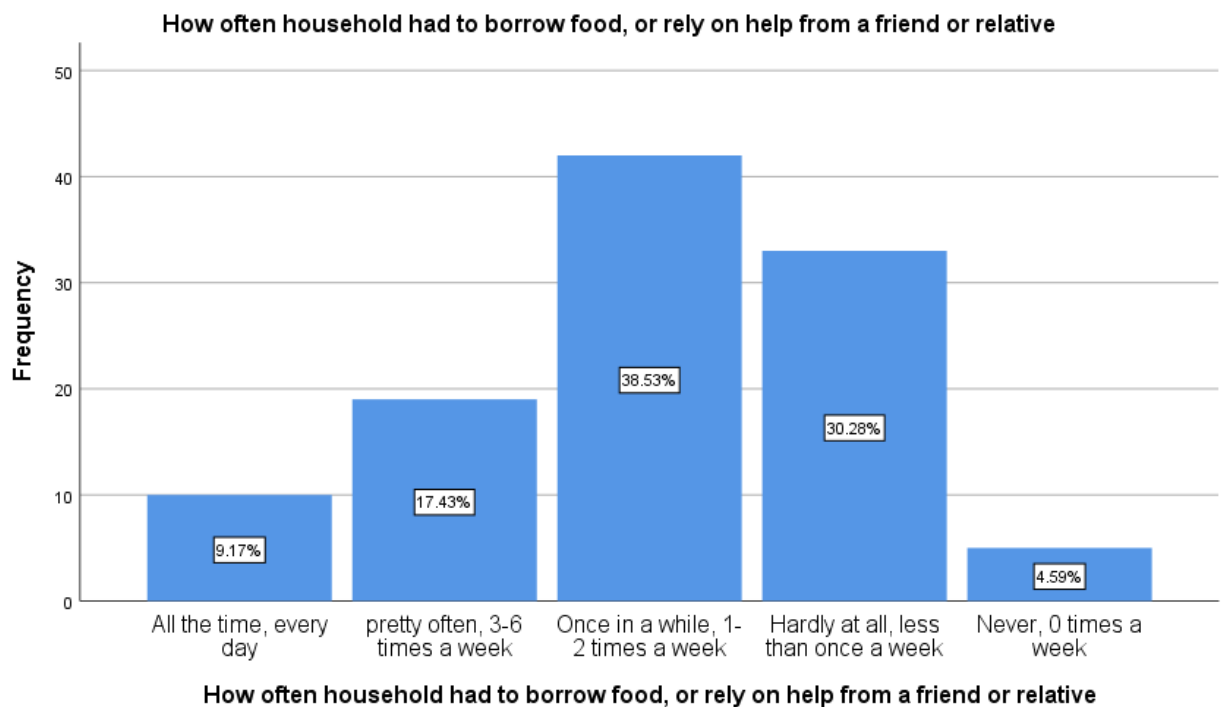
Figure 9 : The pie chart indicates that only 8.26 percent of the interviews felt that exit strategies were highly effective, and 24.77 percent thought they were barely effective, giving a total of 33.3 percent of those who were positive about the effectiveness. It is crucial, however, to note that a total of 66.97 percent of the interviews were at least not positive about exit strategy effectiveness (33.03 percent not sure, 28.44 percent not effective and 5.5 percent judged exit strategies as not effective at all). This has strong implications on how seriously the communities will take exit strategies going forward, and hence sustainability beyond project closure.

This is further discussed in the critical discussion in section 4.4.

Findings on Coping Strategy Index (CPI) Variables

Variable # i- How often household had to borrow food, or rely on help from a friend or relative

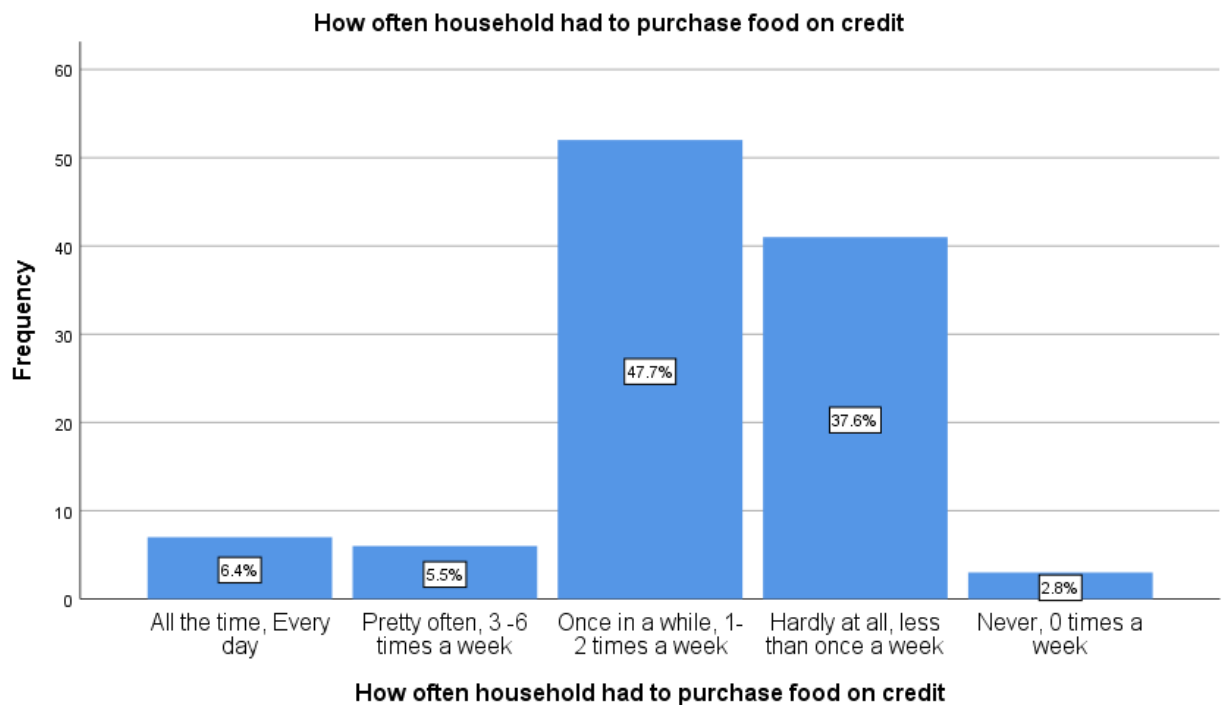
Figure 10: How Often Household Had To Borrow Food



The bar graph in figure 10 indicates how often per week households had to borrow food, or rely on help from friends and/or relatives. It shows that a very small proportion of the population, 9.1 per cent has had to borrow food all the time, every day while a larger proportion of the population, 38.53 percent only borrows food once in a while, and another 30.28 percent hardly borrows food. Taken together, those that are food secure are as many as 69% (38.53% and 30.28%). And those that remain food insecure are about 26% (9.1%+17.43%). This is the food security status a few years after thw closure of the UBALE project. How this portends on the exit strategy dynamic is discussed in the critical analysis given in section 4.4.

Variable # ii- How often household had to purchase food on credit

Figure 11: How Often Households Had To Purchase Food on Credit



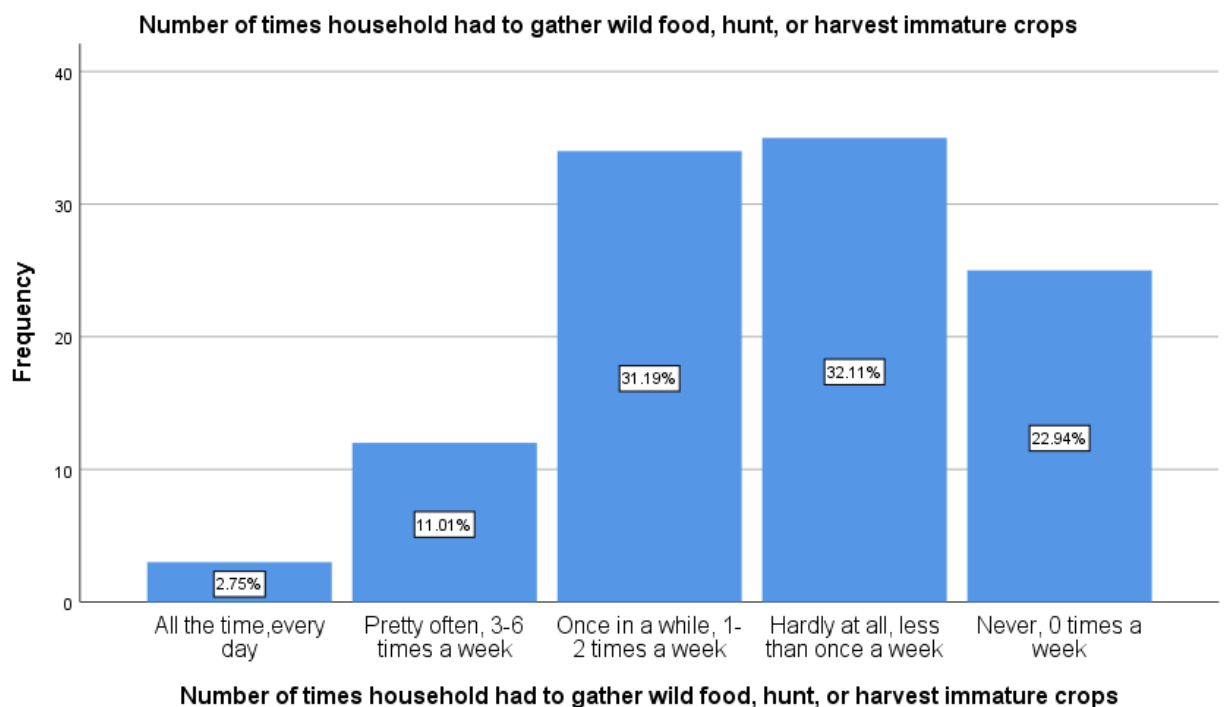
The bar graph in figure 11 shows the frequency with which households purchase food. 47.71 per cent appear to be relatively food secure, purchasing food once in a while, followed by 37.61 percent who hardly purchase food. This shows that in most households, 85 percent (47.71 and 37.61 per cent) either have food or have the means to buy the same using means, and even then not so often. Those who purchase food quite often are a smaller proportion, 14.67 percent (6.42, 5.5 and 2.75 per cent). This shows that indeed UBALE project improved the livelihood security status of the beneficiaries. How this portends for the exit strategy dynamic is discussed in the critical discussion in section 4.4.

