

# CONSULTATIONS WITH THE POOR

## COUNTRY SYNTHESIS REPORT

### MALAWI

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Submitted to:

The Poverty Group  
Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network  
The World Bank  
Washington, D.C.

**(July, 1999)**

The findings, interpretations, and conclusions expressed here are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of the World Bank, its Board of Executive Directors, or the governments they represent.

## Preface

This study is part of a global research effort entitled *Consultations with the Poor*, designed to inform the *World Development Report 2000/1 on Poverty and Development*. The research involved poor people in twenty-three countries around the world. The effort also included two comprehensive reviews of Participatory Poverty Assessments completed in recent years by the World Bank and other agencies. Deepa Narayan, Principal Social Development Specialist in the World Bank's Poverty Group, initiated and led the research effort.

The global *Consultations with the Poor* is unique in two respects. It is the first large scale comparative research effort using participatory methods to focus on the voices of the poor. It is also the first time that the World Development Report is drawing on participatory research in a systematic fashion. Much has been learned in this process about how to conduct Participatory Poverty Assessments on a major scale across countries so that they have policy relevance. Findings from the country studies are already being used at the national level, and the methodology developed by the study team is already being adopted by many others.

We want to congratulate the network of 23 country research teams who mobilized at such short notice and completed the studies within six months. We also want to thank Deepa Narayan and her team: Patti Petesch, Consultant, provided overall coordination; Meera Kaul Shah, Consultant, provided methodological guidance; Ulrike Erhardt, provided administrative assistance; and the Institute of Development Studies, University of Sussex provided advisory support. More than a hundred colleagues within the World Bank also contributed greatly by identifying and supporting the local research teams.

The study would not have been possible without the generous financial support of the U.K. Department for International Development (DFID), numerous departments within the World Bank, the Swedish International Development Agency, John D. & Catherine T. MacArthur Foundation and several NGOs.

The completion of these studies in a way is just the beginning. We must now ensure that the findings lead to follow-up action to make a difference in the lives of the poor.

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## List of Abbreviations

ADMARC	-	Agricultural Development and Marketing Co-operation
AIDS	-	Acquired Immuno-Deficiency Syndrome
CCAP	-	Church of Central African Presbytery
CPAR	-	Canadian Physician for Aid and Relief
DEMATT	-	Development of Malawian Traders Trust
DEO	-	District Education officer
DO	-	Development Officer
EPA	-	Extension Planning Area
FA	-	Field Assistant
GABLE	-	Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education
HIV	-	Human Immuno Virus
MASAF	-	Malawi Social Action Fund
MCP	-	Malawi Congress Party
MRFC	-	Malawi Rural Finance Company
MYP	-	Malawi Young Pioneers
NABW	-	National Association of Business Women
NASME	-	National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises
RC	-	Roman Catholic
SDA	-	Seventh Day Adventist
SEDOM	-	Small Enterprise Development Organisation of Malawi
STA	-	Sub-Traditional Authority
TA	-	Traditional Authority
TAMA	-	Tobacco Association of Malawi
TEBA	-	Temporary Employment Bureau of Africa
UDF	-	United Democratic Front
WVI	-	World Vision International

## List of Local Terminologies and their Literal Translations

<b>Local Terminology</b>	<b>Literal Translation</b>
umoyu umampha	good quality of life
umoyo uwemi	good quality of life
umoyo wabwino	good life
moyo osangalara	happy life
moyo wabwino	good life
moyo okoma	sweet life
kupeza bwino	doing fine
moyo okatamuka	good quality of life
moyo ovaya	aloft, on top of, higher, beyond, superior, or exceeding
moyo okhupuka	good quality of life
kusuzgika	struggling
moyo osangalara	Unhappy life
moyo wausiwa	Poor life
moyo waumphawi	poor quality of life
moyo ochakachika	poor quality of life
osauka	the poor
bakavu	the poor
opeza bwino pang'ono	those doing better
ovutika	the strugglers
onyentchera	the malnourished and stunted
nkhoswe	marriage counsellor
othandiza	helpful
oyanjanitsa	conciliatory
okhulupilika	trustworthy
osakondera	impartial
okoma mtima	kind
omva madandaulo	understanding
chitetezo	security
zadzidzidzi	unexpected events

## **Acknowledgement**

We would like to thank the (Poverty Group in the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network) World Bank in Washington, D.C. for entrusting the Centre with this project out of which we have learnt a lot on the experiences of the people that live in poverty. We are also grateful to the World Bank, Malawi country office for the logistical support it rendered during the course of the study. We cannot forget to thank Meera Kaul Shah for the PRA refresher training she rendered to the research team from our Centre.

Special thanks go to the various people too numerous to mention for allowing to participate in the discussions with members of the research team. We are also indebted to the following for conducting the various discussion sessions with people in the ten study sites: Blessings Chinsinga, Esnat Mkandawire, Sylvia Mpando, Judith Mwandumba, Annie Kumpita, Grace Thakwalakwa, Ndaga Mulaga, Moreen Bapu, Susan Tuwe, Lilian Saka, Brenda Mapemba, Augustine Fatch, James Mwera, Edward Kwisongole, Dennis Mfune, and Rodrick Mwamvani.

Lastly, thanks go to Mrs. Chinkombero, Mrs. Chimphamba for typing the site reports, Mr. Massy Chiotcha for the graphics and Alister Munthali for editing the final draft report.

We take full responsibility for any errors arising from interpretation of the results in the final report and the manner of presentation.

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**July, 1999**



## Executive Summary

The World Bank's *World Development Report 2000/01 (WDR)* will be on poverty and Development. This follows the practice established in 1980 and 1990 of preparing a major report every decade on Poverty. Because of this, the Poverty Group in the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network of the World Bank in Washington D.C. commissioned a comparative qualitative study 'Consultations with the Poor' in 23 countries worldwide. The purpose of Consultations with the Poor was to enable a wide range, of poor people in diverse countries and conditions to share their views in such a way that they can inform and contribute to the concepts and content of the *World development Report 2000/01 (WDR)*. The Poor are true poverty experts. Hence, a policy document on poverty strategies for 21st Century must be based on the experiences, priorities, reflections, and recommendations of poor people, women and men. Malawi is one of the 23 countries whose citizens were lucky to be given the opportunity to share their poverty experiences and express their ideas on how best their poverty situation could be counteracted. The Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi, an organ of the University that conducts and promotes excellence in academic and applied research was consulted to conduct the participatory study in various parts of the country following guidelines that were provided by the Poverty Group of the World Bank.

Based on their agricultural history and economic performance as reported in previous studies, ten sites in ten districts were selected for this purpose. Of the ten, three were urban squatters, while the others were either a fishing or crop farming rural community. The selection of the study participants was done with the generous assistance from the respective chiefs, agricultural officers and local development committees. Participants to the mixed group of women and men were selected at random and on their convenience while the participants to the other discussion groups were selected based on the criteria of identifying the poor sectors of the various communities provided by the mixed group.

### i. Well-being and Ill-being

Findings from the ten sites, seven rural and three urban squatters, indicate that there is generally a shared conceptualisation and understanding of well-being and ill-being across the sites despite the different terminologies that are used to describe the two concepts. The state of well-being, (*umoyu umampha* in Tonga language, *umoyo uwemi* in Tumbuka language spoken in northern Malawi, *umoyo wabwino*, *kupeza bwino*, *moyo okoma*, *moyo osangalara* in Chichewa language spoken widely mainly in central and southern Malawi, *moyo okatamuka*, *moyo ovayal*, *moyo okhupuka* among the youth), was defined on the basis of having access to the most depended upon livelihood resource in the particular area and access to basics of life. For example, fishing communities said that they consider the state of well-being on the basis of having fishing equipment while other rural areas defined well-being on the basis of growing tobacco and other valuable crops. In urban squatters, participants indicated employment status as their yardstick measure of well-being. Further, participants to the discussions said that well-being

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<sup>1</sup> Ovaya comes from the English word 'via' meaning aloft, on top of, higher, beyond, superior or exceeding

households have adequate food for the entire year, have access to decent medical care, have good sleeping houses and bedding, have a constant and regular source of income such that they are able to withstand crisis situations like famine, price hikes and diseases and that since they have what is required for life, they live peacefully (have peace of mind). Most women discussion groups also indicated that well-being entails having adequate household utensils and kitchen ware, pit latrines, bathrooms and plate drying racks.

On the other hand, the state of ill-being (*kusuzgika* in Tumbuka language, *moyo osasangalara*, *moyo wausiwa/upmhawi* in Chichewa, *moyo ochakachika* among the youth) was reported to be the constant deprivation of basic life necessities like food, medical care and shelter. In general, ill-being was said to be characterized by poor health and stunted growth, having inadequate food for the rest of the year, dilapidated houses, irregular income sources, unemployment and having no access to a regular livelihood resources like fishing equipment and agricultural materials. Rudeness, delinquent behaviour, witchcraft, jealousy, excessive beer drinking, quarrels, in-house fighting and unstable families were also reported to be aspects of ill-being. The participants further said that the state of ill-being is also associated with being disabled, aged, orphaned and loneliness. The state of ill-being was being likened to poverty such that the definition of a poor household contained the characteristics associated with ill-being. However, some participants differentiated between poverty and lacking in that lacking is temporal while being poor has some longitudinal definition.

## ii. Well-being and Ill-being Classes or Categories over the Last Decade

A total of four different well-being classes emerged from most discussion sessions that were conducted in the ten sites regardless of the local terminologies that were used which could be because of lingual differences and age groups. The groups are: 'the haves'- *opeza bwino* being the most common highest category that emerged, followed by those 'doing better' - *opeza bwino pang'ono*, 'the have nots' - *osauka/bakavu* and 'the poorest' - *osauka kwambiri* being the most common lowest category that emerged from various discussion groups. As alluded to earlier on this is despite the different terminologies that were used in the different sites because even in one site, two or more terms could be defined as different by one or two groups while the rest of the groups viewed those same terminologies as synonymous. For instance, *osauka*, *ovutika*, *amphawi* and *osowa* were defined as representing different classes by some groups while others said that they are synonymous. Further, the criteria for defining these terminologies were overlapping, when treated as separate concepts. Apart from the four common classes that emerged, one session comprising women in one rural village came up with stunted growth and malnourished - *onyentchera* as a well-being class. This class defined in malnutrition terms had households with people that were thin and of short stature. They have thin pale hairs, are not strong and their bodies do not shine even after bathing. Such households were also said to lack food for most parts of the year. The strugglers/sufferers - *ovutika* as a category also emerged in a few groups but as indicated earlier, the criteria was overlapping with that of defining 'the have nots' - *osauka/bakavu*.

The analyses of all the discussion sessions show variations in the way participants to the various groups felt were the trend changes to well-being classes in the respective sites over last decade. In most cases however, people said that the last decade particularly the past few years have seen most households depreciating in their well-being status such they have shifted into lower classes or that new lower classes have emerged. In general, these groups indicated that at current the lowest classes accommodate about 80-90% of households in their communities when a decade ago, the same categories had as less as 30-40% on average or did not exist at all. Low agricultural production high levels of unemployment, high prices of commodities, diseases, high death rates and illiteracy were singled out in most sites to be the causative factors. Most discussion groups indicated that inadequate farm land due to increased population, high prices of farm inputs, lack of credit facility for farm inputs, droughts of 1997/98, excessive rains of 1998/99, reduced soil fertility, high dependency on casual labour were the main factors that caused agricultural production to be low.

The other main common cause of ill-being that was reported from all the sites is diseases particularly HIV/AIDS. On this, participants said that lack of hygiene, poor diets/and hunger, promiscuity and excessive drinking are the leading factors for most diseases. The participants also said that most of the diseases affect households belonging to the lower well-being classes more because of their social status (unhygienic homes, no food, lack of peace of mind and no money to pay for medical treatment or transport to clinics and hospitals). Another main cause of poverty that was commonly reported from women discussion groups as causing poverty among most women is loneliness. This, they said makes most of them to lead worried lives and that they fail to adequately fend for their households particularly if the woman has no business or is not working.

Poverty was reported from across the sites that it has led some households to accumulate heavy debts over the years and that because of this, they are always leading a life full of worries about how such debts would be squared off. Some of the worried people were reported to have developed some mental problems and that some have resorted to suicide as a way of forgetting their worries. Poverty has also made some people to have perpetual hunger because they do not have access to adequate land and farm inputs that would help them improve their agricultural production. It was also indicated that poverty has made some people to fail to get educated because they cannot afford school fees (secondary school) and other related expenses. Poverty was also reported to have led to an increase in theft and cases of murder from all the sites that were visited. It was also indicated from the sites that poor people have often times been excluded from several activities on the basis of their poverty. For example, most participants said that the poor have been denied access to credits because they said most money lending institutions place heavy doubts on the poor's ability to properly use the money and repay the loan. Poverty was also reported to have led to early marriages among most teenagers particularly girls as their survival mechanism. In some instances, poverty was reported to have caused some good mannered women and girls to fall trap into infidelity so as to solicit money for their home's survival.

In general the communities visited indicated that they have a feeling that the poverty existing in their various communities has increased over the past few years. It is also clear

that from the findings that most people feel that they have no control over most of the causes of poverty in their communities. They felt surrendered and indicated that the government through re-orienting its policies and priorities could address most of the causes. In most instances, participants indicated that poverty existing in their community has become cyclic such that some of the impacts of poverty have actually become causes.

A few people in some discussion groups (particularly in the south, stronghold of the ruling party) said that some households have improved in their well-being status or that they themselves are actually improving. Mostly, they said in the past few years (1995-1999) they have greatly improved because of the political freedom that exists in the country. They are now able to run businesses without being followed by politicians. They also indicated that credit institutions have proliferated in the past few years and that many people have become aware of them unlike in the past when very few people knew their existence. The public works programmes by the government and other relief organisations were also reported to have improved people's livelihoods in that nobody died of hunger and that at least everybody could afford to have food even in times of food shortage. Some people said that they have actually improved because of remittances they get from their children and relatives although they indicated that these are gradually diminishing.

### **iii. Security, Vulnerability and Opportunities for Economic Mobility**

Findings from across the various sites that were visited during the study indicate minor differences in the way they perceive security as it relates to well-being (and ill-being). In most discussion groups, participants said that they consider security as that status of being unshaken when crisis situations occur. In rural sites, participants said that they perceive security in terms of a household's access to a garden that would provide it with adequate food and cash crops (particularly maize and tobacco) or other most depended upon livelihood resource (like fishing equipment) and ownership of livestock. They pointed out that having access to these guarantees food and income safety which are the basis for well-being.

*"When a household runs out of soap, they just sell some chickens.... and if one member of the household falls ill, they sell a goat to raise transport money and fees for the clinic services".*

Participants from urban squatters defined security in terms of well-being is synonymous to leading a good quality of life. That is, the household has to be able to provide adequately for itself (basic necessities) without difficulties. Such households were also reported that they enjoy good health because their living environments are safe and that members have peace of mind. They said that households belonging to the lowest well-being classes are not secure and therefore more vulnerable to great suffering when crisis situations and shocks hit them. Particularly reported to be so are households headed by the elderly, the disabled, blind, orphans and females. They said that these groups do not have any reliable claim to a sustainable means of livelihood and their situation is particularly worse now and will continue as such in future because of the decline of assistance from the extended family relations, the rise in the cost of living and the rising unemployment levels.

A very different dimension of security came up in a discussion group for both men and women in Mbwadzulu village. They looked at this security - *chitetezo*- as referring to situations where a household protects itself from theft. On this, they said the 'haves' are more able to protect themselves because they have money to recruit security guards and construct fences around their homes. This is because they realise that they are targets for theft unlike the poor households.

In terms of opportunities for economic advancement, most women said that the poor (which they said are mostly female headed households) are more likely to be left out because most money lending institutions demand very high collateral and deposit fees which are normally beyond the affordability of the poor and the unemployed.

Participants from most discussion groups indicated that the most vulnerable groups to declining well-being are the sick, the aged, orphans and the disabled particularly those belonging to the lower most well-being classes because they said, these groups do not have the capacity to work so that they can provide for their necessities. Households that are also headed by the drunkards and lazy people were also indicated that they are vulnerable to declining well-being status. This, they said was because these people have no time to work for the sustainability of the family's welfare.

#### **iv. Future hopes and fears**

Findings from this study indicate that most people are not optimistic about their future and they feel their life is at risk. They are generally fatalistic and resigned such that they consider death as their best alternative destiny. The high cost of living, reduced employment opportunities, low agricultural production, high prices of farm inputs, reduced levels of fish catch, HIV/AIDS, increase crime the segregative tendency of credit institutions through their attached membership conditions are the main factors that make most people to feel uncertain about their future. The long cherished support systems from the kinship and extended family structures have gradually declined in the last decade and people feel that this will eventually cease to exist in the next few years because of the ever increasing cost of living. The participants said that the current trends tend to favour people in the upper well-being classes and those in high political power because economic opportunities are high and open for them and that they can easily influence decision making to their advantage.

However a few people in some discussion groups particularly in the southern region indicated that they see a bright future ahead of them. This they said was particularly because of the political changes that have happened since 1994 when multi-party politics were liberalised again in the country. This has made most people to get into any business without being traced upon and that there is trade liberalisation, political freedom and that credit institutions have emerged in the last few years.

#### **v. Shocks and Risks of Life**

Shocks and life risks were defined in most discussion groups as depressing events whose occurrence is unexpected (*zadzidzidzi*) and they disrupt people's normal ways of living. Shocks that were mentioned in almost all the study sites are famine/hunger, deaths, diseases, drought divorce and floods. Some of the shocks of life were reported to affect all classes of well-being because they occur by forces of nature only that households belonging to lower well-being classes are affected adversely compared to households belonging to higher well-being classes because of differences in their back-up structures. Examples of such shocks that were mentioned are deaths, disease, drought, famine, unexpected fire, cholera, orphanhood, strong winds, unemployment/retrenchment, and destruction of crops by hippos. Some of the shocks that were reported are gender specific. For example, most women discussants indicated that divorce and rape are some of the shocks that affect women only. Other shocks that were reported were site specific. For example, child abductions, armed robberies, murder etc. were commonly reported in the urban sites than in rural areas.

#### **vi. Coping to Crisis Situations**

A number of coping mechanisms were reported from the various sites. It is important to note that the various coping strategies depend on the nature of the shock/crisis that has hit the household or community. For instance, if people have been hit by hunger/famine, they resort to casual labour for food or money and that some households revisit their consumption patterns by either reducing meals or food quantity while others change their food types to eat foods of lower quality. On casual labour, most people complained that some paymasters take advantage of their desperate situation such that they are paid less and this forces these people to do more of casual work so that they raise more food/money for their homes.

Since most households have been hit by food shortages for several consecutive years mainly because of low production due to lack of farm inputs and reduced soil fertility, most communities have formed farm clubs through which they expect to obtain input credits to improve production. Some households have decided to diversify their food crop production while others have started raising livestock. Some fishing communities have formed committees to monitor fishing in Lake Malawi during closed seasons. Some women reported that during hunger times they collect flour and maize bran that recollects on the floor at the maize mills. Some households go to participate in food for work (a public works programme by the government and some NGO's) so that they can raise food for the home. Some women said that in the event of divorce or being widowed, they first of all rely on kinsmen and start small businesses later. They however complained that capital becomes a major obstacle. It was also said that some wicked women resort to prostitution together with their girl children to sustain their families.

#### **vii. Forms of Transfer Payments**

Three forms of payment: food, fertiliser and money were suggested from the various discussion groups conducted in the ten different sites as being the most appropriate possible

payment alternatives for any public works activity. Food (particularly maize flour) was indicated as the most convenient and appropriate payment form when food scarcity is serious. Otherwise people would prefer to be paid fertiliser because this would help to boost food production in the next season. Money as a form of payment was supported by men discussants only. Women said that money is usually spent on other things like beer and extramarital affairs. Men said that they would prefer money because apart from buying food, they would also use the money to buy clothes, pay for medical treatment etc. Most discussants indicated though that such programmes should not spare any household but that first consideration should be given to the most poor who could be identified with the assistance of traditional leaders and community development officers. Administrative preference for most discussants is the collaboration between the outside service providers e.g. government or NGO with the local leadership structures to encourage transparency in the process. Most people expressed dissatisfaction with the timing of such public works because they are introduced at a time when their labour is also heavily needed in their gardens (peak period). They would prefer to be provided with free food at this time so that they work in their gardens.

### **viii. Social Cohesion and Exclusion**

Findings from the various discussion groups indicate that people in the various communities have certain cultural associations and support systems that bring together people regardless of their well-being class and gender. Examples of such groups that were mentioned from most sites are religious, funerals, development, farm clubs, weddings, initiation and other festivities. In most of the communities, committees (either religious or village level) have been formed that offer assistance to bereaved families by taking control of the whole funeral ceremony. Even those households that belong to higher classes do participate in such committees because they also want to be assisted by other people when death strikes their homes. In most of the sites, it was also indicated that selecting leaders is participatory in that everyone beyond a certain age (particularly 18 and all those married) is allowed to participate in voting. However, most discussants said that those deemed uneducated or young are seldomly elected. In urban areas, it was said that chiefs are always males while in rural areas, it was said that females could be chiefs because they follow the family system prevalent in each village community.

Findings from the studied communities also indicate that strong ties exist among households belonging to same well-being classes (especially upper classes) because they have common interests and that each persona minds one's business. But, across the well-being groups, people in upper classes consider those below them as a burden. They cannot form a committee together that has to do with finances or property. For instance, in Che Musa squatters, it was said that people in upper classes refused to join neighbourhood watch association because they felt that those people in the lower categories are the thieves. As such, they cannot associate with them and that most often they would be required to pay the watchmen.

However, cases of exclusion were also reported from all the sites. Some of the cases involved the society at large excluding some sectors of the community. For instance, some

communities did not benefit from the starter pack programme of the government that distributed free seed and fertiliser in the 1998/99 farming season. Some cases of exclusion are emanating from communal structures themselves where favouritism rules a lot. For instance, some households did not benefit from the same programme because registration officers (chiefs and agricultural field workers) did not register them deliberately. Some political parties (e.g. the ruling UDF) have been named to foster exclusion among households by providing high class assistance to their favourites either through loans or food/clothes. Credit institutions were also named to foster exclusion in that beneficiaries have frequently been people related to responsible officers, chiefs or those in upper categories because they can afford to produce physical collateral, can afford the high interest rates and bribes. Most men were of the view that the credit institutions favour women because they said there is no institution that targets men. Women on the other hand said that not all women are beneficiaries because of late beneficiaries have been the responsible officers, or wives to politicians and other local leaders. They complained that the credit institutions just registered their names and went on the radio to announce the progress but did not actually provide the loans to the women. Some unmarried women also complained that some institutions do not lend unmarried women because they are considered irresponsible and that most officers demand sexual favours in exchange for a loan.