Variable # iii - Number of times household had to gather wild fruit, hunt or harvest immature crops

The bar graph in figure 12 shows the regularity with which households have to gather wild fruits to fend off starvation. Gathering wild fruits is a more desperate means of survival than any of the ones discussed above. The graph shows that 62 per cent of the population hardly resorts to this desperate means of survival, while a small proportion, 2.75 percent does this all the time. While a good portion, 22 per cent never gathers food in the wild. This shows that food insecurity has not reached a very critical stage typical of a disaster-prone area, with about 84% (62%+22%) not gathering wild foods. Hence UBALE project may be deemed to have achieved success.

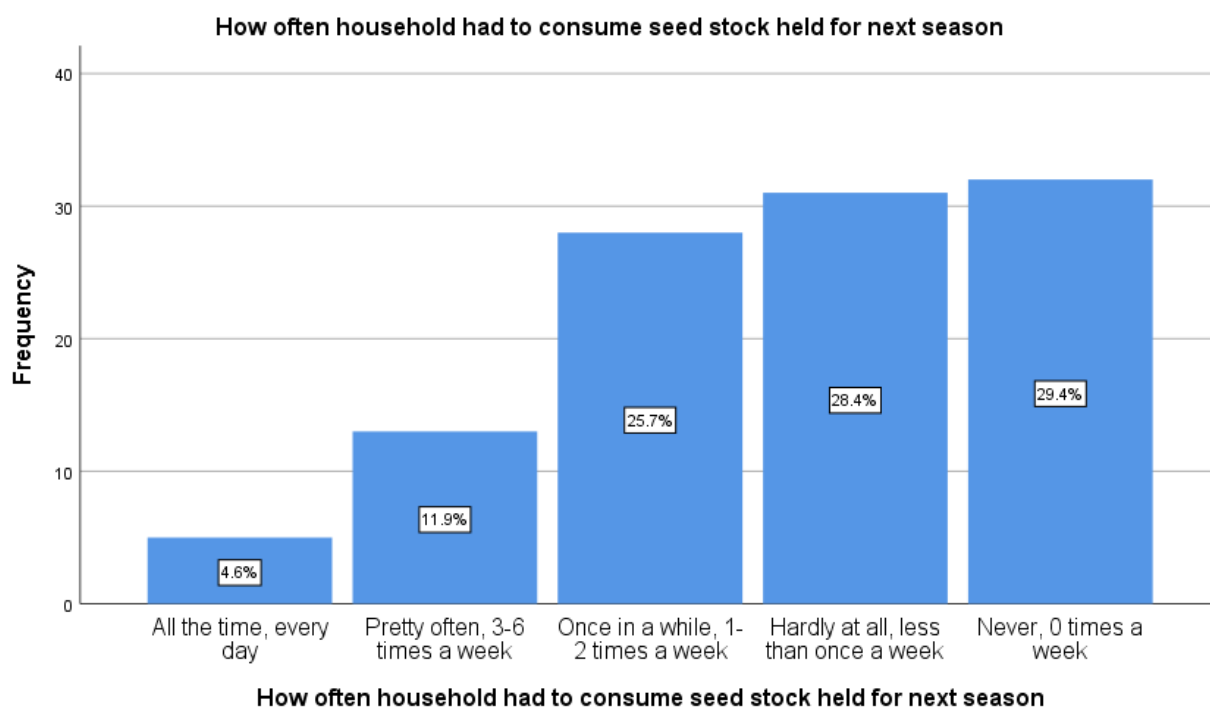
How this portends for the exit strategy dynamic is discussed in the critical analysis in section 4.4.

Figure 12: Number of Times Household Had To Gather Wild Fruit



Variable # iv- How Often Household Had To consume seed stock held for next season

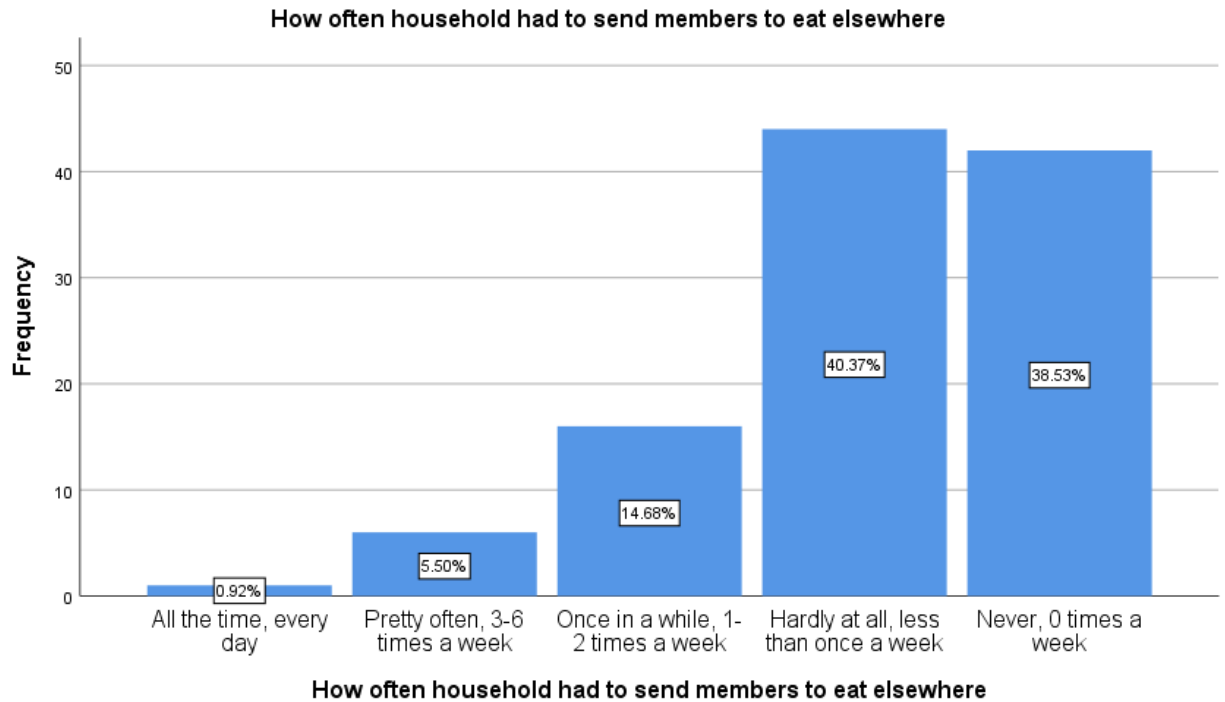
Figure 13: How often household had to consume seed stock held for next season



The bar graph in figure 13 shows how often households have to consume seed meant for planting in the next season. It is noteworthy that this is another hopeless means of survival and as the graph shows, most sections of this population do not resort to it. Only 15 per cent does so, with 5 per cent doing it all the time and 10 per cent doing it often. Hence 85% of the households were reasonably more livelihood secure, either by having adequate foodstuffs or the means to purchase the same on their own. This again, reflects the success of the UBALE project. How this portends on the exit strategy dynamic is discussed in the critical analysis in section 4.4.

Variable # v- How often household had to send members to eat elsewhere

Figure 14: How Often Household Had To Send Members To Eat Elsewhere



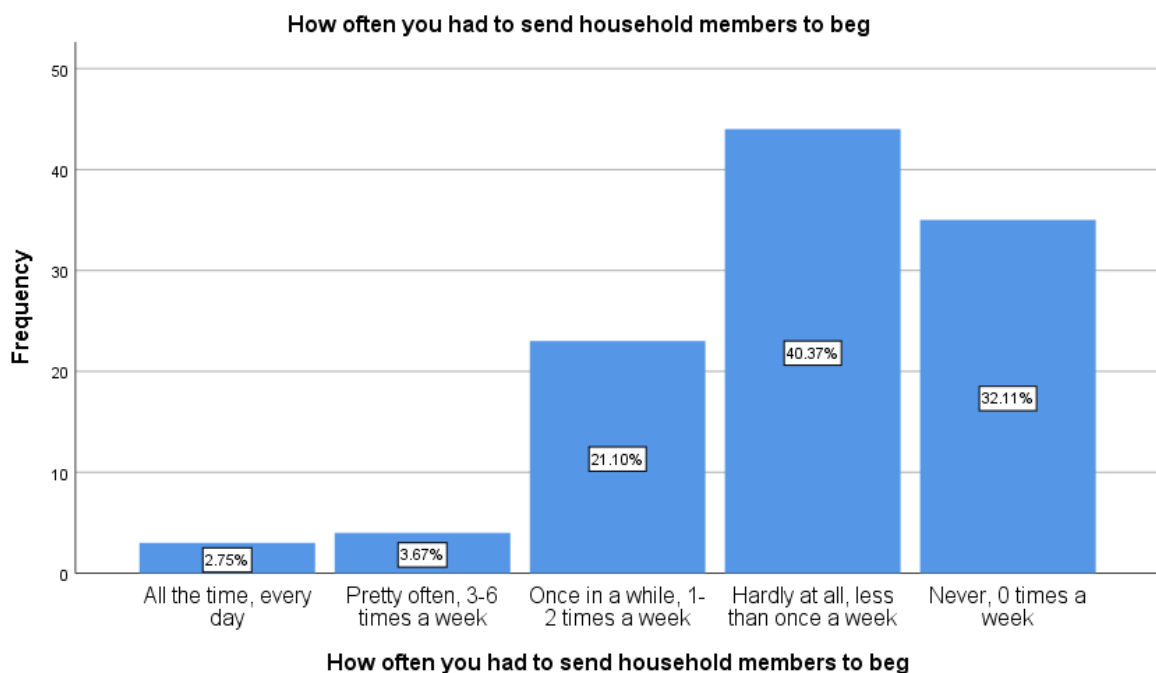
The bar graph in figure 14 shows how often households send family members to eat elsewhere. Up to 94 per cent hardly resorts to such a strategy while 6 per cent only does it occasionally. Again, this indicates that the situation is not as hopeless as it would be. Hence the UBALE project must have drastically reduced livelihood security for most of the households in the area.

How this portends the exit strategy dynamic is discussed in the critical analysis in section 4.4.

Variable # vi- How often household had to send members to beg

Begging is also another coping strategy that households under food stress would do. In the scenario depicted in figure 15, only 6 per cent (2.75 and 3.6 per cent) do so, while up to 94 percent are relatively able to cope through other means.

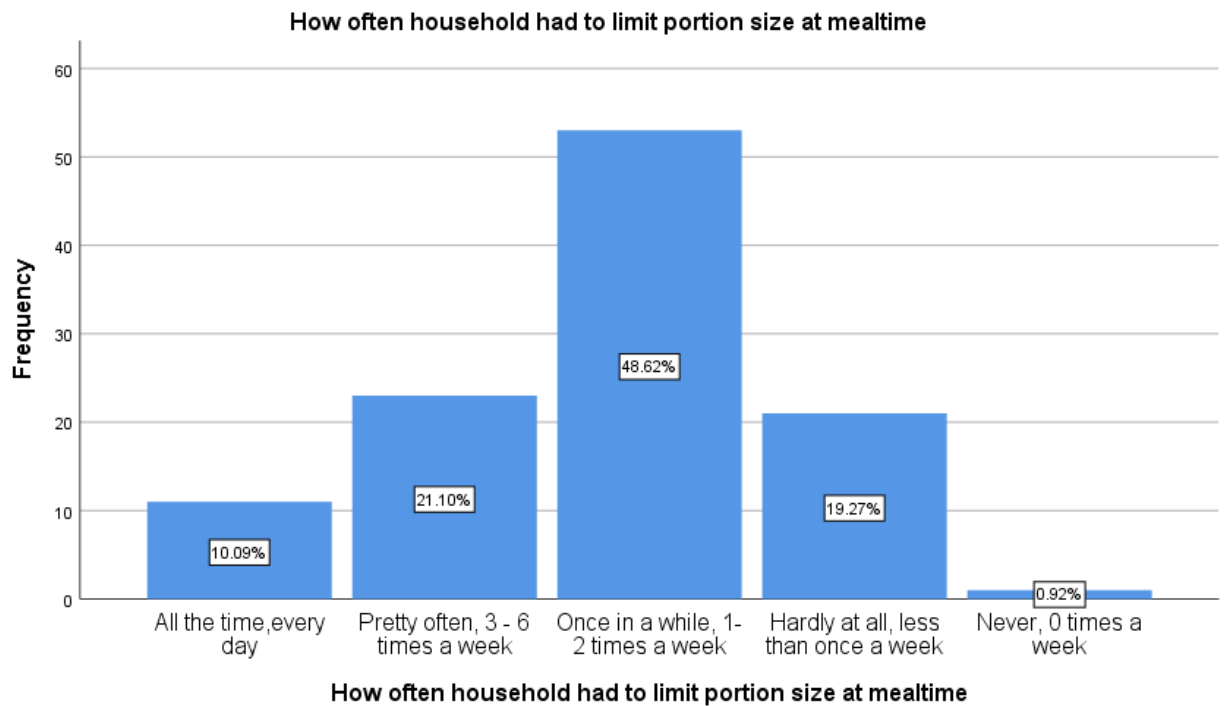
Figure 15: How Often Household Had To Send Members To Beg



Variable # vii-How often household had to limit portion size at mealtime

Limiting food portions is also another coping strategy that households would do under stress. In the case depicted in figure 16, almost half of the population hardly resorts to it and only 10 per cent do it all the time. The remaining portions either do it occasionally or only during lean periods. This is shown in the bar graph in figure 16.

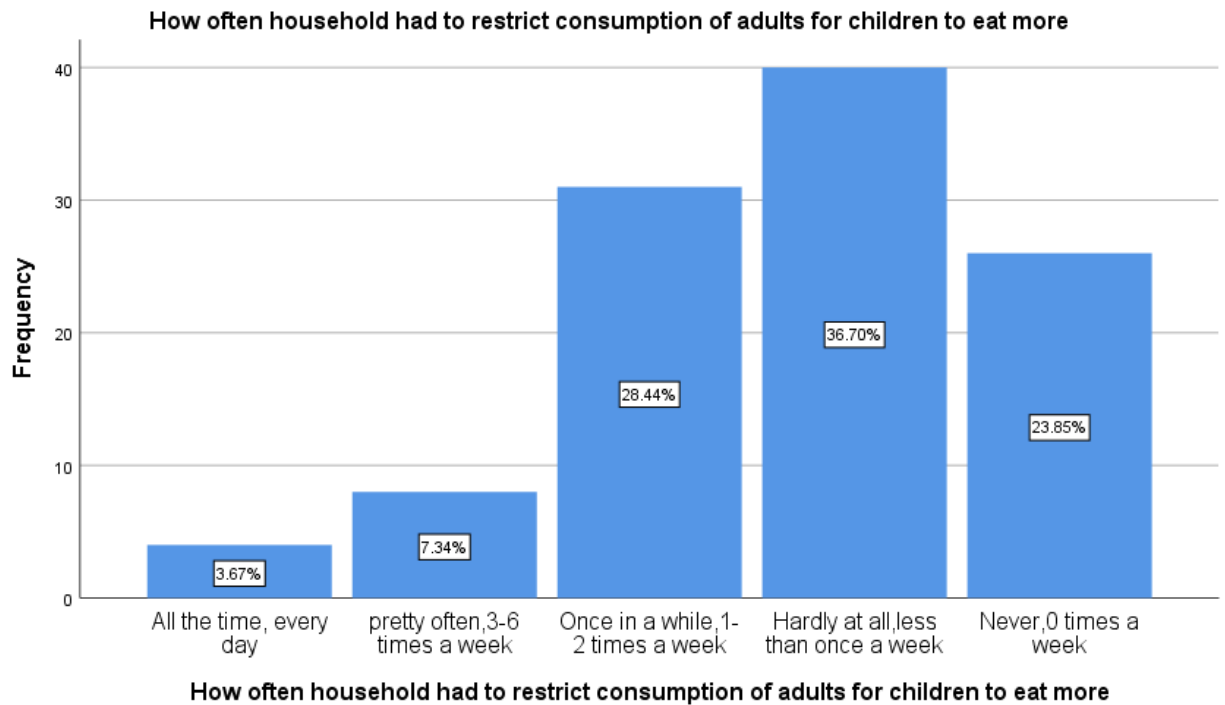
Figure 16: How Often Household Had To Limit Portion Size At Mealtime



The bar graph in figure 16 is almost the same trend as the one in figure 15 and shows a relatively better coping strategy. This is so because almost half the population (48.62%) resorts to it occasionally; a good portion of the population, about 20% hardly does it at all and only 10% are the ones that resort to it all the time. Reduced calory intake would affect nutrition levels which would in turn affect the health status of household members as well as their productivity.

Variable # viii- How often had to restrict consumption of adults for children to eat more

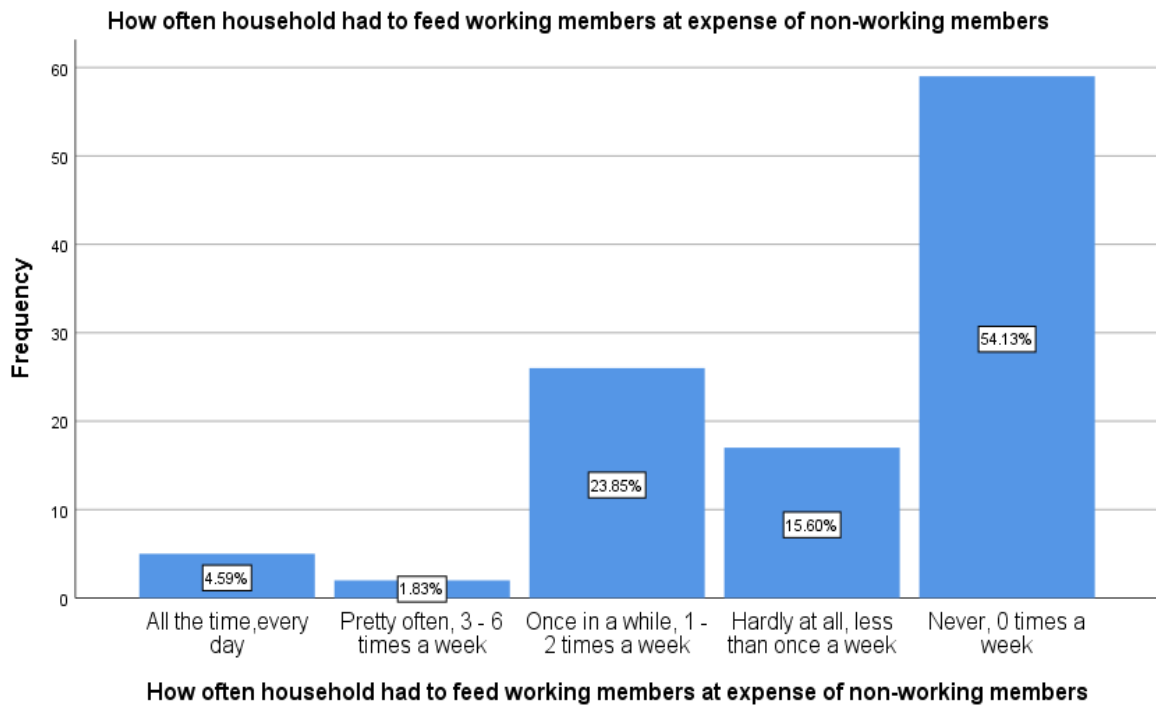
Figure 17: How Often Household Had To Restrict Consumption of Adults



The scenario depicted in figure 17 is that meal discrimination or restriction in favor of children is not that rampant. Only 3.6% do it all the time and 23% not do it at all while the rest hover around occasionally and hardly do it at all. This has a bearing on the nutrition status of the community as a more severe situation of restricting meal portions would have led to a larger portion of the adult population being malnourished and hence affecting their health and productivity.