#### **ix. Crime and Conflict**

Conflict was defined as a situation where amicable relations cease to exist between people either because of clash of interests or other unbearable circumstances. A list of situations which are considered conflicts in the studied communities were drawn. These could be summarised into three categories: communal conflicts, inter-family and intra-family conflicts. Most of the communal conflicts that were discussed in most of the sites are those associated with different political and religious opinions. Inter-family conflicts were reported to exist frequently among households that belong to lower well-being categories and also among households that belong to different well-being classes because of clash of interests. An example of a conflict that occurs frequently among households belonging to lower well-being classes is that involving land. In urban squatters, participants indicated that houses are too close such that boundaries are difficult to identify and that most times this also means no space for toilets and bathrooms for each household. As such several households are forced to share a toilet. This brings problems with care routine and timetable such that often times conflicts arise. Just as in rural areas, households in urban squatters also need land to farm on so as to supplement their livelihood resources. Oftentimes quarrels arise between households over land. Most often, chiefs ignite such conflicts when they relocate land belonging to one person to the other be it honestly or after being bribed. Another conflict in urban squatters involving land is between residents and city authorities. City authorities snatch people's land for city expansion and sometimes they also prevent people from constructing their dwelling units in places they want. Other interfamily conflicts were reported to be a result of petty issues like jealousy specially between households belonging to different classes, women quarreling at water points and maize mills, children quarrels spilling over to parents and witchcraft. Most of the intra-family conflicts were reported to root from financial problems, lack of basic necessities of life like



food, salt and soap, infidelity, jealousy, meanness/ stinginess of the wife or husband when relatives of the other partner visits the family.

Crime was from all the sites seen as consisting of such acts as theft, robbery, burglary, murders and other acts that pose physical threat to people's lives. Such acts were reported from all the sites except for one rural village where most participants said that they are not common. These acts were said to affect all households regardless of well-being level but in some discussion sessions, theft victims were reported to be likely households in the upper classes because they have valuable property that attracts thieves. The participants felt resigned on how they feel the future would be like because they feel these acts are on the increase nowadays especially with the re-introduction of multi-party politics in the country in 1994. Most people feel that the police have relaxed and that the penal system of the country has been weakened. Further, some discussants said that some people have taken democracy to mean doing all sorts of things regardless of whether one infringes on somebody's rights or not. Some of the participants said that the disbanding of the then Malawi Young Pioneers and the youth league of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) has also contributed to this situation because these groups used to enforce peace and stability though at the expense people's political freedom.

#### **x. Problems and Priorities of the Poor**

The poor in the ten communities visited (7 rural villages and 3 poor urban settlements) had a number of problems that they faced in their day to day lives. The problems differed from site to site and within sites. Some of the problems though were common in all the sites and within the sites. Among the urban areas, the most common and predominant problems to the three sites were lack of food (hunger), poor roads, lack of health services in their locations, lack of money, unemployment, deaths, lack of safe drinking water sources, diseases and theft. The rural sites had a similar set of common problems in addition to lacking organised produce markets, less land holding, high prices of commodities, absence of credit facilities, poor bridges and long distances to the police and maize mills. As would be noted in the proceeding chapters, most of these problems affect almost all well-being classes but the effect on each class differs. The most vulnerable are households belonging to lower classes. However, some of the problems were reported to affect mainly households in the upper classes. For instance, theft and deaths due to HIV/AIDS. Most households in the upper classes have valuable property which could be an attraction to thieves and at the same time, they are a big attraction to women because of their monetary resources. In most of the study sites (both rural and urban), the problems of firewood scarcity, distance to safe drinking water points and to maize mills, business opportunities (and credit) were mainly coined in by women discussants. The youths on the other hand said that their main problems had to do with unemployment, drug use, lack of capital to start businesses with, poor education and being cheated upon by their respective fiancee's.

The general consensus of the participants is that most of the common problems have become serious in the past few years as compared to a decade ago apart from problems associated with the political system (for instance, political intimidation, being forced to buy party cards, forced gifts etc.). These politically related problems were characteristic of the

one party state and have disappeared altogether. Most discussants indicated that in recent years, most problems have become severe because of high prices of farm inputs and reduced land holding which have led to serious food insecurity because ten years ago, most people could afford to produce food at-least for own consumption. The soils were fertile and that prices of fertiliser and seed were low compared to nowadays and that people's land holding sizes were bigger. Coupled with these problems have been the rise in theft, robberies, drug abuse since the country formally returned to multi-party politics in 1994 and the ever rising cost of living due to the devaluation of the Malawi Kwacha. The HIV/AIDS, cholera, lack of adequate medicine in hospitals/clinics have also increased the suffering of most people. Most people in the studied communities seem to have resigned their fate and hence when it to the question of problems they could solve on their own, they were very few in number. However, as would be noted in the chapters to follow, most people feel that, their current problems could be addressed through reorientation of government policies, priorities and the collaboration of the various stakeholders. For example, most people feel that to avert the worsening theft, murders and armed robberies, government should review its penal system and that such culprits should not be bailed out when caught.

Problems relating to lack adequate school blocks and hospitals etc., people said that they could participate towards their solution by brick moulding and providing labour during construction but external assistance could be sought from the government or elsewhere in other materials that require financial resources like cement, iron sheets, facilities and staff etc. On problems relating to low agricultural production, people feel that these could be reduced if the government re-introduces subsidies on farm inputs and other essential materials and the promotion of farmers clubs.

## **xi. Institutional Analysis**

In this report, the term 'institution' is used to refer to formal and informal organisations and the norms, rules and values associated with them. The norms, rules and values of an institution define the roles, responsibilities, relationships and patterns of behaviour of the members of an institution. Institutions defined by the discussants in the ten sites include associations, groups, networks and individuals, both within and outside a community with whom members of a community have some relations.

As would be noted from the proceeding chapters, approximately 90 different institutions were identified by the communities in the ten sites visited. These institutions may roughly be categorised into six types: social service institutions, central administrative institutions, NGOs/donor institutions, financial institutions, agricultural related institutions and retail/marketing institutions. Under social service, we have traditional as well as modern institutions. Most of the various institutions were mentioned in all the sites but lake (referring to Lake Malawi) was mentioned by one 'men-only' discussion group in Mbwadzulu village which lies along the lake. As will be observed, among the traditional social service institutions, the traditional leader, *nkhoswe* (marriage counsellor) and the traditional doctor are clearly the most recognised institutions. On the other hand, of the modern social service institutions, the hospital, the church, the school and project committee are most prominent. Among the central administrative institutions, the police tops the list

seconded by those that are agriculture related as being most prominent and needed though not necessarily effective. The Malawi Rural Finance Company (or Malawi Mudzi Fund), the National Association of Business Women (NABW), the Small Enterprise Development Organisation of Malawi are readily identifiable as institutions in Malawi. Among the market/retail institutions, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation and farmers' clubs are easily recognised in many communities. The non-governmental organisations and the donor community appear to be least recognised as institutions in the communities and each one of them was identified by one community. People in the communities have their own criteria that they use in order to determine the usefulness of a particular institution. In this study, the following criteria was reported and used: helpful (*othandiza*), understanding (*omva madandaulo*), conciliatory (*oyanjanitsa*) trustworthy (*okhulupirika*) impartial (*osakondera*), and kindness (*okoma mtima*). It is important to note that although these are generally agreed to be the criteria for a good institution, different groups rated the importance of each of these criteria differently depending on the type of institution being evaluated. For instance, for a hospital 'trustworthiness' may be more of an important criterion than conciliatory whereas for the village head or the *nkhoswe* (marriage counsellor) conciliatory may be a more important criterion than trustworthiness. In the final analysis, some institutions were evaluated to be very important in people's lives and are actually performing according to their expectation regardless of which criterion they use. These were mainly religious institutions, community clubs and committees, agricultural related institutions like Field Assistants, farmers clubs and kinsman. Other institutions performed well in a few criteria and flopped in the rest. Although some institutions were identified in almost all the study sites as being important in people's lives, they were however rated poorly in terms of service delivery and efficiency. For example, the hospital is very important but was rated poorly because most times it has no drugs or that the staff are selfish, lazy, partial, and rude, or that they sell the drugs intended to be for free to the people. The village headman was identified in all the sites (urban and rural) but was almost rated poorly using 'impartiality and trustworthiness' as criteria. The police was identified in all the sites but was rated poorly for inefficiency, incompetence, and delays in offering assistance to the communities when need arise. The *nkhoswe* was more frequently identified by women than men but rated poorly because they said that they favour their kins and hence fail to perform their duty. Some institutions performed badly on 'conciliation' as a criteria e.g. the witch doctor. People said that the witch doctor normally gives wrong signals on what could be the cause of sudden deaths/diseases in a community such that people end up quarreling. Some traditional institutions were rated highly on educating children about the expected cultural norms and values of their community.

Some institutions were identified to be very important during crisis situation. Examples of such institutions that were identified in most sites are community health committees, hospitals/clinics, ADMARC, kinsman, village chief etc.

### **xiii. Gender Relations**

Discussions in the ten sites (7 rural villages, 3 urban squatters) revealed that responsibilities between men and women both within and outside the household or community are shared on the basis of cultural expectations. What emerges from the discussions is that it is natural for women and men to have different responsibilities either within households or at community levels. This is because of the process of socialization. From the moment a child is born it is treated on the basis of its sex. The treatment for a boy child is different from the treatment for the girl child. The responsibilities of men and women are thus passed on to them as they grow. It was pointed out though that there are some responsibilities that know no sex boundaries. These include cultivation, brick laying and chopping fuelwood.

Women were said to perform duties mainly related to food preparation, house cleaning, child care on top of tedious farming activities. Men's tasks on the other hand include digging latrines, construction, tin smith, casual labour and laying bricks. Most women indicated that on a daily basis, they perform more tasks than men although men's tasks are more tiresome but they are not performed on a daily basis.

In urban areas however, some men indicated that they also perform some household chores like food preparation and house clearing occasionally. The only difference is that women do them on most days. When asked to rate on a 10-point scale the daily activities that men and women do and did a decade ago, most women said that currently they do at-least 6-9 (6-8 for urban, 9 for rural sites) of the activities on average and the rest being done by their husbands. Ten years ago, women said that they performed almost 9-10 of the activities. On the other hand, most men said that they (men) perform atleast 5-6 of the activities and they contend that the trend has not changed over the decade. A few men though accept that most of the activities (8-9) are actually performed by women.

At community level, there appears to be a 5/5 split of activities between men and women in that they are all involved in development activities and decision making unlike ten years ago when most decisions were made by men alone and women were just to follow. For example, nowadays women can decide where to drill a borehole or where to construct an underfive clinic. The 5/5 split of activities is also evident even during festivities like weddings, funerals, rallies etc. where they share responsibilities.

### **xiv. Violence**

Patterns of violence against men and women at the household level shows problems common to the sexes and some that are sex specific. Violence that was indicated to be common to both sexes include beatings, transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, extramarital affairs, being left alone overnight, verbal abuse (cursing), selfishness and meanness of spouses when relatives of the other partner visits the family. Women also complained that most of them are not cared for by their husbands (inadequate clothes, food etc.), are barred from getting employment, are left atone with sick children and sometimes they are forced into unwanted sex. Some people, especially men said that levels of violence within households are not different for both sexes and are believed to have increased during

the one-party system of government where women had more power over their husbands because of political back-ups and some women took advantage of this to abuse their husbands. People said that women neglect their family obligations on pretext that they were on party functions. This irked men and in turn the husbands beat them up.

At the community level, most participants said that acts of violence against either sex are minimal compared to the household. The violence against women at community level takes the form of rape, being shouted at, stripped naked and robbed. For men, communal violence was reported to be mainly among men themselves because they tend to shout and beat one another especially at beer parties and snatching other people's wives. Men are also shouted at by some women. Other common forms of violence at community level that were reported for both men and women are gossip, obscenity, being beaten, being bewitched and arrested without valid reasons (mainly in urban areas).

Most groups distinguished three categories of women: those working, business ladies and those not working. The last category of women were said to be worse off because they have to struggle since they are easily abused by their husbands. It was said that husbands know that these women have no other means of survival apart from being attached to them. When asked to rate the levels of violence both now and a decade ago, most women groups said that currently, about 40-80% of all women are abused in one way or the other. The 40% is for old couples where it was said that these people are mannered such that wives are respectful to their husbands. For men, most women said that about 15-20% of all men are abused. On the other hand, men said that about 40-50% of all men are abused in one way or the other.

In general, most women feel that although gender talks have become common in the past few years, they are still performing most of the household duties and that they only participate in decision making that revolves around food preparation and slightly on using the family finances. However, most women also said that nowadays they are able to decide their family sizes or when to start using family planning methods especially in urban areas.

## xv. Conclusion

Findings from this study indicate that people define quality of life on the basis of access to the most depended upon livelihood resource in each geographical location, possession of assets, access to physical needs and personal freedom and recognition. In other words, definition of quality of life to most people revolves around: the right to economic activities, the right to acquire and own property, the right to adequate food, shelter and decent medical care, right to personal freedom, education, personal liberty, recognition and other basic civil and political rights. This study has revealed that most people in many areas in Malawi consider the status of well-being (good quality of life) on the basis of the level to which each of these rights have been achieved by each particular individual, household or community. Consequently, denial of these either through natural processes or socio-political environment leads to poor quality of life. Households that are considered to be in high well-being classes have livelihood resources (for example well paying employment, high agricultural production, fishing equipment, have businesses), have nice shelter and would afford decent medical care and better education. Further, such households live peacefully without any squabbles either from within their families, community or society at large.

The study has also revealed that most people feel that about 70-80% of Malawians belong to lower well-being classes compared to the estimated 30-40% a decade ago. Low agricultural production, high levels of unemployment, high prices of commodities, diseases, high death rates and illiteracy have been cited as the main reasons that have made most people to decline in their well-being status in the last decade. Most people though appear to have resigned their fate and they do not see themselves improving in the near future. They are generally fatalistic and they believe that people in the upper well-being classes will continue to improve because economic opportunities (e.g. credit facilities) are open and wide for them and they can easily influence decision making to their advantage. The ever rising cost of living, hunger, high prices of farm inputs, reduced soil fertility and land holding, high prevalence of diseases including HIV/AIDS, poor medical facilities, rising crime and insecurity and the weakening of extended family support structures are posing a great challenge to most people. Further, poor road infrastructure, inadequate medical facilities and services, long distances to the police and high levels of unemployment have been and continue to pressurize most people. This, most people said, is forcing them to rely on casual labour (at the disadvantage of their gardens), revisiting their consumption patterns, heavy debts, prostitution and theft. In some instances, some families are breaking up, consequently affecting the woman and children more than the man. The study has also shown that people feel that there are certain sectors of the communities that are more vulnerable to declining well-being and crisis situations because they have weaker support systems and that the society at large has no adequate mechanisms to support them. The aged, orphans, sibling or female headed households, the disabled, the unemployed and most households in the lower well-being classes are singled out as the most vulnerable.

People have several formal and informal organisations, values, norms existing amidst their communities which play important roles in their lives. Some of these are conciliatory (e.g. chiefs and *nkhoswe's* – marriage counsellors). Others bring together people belonging to different well-being classes examples of which are weddings, funeral and community

development activities. Some of these are most needed in people's lives but their activities or presence in the communities are rated poorly because of inefficiency, lack of resources, favouritism etc. such that people have lost trust in them.

Most of the women especially in rural areas said that they perform most of the household activities apart from farming. In general, most women feel that although gender talks have become common, they are still performing most of the household duties and they only participate in decision making that revolves around food preparation and slightly on using family finances. However, most women also said that nowadays they are able to decide their family sizes or when to start using family planning methods especially in urban areas. At the community level, there appears to be a 5/5 split of activities between men and women. They all participate in development activities and that both men and women hold positions in committees and can decide on important issues like where to drill a borehole or construct a clinic.

Patterns of violence against men and women shows problems that are common to the sexes and some that are sex specific. Violence that was indicated to be common to both sexes include beatings, transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, extramarital affairs, being left alone overnight, verbal abuse (obscenity), selfishness, meanness of spouses when relatives of the other partner visits the family. Most women said that they are bared from getting employment, forced into unwanted sex and raped. At the community level, acts of violence against either sex were said to be minimal compared to the household.

## **xvi. Recommendations**

1. Need for a strengthened outreach component in the Poverty Alleviation Programme of the Government of Malawi. Since 1994, poverty alleviation through strong emphasis on community participation in community development has formed the backbone policy of the Malawi government. School blocks, clinics, roads, bridges and boreholes have been constructed across the country through a social fund – the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF). People have greatly participated in these activities through mainly labour provision. This study has shown that most people have generally resigned their fate and are fatalistic about their future. This type of attitude needs to be addressed through a strengthened outreach and civic education programme that seeks to address attitude behaviour. The Poverty alleviation programme should have a strong component on eradicating such feelings. Change in people's attitudes is very important and central to participation and would therefore contribute greatly to the future of the poverty alleviation programme.
2. Need to diversify the national economy. The study has shown that hunger is people's main cause of ill-being status resulting from low food crop production. High prices of inputs, less land holding, dependency on casual labour all have been named as main factors leading to low agricultural production. Past studies have also demonstrated this need and consequently recommended to the government and the donor community to explore ways of diversifying the national economy from heavy reliance on agriculture (tobacco tea – cash and maize for food). The government of Malawi need to seriously consider diversifying her economic base and the agricultural sector. The government needs also to research into other crops that would be viable for the country's conditions and attract a high adoption rate based on their output and financial returns.
3. The Malawi government needs to formulate deliberate credit policies and programmes targeting the poor sectors so as to allow them benefit from such programmes.



## 1.0 INTRODUCTION

Malawi is a small, landlocked country located in the Central part of Africa and shares boundary with Tanzania in the North and North East, Zambia in the West and Mozambique in the East, South and South West. It has an area of approximately 118,484 square kilometres and 20 percent of this is covered by lake Malawi (NSO 1992). The country is divided into three administrative regions namely the North, Central and South. The capital city of Malawi is Lilongwe and is in the central region while the commercial capital of Blantyre is in the south. There are twenty six districts in total, five in the north, nine in the centre and twelve in the south.

Malawi was a British Protectorate from 1891 to 1964 when it became independent. Opposition to the colonial administration started in 1915 and this was led by John Chilembwe. The Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland was declared in 1953. Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda who spent about 40 years outside Malawi was invited to lead the Nyasaland African Congress (NAC) which was then fighting for independence. He came in 1958 and assumed leadership of the party. On 3rd March 1959 a state of emergency was declared by the colonial Government and many leaders of the NAC including Dr. Kamuzu Banda, were arrested and detained.

The first multiparty general elections were held in 1961 and four parties contested; the Malawi Congress Party which was formed in 1959 won all the seats. In 1964 Malawi became independent under the monarchical constitution which was replaced by a republican constitution on 6th July, 1966 when Malawi became a Republic and a one party system of government (Mvula & Munthali 1997). Malawi was a one party state from 1966 up to 1993 when a referendum was conducted which resulted in Malawi becoming a multiparty state. Prior to 1992 there was generally political stability in Malawi which was being enjoyed by the Banda regime where presidential directives formed the bulk of public policy. In March 1992, the Bishop's Pastoral Pro-democracy letter was published in which they were calling for good governance, transparency and accountability and the rule of law to prevail. Threats of murder for the Bishops and opposition leaders were issued. Following this, University of Malawi students demonstrated and the university was closed. Months of labour unrest then began in the cities of Lilongwe, Mzuzu, Blantyre and Zomba.

In May 1992 major donors froze non-humanitarian aid programs to force the Banda regime to improve its human rights record. The Malawi Kwacha was devaluated by 22%. In October 1992 the Government agreed to hold a referendum on the introduction of multi-party politics and pressure groups Alliance for Democracy (AFORD) and United Democratic Front (UDF) were born.

The population of Malawi is estimated at 9.8 million and this is according to the 1998 population census. It is growing at a rate of 3.2% and the infant mortality rate is at 181 and these are amongst the highest rates in Africa. And due to the HIV/AIDS pandemic the mortality as well as morbidity rates are expected to rise in the next few years. About 20% of the population is composed of children under the age of 5 years. Eighty five percent of the people live in rural areas and depend on agriculture for subsistence. The country is

predominantly an agricultural country. Agricultural produce accounts for 90% of Malawi's exports and tobacco, tea and cotton are the major export commodities.

While agriculture is indeed the backbone of Malawi's economy, it has to be mentioned that the Malawi's economy is really dependent on the largesse of the donor agencies and nations. It can be said that the economy is not all that stable hence it is easily shaken. The suspension of non-humanitarian aid meant to force the government into multiparty politics earlier in the 1990s; three years of successive drought during the same period; the floatation of the Kwacha; an increase in government expenditure and a decline in revenue et cetera have greatly affected the performance of national economy. Structural adjustment policies which many feel have negative impacts on the poor masses, continue to be implemented. Among these policies are the retrenchment of some civil servants, privatization of state owned companies or institutions and the removal of subsidies on fertilizer and maize.

## 2.0 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

The World Bank's *World Development Report (WDR)* 2000/01 will be on Poverty and Development. This follows the practice established in 1980 and 1990 of preparing a major report every decade on poverty. The WDR enjoys a high profile in the global development community. The 1990 *Report's* messages on strategies for poverty reduction continue to provide an important conceptual framework for the development policies and programs of the World Bank as well as for other official and private development agencies worldwide. The 1990 strategy advanced policies that promote broad-based labor intensive growth, investment in human capital, and the provision of safety nets for those unable to share in the benefits of growth.

The *WDR* 2000/01 presents an opportunity to revisit the World Bank's poverty reduction strategy in light of recent development experience and future prospects. There is now greater recognition that indicators of well-being must be multidimensional. In discussing poverty and inequality, therefore, alongside the standard and important measures based on the levels of income and consumption have to be put other measures which reflect such dimensions as health and education, vulnerability and risk, crime and violence, and other factors highlighted by the poor themselves as being important. Moreover, not only must the measurement of the standard of living go below the level of the household to investigate the conditions facing women and children, it must also go above the household level to take into account community level considerations.

Among the core themes that the WDR will explore is opportunity, empowerment and security. The global evolution of technology, trade and political systems means that the world stands on the brink of extraordinary opportunity for development and poverty reduction over the next twenty years. However, the extent to which the fruits of development are broadly shared is a complex matter, depending on economic, social, political, demographic, environmental, institutional and policy factors. The other side of the coin of extraordinary opportunity, and linked to these very same processes, is the risk of increased inequality, increased vulnerability, social exclusion and marginalization of different groups, and social dissolution. These risks are present at the international, national, sub-national (regional and ethnic), community, household and individual levels.