Variable # ix- How often household had to feed working members at expense of non-working members

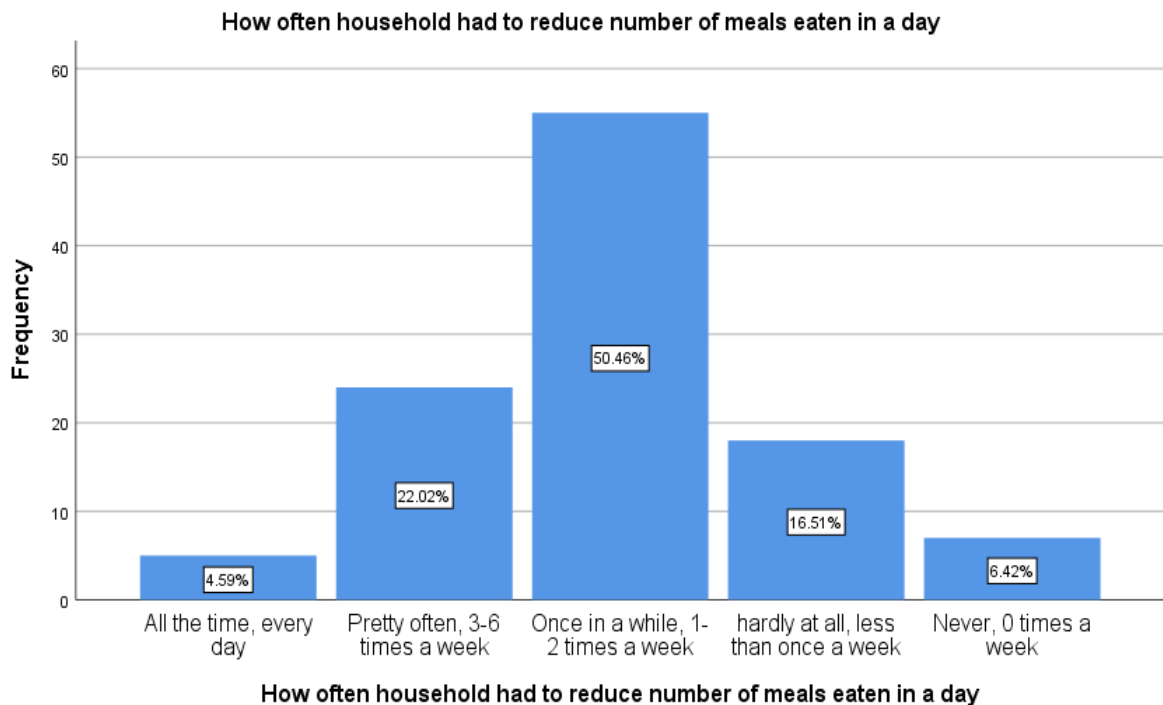
Figure 18: How Often Household Had To Feed Working Members Only



The bar graph in figure 18 shows that very few families (4.59%) had to feed only working members of the household while a large portion of the community never ((54.13%) adopted such a coping strategy. The rest of the community only does so occasionally and/or rarely. This reflects a relatively well-nourished community.

Variable # x- How often household had to reduce number of meals eaten

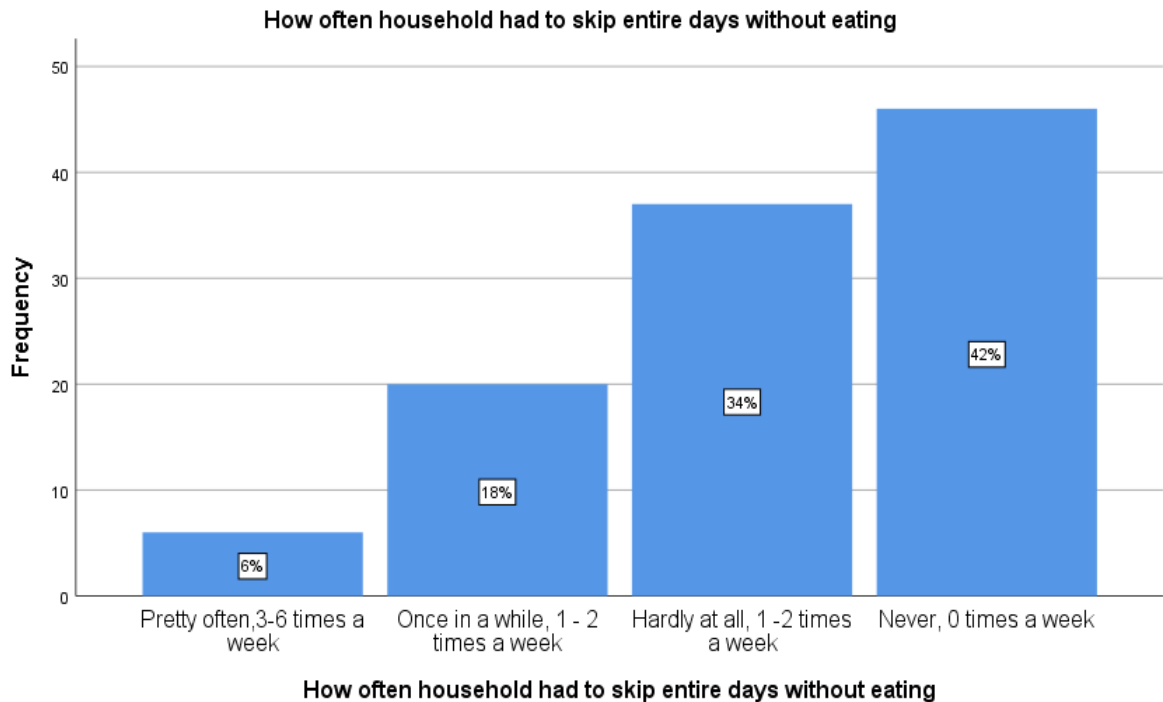
Figure 19: How Often Household Had To Reduce Number of Meals Eaten in a Day



The bar graph in figure 19 shows over 77% of the population find themselves in a situation where they are forced to reduce the number of meals taken in a day, and still another 16% occasionally do so. Only a few households are entirely food secure so as not to miss a meal every day. Reduction of the daily number of meals is a coping strategy used relatively frequently by members of this community. This casts some doubts on the sustainability of some of the outcomes of the reliance-building projects implemented by NGOs.

Variable # xi- How often household had to skip entire days without eating

Figure 20: How Often Household Had To Skip Entire Days Without Eating



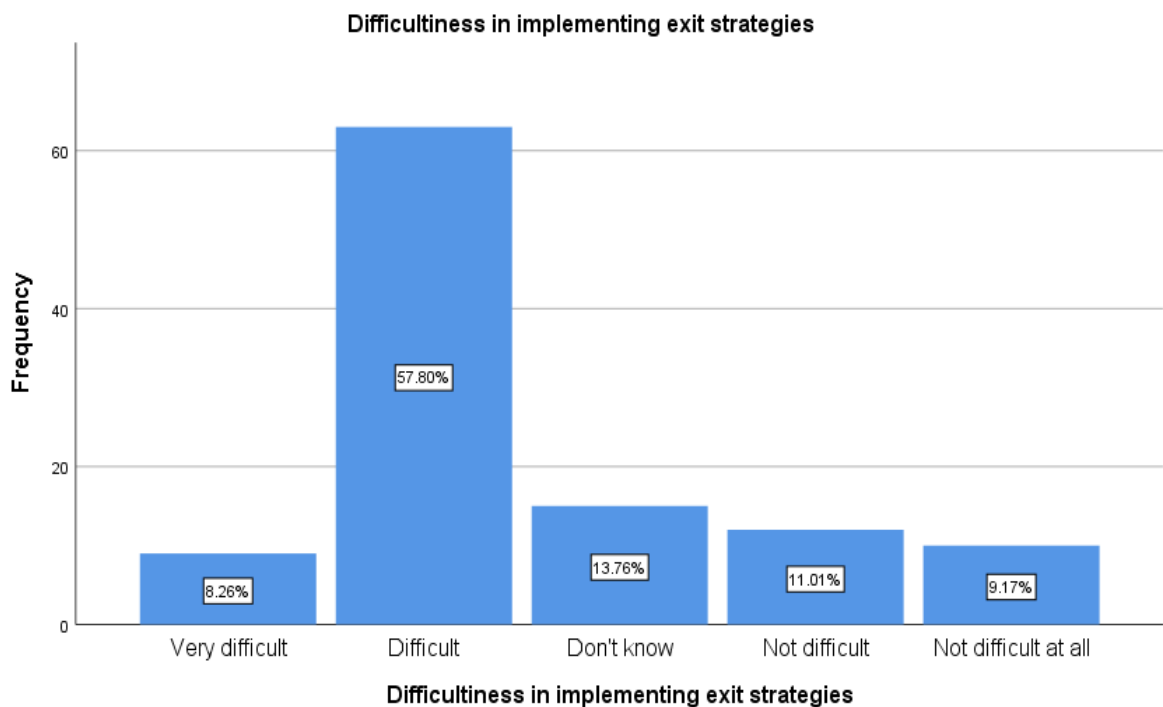
Perhaps a very interesting scenario is the one painted in the bar graph where households would have no other means of survival but to go on starvation for several days. Only 5 per cent reported starvation while 75 per cent hardly starve, 42.20 per cent never starve and the remaining 33 percent rarely starve. This reflects a community whose starvation has not yet reached critical or emergency levels but still over 55% find themselves resorting to this kind of coping strategy now and then, reflecting erratic food shortages.

4.3.2.3 Findings on Challenges in Implementing Exit Strategies

The bar graph in figure 21 shows the community perspectives on the challenges in implementing exit strategies. Up to 78 per cent (57 per cent for difficult, 8 per cent said very difficult and 13 per cent were just not sure) expressed negative sentiments about the

easiness with which exit strategies were implemented. This gives an over all picture that exit strategies are not well conceived, let alone implemented. Very few expressed an easiness with which exit strategies were implemented, and 9 percent expressed no difficulty at all. How this portends on exit Strategy dynamic is discussed in the critical discussion in section 4.4.