The purpose of the *Consultations With the Poor* study is to enable a wide range of poor people in diverse countries and conditions to share their views in such a way that they can inform and contribute to the concepts and content of the WDR 2000/01. The poor are true poverty experts. Hence a policy document on poverty strategies for the 21st century must be based on the experiences, priorities, reflections, and recommendations of poor people, men and women. *Consultations With the Poor* will provide a micro-level perspective of poor people's own experiences of poverty and responses to it - illuminating the nature of risk and vulnerability, for example, and the local processes that shape whether poor women, men and children share in or are excluded from development.

Because of this, the Poverty Group in the Poverty Reduction and Economic Management Network of the World Bank in Washington D.C. commissioned a comparative qualitative study 'Consultations with the Poor' in 23 countries worldwide. Malawi was one of the 23 countries whose citizens were lucky to be given the opportunity to share their poverty experiences with the rest of world and express their ideas on how best their poverty situation could best be counteracted. The Centre for Social Research of the University of Malawi, an organ of the University that conducts and promotes excellence in academic and applied research was therefore consulted to conduct the participatory study in various parts of the country following guidelines that were provided by the Poverty Group of the World Bank.

### **3.0 METHODOLOGY AND STUDY PROCESS**

The study used a mix of participatory and qualitative research techniques namely: focus group discussions, well-being ranking, scoring, cause-impact analysis of poverty, key informant interviews, case studies, trend analysis and listing.

The research team underwent a three-day refresher course in PRA tools and techniques provided by Meera Kaul Shah, a consultant for the World Bank's Poverty Group with the assistance of CSR team members. On the fourth day, a pilot study was conducted in three selected sites (two rural villages and one urban squatter) of Zomba district. The core idea of the pilot was to test the research tools, the study guidelines and to estimate time for the main field work.

During the main fieldwork, the research team split into two teams, each mandated to visit a total of five sites. Each team spent a minimum of 4 days per site. In the four days, each team conducted 8 separate focus discussions with various groups of people, a minimum of 5 individual and institutional case studies, compiled daily and site reports. At each site, a community questionnaire was administered to one or two key informants to get a summary of community characteristics. Because of time limitations, the research team did not provide feedback of the research findings to some of the communities. Site reports for each site were sent to the Centre for Social Research for typing as soon as the team moves to the next site. A country synthesis report has then been developed from the summaries contained in the site reports and daily reports which were also handed in at the end of the field work.

#### **3.1 Selected Sites**

Ten different sites (seven rural and three urban poor) were included in the study (Table 1) from ten districts in the country. The ten districts were selected based on their agricultural history and livelihood sources using data from previous studies. In each district, the actual sites were selected collaboratively with the respective offices of the district development officers, district commissioners and agricultural officers.

**Table 1: Sites selected for the study**

<b>Site</b>	<b>District and Region</b>	<b>Main criteria used</b>
<b>Rural sites (villages)</b>		
Chitambi	Mulanje, South	Surrounded by tea estates
Khwalala	Nkhata-Bay, North	Cassava/fishing community
Kuphera	Dowa, Centre	Tobacco/maize community
Madana	Ntcheu, Centre	Maize/Irish potatoes community
Mtamba	Chiradzulu, South	Maize growing community
Mbwadzulu	Mangochi, South	Fishing community
Nampeya	Machiga, South	Fishing/Rice farming community
<b>Urban sites</b>		
Che Musa	Blantyre city, South	Squatter in the main commercial city
Phwetekere	Lilongwe city, Centre	High density in the capital city
Masasa	Mzuzu city, North	High density in a growing city

### **3.2 Groups of people met**

Participants to the mixed discussion groups were picked at random and on their convenience while the other participants were selected based on the criteria of identifying the poor sectors of the community provided by the mixed groups. Importantly, participants to the various discussion groups were selected in liaison with the local leaders (chiefs and/or their assistants) and field workers from the Ministry of Agriculture.

**Table 2: Number of Discussion groups at each study site**

Site	Poor				Mixed poor/ non-poor men and women			Total
	Men	Women	Youth	Sub-total	Mixed 1	Mixed 2	Sub-total	
<b>Rural Sites</b>								
Chitambi	3	3	1	7	1	-	1	8
Khwalala	3	3	1	7	1	-	1	8
Kuphera	3	3	1	7	1	-	1	8
Madana	3	3	1	7	1	-	1	8
Mtamba	3	3	1	7	1	-	1	8
Mbwadzulu	4	2	2	8	1	1	2	10
Nampeya	3	3	1	7	1	1	2	9
<b>Urban Sites</b>								
Che Musa	1	3	1	5	-	-	-	5
Phwetekere								
Masasa	2	2	1	5	1	-	1	6

As would be observed from Table 2 above, in some urban sites, fewer discussion groups were held. In Che Musa squatter for example, only five of the required eight discussion sessions (minimum) were held. This was so because the research team had difficulties in organizing men for the discussions. According to the chief of the selected sector, most men spend most part of the day in town either at work, business or doing some piece work with companies. This meant that it was not possible to meet the men within working days. Being a Tuesday, the research team decided to skip the site for a rural site with the intention of returning to it on a Saturday so as to meet the required men. On the re-scheduled day (Saturday), it was not possible either to meet the men because there was a funeral in the village and, because of time, the team decided to move to another site, about 100km away. The site report for Blantyre was therefore based on findings from the five discussion groups.

**Table 3: Number of individual case studies at the study sites**

Site	Men	Women	Youth	Total
<i>Rural Sites</i>				
Chitambi	1	3	1	5
Khwalala	2	2	1	5
Kuphera	3	2	1	6
Madana	3	3	1	7
Mtamba	1	4	1	6
Mbwadzulu		3	1	4
Nampeya	1	2	1	4
<i>Urban Sites</i>				
Che Musa	1	5	1	7
Phwetekere	1	3	1	5
Masasa	2	3	1	6

### 3.3 Brief characteristics of the study communities

#### 3.3.1 Rural sites

##### *i. Mbwadzulu*

Mbwadzulu village is in Mangochi district which lies along the shores of Lake Malawi. The village has a linear type of housing settlement. There are about 3500 people (1500 males, 2000 females) in about 475 households, of which 100 are female headed resulting mainly from divorce, deaths of husbands and the desire for some girls to move out of parental control. Main sources of livelihood for both men and women collectively are fishing (90%), farming (7%) and small scale businesses (3%) mainly for the female headed households and those households whose husbands do not swim therefore do not risk going into the lake to fish. Main tribal groupings in the village include Yaos, Lomwes, Tongas, Senas, Chewas, Nyanjas, Tumbukas, Ngonis etc. Most of the people had come to the village for fishing opportunities. The main main religious denominations are Islam and Christianity (Roman Catholics and Protestants belonging to CCAP, SDA, Church of Christ and Anglican). No actual or guessed statistics of these tribal and/or religious groups were however suggested by the chief or the Agricultural staff. According to the chief, almost 80% of the people in the village are politically pro-UDF.



## *ii. Khwalala/Chimbano*

Khwalala village is in Nkhata-Bay district and is situated some 30 km south of the district headquarters. The village is between the shores of Lake Malawi (east) and Tunde hills (west). There are approximately 2,250 people in an estimated 315 households. Farming and fishing are the major livelihood sources for most households. Dominant tribe is that of the Tonga's (97%) while Tumbukas, Nkhondes and Chewas constitute 1% each. Nearly all the people in the village are Christians mainly belonging to the CCAP and Roman Catholic which constitute 70% respectively.

## *iii. Kuphera Site*

Kuphera village, in Dowa district, is about 8km off Malawi's main road that connects the countries two extremities of north and south from Mponela trading centre, some 60km north of Lilongwe, the capital of Malawi. To the north-west of village are Nsanja hills while Wiskoti village and a swamp lie to its north and south respectively. There are approximately 1110 people in the village in about 185 households. Almost all households in the village are predominantly farmers. Their main crops are maize for food and tobacco as a cash crop. Mixed farming (and sometimes inter-cropping) of maize with other crops like beans, sweet potatoes is common. Very few households though, own livestock. Most of the people are Christians. Moslems are very scarce. Some of the people however belong to the 'Nyau' cult (a secret masked art which is traditionally supposed to be for the initiation of young boys and rarely, girls. Some people consider this as their religion). The main tribe (99%) of people is Chewa.

## *iv. Madana Village*

Madana village is in Ntcheu district some 30km west of the district headquarters and 18km off the main road from Blantyre to Lilongwe. To the east is Mvaye mountain while on the west is Kambilonjo river and to the north is Katayamowa river. The village has approximately 200 households with an estimated population of 1600 people. According the chief, the village has had an increase in the population of people in the 1980s because of the civil war in Mozambique. Many refugees settled in the village. Some of the refugees and other relief workers married and settled there. It is predominantly a Christian village with CCAP, Roman Catholic and Baptist churches dominating. Farming is their main source of livelihood. The main crops grown in order of priority are irish potatoes, maize, beans and vegetables. Livestock like cattle, goats and pigs are also common. The Ngoni have been the predominant tribe in the village since they migrated from South Africa about two centuries ago. They have a matrilineal system of descent matrilocal residence rule whereby the husband goes to live with the wife's family.

***v. Chitambi Village***

Chitambi village lies to the south of Mulanje district and falls under Traditional Authority Chikumbu. The village, just like many other villages in the district has a confined space because of the tea estates that have occupied almost 70% of the cultivatable land in the district. There are approximately 600 households with an estimated population of 2300 people. According to the village headman, people in the village are mainly Lomwes by tribe (80%) and most of them belong to the Protestant churches mainly CCAP. The main livelihood sources are farming (maize, sweet potatoes, sugar canes), and small-scale businesses.

***vi. Nampeya village***

Nampeya Village is in the area of Sub-Traditional Authority (STA) Chikweo, Machinga district. According to the Development Officer covering the village, Nampeya is one of the 83 villages falling under Nampeya Agricultural Extension Planning Area (EPA). There are about 486 farming families (353 male headed and 133 female headed) in the village with an estimated population of 3000 people. According to the Development Officer at the EPA, about 70% of the households in the village consider farming, especially rice and maize, as their main source of livelihood while 30% depend on fishing in Lake Chiuta (male headed households only). Being close to a lake, most of the land has adequate water supplies and in some cases, water logged especially those along rivers that drain into the lake.

According to the village headman, the main tribes in the village are : Yaos, (70%), Lomwes (20%), other tribes (10%). The main religious groups are: Islam (50%), Roman Catholic (15%), CCAP (10%), Church of Christ and Evangelical Church (5% each) and other protestant churches including atheists (15%).

***vii. Mtamba village***

Mtamba village lies to the south-east of Chiradzulu district in Traditional Authority Nkalo. The village has approximately 4800 people in an estimated 800 households. Most people are farmers growing maize, cassava, tobacco, soya, sweet potatoes and vegetables. Most people belong to the Yao tribe. Other tribes present are Senas, Chewas and Lomwes. Main religion for most people in Islam.

### 3.3.2 *Urban sites*

#### *i. Masasa squatter*

Masasa is situated to the west of Mzuzu city about 2 ½ km from the city centre. This is in Mzimba district in the northern region of Malawi. It has a rolling landscape with steep slopes and valleys. Most of the houses have been built along the edges of the slopes. The study was specifically conducted in Kowerani section. Recent census records (1998) indicate that Kowerani has about 500 households with approximately 2,500 people. There are several tribes in the area but dominant ones are Tumbukas, Yaos, Tongas and Chewas. Tribal tensions were reported to be on the increase particularly during the country's run-up to the next general elections in May, 1999.

The main livelihood sources for most men are small-scale businesses like selling fish, second hand clothes, charcoal, firewood, weaving baskets, transporting various forms of luggage using wheel barrows and casual labour. Some people own barber shops. Many more are employed in the city in the low-class jobs. Most women sell bananas, and other food related products which are mainly home-made while a good number of them are just housewives. Some women though are also employed in low-class jobs.

#### *ii. Phwetekere squatter*

Sometimes referred to as area 36, Phwetekere is about 3-4km from the main bus depot in Lilongwe. According to the informant (one of the chiefs' assistant), the area has approximately 4000 people in about 500 households. The majority of men depend on small-scale businesses for their livelihood, while others are employed in low-class jobs in the city. The small-scale businesses include for example, running hawkers and street vending. Most women were reported that they are just housewives although some do some businesses mainly in food related products like flitters. About 70% of the residents in the area are Christians mainly CCAP, Roman Catholics, African Abraham Church, Baptist, Anglican and Seventh Day Adventists.

#### *iii. Che Musa Squatter*

Che Musa is located along the Blantyre-Lilongwe (via Zalewa) main road, some 0.2 km from the Blantyre City centre and is characterised by a scattered housing settlement on both sides of the road. According to the chief, there are approximately 3000 households and slightly over 15,000 people residing in the area. Most of the houses are small, look cracked and dilapidated with about 70% roofed with old corrugated iron sheets and an average of five houses occupy a single standard one-house plot space. There is a produce market within the area and being close to the main city centre, people also prefer to do shopping in the private shops in town. The nearest public health centre is in Chilomoni, a neighbouring squatter area (3 km away) while a big referral hospital (Queen Elizabeth Central Hospital) is some 4-5km away from the area. According to the chief, most of the

men (about 85%) are working in town as security guards, labourers and other low class positions, another 15% being involved in petty trading of such items as second-hand clothes, house wares and other items on the streets. Most of the women are (80%) housewives such that apart from their day to day household chores, they do nothing. The main tribes residing in the area include Yaos (and Che Musa is a Yao name), Chewas, Tumbukas, Lomwes and Mang'anjas.

## 4.0 PERCEPTIONS OF POVERTY: WELL-BEING DEFINITIONS AND TRENDS

### 4.1 Local Terminology and Definitions

#### 4.1.1 Rural sites

##### i. Well-being

Findings from the seven rural sites that were studied indicate that there is generally a shared conceptualization and understanding of well-being across the sites. Their perception of well-being and ill-being are essentially the same despite the different local terminologies that are used which are mainly because of age and lingual variations. They defined well-being or a good quality of life (*umoyu wamampha* in Tonga language and *umoyo uwemi* in Tumbuka language spoken in the north; *umoyo wabwino, kupeza bwino, moyo okoma, moyo osangalara* in Chichewa spoken nation wide but mainly in the centre and some parts of the south; and, *moyo okatamuka, moyo ovaya<sup>2</sup> or moyo okhupuka* for the youths), on the basis of being able to access most if not all basic necessities of life. As will be noted, households that are classified as belonging to higher well-being categories are classified on the basis of their being able to possess certain assets, having adequate food, decent medical care, good sleeping houses and bedding and constant and regular sources of income. Such households were reported to also have toilets, bathrooms and kitchens in their homes and that, since they do not lack basics of life, they have peace of mind. Women groups from Khwalala and Mtamba sites further said that good life means having adequate utensils:

“... Good life entails having adequate utensils especially pails (*Ndowa*) for drawing water and ... a plate drying rack (*thandala*) ....”.

In addition to the above characteristics, youths from Khwalala village also indicated that well-being is also dependent on the households ability to cope with crisis situations like that of ‘falling of a house’ and ‘crop failure due to heavy rains and other climatic constraints [*zokolola zikavuta chifukwa cha mvula yambiri mwinanso zovuta zina zokhudzana ndi zanyengo*]. The youths further said that these households are able to cope with falling of a house “... because they either have extra houses to shift to or they rent from other people as they quickly construct another one and that they have adequate money in the banks to buy other food stuffs ...”. They can cope with food shortages because they can afford to purchase food from the local markets or ADMARC outlets in the area or outside.

However, results from the seven rural sites also indicate that well-being is sometimes perceived in terms of access to the most depended-upon source of income. For example,

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<sup>2</sup> The meaning of ‘ovaya’ comes from English word VIA meaning ‘above’, ‘aloft’, ‘on top of’, ‘higher’, ‘beyond’, ‘superior’, or ‘exceeding’

Khwalala and Mbwadzulu villages, which are fishing communities, in addition to having other attributes, consider well-being as having fishing nets (*zilimira and khoka*<sup>3</sup>). In Kuphera site which is predominantly a tobacco growing area, participants also said that well-being equates to "... being able to grow tobacco [*umoyo wabwino nanga sindiye chimodzimodzi nkuti munthu olima fodya*] ... and these households also have a permit (*chiphaso/chilolezo*) and a Quota (*muyezo*) for selling their tobacco at the Auction Floors.

## ii. *Ill-being*

The findings from the study also indicate that, ill-being [*ksuzgika* in Tonga language, *kuvutika, moyo osasangalara, moyo wausiwa/waumphawi* in chichewa] is also perceived in almost the same manner across the seven sites that were visited in that it is perceived as a state of constant deprivation of basic necessities of life. As such, households that are classified in the lowest well-being classes do not have or have limited access to basic necessities such that most of the times they

"stay without food for 2-3 days or even the whole week ..... and may simply cook vegetables for a meal .... some households literally eat bitter maize bran [*gaga/deya owawa*] and gmelina sawdust mixed with a little maize flour especially during hunger months of January and February".

These households were also reported to lack clothes and have houses that are dilapidated and with:

"doors made from hessian sacks [*zitseko za ziguduli*]"'. "They also lack bedding such that most times they sleep by the fire to warm themselves (*amagona chowotha moto usiku onse*), have no money and are of poor health and look malnourished and very stunted [*onyentchera*]"'.

In times of crisis, households classified in the ill-being groups were reported to tumble heavily including sleeping without bedding and food and that

".... sometimes they bury their relatives without coffins but in mats [*amasowa ndi bokosi lamaliro lomwe koti abale awo amayikidwa mu mphasa*]"'. Women from Mbwadzulu village said that they consider ill-being when "people sit on the floor ..... people going to their gardens without taking any food ..... they have no latrines, they cook under the sun (have no kitchen), have no pit latrines, no bathroom – 'called change house' (*chanjausi- bathing place constructed from mainly grass outside the house*) and have no plate drying racks ..".

The other common outcome of this study is that findings from all the sites indicate that the ill-being sectors of the various communities visited include orphans, the disabled, the elderly, widows, female headed households and "even some male headed households especially those that rely entirely on casual labour for their livelihood ...". As will be

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<sup>3</sup> Khoka was defined as that type of a fishing net where people stay outside the water mass and pull the net (with fish) whereas zilimira are those nets that are used while still inside the water and no pulling from outside the water mass is done.

noticed from the proceeding sections, these groups of people were said to belong to the ill-being category because they lack energy to fend for themselves and that sometimes society segregates against them such that they lack adequate support structures. Participants from Khwalala also said that apart from the above characteristics,

“people belonging to ill-being groups are often rude, delinquents and they practice witchcraft out of jealousy”.

Participants from Madana, Nampeya and Chitambi sites said that such people lack peace of mind, they spend whatever money they realize recklessly either on alcohol or extramarital affairs.

### *iii. Poverty and Lacking (usiwa/umphawi ndi kusowa/osowa)*

This study also reveals that people liken poverty to ill-being. For instance, participants from a mixed group of men and women from Chitambi village defined poverty as a state of lacking basic things in life. As such, they said that those poor,

“have erratic food consumption pattern in that they sometimes go for 2-3 days without food”

“have no gardens or have less than 1 acre [*munda wake sukwananso ngakhale ekala yomwe*]”

“they dress poorly”

“they always beg for survival or depend on piece work”

“depend on maize bran especially during the hunger months of January and February”

“to them, money issues do not feature in their minds as long as they have something to eat”

“if the poor is a man, a wife may abandon him”

A mixed group of participants from Mbwadzulu village, a fishing community in Mangochi said that ‘Poverty’ and ‘Lacking’ are not similar situations. The group said that when one is poor, it means that “one is in the worst well-being group such that one is in constant need for basic necessities and as such they live in those pathetic circumstances ..... while ‘lacking (*kusowa*)’ means a temporary deprivation or lacking certain things needed for life. “When we sometimes go to the lake to fish, and return with nothing, it does not mean that we are poor but that day (*tasowa*) we have lacked because we may be able to catch some fish catch the next day”. The group further said that the poor normally do not have food stocks of their own such that they spend most of the time doing piece-work to find food for the family “instead of doing own farming such that each year they run into similar situations ..... and they will thus have poverty for their entire life (*umphawi wamuyaya*) ..... they fail to work in their gardens because their minds are already geared towards begging or doing piece work ..... every morning they go to the lake to wash their faces instead of working (*kukacha m’mawa amangopita kunyanja kukasukusula m’malo moti azigwira ntchito*)”.

#### 4.1.2 Urban Sites

##### *i. Well-being or good quality of life*

Three urban sites were included in the study as noted earlier in the introductory chapter and these are: Che Musa in Blantyre, Phwetekere in Lilongwe and Masasa in Mzuzu. Findings from consultations with several groups of people in the three locations indicate that they define and perceive well-being (*umoyo uwemi* in Tumbuka language spoken in northern Malawi and *umoyo wabwino* for the other sites and *moyo ovaya* for the youth in Blantyre) mainly based on access to regular livelihood sources (for example, work), having basic necessities of life and, being able to possess some luxurious materials or to lead a life full of luxuries. Participants from Masasa in Mzuzu said that “a family is said to be enjoying life if it is able to meet all basic necessities without difficulties and lives in a good environment in terms of sanitation ..... they have a good house that does not leak, adequate food, nice clothes ..... they are happy because most often their children are respectful”. On houses that do not leak, one woman in Che Musa was quoted saying that these houses should not make people wake up and stand when it is raining like in a court when the judge is arriving {“not where people will be saying ‘court stand! – *khoti liime!*”}. They further said that such households are God fearing and members do not indulge in ill behaviour such as stealing and prostitution. They have stable families and have toilets, bathrooms, kitchens and rubbish pits. In addition to this, participants from Phwetekere said that well-being entails leading [*moyo wachizungu*] European (Western) lifestyles, having houses to rent out to others, having decent and well paying jobs and having very good houses with electricity. The participants from Phwetekere further said that these houses should either be self-contained or should at-least have a nice toilet and a bathroom. The participants further said that good life refers to being educated at-least to secondary education level, having peace of mind, couples being respectful to each other, having well behaved children that are not selfish at all (*osadzikonda*), and that :

“most men drink from expensive joints (*Azibambo ambiri amawera m'malo odura okhaokha*)”.

##### *ii. Ill-being or bad quality of life*

Ill-being (*kusauka, umphawi, kuvutika* as referred to in Chichewa language; and *ukavu* in Tumbuka) was said to mean a state of constant deprivation. Participants said that households belonging to this group lack peace of mind because they always worry about how to make ends meet and “in most households, couples quarrel and fight a lot because they desire to lead advanced lifestyles [*umoyo uwemi*] but they lack means to do so”. “It is not surprising that most men from these households are drunkards because they drink to forget problems”. Participants from both Masasa and Che Musa said that the largest proportion of households in these locations that belong to the ill-being group are either defacto or de jure female headed households because they said that such households lead miserable lives since “they do not have the means to adequately provide for their



families. They said that these female headed households are marginalised in the labour market and have less access to credit facilities and markets. Participants from Masasa further said that drunkenness (*uchidakwa*), jealousy and hatred are aspects of ill-being because they impact negatively on one's personal relationship with people from the neighbourhood. As will be noticed from the criteria that are used to classify households that lead bad quality of life, these households normally fail to fend for themselves and that children resort to begging, stealing and for young girls, they resort to prostitution.