Figure 21: Difficulties in Implementing Exit Strategies

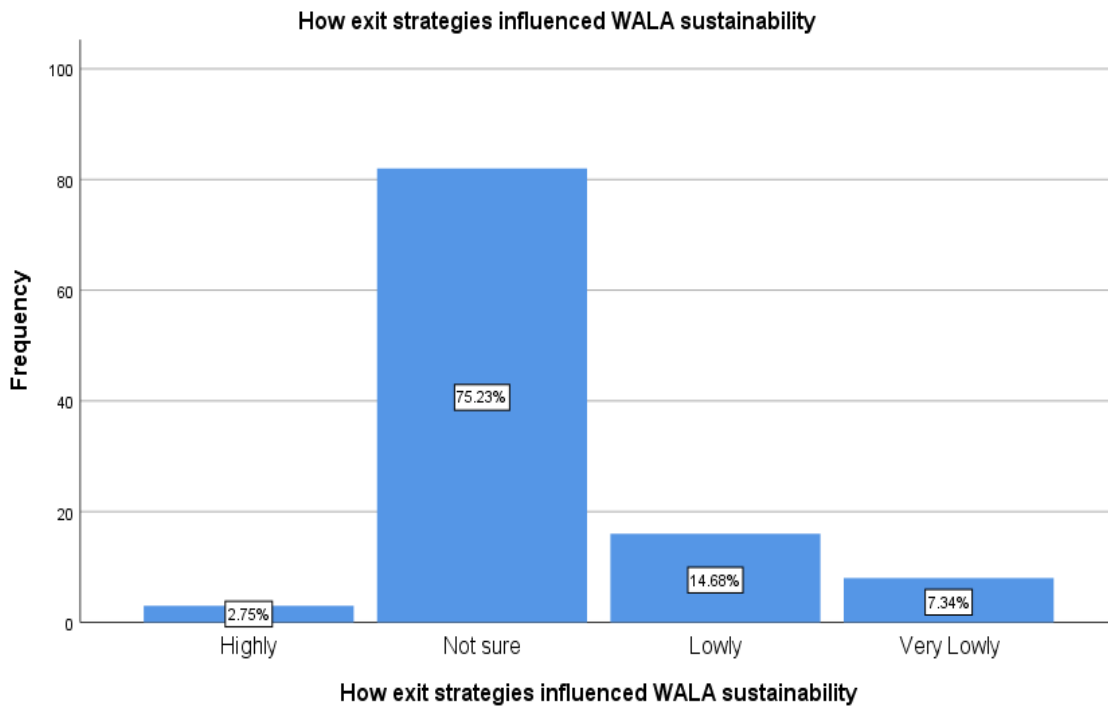


4.3.3 Findings on Specific Project Interventions

Two specific project interventions were scrutinized along with their exit strategies. These were the WALA and UBALE Projects.

4.3.3.1 Findings on the Influence of Exit Strategies on WALA Project

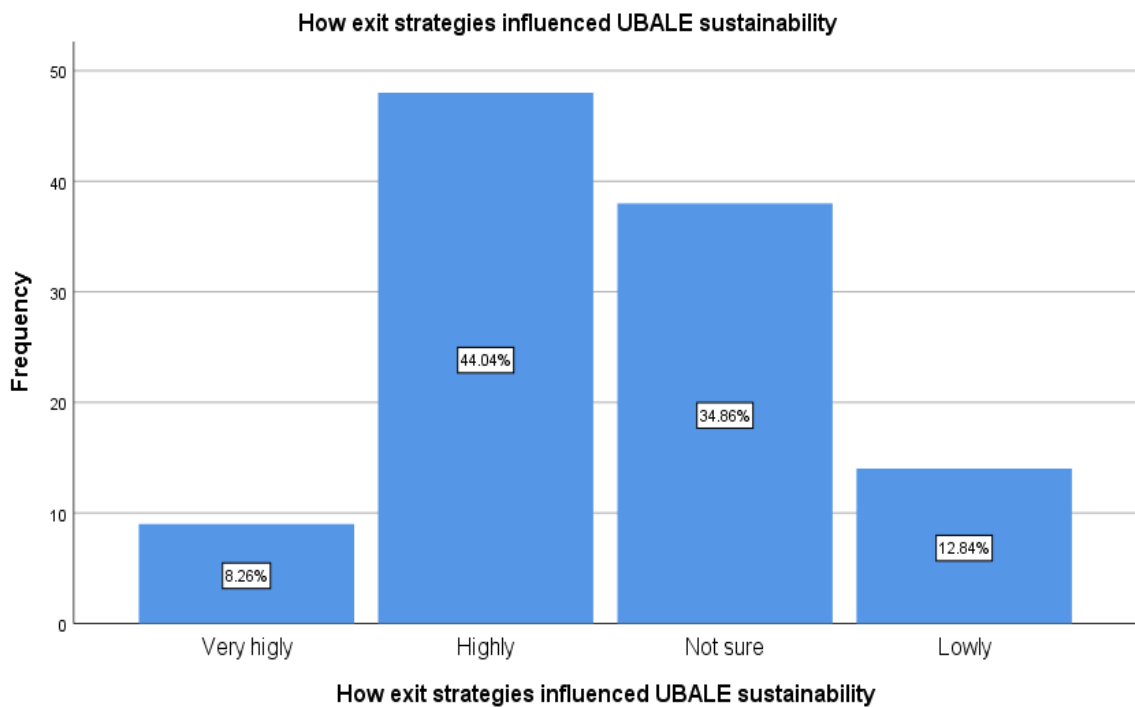
Figure 22: How Exit Strategies Influenced WALA Project Sustainability



The bar graph in figure 22 shows how exit strategies were perceived to have influenced the sustainability of the outcomes of the WALA project over the 2009-2014 period. It shows that 75.2 per cent of respondents were sure how exit strategies influenced the WALA project, 14.7 per cent indicated there was low influence while only 2.8 per cent ranked it highly on exit strategies. However, 7.3 per cent were very negative, ranking it very lowly. It should not be any surprise that the el nino adverse weather devastated the communities very much as the resilience gained during the life time of WALA was not sustained.

4.3.3.2 Findings on Influence of the Exit Strategies on UBALE Project

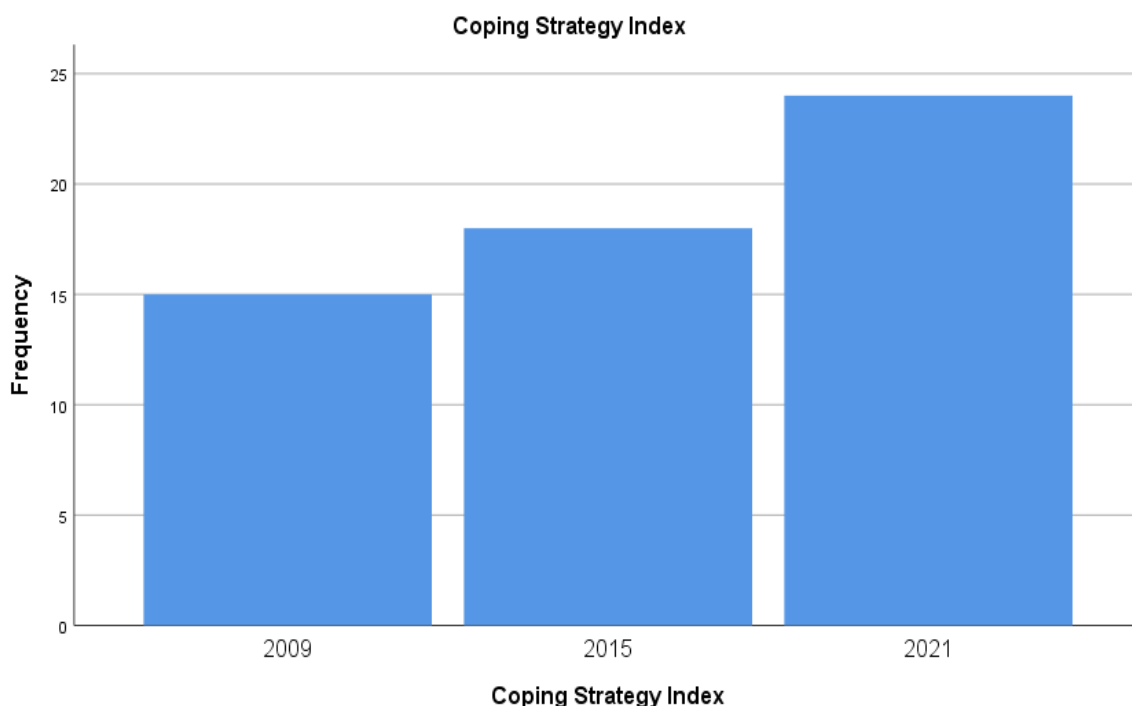
Figure 23: How Exit Strategies Influenced UBALE Project Sustainability



The bar graph in figure 23 indicates how exit strategies were perceived to have influenced the UBALE project. A considerable 44 per cent ranked it high on exit strategies, while 34 per cent were not sure. This is noteworthy as the qualitative study findings indicated that UBALE had a stronger exit strategy regimen than WALA. Unsurprisingly, although the cyclone Idai adverse weather of 2019 devastated communities, UBALE project sites reported better ability to cope than WALA. This is in direct proportion with the stronger exit strategy regimen.

4.3.3.3 Findings on Comparative Influence of Exit Strategies on WALA and UBALE Projects

Figure 24: Coping Strategy Index Comparing WALA and UBALE Projects



The indexes in figure 24 show that before the commencement of the WALA project in 2009 beneficiaries had to use more destructive coping strategies such as consuming seed material, deforestation through charcoal making and even starving for several days. Things began to improve when WALA took off but, with the weaker exit strategy, the sustainability of the outcomes was not that pronounced. The 2015 el nino adverse weather shock exposed this reality. A major improvement in the sustainability of the project outcomes was observed following the closure of the UBALE project in 2019. Two years after UBALE closure, households indicated a stronger resilience regimen than in 2015.

Although UBALE did not have a complete exit strategy regimen as recommended by Levinger and Macias, its character, to an extent reflected the spirit of an exit strategy

regimen. This proportionality suggests that exit strategies have the potential to go a long way towards ensuring more sustainability beyond project closure, whatever the variation of the strategy.

These quantitative findings tend to triangulate well with the qualitative findings which both agree that exit strategies were unclear, poorly timed and their effectiveness very limited. However, there are strong indications that the resilience-building projects themselves were strong and effective in enhancing livelihoods. This is evidenced by improved food security, reduced malnutrition, higher household incomes, higher livestock ownership, less destructive coping strategies and a generally less impoverished atmosphere. In a way, the overall results are kind of ambiguous in the sense that while there appears to be a proportionality between exit strategies and sustainability, livelihoods seem to have improved at project closure. This agrees with the finding of Rodgers and Coates (2016) who found that evidence of project success at the time of closure did not necessarily imply sustained benefit over time. This can be explained by either the strong technical composition of the WALA and UBALE projects or by the influx INGOs that keep flooding the area, implementing projects directed towards more or less similar objectives successively. In such a framework, the weak exit strategy regimens of previous projects tend to be obscured.

4.4 Critical Analysis of the Findings

It is clear that livelihood improvement had been achieved during and immediately after the two project interventions of WALA and UBALE. Both the qualitative and quantitative milestones are in perfect triangulation, as far as these are concerned. This constitutes a point of convergence in the two data protocols as outlined in data analysis in section 3.3.4.

With 85% of the households being able to afford to purchase their food and only 14% struggling to do so, 84% of the households not resorting to gathering wild foods to fend off starvation, 85% of the households not resorting to consuming seed meant for the other season, 69% of the households are being food secure and only 26% still struggling for

food, 94% of the households hardly sending their children to eat elsewhere at the closure of UBALE, there is little doubt that the project had achieved the key objective of enhancing livelihoods among its intended beneficiaries. This is well corroborated and triangulated by both the qualitative and quantitative studies as indicated in sections 4.2 and 4.3 respectively. How this is explained is a matter of conjecture as this study did not set out to investigate that, but conceivably this can be attributed to the technical soundness and holistic nature of the projects themselves. Afterall, proportionality of the exit strategies with resilience does not establish causality between the two (Garousi, 2022). According to the relationship portrayed in section 2.7, Figure 2, the exit strategy is an extraneous variable and only moderates the effect of the independent variable. In this regard, the resilience operates in direct proportion to how strong the exit strategy has been.

This finding, however, is more secondary than it is incidental as it was not the central point of the study. It only serves to provide a benchmark for tracing resilience after closure. Whether those outcomes can be sustained over time is a matter that can be determined by the comprehensiveness of exit strategies, appreciating the interaction between livelihood improvement and resilience as outlined in the problem statement in section 1.2: that livelihood improvement does not necessarily mean resilience as any modest disaster can expose the inherent vulnerability of the communities (Rodgers & Coates, 2016).

However, it is important to appreciate that none of the research questions as outlined in section 1.5 are directly focusing on whether or not the project interventions met their stated targets. This point was not even the main objective of the study. The focus of the research questions was discovering the nature of the exit strategies, their effectiveness in sustaining outcomes and the challenges experienced in their implementation. This is indicated in section 1.5. However, since these exit strategies do not exist in a vacuum, the environment or the vehicle by which they were enacted cannot be ignored. How the significant success of the project interventions portend on exit strategies comes in to bear

on the variables of nature, effectiveness, and implementation challenges against such success.

So, in relation to objective one, exit strategies were inadequate, unclear and superficial as revealed by both the qualitative and quantitative data. This is another point of convergence as indicated in data analysis in section 3.3.4. Such activities as handing over of vehicles, refresher trainings and farewell meetings fall short of the elements of exit strategies as outlined in section 2.1.1.1. nor the ideas of the proponents of exit strategies indicated in section 2.4.

In relation to objective two, it is not surprising that the effectiveness of these stated exit strategies was ranked poorly with up to 66 percent of respondents not appreciating the role that the exit strategies had played under WALA. However, it is noteworthy that the slightly more elaborate exit strategies for UBALE produced better results by way of the community being more resilient to Cyclone Idai in 2019 than it was to El Nino 2015 as outlined in section 2.1.2 which had a more devastating effect that exposed the fragility of the community also exposed the presence of fragility in the community despite the successes of the UBALE project. However, UBALE , with its relatively stronger exit strategy regimen registered better resilience than WALA. So, this attests to the fact that the effectiveness of the exit strategies was somehow compromised. As indicated in section 4.3.2.3, the implementation of exit strategies was very challenging. Only 9.17% of the respondents reported experiencing no difficulty in implementing the exit strategies and 88% expressed varying degrees of difficulty. This goes back to the lack of clarity, lack of timeliness and the last-minute enactment of the same. Even if the strategies were strong and comprehensive, lack of clarity and timely implementation would still compromise their success as the buy-in support would be missing. In such a framework, the registered success of the two projects would not last as to withstand severe shocks and stressors.

In relation to objective three of the study, it is grave that up to 78% of the respondents expressed experiencing varying degrees of difficulty in implementing the exit strategies,

with only 12% having an idea of what was going on about the stated exit strategies. This is unsurprising as communities would naturally struggle with implementing something that has not been made clear to them.

The risk with this state of affairs is that the communities may appear to experience improved livelihoods while remaining prone to retrogress at the emergence of modest adverse conditions at a time when no INGO support is readily available.

Since resilience has been treated as more of an intermediate goal in pursuit of more ideal goals (such as improved food security, increased household income, and reduced morbidity and mortality rates), INGOs have not paid adequate attention to it. This stands in sharp contrast to its very definition by Constan et al (2021) as indicated in section 2.1.1.2.

With climate change, flooding, drought, pests and disease devastating seemingly resilient livelihoods now and then, issues of exit strategies merit all the attention that can be secured.

In that regard, it is contended here that, based on how the UBALE project fared compared to the WALA project (figure 29: Coping Strategy Index Comparing WALA and UBALE Projects), a case for exit strategies has been established. This is so in that UBALE project with its stronger exit strategy regimen than WALA (Table 4: Tactics for Phase-over within the Project Management Life Cycle for Each Project- WALA and UBALE), had left the community more resilient than the latter (Figure 29: Coping Strategy Index Comparing WALA and UBALE Projects). The community was more resilient during Cyclone Idai (2019) when UBALE had just been implemented than it was during el nino (2014). Hence, there is a suggested correlation between exit strategies and sustained resilience beyond closure, although the outcomes themselves can still be obtained independent of the exit strategies. Exit strategies are therefore essential if project outcomes are to be sustained over time.

It is, therefore, conceivable to deduce that a more comprehensive exit strategy regimen for the UBALE project could have further consolidated the livelihood gains and hence

reduce the 26% of the households that were left food insecure, or the 14% of households that could not afford to purchase food, or indeed the 15% households that had resorted to consuming the seed meant for the next season (figures 14, 15 and 16 respectively).

It is noteworthy again, that improved livelihood does not of itself constitute resilience. Resilience is deemed to have been obtained when the community demonstrates a capacity to thrive amidst external stressor or shock (Constas et al, 2021:6).

So, while both the WALA and UBALE projects had registered positive outcomes at closure, there was still room for improvement which a more comprehensive exit strategy regimen could have helped ensure.

4.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the findings from the data analysis of both the qualitative and quantitative data sets. Frequency tables, pie charts and bar graphs used to present specific findings on each of the research questions have been indicated and discussed.

Finally, a section on critical analysis of the study findings has been provided in order to draw out impressions that inform the overall finding on the overarching research question as it relates to the main objective of the study has been given. The next chapter presents the study conclusion, implications as well as recommendations.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS, IMPLICATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter offers the conclusions and implications drawn from the findings that were meant to answer the research questions as outlined in section 1.5. Recommendations are given at the end.

5.2 Conclusion

As shown in the findings in chapter 4, at the closure of the two projects, the INGOs had achieved what they set out to achieve in both WALA and UBALE projects, namely, livelihood improvement. This is indisputably indicated by a stronger showing in improved food security, improved household incomes and reduced morbidity and/or mortality rates, among others according to the CSI results as reflective at closure. While this is an important caveat, the study did not seek to exhaustively address this point. Rather, the condition of the exit strategies that only led to medium -term resilience with long-term resilience remaining elusive. Objective by objective conclusions are given herebelow as follows:

5.2.1 Nature of exit strategies

INGOs lacked theoretical rigor on what constitutes an exit strategy according to literature as indicated in sections 2.1, 2.2 and 2.3 above. Instead, purported exit strategies were more implied than explicit. Activities such as farewell meetings, handover of assets to government agencies and community structures were given more prominence than actual resilience-sustaining ones. This problem appears existential to INGOs. Unsurprisingly, project beneficiaries found exit strategies to be unclear nor enunciated.

5.2.2 Effectiveness of exit strategies

Overall, exit strategies were not that effective in sustaining the livelihood outcomes that had been achieved by both WALA and UBALE project interventions. The El Nino adverse weather conditions of 2015 provided a reality check for the WALA project and the communities were not very resilient despite the earlier success of the project. Again, the exit strategies proved ineffective in sustaining the positive livelihood outcomes of the UBALE project. The Cyclone Idai flooding provided a reality check and the fragility of the community was once again exposed.

Noteworthy is the observed relationship between exit strategies and resilience enhancement by the livelihood projects led by the INGOs. The project with stronger exit strategy regimen, explicit or implied, seemed more prone to building resilience than the one with a weaker one as shown in figure 24 in section 4.3.3.3. The UBALE Project was revealed as having had a stronger coping strategy index than WALA as indicated in table 5.

Since this study was more interested in the influence of exit strategies, the sub-optimal consideration of the same in the bigger scheme of delivery of outputs casts some doubt on the resilience of the community. Outcomes as at project closure did not guarantee sustainability of the same as indicated in section 1.2. The overlap between livelihood improvement and resilience (Fang et al, 2018) ought to be borne in mind. This finding must therefore be taken in the context of the definition of resilience in section 2.1.2. It is only after stressors and shocks have been experienced that resilience can be assessed. The experiences of the El Nino and cyclone Idai confirm this point.

5.2.3 Challenges in exit strategy implementation

Implementation of exit strategies faced several challenges. First, lack of explicitness and clarity on both the INGOs and the project beneficiaries. INGOs were more keen on demonstrating immediate impact than they were on institutionalizing clear exit strategies that would help resilience-building. Exit strategies were largely considered an intangible, intermediate goal, while the ultimate goal remained the pursuit of the more desirable and more tangible outcomes of improved food security, improved household incomes and

reduced morbidity and/or mortality rates, among others. Arguably, this is understandable with donors' almost exclusive focus on numbers reached and the extent of livelihood enhancement. The same core activities that were meant to enhance livelihood improvement were later deemed as exit strategies. Activities like wetland utilization that had been implemented throughout the project life were later deemed exit strategies. This confused the beneficiaries. Again, the purported exit strategies were introduced as an after-thought rather than a well-planned activity. Such a tick-a-box approach contributed to a casual approach towards exit strategy implementation.