In general terms, people across several communities perceive and conceptualise well-being and ill-being in almost a similar pattern although different terminologies are used across the various age groups and lingual differences. People mainly refer well-being to that state of having most if not all the necessary basics of life and also depending on a household's access to the most depended-upon source of income. Well-being has been said that it involves household members to have improved life standards, health bodies and peace of mind. Ill-being on the other hand is perceived as that state of continuous deprivation or lacking the basics of life, the consequences of which include suffering and struggling for life such that some people resort to doing casual labour to raise food for the home. The most vulnerable groups to ill-being across the studied communities are the aged, orphans, disabled, the elderly, the blind, female headed households and those other households that entirely depend on piece work for survival.

Based on these various definitions, perceptions, and conceptualizations regarding well-being, ill-being, poverty and deprivation etc., several categories of households across the studied communities were identified. Criteria for defining these categories and subsequent classification of households to the various categories were also identified and discussed upon. The section following, gives an outline of what transpired.

## **4.2 Well-being categories and criteria for defining households**

Four categories of well-being (and ill-being) were identified from across the studied communities. These categories, which revolved around definitions of well-being and ill-being were: 'the haves *-opeza bwino*' being the most common higher category followed by 'those doing better *-opeza bwino pang'ono*', 'the have nots *-osauka/ bakavu*' and 'the poorest- *osauka kwambiri*' being the most common lowest category. This is despite the different terminologies that were used in the discussion groups across the ten different sites because even in one site, two or more terms could be defined as different classes by one or two discussion groups when the rest of the groups viewed the same terms as being synonymous. For example, *ovutika*, *osauka*, *amphawi*, and *osowa* were defined as representing different classes by some groups while others said they mean one thing. Further, the criteria for defining these concepts were overlapping when treated as separate. However, a distinct class in the lowest well-being groups, 'the malnourished and stunted- *onyentchera*' was identified by a discussion group involving women only from Nampeya village in Machinga District. 'The strugglers/sufferers - *Ovutika*' as a

distinct category was also mentioned by some of the groups, but as alluded to earlier, the criteria was either overlapping with that used for ‘the have nots – *osauka/bakavu*] category defined by either the same group or other groups from the same site. The only discussion group that defined this class in a more slightly different manner was a women-only group from Nampeya village (Table 4).

**Table 4: Common well-being classes, common criteria for classifying households to the various categories (from selected discussion groups) and the current reported proportions of households in the various categories – {Rural sites}**

CATEGORIES	COMMON PATTERN (Proportions out of 100)					DIFFERENT (Proportions out of 100)		
	MADANA VILLAGE WOMEN-ONLY GROUP 1		MBWADZULU VILLAGE YOUTH GROUP		CHITAMBI VILLAGE MEN-ONLY GROUP 3		NAMPEYA VILLAGE WOMEN-ONLY GROUP 2	
	CRITERIA	PROP OF HH	CRITERIA	PROPO. OF HH	CRITERIA	PRO. OF HH	CRITERIA	PROP. OF HH
<b>THE HAVES</b> <i>Opeza bwino/umoyo umampha/umoyo uwemi</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. have full granary</li> <li>. always harvest a lot of Irish potatoes</li> <li>. find money easily</li> <li>. eat well</li> <li>. have livestock like cattle and goats</li> <li>have magical charms that help them to be rich</li> <li>. have oxcart</li> </ul>	5	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. have cars</li> <li>. have fishing nets <i>zitimira kapena khoka</i>)</li> <li>. have electric maize mills</li> <li>. have grocery (shops and stores)</li> <li>. have decent clothes</li> <li>. have boats</li> <li>. do fish business</li> <li>. sleep in good looking houses</li> </ul>	10	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. food for whole year</li> <li>. lots of livestock</li> <li>. have vehicles, radio/cassette player</li> <li>. enough clothes</li> <li>. employ others</li> <li>. buy gardens from others</li> <li>. brick, iron roofed houses with cemented floor</li> <li>. metal plates</li> </ul>	6		
<b>THOSE DOING BETTER</b> <i>Opeza bwino pan'gono</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. run small scale businesses</li> <li>. do casual labour</li> <li>. inadequate harvests</li> <li>. lack fertiliser</li> <li>. do not have enough clothes</li> <li>. have goats, chickens</li> </ul>	7	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. at-least do not sleep without food</li> <li>. have small fishing nets</li> <li>. have livestock like goats, poultry</li> <li>. local brewers (<i>kachasu brewers</i>)</li> <li>. have gardens</li> </ul>	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. have radio</li> <li>. have a bicycle</li> <li>. have livestock mainly goats, and poultry</li> <li>. enough clothes</li> <li>. food does not run the whole year</li> <li>. have working children</li> <li>. rent gardens</li> <li>. have metal plates</li> </ul>	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. employ others</li> <li>. afford fertiliser</li> <li>. have mosquito nets</li> <li>. have active bodies (<i>matupi otakasuka</i>)</li> <li>. children change clothes</li> <li>. enough food and eat 3 times in a day</li> <li>. have bicycles</li> <li>. own livestock like goats and sheep</li> <li>. do businesses</li> <li>. have beds</li> <li>. have ploughs</li> </ul>	5
<b>THE HAVE NOTS/ POOR</b> <i>Osauka/ bakavu</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. no livestock</li> <li>. rely on casual labour</li> <li>. inadequate food</li> <li>. lack fertiliser</li> <li>. less harvest</li> <li>. sell firewood</li> </ul>	12	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. fishermen (they use small nets or <i>matchera</i> and the line and hook method (<i>mbedza</i>))</li> <li>. do piece work with boat owners</li> <li>. have grass thatched houses</li> <li>. struggle to find food</li> <li>. unhealthy bodies</li> </ul>	40	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. few household utensils</li> <li>. inadequate clothes</li> <li>. grass thatched houses</li> <li>. small gardens</li> <li>. have chickens only</li> <li>. grow sweet potatoes to sell</li> <li>. do casual labour</li> <li>. plastic household utensils</li> </ul>	60		

Table 4 cont'd.

CATEGORIES	COMMON PATTERN (Proportions out of 100)						DIFFERENT (Proportions out of 100)	
	MADANA VILLAGE WOMEN-ONLY GROUP 1		MBWADZULU VILLAGE YOUTH GROUP		CHITAMBI VILLAGE MEN-ONLY GROUP 3		NAMPEYA VILLAGE WOMEN-ONLY GROUP 2	
	CRITERIA	PROP OF HH	CRITERIA	PROPO. OF HH	CRITERIA	PRO. OF HH	CRITERIA	PROP. OF HH
THE POOREST OSAUKITSITSA	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. lack clothes</li> <li>. eat maize bran that is infact food for pigs</li> <li>. do casual labour</li> <li>. the aged, the sick, the disabled</li> <li>. can not afford to but fertiliser</li> </ul>	76	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. have stunted growth (<i>onyentchera</i>)</li> <li>. do casual labour</li> <li>. sleep without beddings</li> <li>. sleep in temporary traditional houses (<i>makumbi</i>)</li> <li>. frequent beggars</li> <li>. orphans</li> </ul>	25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. lack food</li> <li>. no garden</li> <li>. clothes handouts</li> <li>. they are lazy</li> <li>. susceptible to diseases</li> <li>. disabled, orphans</li> <li>. casual labour for buying maize</li> </ul>	22		
STRUGGLERS Ovutika							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. uses one cloth until it is finished</li> <li>. casual labour</li> <li>. normally eat once per day</li> <li>. rely on vegetables during hunger periods</li> <li>. lack sleeping mats</li> <li>. have no hoes</li> <li>. no plates</li> <li>. houses with roofs blown off</li> <li>. children not in school</li> <li>. use cooking oil occasionally</li> <li>. inactive bodies because of malaria</li> </ul>	65
THE STUNTED AND MALNOURISHED Onyentchera							<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. thin bodies and short</li> <li>. pale and weak hair (<i>tsitsi lopepera</i>)</li> <li>. bodies do not shine even after bathing</li> <li>. fall sick frequently</li> <li>. do not have food</li> </ul>	30

#### 4.2.1 Rural Sites

There appears to be few differences across age, gender and languages regarding how people characterise households belonging to the four common categories. As indicated in Table 4 above, households that belong to the ‘the haves –*opeza bwino*’ category, “have granaries that are full of maize at the time of harvest .... and this maize does not last before the next harvest -*chimanga chimapezana munkhokwe*”. While this is the case for some of the visited communities, participants from Madana village, which is an Irish potato growing area, say that in addition to maize “these households always harvest a lot of Irish potatoes”. The participants further said that these households “have livestock mainly cattle, goats, sheep and poultry ..... in times of crisis like hunger or funeral, they sell some of the livestock to cope” and that “they employ others to work in their gardens and pay them either maize, maize bran (in times of hunger), clothes or money”. Participants from Nampeya site in Machinga said “... such people do not even cook on their own because they have employed people to be cooking for them ...”. Participants from Mbwadzulu and Khwalala sites, which are fishing communities, said that ‘*opeza bwino*’ in their communities have engine boats and fishing nets [*zilimira and makhoka*] and that these people do not physically go into the lake on their own but that they employ other people to do so on their behalf and pay them either money or a share of the fish catch. Another criteria that was identified for the ‘*opeza bwino*’ category include: having and sleeping in good looking houses that are sometimes made of burnt bricks and roofed with corrugated iron sheets, have metal plates, they do business either of maize mills or grocery shops, have stereos/ cassette players, cars, have adequate clothes and that:

“to them money is not an issue to worry about”.

The ‘doing better –*opeza bwino pang’ono*’ category, which was the second most common higher well-being category across the sites, was reported to be characterised by inadequate harvests that do not last the whole year, lacking fertiliser, doing casual labour for survival, having small fishing nets (for fishing communities), having small livestock like goats, having a radio, inadequate clothes, and owning bicycles. Although households belonging to this category do not have adequate food harvests, the young participants from Mbwadzulu said these households at-least do not sleep without eating food. Households belonging to the ‘have nots –*osauka*’ category on the other hand were reported to be characterised by:

“reliance rely on casual labour for survival”

“failure to afford fertiliser”

“small gardens .... such that they harvest less for their families ”

“plastic utensils like plates”

“grass thatched houses”

“unhealthy bodies”

“using small nets or *matchera* and the line and hook method for fishing [*mbedza*]”

“doing piece work with the boat owners”

“doing small scale businesses”

Households belonging to the ‘poorest -*osaukitsitsa*’ category, which was the most lowest common category identified across the sites studied, were reported to be characterised by lacking clothes and normally depend on cloth handouts from relatives or relief organisations, eating maize bran especially during the hunger months of January and February “.. they eat maize bran that is meant for pigs”. The participants across the sites indicated that household members belonging to this category are very susceptible to illnesses, have stunted growth and look malnourished (*matupi onyentchera*), they sleep in temporary traditional houses (called *makumbi* in Mbwadzulu site), they are very lazy to farm or to do other jobs for their livelihood. The participants also said that this category is mainly made up of households that are headed by the aged, the sick, disabled, orphans, widows such that most of them depend on begging.

Certain categories of households that were identified were distinct to the groups that identified the category. For example, a women-only discussion group from Nampeya site identified ‘*onyentchera* ‘the stunted and malnourished’ as a category. This, they said is a category that was said to be beyond the ‘*Osauka kwambiri/osaukitsitsa*’ and was reported to be characterised by bodies that are thin and of short stature, thin hairs (*tsitsi lopepera*), bodies that do not shine even after bathing, frequent illnesses and they severely lack food.

#### **4.2.2 Urban Sites**

Two well-being (and ill-being) categories were identified across the three urban sites that were involved in the study and these were: ‘the haves -*opeza bwino*’ representing the most higher category and ‘the poor -*osauka*’. Table 5 gives an outline of the most common criteria that were cited to define the two most common classes of well-being in the three urban squatters.

**Table 5 : Common categories and criteria for classifying households to the various categories (Urban sites)**

CLASS OF WELL-BEING	CRITERIA
<p>'THE HAVES' <i>'opeza bwinoh</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. have houses roofed with iron sheets</li> <li>. dress well</li> <li>. hygienic houses</li> <li>. do not lack life necessities</li> <li>. have enough food and do not miss meals</li> <li>. have videos, cellular/mobile phones, television sets</li> <li>. houses with electricity</li> <li>. both husband and wife working</li> <li>. have a vehicle</li> <li>. have health bodies</li> <li>. doing big business like grocery (shops), maize mills, mini buses</li> <li>. children are happy and grow healthily</li> <li>. husbands are not adulterous</li> <li>. love every one and help people when in problems</li> <li>. have a farm</li> </ul>
<p>'THE HAVE NOTS / POOR' <i>osauka / bakavu</i></p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>. struggle to find food</li> <li>. stay in small houses either rented or their own</li> <li>. poorly paid at work</li> <li>. run small businesses like selling tobacco cigarettes, freezers</li> <li>. wives do not work</li> <li>. jealousy and back-biting</li> <li>. beggars and the lame</li> <li>. orphans, the aged and the divorced</li> <li>. uneducated people</li> <li>. poor dressing</li> <li>. depend on casual work for survival</li> <li>. fetch and sell river sand</li> <li>. use lamps</li> <li>. frequent illnesses</li> <li>. unclean homes</li> <li>. children look very miserable</li> <li>. family problems like diseases, hunger, adulterous husbands, quarrels and fighting</li> <li>. households are large</li> </ul>

In the urban sites, households that belong to the *opeza bwino* category were reported that they are characterised by houses that have iron sheets roofs and are cemented, fenced and constructed from burnt bricks. Members from such households were reported that they

dress very well, they do not lack necessities, have video sets, cell (mobile) phones, and televisions, have electricity in their homes, either both husband and wife are working or at-least one is working in an office environment such that they have a regular source of income, and have vehicles (Table 5). Additionally, other criteria that were also identified for the *opeza bwino* include eating different types of food and beef when desired, have healthy bodies and that some are doing businesses. The '*osauka*' category of households in the three urban sites were reported that they are characterised by struggling to find food for the home including doing casual work (for example, picking pieces of luggage at the bus stations) or sometimes they raise money enough to buy maize for a day's ration, staying in very small houses that are either their own or rented. The participants further said that most of the people that belong to this category are in low class jobs that are low paying but use a lot of energy, some are running small scale businesses like selling freezes and tobacco cigarettes, wives do not work and that because of their poverty, "... these people like back-biting ..." out of jealousy. The other criteria cited for the *osauka* households are that their houses are normally grass thatched, have no livestock, usually no radio, "they even do not have a bed to sleep on ..", have large household sizes normally of six or more children, have no shoes. In addition to these characteristics, participants from Masasa site said that households that belong to the '*osauka*' category have no toilets, their homes are very unclean because they do not sweep around their homes. They further stated that in such households there are such problems like frequent illnesses, hunger, quarrels, fighting between husbands and wives because "wives feel that their husbands spend money on extramarital affairs ..", children look miserable and dress miserably and are not happy compared to children from the other homes. The participants then said that households that belong to this category in their communities are mainly those headed by the aged, orphans, widows, the disabled, the divorced women, and beggars because they do not have support structures and they have no energy to work like their counterparts.

However, other distinct categories that were also identified in the urban areas although not in all the three sites are: '*opeza bwino pang'ono*' and 'those doing better though not happy- *opeza bwino pang'ono koma osasangalara*' (Masasa only), '*osauka pango'no*' and 'the poorest- *osauka kotheratu*' (Phwetekere and Masasa sites), and, '*ovutika*' by Che Musa site only. As indicated earlier, criteria for defining these criteria, overlapped with that for defining the 'have nots' in the same location by other groups.



### **4.3 Changes in Well-being categories, criteria, proportion of households in the categories and factors leading to the changes**

The analyses of all the discussion groups show variations in the way the participants to the various groups felt have been the well-being trends in the respective sites over the last decade. In some cases, the then higher well-being classes were reported by all or some discussion groups to have either remained static or experienced significant reductions in the proportions of households, while, in other cases, the once higher well-being classes were reported to have disappeared altogether in the last decade. Similarly, for some sites, some participants indicated that over the past ten years, people's welfare has actually improved for the better such that, either new higher well-being classes have emerged or that some households have moved into the higher classes from the lower classes. For some sites, it was indicated that just as some households have improved their welfare over the last decade, there are also some households that have actually experienced a decline and have moved into the lower classes and that some households have remained in the same categories as before.

The two sub-sections (urban and rural), following, give an outline of the various common factors that were reported to have led some households to improve, remain the same or decline in their welfare.

#### ***4.3.1 Urban Sites***

In general, participants from Masasa urban site indicated that the welfare of households in the location has dwindled over the last decade while, participants from both Phwetekere and Che Musa indicated that there has been a bi-directional shift in people's welfare such that some households have actually improved while others have declined or remained unchanged (Tables 6, 7 and 8).

For the two sites that indicated a partial improvement in the welfare of some households (Che Musa and Phwetekere), one of the common reasons that were put across from mainly the various women groups was that there has been a decrease in most households' sizes. This, they said was because people have nowadays realised the benefits of family planning such that most households have small manageable families. In Che Musa, one woman from one of the women-only discussion groups was quoted saying that "... in the past, people were not using family planning methods and this was making the families to have more members ..... such that it was difficult for most households to budget properly .....". Similarly, another woman from one of the discussion groups was quoted "... some households have improved in life because they have been receptive to family planning methods ..... now they have manageable families which have enabled them to survive the recent rise in the cost of living without problems....."

**Table 6: Factors that have led to changing well-being categories, criteria and proportion of households in urban sites (Malawi). - (Why some households have improved in their welfare and why some higher categories were reported to have improved in proportions over the last decade (from 2/5 in every 100 households to over 10 on average).**

REASONS	CM	PH	MS
1. there are more casual labour opportunities nowadays that before and wages are better than before	✓		
2. fetching river sand and sell	✓		
3. some people have access to loans from kinship networks to start businesses		✓	
4. small family sizes than before	✓	✓	
5. some people are in big business	✓	✓	
6. retirees and other workers have come to settle in the area	✓	✓	
7. more money lenders nowadays	✓		
8. more people have secured jobs	✓		
9. there is no government oppression that was the case in the past	✓		
10. more political leaders have accessed loans from their parties to start businesses		✓	

Note: CM = Che Musa  
 PH= Phwetekere  
 MS= Masasa

The other reason that was reported from the two sites mainly by men-only discussion groups was that in the recent years, there has been a proliferation of big businesses like that of running minibuses and grocery shops. This, they said was particularly because

“ nowadays people are free to do any type of business without fearing government interference unlike in the past when we could be asked a lot of questions about where we got the capital from ..... or whom we wanted to compete with ...”.

It was also a common revelation from both Phwetekere and Che Musa discussion groups that there was also an increase in the proportion of the higher well-being classes or that new higher classes have emerged over the last decade because of people’s migration into the areas. Mainly, the participants said that some retirees and lowly paid workers prefer to construct, rent and stay in the locations because of their cheap rentals, and that, since these people have a regular source of income or that they have acquired enough property over the time they had been working, they are considered to be in the higher well-being classes because their status supersedes the rest of the households. This, they said has been on the increase particularly in the past few years because rental fees have gone up steadily in other locations. In Phwetekere location alone, participants reported that there has been an increase in the proportion of the higher well-being classes because some local political leaders have been given loans by their respective parties to start businesses such that they have tremendously improved over the last five years. Particularly

mentioned were local leaders representing the ruling United Democratic Front (UDF). The men-only groups from Che Musa location further reported that they feel that the welfare of some households has improved for the better because they said there are more local construction companies nowadays than before and that these have increased opportunities for casual work and that most men go to the rivers to fetch sand and sell to the companies. Some of the discussion groups from Che Musa further reported that the change of government has enabled people to live in peace without being oppressed by government in any form and they said that they consider this relative freedom as an uplift in the people's well-being status.

As indicated earlier, participants from Masasa urban site in the northern region said that the general welfare of people in the location has dwindled over the last decade and that in some discussion groups, it was indicated that the higher well-being classes have disappeared altogether. Some discussion groups from Phwetekere in Lilongwe and Che Musa in Blantyre the south also said that the situation was not all that rosy for all households in the last ten years. Some households were reported to have declined into the lower classes and that over the years, new lower classes of well-being have emerged. Table 7 below gives an outline of the various factors that were reported to have negatively impacted on some households making them to decline. As will be noted from the same table, three factors were mentioned in all the three urban sites and these are: the devaluation of the Malawi kwacha, unemployment and the impact of HIV/AIDS on some households in the community. On the devaluation of the Malawi kwacha, participants to most discussion groups across the sites indicated that the devaluation has made life too tough for most households because they are failing to afford basic commodities of life like food, soap, salt and sugar. This, they said was particularly so because in most households, there is only one bread winner, who is also lowly paid such that it is now more difficult to supply the household with its necessities. One woman from one of the discussion groups in Che Musa was quoted saying "... ten years ago money was not a problem because with little money we could buy so many things which is not the case nowadays ...". On this, youths from Phwetekere said "... not long ago K15.00 would suffice to buy relish for the whole week but nowadays the same money buys nothing ..... it is not even enough as pocket money for a single student going to school for one day .... This is why we are saying our currency has lost its value ...". The devaluation of the kwacha, coupled with high unemployment rates across the three sites have adversely affected most households over the years. Women from Che Musa said that "... the unemployed usually have nothing to support themselves with because they are just loafing without any defined livelihood source ...[*anthu ambiri oti sali pantchito alibe chithandizo china chiri chonse chifukwa ndi malova oti alibe chirichonse chodzithandiza nacho paumoyo wao*]". On the same unemployment problem, participants from Che Musa further said that in the past a lot of people were working such that they could afford at-least the most basic needs of life. They blamed the recent privatisation programme of the government as part of its structural adjustment programmes because they said many people have lost their jobs in the process.