It is only relief programs that seem to pay attention to a community's state of resilience to inform their intervention preparations.

The handouts syndrome is still negatively influencing the seriousness with which project beneficiaries approach elements of exit strategies aimed at strengthening sustainability.

However, with growing recognition that a reorientation of how development ought to be done and issues of sustainability coming more and more to the fore, exit strategies beg to be taken more seriously now than ever before. This becomes more critical when it is taken in the context of faltering donor support.

Again, it is only district-level structures, notably DEC, DACC, BCI-TSC and partner NGOs that are provided the platform to critically scrutinize projects coming to communities. Community-level structures like ADCs, CBOs, VDCs and Farmer Organizations are mere followers and implementers, hence crowding-out specific real-time local contexts in sustainable development planning. This is evidenced by their relative passive role in discussions around project interventions and, even more critically, exit strategies.

5.3 Implications

All this underscores the fact that if such a trend is allowed to persist, seemingly successful project intervention outcomes will remain vulnerable to regress to previously less desirable fragile states at the emergence of modest exogenous shocks such as adverse weather (drought or flooding) and/or pest or disease attack. Alternatively, the

optimal rate of livelihood enhancement that would have been potentially accomplished may be reduced. The El Nino and cyclone Idai adverse weather patterns presented a serious reality check to the WALA and UBALE projects respectively, and UBALE proved more apt at building resilience, conceivably due to its relatively stronger exit strategy regimen.

Since improved livelihoods as observed at the end line do not guarantee sustainability beyond project closure, the vicious cycle in which communities in disaster-prone areas are trapped in is likely to persist. Such a situation might be exploited by INGOs and donors alike, who might have their ulterior motives for supporting such communities. In such a framework, the INGO shall remain an inhibitor instead of the enabler it purports to be.

5.4 Recommendations

With the conclusions and implications based on the findings above, a general recommendation is hereby made that, to truly and significantly reduce the fragility that is so rampant in disaster-prone areas, there must be an intentional focus on exit strategies and the power imbalances inherent therein. However, the following specific recommendations are made to specific stakeholders as given below:

a.) Government

- i.) In relation to objective one, government agencies at all levels - area, district, regional and national, while being grateful for any assets and/or inventory received from INGOs at project closure, should also pay more attention to how the core activities initiated by these INGOs will perform as the agency's involvement diminishes over time. Post-intervention evaluations should be more keenly pursued.
- ii.) In relation to objectives one and two, District Executive Committees in collaboration with Area Executive Committees and Area Development Committees should insist on a more intentional focus on exit strategies by INGOs

by harnessing and regularly monitoring the design and implementation of all INGO exit strategies.

b.) INGOs

- i.) In relation to objective one, INGOs considering implementing resilience-enhancing programs should conduct further analysis to determine whether their assessment, pilot and baseline findings are more a reflection of resilience and/or vulnerability, or a mere temporary upward/downward movement of indicators whose persistence is not certain. This will help the design of their project interventions so that they reflect more real-time livelihood exigencies.
- ii.) In relation to objectives one and three, INGOs should seek to acquire a deeper understanding of how exit strategies work, and hence build clear exit strategies. This should be in collaboration with the intended beneficiaries of their intervention – in order to take into account factors internal to the community. These should be integrated during the formative stages of the projects, taking into account contextual variations. This will prevent crowding-out community buy-in support which is foundational for sustainability.

c.) Project Beneficiaries

- i.) In relation to objective three, secondary beneficiaries, who are community level structures such as ADCs, CBO Networks, VDCs and CBOS should not just be contented with immediate outcomes of INGO-led agency interventions. Rather, they should consciously seek empowerment through capacity building in the areas of critically scrutinizing INGO-led projects coming to their communities, especially elements of resilience and sustainability as expressed in exit strategies, clear or implied but clear ones should be emphasized.
- ii.) In relation to objective three, primary beneficiaries, who are individual households and farmers alike should hold their community structures (ADCs, CBO Networks, VDCs and CBOS) accountable for INGO-led project exit strategies.

5.5 Area of Further Study

This study focused on exit strategies and how INGOs operating in disaster-prone areas engage the same. However, these INGOs get their technical and financial support from donors who have traditionally responded positively to humanitarian situations. INGOs somehow appear to be contented with the status quo of receiving donor aid to contain humanitarian situations. With aid effectiveness being seriously questioned and donor interests in global affairs coming to the fore, an area of academic inquiry exists on whether donors are really interested in resilience - building and hence sustainability, or their interests lie elsewhere.

Again, since the findings of this study are only correlational, another area of academic research might exist in using multivariate analysis of the results to isolate the exact variable and to what extent that variable is causing the positive relationship with sustained food security.

5.6 Conclusion

The chapter has presented overall conclusions of the study and the implications of maintaining the status quo as far as exit strategies are concerned. Both general and specific policy recommendations aimed at addressing such implications made to appropriate audiences have been given. Finally the chapter has presented areas that beg further study.

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APPENDICES

Appendix i: Letter of Introduction



ACTING VICE-CHANCELLOR

UNIVERSITY OF MALAWI

Prof. Alfred D. Mtcnje, BEd MI", MA S. Illinois, PhDP.O. Box 280, Zomba, Malawi
London.

Telephone: (265) 526

Our Ref: P. 09/20/89

622

Your Ref:

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2nd November 2021

Mr. Francis Mmaka

MDS Student

Faculty of Social Science

P.O. Box 280

Zornba

Dear Mr. Mmaka

RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR
PROTOCOL NO. P.09/21/89 AID PROJECT EXIT STRATEGIES FOR A
SUSTAINABLE LIVELIHOODS RESILIENCE PROGRAM IN A
DISASTER-PRONE AREA: THE CASE OF MAKHANGA E.P.A. IN NSANJE
DISTRICT, IN THE LOWER SHIRE SUB-REGION OF MALAWI

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to
inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You

are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

– This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the University of Malawi Research Ethics Committee (UNIMAREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat.

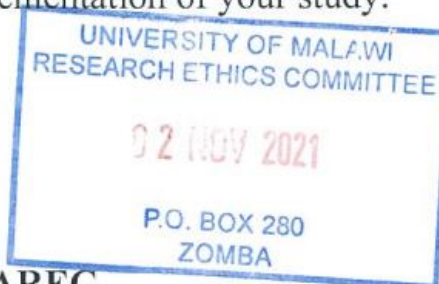
Once the study is completed, you are required to furnish the Committee and the Principal with a final report of the study. The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,



Prof. Alister Munthali
CHAIRPERSON OF UNIMAREC



CC: Acting Vice Chancellor

Acting University Registrar

College Finance Officer

Dean of Research

Compliance Officer

Appendix ii: Interview Consent Form

My name is Francis Mmaka, a student with University of Malawi. As part of my studies, I am conducting a research on the topic “Aid Project Exit Strategies for a Sustainable Livelihoods Program in a Disaster-Prone Area: The Case of Makhanga E.P.A”

As part of this study, I would like to interview some structures and bodies in order to gain knowledge on experiences as beneficiaries and partners in these programs implemented by various NGOS in this area.

The University of Malawi has already given me permission to carry out this research, but also has the Nsanje District Council and all other relevant bodies under it, including Makhanga Extension Planning Area.

I would like now to engage you in a discussion around the conduct of Non-Governmental Organizations that get involved in recovery and resilience-building projects in areas that regularly get devastated by floods and/or droughts. Your answers will help these NGOs plan better as they seek to serve you. Please do not feel obliged to answer a question if you do not wish to do so, though I assure you that any information you provide, including electronic recordings and transcripts, will be treated with strict confidence.

I thank you in advance for your cooperation.

Signed -----

Address for University of Malawi:

Unimarec

Attn: Professor Alister Munthali

Box 280

Zomba

Tel 0888822044

Appendix iii: Study Guide for NGOs Involved In Recovery and Resilience Building

Name of NGO.....

Location.....

Meeting Venue.....

Name of M, E&D Officer.....

This NGO has been identified as one of those that regularly get involved in resilience-building following flooding and/or droughts in this area.

We would like to engage you in a discussion around the conduct of Non-Governmental Organizations that get involved in recovery and resilience-building projects in areas that regularly get devastated by floods and/or droughts. Your answers will help inform the design of exit strategies that are considered crucial for the success of resilience-building projects. Please do not feel obliged to answer a question if you do not wish to do so, though we assure you that any information you provide will be treated with strict confidence.

1. How long has this organization been involved in resilience-building in this area?

-----years

2. Does this organization operate singularly, in partnership or consortium?

3. What are the programs that constitute your recovery and resilience-building package?

a.)-----

b.)-----

c.)-----

d.)-----

- 1.) How many years, generally, are these programs before they are closed?

2.) According to your post-intervention evaluations, how do the livelihood activities fair beyond the closure of those projects?

6.) Since these project interventions are largely of a transient nature, how do you seek to foster their sustainability and mitigate the risks of failure beyond closure?

7.) Specifically, what are the key exit strategies instituted by your Organization in your resilience-building project interventions that build on relief programs?

- a.) -----
- b.) -----
- c.) -----
- d.) -----
- e.) -----

8.) In your own assessment, to what extent do those exit strategies help facilitate community participation?

9.) What is the timing of the implementation of these exit strategies like?

10.) Since these are largely livelihoods projects that ought to be flexible as the initiatives evolve, how regularly are the exit strategies revisited to foster sustainability?

11.) How do these strategies enhance community participation and ownership during the lifespan of the project intervention?

12.) How do you establish when and how to terminate, hand-over, or transform?

13.) Why is it that there is little if any continuation of the livelihood project intervention activities beyond the closure of the NGO intervention?

14). During the difficult time of the El Nino adverse weather in 2015, how resilient were the communities around here and how did you measure it?

15). With specific reference to three prominent projects of WALA and UBALE, how did the respective exit regimens contribute to the sustainability of the resilience-building activities?

a.) WALA.....

.....

c.)UBALE.....

.....

16.)How did this resilience/fragility manifest itself?

17). Why is it that every time disaster strikes, be it floods or drought, the people in this area find themselves in a situation where they need immediate humanitarian assistance despite numerous recovery and resilient building efforts by NGO partners having run for years?

18.) What, in your opinion, would constitute an appropriate exit strategy to sustain resilience beyond the NGO Project intervention period? What has worked well and what has not? Are they well thought out?

19). Why do you consider the above to be the answer to the perennial problem of fragile livelihoods despite recovery programs?

20). Is it your opinion that relief is better than self-reliance? What are the community perspectives?

21). What can be done to change this mind-set?

22). How is the disaster preparedness with different community groups especially the minority? How are women and children specifically affected?

23). During disaster response what challenges are faced and how are they tackled? What are the primary concerns of the project management? Is it only the timely delivery of the project outputs?

- a.)-----
- b.)-----
- c.)-----
- d.)-----

24.) How do the consumers of your service view your service?

SECTION B: RESEARCH FOCUS

25.) According to your post-intervention evaluations, how do the livelihood activities fair beyond the closure of those projects? Rate out of 5, with 5 being the best and 1 the worst

iv.) Very well? iv.). Well? iii.) Not Sure? ii.) Poor? i.) Very Poor?

26.) Specifically, what are the key exit strategies instituted by your Organization in your resilience-building project interventions that build on relief programs?

- a.) -----
- b.) -----
- c.) -----
- d.) -----
- e.) -----

27.) What is the timing of the implementation of these exit strategies like?

i.) At the point of entry? ii.) During project implementation? iii.) Towards Project Closure?

28.) Since these are largely livelihoods projects that ought to be flexible as the initiatives evolve, how regularly are the exit strategies revisited to foster sustainability?

i) Never? ii) Once iii) More than once?

29.) How do these strategies enhance community participation and ownership during the lifespan of the project intervention?

- v.) Highly Effective? iv.) Barely Effective? iii.) Not Sure? ii.) Not Effective?
i.) Not Effective at All?

30.) During the difficult time of the NI nino adverse weather in 2015, how resilient were the communities around here and how did you measure it?

- iii.) Very Resilient? ii.) Moderately Resilient? i.) Fragile?

31.) With specific reference to two prominent projects of WALA and UBALE, how did the respective exit regimens contribute to the sustainability of the resilience-building activities?

- a.) WALA i) Highly ii) Moderately iii) Poorly

- c.) UBALE i) Highly ii) Moderately iii) Poorly

32.) How do the consumers of your service view your service?

- v.) Most favorably? iv.) Favorably? iii.) Not Sure ii.) Negatively i.) Most Negatively?

Appendix iv: Guideline for Testing Soundness of Exit Strategies In Recovery and Resilience Building

Name of Government Structure.....

Location.....

Venue of Meeting.....

Name of Expert.....

We would like to engage you in a discussion about the conduct of Non-Governmental Organizations that get involved in recovery and resilience-building projects in areas that regularly get devastated by floods and/or droughts. Your answers will help inform the design of exit strategies that are considered crucial for the success of resilience-building projects. Please do not feel obliged to answer a question if you do not wish to do so, though we assure you that any information you provide will be treated with strict confidence.

- 1.) The following have been identified as the key exit strategies instituted by Non-Governmental Organizations involved in resilience-building project interventions that build on relief programs

- a.)-----
- b.)-----
- c.)-----
- d.)-----
- e.)-----

- 2.) In your assessment, how effective are these exit strategies?

- 3.) What should be the timing of the implementation of these exit strategies like?

.....
.....
.....

4.) How could these strategies enhance community participation and ownership during the lifespan of the project intervention?

.....
.....
.....

5.) To what extent would you attribute the success/failure of the projects of WALA, AND UBALE to the soundness/unsoundness of exit strategies?

a.) WALA.....

.....
.....
.....

b.) UBALE.....

.....

Appendix v: Questionnaire for Individual Household Survey

Household Survey Paper

NAME OF INTERVIEWER - _____

DATE COMPLETED _____

NAME OF REVIEWER _____

DATE REVIEWED _____

INSTRUCTIONS TO THE INTERVIEWER

1. Ensure that the sampling procedure has been followed before starting the interview.
2. Only the chosen household per plan should be interviewed.
3. Greet the respondent of the survey and ask if they are willing to participate
4. Tell the participant the time it will take and make sure they are comfortable to go along with it
5. Before commencing with the questionnaire, make sure the information requested above is completed.
6. Read the questions the way they appear in the questionnaire, without any explanation unless there is need.
7. Do not skip any question because you deem it unnecessary unless that is what is expected.
8. Record the answers that the respondent gives rather than making up what you think the respondents are saying or what you think they should have said.
9. Many questions require one choice from different alternatives. Make sure that only one answer is marked.
10. Ensure that the respondent is not being influenced by anyone when answering the questions.
11. Ensure that all the questions are answered unless they do not apply.
12. Go through the completed questionnaire again and make sure all questions that apply have been answered.

13. Give opportunity to the respondent to ask any questions or give comments on the interview if need be.

14. Thank the respondent after the survey and assure them that their answers will be treated with confidentiality.

SECTION A: Demographic Data

1.1

a.) Father :

b.) Mother :

c.) Child :

d.) Grandparent:

e.) Relative :

f.) Other :

1.2

a.) Village : _____

b.) TA : _____

c.) Ethnicity : _____

d.) Age :

1.3

How big is your household?

15. 1-2 members

16. 3-4 members

17. 5-6 members

18. 6-7 members

19. 8 and more members

SECTION A: Demographic Data

1.1

- a.) Father :
- b.) Mother :
- c.) Child :
- d.) Grandparent:
- e.) Relative : f.) Other :

1.2

- a.) Village : _____
- b.) TA : _____
- c.) Ethnicity : _____
- d.) Age :

1.3

How big is your household?

- a.) 1-2 members
- b.) 3-4 members
- c.) 5-6 members
- d.) 6-7 members
- e.) 8 or more members

SECTION B: RESEARCH FOCUS

Are you currently receiving food aid from any agency? Yes ☐ No ☐

Table 2.3 Consumption Coping Strategy Index (CSI)

In the past 30 days, if there have been times when you did not have enough food or money to buy food, how often has your household had to:		Relative Frequency						
		All the time? Every day	Pretty often? 3-4*/week	Once in a while? 1-2*/week	Hardly at all? <1*/week	Never? 0*/week	Severity Ranking	Score
a,)	Borrow food, or rely on help from a friend or relative							
b,)	Purchase food on credit							
c,)	Gather wild fruit, hunt or harvest immature crops							
d,)	Consume seed stock held for next season							

e.)	Send members to eat elsewhere					
f.)	Send members to beg					
g.)	Limit portion size at meal time					
h.)	Restrict consumption of adults for children to eat more					
i.)	Feed working members at expense of non-working members					
j.)	Reduce number of meals eaten					

k.)	Skip entire days without eating					

Appendix vi: Names of GVHs and VHs from which the sample of 109 was drawn

Appendix V: NAMES OF GVHs and VHS FORMING THE QUANTITATIVE STUDY SAMPLE

Category of GVHs	Name of GVH	Name of VH Sampled	No. of HHs Sampled
A	Chapinga	Kalumateya	3
		Maheya	3
		Nalisoni	3
	Gooke	Anganjane	3
		Chipolopolo	3
		Dogo	3
	Namanya	Singano	3
		Mchambalinje	3
		Mgobo	3
B	Mwanabvumbe	Akomandalendo	2
		Zwangeti	2
	Sambani	Amosi	2
		Zanganembo	2
	Khambadza	Chambulukwa	2
		Moloseni	2
	Chitseko	Jaenda	2
		Alumenda	2
	Makhapa	Mphiphira	2
		Mathiya	2
	Chipondeni	Biliati 2	2
		Mlambe	2
	Tchereni	Dafuta	2
		Lomoni	2

C	Karonga	Chilimadzi	1
		Jasi	1
		Namanthungo	1
	Ndiuzani	Gerald	1
		Ndiuzani	1
	Gundani	Chipangula	1
		Phiphira	1
		Nyenyenzi	1
	Osiyana	Ndadzerakufa	1
		Anyala	1
		Manjolo	1
	Manyowa	Manyowa	1
		Kaso	1
		Walera	1
	Mgonera	Semu	1
		Zimtambira	1
		Mailosi	1
	Gatoma	Chataika	1
		Grevulo	1
		Finyamowa	1
	Mbadzo	Dembe	1
		Mulakha	1
		Somanje	1
	Clemence	Bonongwe	1
		Navaya	1
		Theniford	1
	Alfazema	August	1
		Aironi	1
		Falinya	1
	Ng'ombe	Chawoneka	1

		Makiyi	1
		Samudeni	1
	Nduna	Chizinga	1
		Jackson	1
		Duwe	1
	Chataika	Falatcha	1
	Makwalo	Meke	1
		Chafomoka	1
		Ntalika	1
	Mchacha	Mlenga	1
		Nkhandwe	1
		Dovu	1
	Manthenga	Litchangwi	1
		Sali	1
		Simoni	1
	Kainfa	Suzana	1
		Katandika	1
		Kanting’inda	1
	Mkweza	Gande	1
		Belo	1
		Chumbetete	1
	Buleya	Malitinyu	1
	Namathimba	Kachaso	1
		Dzikosala	1
		Mkoladala	1
	Mchacha 58	Nkhunde	1
		Piyo	1
		Mwimaniwa	1
Chimbuyombuyo		1	
TOTAL		109	

Source : Makhanga E.P.A Annual Report, 2021.

Appendix vii: Data Collection Budget

Item	Quantity	Unit Cost (MK)	Frequency	Amount (MK)
Transport to and from Nsanje	1	7500.00	4	30000.00
Local Transport within Makhanga	10	1000.00	10	100,000.00
Accommodation	1	10000.00	10	100,000.00
Refreshments	60	500.00	2	60,000.00
Meals	2	1000.00	30	60,000.00
Water Buckets	2	5000.00	1	100,00.00
Masks	100	50	2	100,00.00
Contingency	1	5000.00	2	100,00.00
Total				380,000.00