"the government has sold some of its companies ..... some of the people here have been retrenched by the new management of the companies instead of

recruiting more as was the case before ..... [*boma lagulitsa makampane ..... anthu ambiri kuno achotsedwa ntchito m'malo moti azitilemba ngati m'mene zinaliri kale*]

On the same unemployment problem, participants from both Phwetekere and Masasa locations said that the increase in the population of their respective cities has made life tough in the labour market. The HIV/AIDS on the other hand was reported to have also impacted heavily on the welfare of some households across the three sites in that the epidemic has made most households to lose breadwinners such that life has turned to be tough for those other members left especially orphans. This has also meant a consequent increase in the number of dependants for some households thereby making life more tougher than before because of the added responsibility. The HIV/AIDS epidemic was also reported to have led to a reduction in the proportions of the higher well-being classes because they said

“...most of the well-to-do people have died of AIDS since they were going out with a lot of women because most women like rich people – *opeza bwino ambiri atha kufaiifa chifukwa cha edzi chifukwa choti amayenda ndi azimai ambiri poti azimayitu paja amakonda anthu a ndalama*”.

The participants further said that the wealth that these well-to-do people left behind have disappeared because there was no one to look after and that in some cases relatives of the deceased scrambled for it. Participants from one discussion group in Masasa said that AIDS also “affects one’s ability to work productively” and thus reducing one’s chances to advance in life.

**Table 7: Factors that were reported to have led to changing well-being categories, criteria and proportion of households in urban sites (Malawi) – (why some household’s welfare has declined (by 10-25% on average) or why new lower categories have emerged)**

REASONS	CM	PH	MS
1. Malawi Kwacha had more value ten years ago than now	✓	✓	✓
2. High unemployment nowadays	✓	✓	✓
3. HIV/AIDS	✓	✓	✓
4. no or less land for cultivation		✓	✓
5. High population in the location nowadays than 10 yeas ago			✓
6. High fertiliser prices		✓	✓
7. Increase in number of dependants			✓

Note: CM = Che Musa  
PH= Phwetekere  
MS= Masasa

In Phwetekere and Masasa sites, participants also indicated that shortage of adequate land for farming and the rise in the prices of fertiliser coupled with the stoppage of fertiliser loans and other inputs like seeds to farmers have also led to the decline in the well-being of some households that used to supplement their livelihood with proceeds from farming. In Phwetekere, participants said that:

“... the little land we had was forcibly bought from us by the Lilongwe City Council under a World Bank sponsored project ..... we were told that the objective of the project was to upgrade the Phwetekere squatter settlement ..... but, although the project halted, the land has not been returned to us ...”.

In Masasa, participants to some discussion groups said that the rise in the number of people flocking to that location has forced the chiefs to distribute more land for house construction at the expense of people’s farming to supplement their income.

There are some households that were however reported to have belonged to the same lower well-being classes over the last decade. Participants from Che Musa and Phwetekere said that this has been like that for some households not because “.... they lacked resources to advance, but that they are lazy to work”, and that some have remained the same because each time they raise money they drink excessively such that they do not invest in any business or support their families.

**Table 8: Factors that were reported to have led to changing well-being categories, criteria and proportion of households in urban sites (Malawi) – (why some household’s welfare has not changed)**

REASONS	CM	PH	MS
1. laziness and drunkards	✓	✓	
2. lack of good relations with money lenders		✓	
3. segregation on the part of money lenders		✓	✓
4. remittances from children and relatives		✓	

Note: CM = Che Musa  
 PH= Phwetekere  
 MS= Masasa

In Phwetekere and Masasa locations, some households were said to have remained in the lower well-being classes because they have been segregated against in the distribution of loans for businesses. In Phwetekere, participants indicated that over the last five years, local political leaders (particularly UDF leaders) have assisted some households particularly those that openly claim to be pro-UDF, to have access to loans such that they have improved a bit but those not pro-UDF have remained stagnant where they had been. In Masasa, participants said that some money-lenders have favoured those that were already well-to-do and their relatives leaving out the poor and non-relatives such that they have not improved. In the same vein, participants from Phwetekere said that some people

have not accessed loans because they have not cultivated good relations with money lenders because they did not bribe them as demanded. Findings from some discussion groups in Masasa site indicate that some households that were at the brink of declining into the lower most classes have managed to remain in the same classes because they have been assisted by their children and other relatives that are working in town.

#### **4.3.2 Rural Sites**

The analyses of the findings from the various discussion groups from the seven rural sites indicate another mix in the way people felt have been the trends in the welfare of most households in their various communities. In all the seven communities visited, it was said that over the last decade, there has been a general shift in the way people perceive well-being and to the proportion of households in the various well-being classes either for an improvement or for the worse. Tables 9 and 10 below give an overview of the reasons why some households managed to appreciate, why some higher classes emerged or increased in the proportion of households when some households actually declined into the lower classes.

As indicated earlier, the general trend of findings across the groups in the seven sites indicate that people feel that some households have improved their welfare while some actually declined although the reasons for the improvement or decline vary considerably across the sites and regions. For example, participants from Mbwadzulu and Nampeya sites (Mangochi and Machinga Districts respectively), all from the south, indicated that some households in their villages have improved their welfare because nowadays, they said they are able to realise more financial returns from their businesses than before because they charge prices on their commodities according to their desire without government control and that they no longer fear government intervention in their businesses. Cutting across all the sites except one, Kuphera in Dowa District, was the fact that some households in the respective communities have improved their welfare because they said that nowadays access to loan facilities had improved than in the past such that most people have benefited from these facilities. Participants to a mixed group discussion in Chitambi site in Chiradzulu indicated that most people nowadays have:

“...become aware of credit schemes while in the past, only very few people knew about this ..... some have joined farmer’s clubs through which they are able to access fertiliser and seed loans ..”

such that they said those people have actually improved. Some discussion groups from Khwalala site in Nkhata-Bay said that

“... several people from this village obtained loans from the Member of Parliament especially his relatives, ..... they invested this money and are now doing better than before ...”.

Findings from all the rural sites in the south also indicate that people feel that some households have actually improved their welfare because of the change of government from the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) rule to the United Democratic Front (UDF). This, they said was because nowadays people in the respective villages are free and able to open up businesses with their money than in the past when they were being followed upon. On this, participants to a mixed group discussion group from Nampeya in Machinga said that “the change of government has made some people that were afraid to do businesses to start now because in the past most people just buried their money in a hole dug inside their house -*amngokwilira pansi*- and not keeping with banks because they feared to be detected by the government”. On the same, youths from Mbwadzulu village in Mangochi said that the proportion of households belonging to the upper-most well-being class -*okatomuka/okhupuka*- has over the last five years doubled from 5 to 10 in every 100 households in the village. This, the youths said was because “we now have a new government that is not oppressive ..... because in the past, the government was very oppressive but these days people are free to do any businesses they want ...”. The youths further said that with the coming of the new government, there are a lot of money lending institutions like the Malawi Rural Finance Company (MRFC) from where people are able to obtain loans. However, the youths were quick to point out that

“...the MRFC charges a very high interest rate and requires you to deposit a certain amount of money before being considered such that those that have benefited are those that were doing better already -a Malawi rulo fayinansi kampane amatchaja intelesiti yaikulu komanso amafuna kuti munthu upeleke dipoziti kaye asanakuganizire”.

**Table 9: Factors that have led to changing well-being categories, criteria and proportion of households in rural sites (Malawi) - (Why some households have improved in their welfare or why some higher categories have experienced an increase in the proportion of households – by 5-15% on average)**

REASONS	MB	NP	KP	CT	MT	MD	KW
1. more returns from businesses than before	✓	✓					
2. more freedom to businesses with own money than in the past when people were being followed upon	✓	✓		✓			
3. people helping one another more nowadays	✓	✓					
4. access to loans nowadays improved	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓
5. good harvests and better market prices		✓					
6. more casual work opportunities nowadays		✓					
7. migration from other areas		✓					
8. employment		✓		✓			
9. good rains than before		✓					
10. public works programme		✓			✓		
11. starter pack programme		✓					
12. access to tobacco farming and selling			✓		✓		
13. hard work in own gardens			✓			✓	
14. free primary education				✓			
15. remittances							✓

Key: MB= Mbwadzulu  
 CT= Chitambi  
 KW= Khwalala

NP= Nampeya  
 MT= Mtamba

KP= Kuphera  
 MD= Madana

Participants to some discussion groups in Nampeya and Mtamba villages said that the introduction of public works programme has also assisted some households from falling into the lower-most well-being classes because in times of hunger, these programmes have distributed maize and paid some money to these people. On the same note, participants from Nampeya also indicated that the ‘Starter Pack’ programme by the government has also assisted many households that were at the blink of falling into the worst well-being classes to harvest some maize this year thereby improving their welfare. One male participant said “because like me, I had no seeds. My garden would have been left uncultivated (*ukanagonera*) this year, but now I can see there is something to harvest”. The liberalisation of the tobacco farming and selling was also mentioned by some discussion groups at Kuphera and Mtamba sites as having enabled some people to grow tobacco and sell direct to the auction floors at better prices, a situation they said was not like that before.

Other reasons that were put forward as having led some households to an improvement were that they have started to work hard in their gardens after being personally



approached by the agricultural field staff, remittances from children and other relatives in town and that they feel the introduction of the free primary education has made most of their children to enroll in school. This, they said, “is very good because these children will help them in future .....”.

Just like in the urban sites, participants to the discussion groups in the rural areas also said that life was not all that rosy for all households. Common factors that were reported in most of the rural sites as leading to the decline in the proportion of the upper well-being classes included death of the only depended-upon household head, decline in soil fertility coupled with the rises in the prices of fertiliser and the stoppage of loans for inputs like fertiliser and seed. Participants to a women-only discussion group from Nampeya said that over the years, there has emerged the lowest well-being class (the malnourished and stunted –*onyentchera*). This, they said was, because of the decline in soil fertility plus the high prices of fertiliser which has enabled some households that belonged to the lowest class ten years ago to diminish even further. Another women discussion group from the same Nampeya also said that “in the past, we used to harvest at least four full ox carts [*ngolo folo zodzaza*] with maize and sell the excess maize even without using fertiliser but now we can not do the same because of poor soils and fertiliser is expensive”.

Participants to discussion groups in Mbwadzulu, Nampeya and Khwalala villages, which are fishing communities, indicated that there has been a reduction to the proportions of the upper well-being classes because fish catches have reduced over the past few years. They said “there is a decline in the levels of fish that we are catching nowadays ....., we no longer have fish catches as we used to have in the past ... this really has affected us and that is why this class of people (the poorest –*osaukitsitsa*) has been created over the past years .... because most of us are poor fishermen that depend on those that own fishing nets for piece work (*alovi*) and with this decline in fish catches, they no longer recruit more people”. People from Mbwadzulu, for example, consider the lake as their mine –*mgodi*– such that the decline in the levels of fish catches is equated to a deformed/damaged mine –*mgodi odilizika*– because the situation has greatly affected their income base.

**Table 10: Factors that were reported to have led to changing well-being categories, criteria and proportion of households in rural sites (Malawi) – (why some household’s welfare has declined or why new lower categories have emerged)**

REASONS	MB	NP	KP	CT	MT	MD	KW
1. hunger for two consecutive years (1997-1998)	✓						
2. reduced fish catches from lake Malawi	✓	✓					✓
3. opportunities for casual labour reduced	✓						
4. death of some household heads	✓		✓	✓	✓		
5. businesses gone bankrupt	✓	✓		✓			✓
6. food is expensive	✓			✓			
7. ten years ago people produced own food	✓	✓		✓	✓		✓
8. high birth rate	✓						
9. excessive alcoholism and laziness	✓		✓				
10. money was not a problem	✓						
11. more diseases nowadays than before		✓					
12. crop and animal diseases		✓					
13. reduced opportunities for casual work		✓				✓	
14. theft of animals, crops and property			✓		✓		
15. decline in soil fertility			✓		✓	✓	
16. high prices for fertiliser/ no loan facilities			✓	✓	✓	✓	
17. laziness				✓			
18. free primary school education				✓			
19. stoppage of TEBA				✓	✓		✓
20. high population				✓	✓		
21. devaluation of the kwacha				✓			✓
22. too much rains/poor weather					✓	✓	
22. unemployment					✓		
23. old age/ illnesses						✓	✓

Key: MB= Mbwadzulu  
 CT= Chitambi  
 KW= Khwalala

NP= Nampeya  
 MT= Mtamba

KP= Kuphera  
 MD= Madana

The devaluation of the Malawi Kwacha in August, 1998 was also mentioned as having caused a drastic decline in the proportions of most well-being classes. This was reported to have made prices of fertiliser and the basic life necessities to escalate (catching a plane – *kukwera ndege*) and that for those households that run out of food before the next harvest, it is very difficult for them to buy on the market. At the same time, participants from four of the seven sites (Table 10) indicated that the devaluation of the Kwacha has made businesses for some people to go bankrupt (*kudilizika*). This, they said, was because people nowadays do not buy commodities from their shops as before such that they do not make the same profit margins as before.

“People would rather stay without taking a bath rather than buying a tablet of Maluwa soap at K4.50 which was selling at 65 tambala a year ago”.

Similarly, some people that owned maize mills ten years ago have closed them down, ... they can no longer maintain them because, the participants said that spare parts are very expensive nowadays. While appreciating the current political pluralism, participants from Chitambi village in Chiradzulu District said that the new dispensation has had its bad effects on people’s welfare,

“our property, crops and animals are being stolen in broad daylight”.

They said that the police is very far from their area and that even if they report to them the police normally are reluctant to assist and sometimes they just say “go and catch the thief and bring him here .... we do not have vehicles to go there” and that sometimes when a thief is brought to them, he just stays there for one day in custody. This, they said has made many people to be stealing because they know that the police will not arrest them.

The other factor that was reported by participants from three sites (Chitambi, Mtamba and Khwalala) as having impacted on the lives of most people in their villages was the closure of TEBA<sup>4</sup>

#### **4.4 Main Causes and Impacts of Poverty**

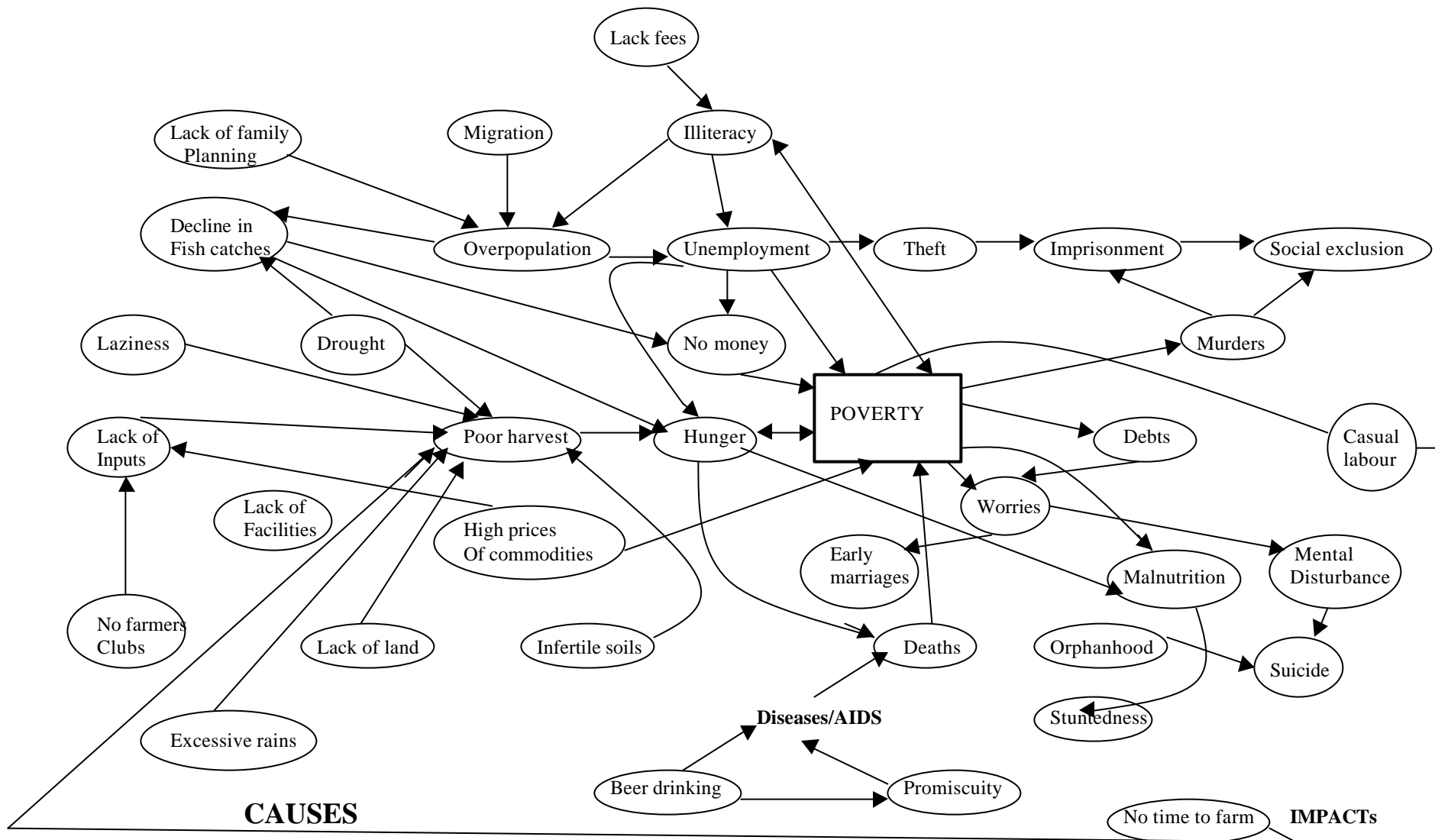
This study indicates that high prices of commodities, poor or reduced harvests, diseases, rise in death’s rates, unemployment and illiteracy were the common main causes of poverty that were reported in all the sites that were visited. At the same time, most participants from across the sites also indicated that poverty mainly leads to malnutrition, a lot of debts, worries, theft/murders, dependency on casual labour, hunger and illiteracy. However, depending on what each community felt was its main source of livelihood, there are variations as to what each community indicated to be the most priority cause of poverty among most households in the community. For example, participants from the three urban sites indicated that most of the households are poor because of unemployment and high commodity prices whereas, participants from most of the rural sites indicated

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<sup>4</sup> TEBA stood for The Employment Bureau of Africa. Under TEBA, people used to be recruited and sent to work in the mines of South Africa and Zimbabwe. This enabled many people to get employed and on return, they brought several items like stereos, vehicles and others built houses in their homes. TEBA was stopped in the 1989/90 after a plane carrying returnees crashed and has since then, been difficult to be re-introduced because South Africa and Zimbabwe now have their own unemployment problems to address

that the decline in food harvests is what is causing most households to tumble in life. Participants from Mbwadzulu village, a fishing community, indicated that the decline in the levels of fish catches over the past few years is what is causing most households to be poor because they do not consider crop farming as their main livelihood source because their gardens are mainly sandy and crops do not grow healthily.

**FIGURE 1: MAIN CAUSES AND IMPACTS OF POVERTY (ANALYSED BY SEVERAL DISCUSSION GROUPS – MALAWI)**



Unemployment was reported to be on the increase particularly in the urban sites because of the following factors:

**Illiteracy** – most of the participants both from rural and urban sites indicated that employment opportunities are almost non-existent for most people because employers nowadays are interested in employing educated people even in the lower most jobs. Factors that were reported to have led to an increase in illiteracy for most people were lack of school fees (in secondary schools), distance to the nearest schools, poverty (lacking clothes, fees, school materials etc.), drug and alcohol abuse/delinquency among most youths and children, laziness both on the part of parents and children themselves, lack of food especially in the morning and at break time.

**Favouritism** most participants indicated that most employers nowadays favour their relatives and children from very close friends when opportunities arise. Findings also show a contrast of feelings between men and women on which gender has more employment opportunities than the other. Most men indicated that women nowadays have more chances of being recruited than men because of what they referred to as gender issues *ndi jendayi azimayi ali ndi mwayi wambiri wolembedwa ntchito*. On the other hand, women said that they are more disadvantaged than men because they said most employers, who are men, have a feeling that women can not perform as men do. Some women participants said that they are not easily employed because some employers demand sexual favours before being recruited.

**Overpopulation** it was reported from most discussion groups (especially from the urban sites) that because of the rise in population, it has become increasingly difficult over the years for most people to find jobs in the formal sector. Lack of family planning facilities and services and the non-use of the services where available by most people due to illiteracy and lack of civic education were reported to have led to the increase in population in most sites. Overpopulation was also reported to be on the increase across the urban sites because they said that most people are migrating from the rural areas to town to look for jobs and that people prefer to build/rent and stay in the visited sites because of cheap rentals.

**Retrenchment**- most participants said that some people have lost jobs over the few years because of the government's privatisation programme. They said that the new management for the various government owned companies they worked for have laid off most people particularly those in the lower classes most of whom are found in the sites visited and other similar squatters.

**Absence or in-availability of companies/market**- most of the participants from across the rural sites indicated that they are not employed because there are no companies in their areas. They further lamented that the absence of agro-based companies in most areas that would be purchasing people's crops after harvest has made people to relax and stop growing some of the crops. For example, participants from Nampeya village said that their area used to produce a lot of rice and sugar canes but has since declined its

production levels because most people could not readily find a market for their sugar canes and rice.

Unemployment was reported to have made most people to be poor because they do not have the required livelihood resource such that finding money, food, clothes, and peace of mind are nightmares to most of the unemployed people. Unemployment was also reported to have made some people to resort to stealing as their survival strategy [*anthu ena opotoka m'maganizo amangoganiza zakuba*]. Overpopulation in the fishing communities (Mbwadzulu, Nampeya and Khwalala) was reported to have led to a subsequent increase in the numbers of fishing nets in the lake thereby making fishing levels to gradually decline over the years. Low agricultural production was also one of the most common reported main causes of poverty. On this, participants said that if a household has low agricultural production, hunger is the most eminent outcome and that most households do not have money to purchase other households necessities. Low agricultural production was reported to be on the increase in most sites particularly rural because of the following factors:

**Lack of land to farm on-** it was reported from most discussion groups that most households have less land holding (< 1 hectare) for adequate sustainable agricultural production comparing with their family sizes. In the urban sites, participants said that most people do not have even a single piece of land to farm on so as to supplement their livelihood resources and that in some situations, those households that had land ten years ago now do not have. This, participants said was due to the expansion of their communities because of people's migration into the areas such that some land has been assigned to house construction at the expense of agricultural production.

#### **Drought over the past few years**

**Lack of farm inputs-** several factors were again cited as having led to the scarcity of farm inputs. One of the factors that was cited was the rise in the prices of fertiliser beyond the affordability of most people. On this, the participants said that the rise in the prices of fertilizer has come about in the past few years because the new government has removed subsidies that used to assist the farming communities. This, they said was because the government is always listening and accepting whatever the World Bank, IMF and the United States demand it to do [*nanga a bomawa pano samangvomera zomwe alamulidwa ndi a Walodi banki, IMF and dziko la america*]. The other factor that was reported to have made farm inputs to be scarce was the non-existent of farmer's clubs through which, the participants said most people were getting input credits in the past ten years.

**Laziness-** some households were reported that they normally have less agricultural production because its members (particularly the head) are lazy and that they become used to begging and relying on food handouts from government and other well-wishers in the community. For example, a group discussion for men only in Mbwadzulu gave an example of a person in their village who does not want to farm. Instead, this person was reported that every morning he goes to the lake and wait for people to give him some

casual work to do including carrying the fish from the shores to the road. “we always plead with him to at-least do some bit of farming for his survival which he does not want to – *timachita kumunyengelera kuti takalimaniko achimwene kuti mupezeko kachakudya kokha*”.

### **Excessive rains especially in 1998 in Nampeya area**

**Dependency on casual labour-** such that some people forget to farm in their gardens. This, they said was due to several reasons. One was that some people want to make more money at once such that they take long time working for the money. The other reason given was that most people resort to casual work because they have no food in their homes. As such, they spend more time working for the food so that they can survive. Thirdly, some government and NGO initiatives for relief were reported to be ill-timed in that the projects are introduced at a time when people’s labour is also required in their gardens. But because most people would want to solve their most immediate problem, they choose to work for the food/ or money than to do farming in their gardens. Finally, agricultural production was reported to have reduced over the years because the soils have lost their fertility over the years.

The other main common cause of poverty that was reported from across the sites is diseases. On this, participants said that lack of hygiene, poor diets/and hunger, promiscuity and excessive drinking are the leading factors for most diseases. The participants also said that most of the diseases affect households belonging to the lower well-being classes more because of their social status (unhygienic homes, no food, lack of peace of mind and no money to pay for medical treatment or transport to clinics and hospitals). Another main cause of poverty that was commonly reported from women discussion groups as causing poverty among most women is loneliness. This, they said makes most of them to lead worried lives and that they fail to adequately fend for their households particularly if the woman has no business or is not working. They also said that most of the times, extra-marital affairs on the part of husbands often leads to quarrels in the home and this makes most women to lead a poor life because they said that they consider peace of mind as a very important attribute of well-being. In the same vein, extra-marital affairs on the part of wives was reported to frequently result in divorce because women said that men are not as forgiving and compromising as women. A state of divorce was said to be very bad especially for women because they in the first place fail to adjust their roles from that of just being a wife and cook for the family to that of being a breadwinner. In most cases, the women said that they do not have the capacity to maintain their families because they do not have the required livelihood sources.

Poverty was reported from across the sites that it has led some households to accumulate heavy debts over the years and that because of this, they are always leading a life full of worries of how such debts would be settled. Some of the worried people were reported to have developed some mental problems and that some have resorted to suicide as a way of forgetting their worries. Poverty has also made some people to have perpetual hunger because they do not have access to adequate land and farm inputs that would help them improve their agricultural production. It was also indicated that poverty has made some



people to fail to get educated because they cannot afford school fees and other related expenses. Poverty was also reported to have led to an increase in theft and cases of murder from across the sites that were visited. It was also indicated from the study sites that poor people have often times been excluded from several activities on the basis of their poverty. For example, most participants said that the poor have been denied access to credits because they said most money lending institutions place heavy doubts on the poor's ability to properly use the money and repay the loan. Poverty was also reported to have led to early marriages among most teenagers particularly girls as their survival mechanism. In some instances, poverty was reported to have caused some good mannered women and girls to fall trap into infidelity so as to solicit money for their household's survival.

In conclusion, the communities visited indicated that they have a feeling that the poverty existing in their various communities has increased over the past few years. It was also felt from the sites that the people feel that they have no control over most of the causes of poverty in their communities. They said most of these causes could be better addressed by government through re-orienting its privatisation and subsidy position to suit the level of the lower sectors of most populations. In most instances, participants indicated the poverty existing in their community has become cyclic such that some of the impacts of poverty have actually become causes.

#### **4.5 Security, Risk and Crisis, Coping Strategies, Vulnerability, Opportunities, Social Cohesion/ Exclusion, Crime and Conflict**

The following section gives an outline of the perceptions of the people from the communities that were on the various issues as outlined above and how these issues have been changing within their communities over the last decade. As will be noted, there are no major differences in the way people perceive most of these issues except for crisis/risks that have affected the respective communities and how the various communities adjusted thereto.

##### ***4.5.1 Security, Vulnerability and Opportunities for Economic Mobility***

As indicated in the earlier sections, there have been considerable variations in the way participants felt the various well-being classes have changed over the last decade. In some cases, participants said that either lower or higher classes have emerged or that some households have improved their welfare while others have actually declined.

Findings from the various sites that were visited during the study indicate minor differences in the way they perceive security as it relates to well-being (and ill-being). In most of the discussion groups, participants said they consider security as that status of being unshaken when crisis situations occur. In Kuphera Site (Dowa), participants said that they perceive security "in terms of a household's access to a garden that would provide it with adequate food and cash crops (particularly maize and tobacco) and

ownership of livestock”. They pointed out that having access to these guarantees food and income security which are the basis for well-being.

“When a household runs out of soap, they just sell some chickens.... and if one member of the household falls ill, they sell a goat to raise transport money and fees for the clinic services”.

Participants from Masasa Urban Squatter said that security in terms of well-being is synonymous to leading a good quality of life. That is, the household has to be able to provide adequately for itself (basic necessities) without difficulties. Such households were also reported that they enjoy good health because their living environments are safe and that they have latrines such that when visitors come they do not have to use the neighbour’s facilities, and, that household members have peace of mind. Although participants from Masasa did not clearly come up with one terminology that refers to security and/or insecurity, they, nonetheless, were able to isolate categories of people that are considered insecure as those at greater risk and more vulnerable to shocks. These groups of people were said to belong to the lowest well-being classes. Particularly reported to be so are households headed by the elderly, the disabled, the blind, sibling-headed and female headed households. They said these groups of people are seen as vulnerable because they do not have any reliable claim to a sustainable means of livelihood “their food situation is precarious and their situation is particularly worse now and will continue as such in future because of the decline of assistance from the extended family relations, the rise in the cost of living and the rising unemployment levels”.

Participants to a women-only group discussion session in Mtamba Village said that they also consider a household to be secure when:

“It has access to short term loans and ability to pay back the loans...”;

“It has livestock that it can sell to buy food and other basic necessities like soap...”

“It has surplus food from own stocks”.

Similarly, women from Nampeya said that secure households are those that belong to the higher well being classes because “they have a lot of maize, husbands are working...” They then said because of their solid income base, such households are able to withstand shocks of life. In Che Mussa, a men-only discussion group also said that households that belong to the lower most classes of well being are more vulnerable to decline in their welfare and that they suffer most in times of crisis. For example, the participants said that

“when there is drought, those that are poor are affected most because they have no money to buy maize from ADMARC depots...”

In Mbwadzulu Village, participants said they feel secure nowadays than ever before in terms of their health because they have a Village Health Committee which they said is

very active and committed. They cited an example of January 1998 and February, 1999 when the village had Cholera outbreaks.

“In 1998, a lot of people died but the formation of the committee made it possible for many lives to be saved this February because the committee urgently informed hospital personnel about the outbreak and that they collaboratively worked together day and night distributing some medications to the villagers”.

The participants further indicated that in general, households belonging to lower categories are more prone to decline in welfare in any crisis situation. This, they said was so because they do not have other viable sources of livelihoods apart from fishing and farming.

A very different dimension of security came up in the discussion group involving both men and women in Mbwadzulu Village. They looked at this security (*chitetezo*) as referring to situations where a household protects itself from theft. On this, they said the “haves” are more able to protect themselves because they have money to recruit security guards and construct fences around their homes. They do this also because they realise that they are the targets for theft unlike the poor households.

Women from Phwetekere Squatter in Lilongwe indicated that men are generally major breadwinners in their community such that their deaths pose a big threat to the lives of those left behind. They said that even if the deceased left some investments behind, they cannot last long because those left behind entirely depend on them.....”when the estate runs out, the mother either remarries against her will or is, together with her daughters forced into prostitution. The daughters may be forced into early marriages whereas boys start stealing just to fend for the family. The women group further said that unemployed people form another sect that is very vulnerable because they do not have any source of livelihood apart from being looked after or stealing and doing some piece work. In terms of opportunities, the women said that the poor are more likely to be left out because most lending institutions demand very high collateral and deposit fees which are normally beyond the affordability of the poor and the unemployed.

Participants from Phwetekere generally defined security as a situation where a household has a small scale business, a grocery shop, houses to rent and minibuses. They also said that security entails a decent job or a reliable kinship network in times of crises.

Participants from most discussion groups indicated that the most vulnerable groups to declining well-being are the sick, the aged, orphans and the disabled particularly those belonging to the lower most well-being classes because they said, these groups do not have the capacity to work so that they provide for their necessities. Households that are also headed by the drunkards and lazy people were also indicated that they are vulnerable to declining welfare status. This they said was because these people have no time to work for the sustainability of the family’s welfare.

#### 4.5.2 *Future hopes*

Most participants from the studied communities feel that their future is in abeyance and that they really do not know what comes next. Most participants were not optimistic about their future. They were generally fatalistic and resigned "...only God knows ...". Participants from Phwetekere urban squatter said :

"the only way we can get out of poverty is through death because the majority of households in this community do not have reliable sources of livelihoods ..... the rise in the cost of living will only escalate crime and prostitution ..... many marriages will be broken down and our children will continue to be innocent victims ..... more children will become delinquents and orphans because of the HIV/AIDS impact ....".

They indicated that opportunities for social and economic mobility are virtually non-existent. The cost of living continues to sour, fertilizer prices continue to rise beyond affordable levels, extended family systems are no longer a reliable support institution and government relief programmes have almost sealed down. Employment opportunities are scarce and access to loans is very limited because they are extended to a selected few. The few are either related to the lenders or those that can afford the collateral and deposit fees demanded. Most participants said that they have a feeling that the "haves" will continue to advance in their welfare while the lower class people will continue to tumble amidst their declining economies

"those that drink tea will continue to drink tea -*omwa tea adzamwanso*".

Participants from Mbwadzulu also said that people in the higher classes will continue to improve in their welfare because their turn-over per unit time is bigger compared to the lower classes. On this, they said that when they do some piece work with boat/fish nets owners, they share the catch or they sell first and have the total value as a lump sum. Before sharing the money, they first deduct monies they used for paraffin, mantle, spirit and oil. The remaining money is then shared between the owner of the boat/net and fishermen. Thereafter,

"we (casual workers) share the other half but since there are sometimes ten of us, it means our personal shares are as little as a K100/day while the boat owners may pocket as much as a K1000.00".

However, they have a feeling that if more money lending institutions could be introduced, some more people could access loans for businesses and purchasing fertilizer and other farm inputs to improve their livelihoods. Further, most participants indicated concern over the entry conditions from most of the money lending institutions. They said that they normally require high valued collateral and deposit fees that are unaffordable by most most households in the lower well-being classes. They also lamented over the high

interest rates charged on the various agricultural credits because they said, this makes most households to remain with nothing at the end of the season since they sell all their harvests to square the credits. Participants from the fishing communities in Mbwadzulu, Khwalala and Nampeya said they feel the declining fish catches pose a great threat to their lives because their farm lands are not suitable for farming since they are mostly sandy. Some of the participants expressed the feeling that if the government could think of investing in agro-based industries in their various areas so that:

“we can kill two birds with one stone”.

For example, some participants from Nampeya village said that if a sugar making plant could be opened in the area, many people would think of growing more sugar canes because they would be assured of a steady market. At the same time, some of the people from the area would benefit through direct employment into the industry. Participants from Mbwadzulu village, which is along the shores Lake Malawi, said that if a cottage or hotel could be constructed near their village, some people would be selling their fish there while others will be employed.

However, some participants from Mbwadzulu, Nampeya and Chitambi villages and Che Musa squatter in the south indicated that they feel in the next ten years, life will improve for them. They said this is so because nowadays they have the liberty to do any business they like and that they now realise that they can also access loans unlike in the past when loans were given to a selected few people holding senior political positions at district levels. They also said that it will be like that because now farmers have the liberty of selling their crops at a price they desire or agreed upon with the buyer.

#### **4.5.3 Shocks of Life/Risks**

In general, participants to most of the discussion groups from across the ten sites indicated that in general, they perceive ‘shock and risk’ to be synonymous and that they mean:

“any depressing events that normally occur unexpectedly, ..... they shake the whole household or community (*zinthu zopombonyeza/zokhumudwitsa paumoyo wamunthu zimene zimadza mwadzidzi ... zimagwedeza umoyo wapabanjaponse ngakhalenso mudzi omwe*)” and puts people’s lives in danger (in a mound – *pachiswe*).

With this perception, several cases of what the participants to the discussions felt were the various shocks/risks to their lives over the last decade were listed and discussed (Table 11).

As would be noted from Table 11, some events/occurrences were reported that they are considered as shocks/risks from almost all the sites (for example, famine or hunger, deaths, diseases and floods) while others are considered shocks in distinct sites. Distinct

examples of the various events that are considered shocks to people's lives as indicated in the table below include child abductions (reported from Che Musa urban squatter), unemployment (reported from Khwalala rural site), and strong mwera winds (reported from Chitambi village in Mulanje). On child abductions, participants said that in 1998, many children were being abducted on their way either to or from school and as they play by unknown people. One woman from a women-only discussion group in Che Musa said "... we should also not forget about the shocking incidences we experienced last year when some of our children were being abducted –*tisaiwale zoopysa taziona chaka chathachi pomwe ana athu amagwidwa nkubedwa ndi achifwamba*".

**Table 11: Common shocks of life reported from across the ten sites over the last decade**

Shock(s)	NP	MB	KP	MD	MT	KH	CT	CM	PH	MS
Famine/hunger	✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓			
Drought	✓	✓		✓	✓					
Deaths/funerals	✓	✓			✓		✓		✓	
Falling of a house	✓					✓				
Unexpected fire	✓						✓			
Floods	✓					✓	✓			✓
Cholera		✓						✓		
Orphanhood		✓								
Diseases <sup>5</sup>		✓		✓			✓		✓	
Hippos destroying crops		✓								
Divorce				✓	✓		✓			
Unemployment						✓				
Theft/robberies/murders					✓		✓	✓		
Strong winds							✓			
Child abductions								✓		

Key: MB= Mbwadzulu  
 CT= Chitambi  
 KW= Khwalala  
 MS= Masasa

NP= Nampeya  
 MT= Mtamba  
 CM= Che Musa

KP= Kuphera  
 MD= Madana  
 PH= Phwetekere

Participants to some women discussion groups from three sites (Madana, Mtamba and Chitambi) also said that some shocks were so specific to women and that others had been very general in nature. An example of a shock that was indicated across the three sites to seriously affect women was divorce. On this, the women said that since most of the women do not work and have no other livelihood sources apart from heavily depending on their husbands, divorce exerts more pressure on them. This, they said was the case because in most cases, the burden of caring for children is left for the woman after divorce “they can be divorced at any time or can get pregnant and be abandoned by the responsible men ..... this normally happens out of men’s greed because they always want to have new taste (meaning new wife)..... the burden of caring for the children rests squarely on women’s shoulders ..... you see, these women become helpless and they lead a miserable life”. Women from Madana in Ntcheu indicated this to be one factor that makes most of the female headed households to belong to the lower well-being classes.

<sup>5</sup> Diseases included are malaria, bilharzia, diarrhoea

Shocks that were indicated to affect all households regardless of their well-being classes across the sites include famine/ hunger, drought, deaths/ funerals, and floods. These events were said to be unavoidable by any household because they occur naturally although participants in one of the discussion groups in Masasa urban squatter said that floods mainly affect those people with gardens in low lying areas whereas those farming in upper lands are not affected at all. Most of the participants, however indicated that although these events act universally, some households are affected more than others. They indicated that mostly, households that belong to the lower most well-being classes suffer heavily because they have no savings to depend on in case such events occur. If it is a funeral, the participants said that “they even do not have money to buy a coffin for burying their relative ..... instead they literally use mats .....”. The participants also indicated that households that are in the higher classes may similarly be aggrieved, but they at-least manage to buy a coffin for their relative unlike the *poor* whom they said suffer more because they also have to think of where to borrow money for the coffin and how to repay the loan thereafter. Participants from Masasa squatter further said that households that particularly suffer heavily from these shocks are those that are headed by the disabled, the elderly, female and children especially those that belong to the lower well-being classes because they said these people have virtually nothing to fall back on in times of crisis.

“... their conditions are made even worse by the decline in the scale of assistance from the extended family relations because of the rise in the cost of living since most people nowadays believe in ‘fending for oneself’”.

On theft/robberies/murders, most of the participants from Mtamba, Chitambi and Che Musa squatter said that they consider these as being very depressing because they lose their valued property and lives of relatives. Participants from Mtamba and Chitambi villages further said that these events are on the increase in their areas because the police station is very far and that the abandonment of the MYP and the unpaid youth leaguers of the Malawi Congress Party who used to help in maintaining peace and order have also contributed. On this, the participants further said that they get depressed even more when the police does not assist on time

“normally they send us back to catch the murderers and thieves and bring them to the police station ..... who can dare attempting to catch a robber armed with an AK47 raffle .....”.

On the same shock of increasing theft, robberies and murders, one participant from a men-only discussion group in Che Musa squatter said

“there was an incident that happened here last year (1998) where the whole family was murdered because thieves wanted to steal a TV set and other household belongings .....don’t you think that this is very depressing?”.

Participants from Che Musa said that theft as a shock is mainly experienced by households belonging to the upper well-being classes because thieves want to steal their property . “. what can a thief get from a poor person like me –the crier –[olira] ....”



Diseases (for example malaria, bilharzia) were reported to be another common shock to most households in four of the ten sites that were visited. Participants to the discussions said that diseases are mainly common among the lower well-being classes because of inadequate food, poor housing and sleeping places such that their homes are always unhygienic. It was further said that diseases make those in the lower well-being categories to suffer more because they cannot afford transport costs to go to a government hospital for free treatment. They also said that people in the lower classes cannot afford to pay services at private clinics, as such, they just sleep and groan “*amangogona nkumabuula*”. Participants from Nampeya in Machinga said that diseases normally lead to the other shock of death especially for those people that cannot afford transport money to take them to the hospital because they die on the way

“The participants said shocks like death do happen sometimes due to long distances to the hospitals “... a person can die before receiving medical attention because the hospitals are very far away”.

#### **4.5.4 Coping with Crisis Situations**

There are a number of ways people in the visited communities cope with declining well-being and shocks of life. Some of the coping strategies were reported from across the ten sites that were visited while others were so specific to some sites depending on what the community considered to be the leading factors. In Mbwadzulu village for example, people have noticed that over the last few years, fish catches have been gradually declining such that they feel their future is at risk. On this, participants to a discussion session for a mixed group of men and women said that they have started mobilizing themselves through the chief to look for ways of protecting this valuable livelihood resource for their community.

“a meeting was called by our chief with all villagers ..... we agreed to start having closed seasons annually during which no one will be allowed to go into the lake for fishing to allow for the fish to reproduce ..... to ensure compliance of the agreement, we agreed to form a committee that will be monitoring illegal fishing during the closed season especially those using fishing nets that have small holes ..”.

Although the committee was said to have not started implementing the recommendations, the participants said that they had a feeling that the motive will help to conserve their most depended upon livelihood resource. “however, the committee has not yet started to function because we have asked the chief first to do some research *-kafukufuku-* on other alternative livelihood sources during the closed season ..... if we just close, what will our children eat?”

On hunger, participants from most of the discussion groups said that they manage to survive during hunger months in a variety of ways. Most of the participants from across the sites indicated that during hunger, some households adjust their consumption patterns.

They either reduce the meal frequency from three to two or one, or reduce the amount of food eaten per time. Some participants said that during hunger times, households that do not have food stocks of their own just cook pumpkin leaves and eat them as their meal. Some participants from Mbwadzulu said that they adjust to the hunger by doing casual work at the lake with boat owners. The participants, however, complained that the landlords normally take advantage of the people's desperate situations to make them work more for little wages.

“we get K5.00, buy some maize for 1 day's consumption, when it is finished we go again ..... the problem is that these boat owners know that we are starving, as such we would accept any little wages they would offer to us because they know we are very desperate ..... we want to save our children from dying ..” .

Some women from the same village said that during hunger, they go to the maize mills to collect flour that accumulates on the floor at the maize mills.

To avoid the other pending hunger situations in future, participants of a mixed group of men and women from Chitambi in Mulanje said that households have decided to come together to form a farmers' club through which they are hoping to be getting farm inputs on loan. They also indicated that for the past ten years since 1989/90, they have always planted some crops alongside maize. These crops include sweet potatoes, soya, cassava and sugar canes. Because of the rainfall pattern of the area, most people plant and harvest sweet potatoes three times per year.

For broken marriages, women said that they start small businesses using any little money they may come across. While this is the case, some women participants indicated that other women resort to prostitution and they say:

“there is no reason for them to suffer when they have money in their bodies ..... avutikiranji pomwe ndalama ali nazo m'thupi mwawo”.

In Khwalala site, participants indicated that they have many approaches to cope with the decline in well-being. Many people have resorted to planting more crops rather than cassava and maize only. They are also planting soya, sweet potatoes and have also intensified banana farming. While this is the case, some people from households that are desperate resort to casual labour which they said is hazardous to their health because they said in most cases, they tend to overwork themselves with the aim of making more money. Their wages are miserable.

“Many women have over the years become prostitutes and this has led to family breakdowns.... some have contracted HIV/AIDS.....”

Because of this, the participants said that the welfare of their dependants especially children have been negatively affected such that they have helplessly descended into the lower most classes. Some households especially those headed by the aged have over the past depended on remittances from children for their survival. However, some

participants said that the magnitude and frequency of the remittances have declined over the years because of the high cost of living.

In Nampeya Village, participants to one of the women-only groups indicated that for most households that are in the lower categories, their food stocks run out by December such that they envisage tough life especially from January to March. As such, “they plant pumpkin seeds earlier such that by February they are ready and survive on them.” It was also generally said some households survive through working under the “Food for Work Programme” where people work and get paid either maize flour or maize, beans and sometimes money.

#### **4.5.5 Forms of Transfer Payments**

Findings from the sites indicate that they consider food to be the most convenient and appropriate form of payment in public works programmes. They feel that money would not be a good payment vehicle because they said most times money is always spent on useless things like alcohol even if the core idea of working was to raise money for purchasing food. This, most women discussion groups said was especially so for most men whom they called ‘children’ whenever they have money because they said do not act responsibly (beer and extra-marital affairs). Men from Chitambi rural site however said that money would be the best form of payment because they said apart from buying maize, they could also use the money for buying other household necessities like soap. The next preferred payment form was fertilizer because they said fertilizer would help to improve their agricultural production the next years. On this, a mixed group of men and women participants from Nampeya said that they would prefer fertilizer to maize because fertilizer has the advantage of reducing the dependency on food handouts in the long run unlike when people are given maize or money

“they eat it there and then, ...next year, they start suffering again so they go and do the same ... but if it is not possible to pay fertilizer, then maize should be paid because the two form the basis of people’s survival (fertilizer and maize form a strong bond uniting families just like a marriage counselor) -*chimanga ndi feteleza ndiye zimamanga chinkhoswe*”.

Most participants said that everybody in the community who has the time and energy should be allowed to participate because they said “whoever has no food knows his/her shortfalls” . They said that most of the times the rich do not bother to go and work for food but,

“if they do, it means somewhere they have sensed a danger ... so let them benefit as well”.

However most of the participants from Mbwadzulu village lamented that most times, these development activities come at a time when their labour is also sought in their gardens such that people spend more time on them instead of working in their fields.

Organizationally, most participants from the sites said that they would prefer government officials and other people from outside their communities to administer these activities because they said these people have no picture of the communities such that they would perform their duties without favouring any households. A common example that was given as a case where people from the same community were used and ended up messing the whole programme was during the registration exercise for the ‘Starter Pack’ programme (free fertilizer and maize seeds). It was said from many sites that some responsible people e.g. the chief and agricultural Field Assistants favoured some households especially those related to them or those belonging to the ‘rich’. In some cases, even children belonging to some households were registered as if they are heads of households with the aim that they should receive more of the starter packs. In some cases especially for the poor households and those not related to the registering officers, some households were even ignored and did not benefit. However, in some other discussion groups, participants said that while the sole responsibility of overseeing the whole exercise should be left in the hands of outsiders, the involvement of the locals would be beneficial in that it would allow for the smooth running of the activities because people are used to their local leaders otherwise if everything is done by the outsiders, people would not have any trust and the rate of acceptance would be very low. They also said that such activities where no local leaders are involved would be taken as political. One men-only discussion group from Nampeya indicated that the chief should be responsible for the whole exercise because they said that they consider him as their father<sup>6</sup>

#### **4.5.6 Social Cohesion and Exclusion**

Several circumstances that depict cohesion were cited and discussed. In general, there appears to be strong social ties among households belonging to the same social classes and clan than across the social groups in all the sites visited. Common social ties across households belonging to different classes were reported that they are mainly rooted in festivities and other community ceremonial functions and during community development functionaries.

Regardless of the well being classes, it was indicated that people come together during religious activities, wedding ceremonies and funerals. Reported from almost all sites as a single event that unites most people is funeral. Most participants said since death does not spare households, people belonging to the higher classes feel very obliged to mix with the lower classes because if they do not, and death occurs in their families:

“.... they know that no one will go to console them.....and since these people are ‘hims’ (*ndi mahimu*) they feel they cannot dig graves.... we help them with grave digging and burying the dead...”

Other common functions that are performed during funerals in all the sites include:

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<sup>6</sup> Among the participants to the discussion group was the chief’s assistant

“Women go to the deceased’s house to help with mourning and console their fellow bereaved woman.... some women go out to collect firewood, water and flour from well-wishers in the community.”

They said when this is done, they also assist with cooking for all the people gathered. Where the deceased is a female, it was also indicated that women assist with the final ‘bathing of the body and dress it properly’ before putting it in a coffin. Similarly so are men.

On the other hand, men and boys assist with grave digging as indicated earlier , but they also go around the community announcing about the death, collecting few coins from well-wishers to assist with the funeral functions like purchasing salt, paraffin for night use and other immediate uses. In the three squatters, the monies were also reported to be used by those accompanying the bereaved family to their home if burial is not taking place in the same community. Men were also reported that they moderate all the funeral programmes and make sure every function is done properly regardless of the social class of the bereaved. The only exception is when the bereaved does not attend other people’s funerals. In this case, the grave diggers refuse to do so and in most cases, people leave everything for him/her to do alone. In such cases, it was indicated that only when the chief intervenes and the bereaved pays some money or a goat does the community come to assist. In some communities, Mtamba Village for example, participants indicated that there is a funeral committee with sub-committees responsible for funeral functions like grave digging, cooking etc. In some cases, participants said that when the bereaved is very poor to purchase a coffin , like the aged, some members of the community assist with money for the coffin.

In development activities, findings indicate that people work together because they know the outcome will benefit everybody universally. However, youths from Mbwadzulu said that

“although we all participate in community development projects, the poor are the first to be called during such times because they say that ‘the doing fine’ classes are always busy with other things “.... and will thus join us later”.

In choosing community leaders, the youths said that everybody above the age of 15 participates regardless of where one comes from

“....leaders are also chosen according to their qualities... what we look for are qualities like behavior befitting the post”.

In all rural sites, it was indicated that chiefs are chosen from within the clan of the incumbent’s or the deceased’s and that this is done collaboratively by elder men and women in the village, particularly those from the same clan. In the urban squatters, it was indicated that a chief may be chosen from any family but particularly considered are those that have stayed in the area for a long time, maybe over fifteen years. Contrary to the rural settings where it was indicated that a chief could be any male or female from the

same clan as the previous, participants in the urban squatters indicated that their chief is always a man.

It was also indicated that normally there were strong social ties within households belonging to the same classes because “the rich feel that once they chat with us we will make them poorer through asking for financial favours from them..” As such, each group chats alone “... those that possess vehicles chat amongst themselves while those that possess wheel barrows chat amongst themselves also <sup>7</sup> [wagalimoto ndi wagalimoto, wa wilibala ndi wa wilibala]”

Participants from Phwetekere indicated that great solidarity in the community mainly exists among the lower classes because they said that they easily understand each other since they have common interests. For example, they said that in the past there was an agreement made to start a neighbourhood watch team to help curb the levels of crime in the community. People belonging to the higher classes did not participate because they preferred to employ their own security and that they felt that

“we would always want them to pay for the neighbourhood facilities like torches and batteries thereby milking off their wealth ....”

Participants from Mbwadzulu village, a fishing community, also indicated that their unity is even extended to the lake. They said

“when we are going to the lake, we invite each other so that no one is left out because we normally go there at night .....and when we are inside the lake, and someone’s lamp has run out of paraffin or has lost his peddle, we go to assist if he shouts for help”

With the advent of political pluralism, people expressed the fear that political parties may in the long run become vehicles for exclusion of some sectors of society. On this, they said that some households have not benefited from loan schemes because they do not belong to the ruling party.

Findings from the various discussion groups also indicate that cases of exclusion are eminent in many sectors across the sites that were visited. In most of the cases, incidences of exclusion were reported to be rampant where access to economic opportunities are concerned. Most men discussion groups said that they are segregated against by most of the money lending institutions which they said favour women. They cited examples of the National Association of Business Women (NABW), Women’s World Banking, and the FINCA as some of the lending institutions that are targeting

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<sup>7</sup>Wagalimoto ndi wagalimoto, wa wilibala ndi wa wilibala refers to the social exclusion that occurs in the various communities where the poor chat alone, the rich among themselves also. The phrasing is contained in one of the popular songs in Malawi by a famous local artist, Billy Kaunda

women only in their areas. Some of the men discussion groups said that the only time that men are involved is when the lending institutions are demanding collateral where some property that belongs to them is made use of such that when the woman fails to repay the credit, that property is confiscated. In the same vein, some men lamented that there is currently no institution that is targeting men only for the credits. Women discussion groups had a two-fold view on this. Some of the women said that married women are the ones that have more access to loan facilities compared to the unmarried, the aged, disabled etc. This, they said was because the lending institutions feel secure to give loans to married women than the others because they feel married women are more responsible. The other view from women groups is that it is not true that women are favoured in giving out loans. They said that the money lending institutions have not given out any loans to women. Instead they said that these institutions just registered them and went on the radio to announce that they are making progress. They also said that most of the women that have benefited are wives to local political leaders, chiefs, church elders, and those whose husbands are 'rich'. Women from Nampeya indicated that some institutions only prefer to recognise as members only those that can read and write. Others are left out.

In general, most of the discussion groups indicated that where cases of exclusion are exercised, the 'lucky' ones are favoured. The participants defined 'luck' as referring to being related to the people administering the activities or being very close to them, being a relative of the chief, being a patriot of the ruling party and being rich such that it is easy to bribe the organizers.

#### ***4.5.7 Crime and Conflict***

Findings from the various discussion groups indicate a general consensus of how they define conflict and several incidences where conflicts have flared in the various communities were cited. Conflict was defined as those situations where people do not talk to each other amicably either because they have crashed their interests or that some people have done very wrong things to the other parties such that they sometimes may end fighting if no one intervenes. Some of the conflicts were reported to be common among the lower classes. A good example of a conflict that was cited to exist among the lower class people in Phwetekere, Chitambi and Kuphera villages is that involving land. This problem, however was reported in Che Musa to be present even between people belonging to different well-being classes and was reported to be perpetuated by the chiefs who distribute people's land to the 'rich' without consulting the owners. In Che Musa squatter, a common conflict that exists is that of unidentified boundaries among houses belonging to different households. This, the women participants said usually happens because the houses are too close to each other such that,

“if you are a visitor, you can enter somebody's house thinking that it belongs to your relative”

In such cases, sanitation care was reported to be problematic because other “women do not sweep around their homes but are fond of littering around..” such that women are always quarreling. Another incident that also brings out conflict among households in Che Musa was that since more than three houses are built on one plot, they use one latrine and this, the women said brings more problems regarding its care:

“you find that immediately you finish cleaning the latrine, a neighbour goes in and messes up .... this is very irritating” the women said.

They also made a strong point regarding plots where there are bachelors whom they said do not participate in the cleaning and yet

“...they frequently use these latrines .... including throwing in used condoms ....”.

In Phwetekere squatter and Kuphera village, it was reported that conflicts are also very eminent among the people belonging to the lower classes of well-being

“....the poor also quarrel especially at drinking joints .... they sometimes quarrel over girl or boy friends...”

The participants further said that intra-conflicts among households belonging to the higher categories are very rare because every one is busy making money and sees no point in becoming concerned with other people’s affairs. Some conflicts that were reported were specific to women

“there are cases whereby women quarrel at the water pumps or maize mills because some women do not want to stay on the queue so they ignore it and this ignites conflicts among them”

Some of the conflicts spill over from children when they are playing and it was reported that this sometimes makes families to be in conflict with each other especially where a child is hurt or wounded and where the children involved are from different well-being classes. In Chitambi village, some of the participants said that some of the conflicts in their village arise because of witchcraft such that those that are believed to be wizards are always cursed whenever there is a serious illness or sudden death in the village. Particularly accused are aged sectors of the community because they believe that these people “ they are carnivorous-feed on other people’s fresh”. Participants said that the tensions are further increased when a diviner/ herbalist confirms their suspicions “whether he tells lies or not, they just believe in what he says”.

*i. Conflicts between households belonging to different well-being classes*

It was reported that some of the conflicts are generated out of jealousy especially when they involve people from different well-being classes. This normally happens because on



one hand, the “rich are proud of the successes” and on the other, the poor are “jealousy of the rich”. Participants from Kuphera village in Dowa said that tension between the two extreme well-being classes has increased because theft is on the increase in the area. The targeted have been households belonging to the higher classes and because of this, the ‘higher class’ suspects that theft is perpetuated by the lower sectors of the same village and are normally reported to the police. On the same, participants from Phwetekere squatter area said that such tensions make the poor

“ ..... to plot crimes against the rich including stealing from them .. because we want to implement their suspicions...”.

However, the participants also said that the enmity does not end there because when a thief is caught, people have resorted to torching the culprits to death by petrol burning or beating. This, they said creates further conflicts between the relatives of the deceased and the owners of the property that was stolen such that plots become perpetual “... just last week a thief was burnt to death ....” They said. The other conflict that exists between people belonging to different well-being classes involves women.

“.....sometimes those people in the ‘doing well- *opeza bwino*’ classes go out with spouses of the poor”.

Participants from Phwetekere said that this also leads to tense relations in the community because they said the aggrieved husbands retaliate by hatching up plots against them. In Che Musa, one participant from a men-only discussion group said that he is always fighting other people because they play around with his wife whenever he is at work since he works at night (watchman). Another direct conflict that exists between people belonging to the two classes as reported by youths from Mbwadzulu village, involves payment of wages after some piecework has been done. The youths said that sometimes because the people have returned from the lake with a very small catch of fish, the boat and net owners do not want to pay them even little money. This, they said creates conflicts which sometimes results in the owners being beaten or having their nets confiscated. Participants from Madana site in Ntcheu said that in their community, there exists a very wide social gap between the poor and the rich. The only exception to this, as reported, exists where the two people are from the same clan [*limana*] because the rich are obliged to help. Most of the tensions existing in the area were reported to be perpetuated by their chief who sows seeds of disunity among households by favouring others especially those close to him and his relatives.

A women-only discussion group from Mbwadzulu in Mangochi said that although the poor are in most cases the leading agents to the inter-class conflicts, some of the people belonging to the upper classes indeed deserve to be beaten because they said ....“each time they buy new clothes, they boast a lot such that they are always admiring themselves wherever they go [*amachita matama ...akamayenda amangodziyang’anira*]”. Youths from Khwalala site said that some of the conflicts arise because people belonging to the higher well-being classes do not consider the lower classes as equals even in nature but “they regard them as a burden ...”.

*ii. Family conflicts*

There was also a common and general revelation across the visited communities that conflicts also arise inside families especially between husbands and wives. A common source of tension that was reported was about support systems in the family especially when the man is not supportive enough to provide for the family's needs.

“wives admire what is happening in other people's homes and cause problems to their husbands”.

Demands that women often times make are over clothes, food and money to start businesses and they normally end up in conflicts. It was also reported from some of the groups that tensions exist in most families because of infidelity on either part but especially on the part of women because when it is a man,

“most of us women are always forgiving”.

Another source of tension inside families that was also reported is that of meanness on either part of the couple especially when relatives from the other party have come to visit the family. This, they said creates conflicts which eventually results into fights and marriage breakdowns. Some women participants said

In some families, when a woman is doing business, the man becomes jealousy and starts taking away all the profits that the woman makes “and thus killing her business” whereas in other families, some husbands actually stop their wives from doing businesses because they feel that

“once their wives go out on business errands, they meet other men behind their backs .... most business women therefore end up quarreling with their husbands ..”.

Some of the common conflicts that were reported are in chapter 6 (Gender Relations) under subsection(s) ‘Violence’.

Crime was seen as consisting such acts as theft, robbery, burglary, murders and other acts that pose physical threat to people's lives. In general, crime was said to be on the increase in all the sites that were visited. However, most participants from Nampeya village indicated that crime is very minimal and armed robberies have never happened in the village. Specifically reported to be on the increase in all the other sites were armed robberies and murders. These, most participants said were because of the police's negligence and the political pluralism the country has just undergone. On the issue of the police, most participants indicated that in most cases the police does not come to the assistance of the people on time and that in some situations the police advise the victims to go and catch the robber ‘who is armed’ and that sometimes they just say

“.. we have no transport to go there, if you find one please let us know”.

On this, the participants said that only those people in the upper well-being classes normally afford to be assisted. The participants further said that the disbanding of the former MYP and the MCP's unpaid youth leaguers has also contributed to the rise in crime because they said that the two abandoned groups helped to maintain peace and order even in places that are very far from the police

“and they were very efficient than the police....”.

The advent of multiparty politics was also reported to have influenced the rise in armed robberies because they said the robbers are not punished enough once caught in the name of human rights

“you see them on the street after two days only and they even come to challenge you that they cannot stay there for long ..”.

## 5.0 PRIORITIES OF THE POOR

The poor in the 10 communities visited (7 rural villages and 3 poor urban settlements) had a number of problems that they face in their day to day lives. The problems differed from site to site and within sites. Some problems though were common in all the sites and within the sites. This section deals with priority problems of the poor as seen and analyzed by the poor themselves.

### 5.1 Problems in Urban Areas

Among the urban areas, the most common and predominant problems to the three sites (Table 12) were lack of food (hunger), poor roads, lack of health services in their locations, lack of money, unemployment, deaths, lack of safe drinking water, diseases and theft. There were other problems that were common only to two sites and these included lack of firewood, lack of bridges, lack of farming land, lack of clothes, drug abuse, lack of garbage tins in the produce markets and snatching each other's spouses which was closely related to women fighting over men.

**Table 12: Ranking of Major Problems by Poor Groups by Site (Urban)- Malawi**

PROBLEM	PHWETEKERE	CHE MUSA	MASASA
Hunger	Y	Y	Y
Scarcity of firewood		Y	Y
No electricity	Y		Y
No public transport systems		Y	Y
Poor roads/bridges	Y	Y	Y
Lack of capital for business			Y
No hospital/clinic/poor services	Y	Y	Y
Lack of money	Y	Y	Y
Unemployment	Y	Y	Y
Deaths	Y	Y	Y
Poor housing			Y
Lack of farming land	Y		Y
No good / safe water	Y	Y	Y
Diseases	Y	Y	Y
Lack of clothes		Y	Y
Witchcraft			Y
Lack of police		Y	
No money lending institutions		Y	
Poor education		Y	

<b>PROBLEM</b>	<b>PHWETEKERE</b>	<b>CHE MUSA</b>	<b>MASASA</b>
Fake promises by government		Y	
Schools far/poor education	Y	Y	Y
No produce markets e.g. ADMARC	Y	Y	
Lack of unity		Y	
Insecurity (theft, robbery, Thuggery)	Y	Y	Y
Segregation		Y	
Smoking Indian Hemp	Y	Y	
No support for the aged		Y	
High prices of commodities	Y		
Prostitution	Y		
Drunkenness	Y		
Orphanhood	Y		
Working without being paid	Y		
No dust bins at the market	Y	Y	
Snatching spouses	Y	Y	

Table 13 shows problems in the three urban sites as mentioned by women, men and youth groups. According to this table there were problems mentioned by all the three groups and other problems were mentioned by only two groups and some were specific to groups. Problems mentioned by all groups included lack of food (hunger), poor roads, unemployment, diseases and theft. Clearly, these are the leading problems in the three study sites.

**Table 13: Problems Identified by Gender and Age (Urban)**

<b>PROBLEM</b>	<b>MEN</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>YOUTH</b>
Hunger	Y	Y	Y
Scarcity of firewood		Y	
No electricity	Y	Y	
No public transport system		Y	
Poor roads/bridges	Y	Y	Y
Lack of business capital	Y	Y	
No hospital/clinic/poor services		Y	Y
Lack of money	Y	Y	
Unemployment	Y	Y	Y
Deaths	Y	Y	
Poor housing	Y	Y	Y
Lack of farming land	Y	Y	Y
No good / safe water	Y	Y	
Diseases	Y	Y	Y
Insecurity (Theft, robbery, and thuggery)	Y	Y	Y
Lack of clothes	Y	Y	
Witchcraft			Y
Lack of police			Y
No money lending institutions		Y	Y
Poor education/schools far	Y	Y	Y
Government lies			Y
No produce markets e.g. ADMARC	Y	Y	
Lack of unity		Y	
Segregation		Y	
Smoking Indian Hemp		Y	Y
No support for the aged	Y		
High prices of commodities	Y	Y	
Prostitution	Y		Y
Drunkenness	Y		Y
Orphanhood	Y		Y
Poverty	Y	Y	
Working without being paid	Y		
No dust bins at the market	Y		
Snatching spouses		Y	

Problems mentioned by only two groups include the falling of dwelling units and bathrooms due to heavy rains, lack of electricity, lack of money for starting up businesses, deaths, lack of houses, lack of money lending agencies, lack of schools, drug abuse, high commodity prices, prostitution, drunkenness, orphanhood, and poverty. The following section briefly discusses some of the problems.

The problem of hunger came up in all the three urban sites and in all the three sites the problem was worse now than ten years ago. Most groups in two sites (Masasa and Che Musa) ranked it number one. In Kowerani Masasa for example, the problem of hunger emerged in all the six groups and with the exception of two groups of women, the rest of the groups ranked it as the most pressing problem. The groups blamed the high cost of farm inputs for what they perceive to be deterioration in food security.

The problem of theft also came up in all the three urban sites. People indicated that the problem of theft has reached crisis proportion in recent times because of unemployment, poverty, high cost of living, laziness and sheer jealousy. It was said that a combination of these factors have pushed a vast majority of poor people into criminal activities. Theft is increasingly becoming an attractive means of livelihood. People described it as "*a shortcut means of livelihood*".

Lack of communal water points or any source of safe drinking water was another major problem affecting the urban sites. Even where the water points may be available water was still a problem for the poor because the fees per water bucket are very high. Furthermore, many water points have been disconnected because the committees looking after them have accumulated very high bills. They misappropriated the fees collected which was meant for routine maintenance and settlement of the bills. In some instances the water points are simply inadequate to cater for the ever rising demand resulting from the increased population in all the three locations.

Another problem affecting urban communities is unemployment. Reasons given for the rising levels of unemployment included inavailability of companies, redundancies and retrenchment both in private and public sectors, lack of quality education and excessive corruption. Most people said that employment opportunities are not fairly competed for. They said that because of wide spread corruption in the job market, it is not easy for people that do not have people in positions of power to get jobs.

Though these people are on the outskirts of town, their economy is predominantly subsistence. Land is thus a major productive asset for them. Hence, the problem of lack of land featured in all the three urban sites. People said that now they have less land because of, among other things, rapid population increase, the appropriation of land that was initially 'theirs' by the City Council and selling it at very high prices. Thus, those people that cannot afford the high prices are moving out and settlers are coming and grabbing the best land. People in Pwetekere estimated that a single plot now costs over K4000.00 and poor people cannot afford this. They said that the problem is so acute that nobody is able to even cultivate maize (green fresh maize) for consumption.

The problem of deaths also featured prominently in all the three urban sites. People attributed the high mortality rates to the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. People stated that the rates are particularly high in their areas because the incidence of prostitution in the cities is high. Prostitution was said to be on the increase because of lack of employment and difficulties in finding food. For some women, it was said, this was the only means for them to get some livelihood.

'Poor roads' is another problem that affects the people in the urban areas. The problem was said to be acute particularly during the rainy season. Most roads in the locations visited have big pot-holes that have forced both public and private transport operators to withdraw services in these areas. People, especially women say that this makes their life unbearable. This is because most women are involved in small-scale businesses that see them travelling into town. Transport is thus vital to them. They now either have to walk or stay at home and earn nothing. Some roads are said to be overgrown with bushes which makes them dangerous at night. They harbour snakes and serve as hide outs for robbers.

A new problem came out of the discussion with poor women in the township of Blantyre. The women said that now they feel discriminated in times of free maize distribution whenever there is food shortages. They said that this affects mainly women from very poor households.

In the same township two new problems came from one of the men's group which appeared nowhere else. The two problems are the lack of support for the aged by the younger generation and the high costs of materials for funerals e.g. coffins. These problems are a recent occurrence and affect mainly the people falling into the 3<sup>rd</sup> category downwards (below the 'at-least doing well')

### ***5.1.1 Groups of well-being affected by the various problems***

Though these problems affect all people in the sites, they affect different well-being categories differently. The magnitude of severity across these categories also differs. The lower well-being categories in the three sites though are generally more vulnerable than the better off categories.

The problem of theft, for example, is a problem for all well-being categories. Households in the second well-being category though, that is, the doing a little well are the major victims. It was said that these are particularly targeted because they do not have sophisticated security system as do the 'haves/doing well'. Most of the houses for the 'doing well-the haves' are fitted with security alarm system and criminals suspect that they have guns for protection. This though does not mean that this category is completely free of this problem. They, too, fall prey to theft because they have the goods that robbers are after.



The problem of communal water points is mainly a problem for categories below the 'haves/doing well/better'. It was said that this was not a problem for the upper category because they usually have private water points and their houses are self contained. This could even be extended to some households from the second well-being category. Some of them have private water points in their yards. It is a serious problem though for the rest of the well-being categories.

Unemployment is a problem for categories below 'the haves/doing well' to the lowest. It was stated that those in the first category are often well educated and well networked. They therefore do not have problems in getting jobs. In fact women in Pwetekere said "they change jobs as if they are pairs of trousers". The same may apply to some people in the second category who are sometimes assisted by friends and relatives in the first category.

The problem of lack of land was said to be acute in categories below 'the at-least doing better'. In all the three sites shortage of land was blamed on the rapid population growth in recent years. Apart from the natural population growth a lot of people have settled in these areas recently.

Hunger or lack of food is said to affect all but that people in categories below the at-least doing better are particularly vulnerable. People in these categories are said not to have reliable sustainable means of livelihood. Often they depend on casual labour and very small-scale businesses where they barely make profits.

The problem of death affects all and this is linked to the scourge of the HIV/AIDS epidemic". Particularly those in the higher well-being classes because it was said that they have sexual intercourse with other women quite a lot.

### 5.1.2 *Changes in Problems and Priorities*

There have been changes in the problems and priorities of the poor over the past ten years. Some problems have disappeared altogether, others are still existing while new ones have emerged.

Hunger for example is and was a problem ten years ago. The only difference is that it is more severe now than ten years ago. In all the three urban sites the problem of hunger had worsened in that it now affects more people. Most people during the discussions contended that the problem of hunger has progressively worsened because of scarcity of land and the dramatic increase in the prices of essential farm inputs such as fertilizer and seeds. Some people even pointed out that the government's policy of trade liberalization has adversely affected the food security situation in their areas. In recent months the problem has become so acute because of the rise of the price of maize and maize flour since the devaluation of the Malawi Kwacha.

Similarly, poor roads were and are still a problem. The reason is that they are not properly maintained and are therefore easily washed away during heavy rains. It was stated that the state of roads within these communities is relatively worse off today than ten years ago. The people said that these days the government no longer maintains the roads and the community's spirit of self-help had waned because some politicians discouraged people during campaign that self help activities are slavery and non-paying – *thangata*.

Some of the problems are relatively new in the three sites. Some of the new problems that were mentioned included lack of farming land, falling of houses due to heavy rains and unemployment. The rapid population growth in the areas has reduced the amount of land that is available to a household. Land that was used for cultivation has now been turned into settlements or business premises. The problem of falling of houses has come about because of the heavy rains in the past two or so years. Most of the houses in these areas cannot withstand heavy rains; they are made of mud and thatched with grass. Unemployment has soared because of among other things, retrenchment, privatization of public enterprises and the rise in population. There are now more people seeking jobs but very few openings. Even casual labour is very difficult to source.

The problem of death is said to have worsened in all the three sites because of the impact of the HIV/AIDS pandemic. The other problem that was said to have worsened is the problem of inadequate security which was attributed to laxity in the operations of the police force.

Among the problems that were said to have disappeared are the forced gifts to people in high political authority (to Dr. Kamuzu Banda and senior MCP officials), purchase of party cards, personal tax and forced attendance of political rallies. These are no longer problems because of the change of the political system from a one party to a multi-party state.

Overall though, people said that, the problems which have emerged and those that have remained, outweigh the impact of the problems which have disappeared. The disappearance of these problems was said not to have made any significant difference in the well-being of most people.

### ***5.1.3 Problems for which they need external support***

Findings from the three urban sites indicate a common feeling of the participants over the type of problems that they can solve on their own and those which they would need external support. Out of the many problems that people in the three communities face, they felt they could realistically deal with only a few of the problems on their own. These problems include lack of bridges, lack of firewood, lack of houses, witchcraft and lack of clothes. They said that they have previously tried to maintain roads and construct bridges but they have often been washed away by heavy rains. The materials used are often improvised therefore do not last long.

The list of problems requiring external support is very long and it is almost all the problems. Some of the problems included are hunger, theft and lack of farming land. The reasons behind this list were as follows: the problem of hunger has increased because of lack of essential farm inputs such as fertilizer and seeds. They are very expensive and only a few can afford them. This has meant poor harvests, which has led to serious food shortages. The government should therefore make an effort to ensure that these inputs are affordable to as many people as possible. If not, the government should make fertilizer and related farm inputs available but very cheap and easily bought with cash or credit. The shortage of farming land has also contributed to the escalation of the problem of hunger. They therefore suggested that the government should regulate the powers of the chief over land. Many people have lost land because the chief has sold it to outsiders. They cannot therefore cultivate enough even for subsistence only.

The other solution to the land problem as suggested by the people is for the government to intensify family planning campaigns. People said that government should make family planning methods accessible as much as possible. If the population is left unchecked, the problem will worsen even further.

They blame the police for the problem of theft. They are inefficient and ineffective. They are not responsive to the requests of the people and if they do, the culprits are not brought to book accordingly. This tendency has increased the number of thieves because they know that if they are apprehended, they will not face the long arm of the law. They will be set free. The problem can only be contained if the police are diligent in their operations. Poverty is yet another reason for the escalation of theft. The cost of living is unbearable and most people are resorting to theft as a means of livelihood. The government could assist by creating jobs and negotiating with financial institutions to provide loans in order to ameliorate poverty levels.

For most problems even if people said that they needed external support, it was clear from the discussions that what they needed was a little push from the government or non-governmental organization . They could solve most of the problems by themselves.

## 5.2 Rural Sites

The seven rural sites had more or less the same set of problem as the urban sites. These problems included: hunger (lack of food), lack of hospitals, lack of safe water, lack of maize mills, lack of loan facilities, high commodity prices, theft, unemployment, poor bridges, shortage of land and lack of produce markets e.g. ADMARC

**Table 14: Problems identified by various discussion groups from across the rural sites**

Problems	Kuphera	Madana	Khwalala	Mbwadzulu	Nampeya	Mtamba	Chitambi
Hunger	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
No safe water sources	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Lack of money	Y	Y	Y	Y			Y
Poor roads	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y
No hospital	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
No post office	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Poor schools/ teachers' houses		Y					
High prices of commodities like fertiliser	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Diseases	Y	Y	Y	Y			
Lack of clothes		Y	Y		Y		
Unemployment		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Orphanhood / aged		Y	Y	Y		Y	Y
Overpopulation	Y	Y		Y			
Theft	Y	Y			Y	Y	Y
Deaths	Y	Y	Y	Y			
Neglecting pregnant women and children		Y					
Divorces		Y					
Lack of farmland	Y	Y	Y				Y
Irrigation water		Y					
Lack of money to buy coffins		Y					
Lack of transport	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y
Lack of maize mills	Y	Y	Y		Y	Y	Y
No bridges	Y	Y			Y		Y
Lack of relish			Y				Y
Falling of houses and toilets			Y				

Problems	Kuphera	Madana	Khwalala	Mbwadzulu	Nampeya	Mtamba	Chitambi
Floods			Y				
Lack of schools	Y		Y	Y	Y	Y	Y
Cassava diseases			Y				
No ADMARC	Y		Y	Y			
Lack of farm equipment	Y		Y			Y	
Lack of fertiliser / farm inputs			Y	Y	Y		
Soil erosion				Y			
Bus stop shelter				Y			
Adult Literacy				Y	Y		
Telephone				Y	Y	Y	
Secondary school				Y			
Decline in fish catches				Y			
Early marriages				Y			
Lack of credit facilities				Y	Y	Y	Y
Secondary school selection				Y			
Lack of money for school fees				Y			
Lack of classes				Y			
Lack of produce markets				Y		Y	Y
Lack of nearby police					Y	Y	
Low selling price on farm produce	Y				Y		Y
Lack of companies					Y		
Lack of beddings					Y		
Lack of utensils					Y		
Lack of library					Y		
Lack of sports clubs					Y		
Government threats						Y	
Lack of development public works						Y	
Lack of political freedom						Y	Y
No grocery shops						Y	
Lack of ADMARC depots							Y
Lack of distant education centres (DEC)							Y
Livestock diseases							Y
Loss of soil fertility							Y
Lack of firewood							Y
High cost of transport							Y
Murder	Y						
Lack of electricity	Y						
Thugs							Y

In most sites the problem of lack of food came up in most of the different groups and it was often ranked number one. Food is said to be a serious problem in most areas due to overpopulation which forces people to have small farm land and cannot produce enough food. Even where land was a little abundant loss of soil fertility results in poor yields leading to hunger. Unemployment was also given as a factor contributing to this problem. It was said that since most people are unemployed, they do not have money to buy food. Above all though, lack of food in the rural sites is blamed on the high costs of farm inputs. Most people, it was said, cannot afford this and hence they come out with very little yields.

The problem of lack of health facilities in the villages or in the vicinity of the village also comes through in most sites. Health facilities are a problem because they are located far away from their villages. In addition to this, even those facilities away from them usually have no drugs. People thus spend hours on end trying to get medication from the hospital but come back with nothing.

Another pressing problem for the rural poor is the lack of safe clean water. In most cases this was a problem because either the villages do not have boreholes, water taps or protected wells. In some villages the problem was because the taps are no longer functioning or the water pressure is too low. People stated that some of the reasons that have brought about this problem are deforestation which has resulted in the reduction of the availability of water and the siltation which has covered most of the wells.

Lack of maize mills also came up in all the seven sites. The only exception was the youth in Machinga who did not mention this. The problem is that these are far from people's villages. Most people would rather have these in their villages.

**Table 15: Problems identified by gender and by age – Rural sites**

<b>PROBLEMS</b>	<b>MEN</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>YOUTH</b>
Hunger	Y	Y	Y
Lack of boreholes / safe drinking water	Y	Y	Y
Lack of money	Y	Y	Y
Poor roads	Y	Y	Y
No hospital	Y	Y	Y
No post office	Y	Y	Y
Poor schools/ teachers' houses	Y	Y	Y
Poverty	Y	Y	Y
High prices of commodities	Y	Y	Y
Diseases	Y	Y	Y
Lack of clothes		Y	Y
Unemployment	Y	Y	Y
Orphanhood / aged	Y	Y	Y
Overpopulation		Y	Y
Theft	Y	Y	
Deaths	Y	Y	Y
Neglecting impregnated women and children		Y	
Divorces		Y	
Lack of farmland	Y	Y	Y
Irrigation water	Y		
High prices of fertiliser	Y		
Lack of coffins		Y	
Lack of transport	Y	Y	Y
Lack of maize mills	Y	Y	Y
No bridges	Y	Y	
Lack of relish	Y	Y	
Falling of houses and toilets	Y	Y	
Floods		Y	
Lack of schools	Y	Y	Y
Cassava diseases	Y		
No ADMARC	Y	Y	Y
Lack of farm equipment	Y	Y	Y
Lack of fertiliser / farm inputs	Y	Y	
Soil erosion			
Bus stop shelter		Y	
Adult Literacy		Y	
Telephone	Y	Y	
Secondary school	Y	Y	Y
Decline in fish catches			Y
Early marriages			Y
Lack of credit facilities	Y	Y	Y
Secondary school selection	Y		
Lack of money for school fees			Y
Lack of classes			Y
Lack of produce markets	Y	Y	Y
Lack of nearby police	Y	Y	Y

<b>PROBLEMS</b>	<b>MEN</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>YOUTH</b>
Low selling price on farm produce	Y	Y	Y
Lack of companies	Y		
Lack of beddings		Y	
Lack of utensils		Y	
Lack of library			Y
Lack of sports clubs			Y
Government threats			
Lack of development public works			Y
Lack of political freedom			
No grocery shops		Y	
Lack of ADMARC depots		Y	
Lack of distant education centres (DEC)			
Livestock diseases		Y	
Loss of soil fertility	Y		
Lack of firewood		Y	
High cost of transport		Y	
Thugs		Y	
Lack of electricity			Y
Murder		Y	

The problem of high commodity prices featured highly in all the seven rural sites. People blamed this on the fall of the Kwacha and the unscrupulous behaviour of most traders. People said that the cost of living is very high because traders are just fixing commodity prices as they wish disregarding the recommended government prices.

From a number of sites, the problem of lack of loan facilities also came out distinctly. People stated that they need loans to start or boost their businesses but they don't have institutions in their village/community which can provide these.

Theft is a problem that was identified by all sites. In Machinga though women did not perceive this as a problem. Some groups attributed the problem of theft to the growth of population. They say the population has grown disproportional to the growth of the police force. Hence there are few policemen serving an increased population. Discussions in most sites indicated that people would feel safer if they had some police unit in their area. Other people feel that theft has increased because once thieves are apprehended they are not punished enough. "Imagine when we send these thieves to the police we end up being disappointed to see them back the same day". Theft in other areas was blamed on the rise in the number of orphans and the unemployed. They said that most of these orphans and unemployed resort to stealing because this is the only way they can support themselves. The other problem mentioned in all the sites was the increase in the number of orphans. People say that this problem is overwhelming to them because of the deadly AIDS disease. They said that most of these orphans do not have adequate support and hence, they end up stealing.



Closely connected with the issue of lack of credit facilities is the problem of unemployment. In Mulanje it was only the women and the youth that mentioned this. Some people attributed this problem to lack of land. They said that the problem is on the increase because they no longer have land to cultivate. They then go in search of paid employment. Lack of companies or firms that can employ people in the area was also seen to be a major cause of the problem.

Two problems discussed above namely, lack of food and unemployment had land as one of their major causes. In a number of sites and groups, shortage of land came out as a problem in its own right, This was attributed to the problem of population growth. People said that in the past the population was small and they used to have 2 or more pieces of land. This is not the case now because they have shared part of their land with other family members. Some people went on to say that in the past they could grow different crops on different fields because they had enough land which is not the case today *"kale timachita kasintha-sintha wa mbewu koma masiku ano zinatha"*.

Lack of bridges also came up in nearly all the rural sites. The same applied to lack of an ADMARC market.

A problem that came out specifically from a site in Mangochi was the dwindling of the fish stocks in the lake. Among the many statements pronounced, the youth said

*"In the past this problem did not exist but now it has emerged because of over-population and the use of bigger vessels for catching fish. The population is high nowadays and in an area where people rely on fishing like here it is a great problem. The Malawi Lakes Development Company (MALDECO), a fisheries company, is using bigger vessels to catch fish. These bigger vessels catch even the smallest fish. The fish are not given enough time to breed. This is leading to unavailability of fish. In the past we only caught fish with nyambo (bait) and mbedza (hook). Making use of hooks and baits could give a lot of time for fish to breed"*

In Machinga the youth brought up the problem of lack of a library in their area. They said that this is a problem affecting everybody who is interested in education regardless of the socio-economic background or category of well-being.

### 5.2.1 Changes in Problems

Even if lack of food was a problem ten years ago, the problem is worse these days. The problem is said to be getting worse because of overpopulation which is resulting in small land holding size leading to poor yields - unlike in the past when the population was low and the land holding size bigger. They also said that the problem is worse off presently because of loss of soil fertility and the rise in the price of fertiliser which was not the case in the past.

The problem of lack of hospitals was said to have worsened simply because even the facilities that are at a distance, medication is a problem. People said that the problem is more pressing now than in the past because though hospitals were far, at present the problem is compounded with the unavailability of drugs. In Maching and Mangochi though some people said that there was an improvement and this was because they said they had Village Health Committees that were functioning. They claimed that members of these committees could at least help them deal with small ailments.

The problem of lack of safe water was in most sites reported to have got worse. As stated before this was either because the taps were broken, the wells were silted or the boreholes were broken.

The problem of maize mills in most cases remained the same. Principally this was because people talked of maize mills being a problem because of the distances. These distances are in most cases the same. Unlike in the case of health facilities where the distances were the same but the problem was worsened due to unavailability of drugs, the problem of maize mills remained the same. Not even the pricing seems to have changed people's attitudes towards the maize mills.

The problem of lack of loan facilities was said to be relatively new. This was because in the past people were not aware of these facilities. On the other hand, people said that with the little money they made be it in farming or some small business, they were able to sustain their lives. With the fall of the value of the Kwacha, it was said that people cannot make ends meet, hence the need to diversify their economic activities and hence the need for loans.

The problem of high prices of commodities was also said to be new in most of the sites. Most people attributed this to the fall of the Kwacha, "*Kutsika Mphamvu kwa ndalama*" and political pluralism which they said have resulted in freedoms which make traders fix prices as they wish without due regard to the rural poor.

Theft is an old phenomenon but it has got worse. Most people said that the problem was there in the past but that it was not as pressing as it is today. The reasons are stated above (lack of proper punishment for offender, fewer policemen, increase in the number of orphans and the unemployed).

Disease is a problem that came up in most of the sites. This too is not a new phenomenon but that it is worse than before and it is getting even worse. People blamed this on the HIV/AIDS epidemic. Poverty was said to be blamed for this as well because it was said that it was the thing that drove so many women into prostitution. This trade is said to be the major contributor to the epidemic.

### ***5.2.2 Groups of the poor affected by the various problems***

In the rural sites most problems were said to affect all segments of the society. There were slight differences here and there but the differences were not that significant because there were few people that could really be classified as doing well. Some problems though affect people in the lower well-being categories more than those in the upper categories. Very few problems affect those in the upper categories more. In all the seven rural sites it was only the problem of theft that seemed to affect the upper categories more. The reason behind this is that these are the 'haves' and thieves are sure of getting something worthwhile if they visit these people. Otherwise most problems affect the lower categories more and this includes the group closer to the upper group.

A look at some specific problems reveals that hunger is a problem that affects all categories of well-being except the highest category and this is in all the sites. Most groups were quick to emphasise that lack of food is a more serious problem for people in categories below the 'at-least doing well'. It was said that the situation is such for these people because in the face of high prices and shortage of land, they rely on casual labour and very small-scale businesses for their livelihoods. For a group in Mangochi which is a fishing area, the problem is worsened by the decline in the fish stocks. Again in Mangochi, female headed-households were singled out as the group most affected since they have a lot of responsibilities whereas in male headed households, most people share the responsibilities

The problem of lack of hospitals also affects almost everyone in the seven sites regardless of the well-being category to which they belong. Those in category one though feel less of the impact of this problem. This is because this lot can afford transport to and from the hospital.

Death as a problem was said to be a problem common to all categories. It is said to spare nobody. Both the rich and the poor are equally affected. The death rate is very high because of limited health facilities which makes people to die of otherwise curable diseases. It is worsened by the AIDS pandemic. *The victims are disproportionately women because they are forced into prostitution because of poverty.* There is nothing else that these people can do because they need money for clothes and food.

The problem of safe water sources is a general problem too and affects all categories of well-being. All households in the sites visited depend on communal water points. Nobody has a private water point. When all the boreholes break down, they all rely on the rivers or lake for their water and this is regardless of what category a household is in.

The problem of unemployment was said to be particularly acute for categories below the 'at-least doing fine/well'. The groups indicated that the magnitude of the problem has increased because of high levels of illiteracy, lack of companies that can create employment opportunities and the laying off of civil-servants. The upper categories are not badly affected because most of them are self-employed in some businesses.

### *5.2.3 External Support*

Most rural communities seem to have resigned to their fate and hence when it came to the question of problems they could solve on their own, they were very few in number.

On the problem of theft communities feel that they could deal with the problem on their own if they were given the authority and chance to punish the thieves themselves. They said that thieves could face tough punishment if punished within the community as opposed to the way the police are handling them. Some people though feel that they still need external help from the police even if they question the ability of the policemen to take care of all their concerns considering that they are few in numbers.

The problem of bridges was one of the problems most people said they could solve by themselves. They said that if that if they were properly organised, they could easily build and maintain these bridges as they did in the past

The problem of hunger also can be solved by the people themselves but they still require some external assistance. This external assistance would be in the form of extension advice on the use of manure to restore soil fertility which they said would increase the yields. The other external contribution would be in a form of government free fertiliser and seeds distribution or at least subsidising the agricultural inputs.

Health facilities too require a joint effort between the people and government. Most people said that the community could mould bricks and build the health facilities. The government though was expected to contribute the other building materials, staff, salaries and drugs.

On the problem of maize mills most communities said that this is a problem that communities themselves should be able to sort out and not wait for the intervention of outsiders. The problem really is the lack of electricity in the rural areas. People then cannot venture in this businesses because it is too costly to run if they use maize mills run on diesel. The form of external support thus, would be for government to intensify its rural electrification programme so that many villages may have electricity. This would then entice people to install maize mills in the villages.

The problem that needs complete external assistance is that of rising prices of essential commodities. The common poor man in the village feels that there is nothing they can do

about this apart from the government reversing the trend. How the government does it, the communities do not care.

#### **5.2.4 *The future***

For the future most groups were not that optimistic. Most groups feared that some of the problems like hunger, unemployment and theft will keep on increasing in the years to come. They said they feared that the problem of hunger will continue because fertiliser is expensive and they do not see the price going down. People then have no hope of producing enough. They also feared that the ever growing population puts pressure on land holding so much so that there is little hope for good yields

Most groups also paint a gloomy picture on theft. People fear that this is unlikely to improve because of the poverty, overpopulation and high unemployment rate.

Unemployment itself is feared that it will even worsen because the number of educated people is increasing while job markets continue to decline.

People in Mangochi feel that the fish catches will continue to be a problem. They say they see the problem continuing because the fisheries department (reference to a parastatal commercial firm) is fishing heavily. They said that their boats go fishing regardless of whatever weather is prevailing on the lake and that is why these boats catch more than 500 boxes a day which is too much for the fish to have a chance to breed.

## **6.0 INSTITUTIONAL ANALYSIS**

### **6.1 Introduction**

In this report the term “institution” is used to refer to formal and informal organisations and the norms, rules and values associated with them. The norms, rules and values of an institution define the roles, responsibilities, relationships and patterns of behaviour of the members of an institution. Institutions, as defined here, may include associations, groups, networks and individuals, both within and outside a community with whom members of a community have some relations.

### **6.2 Which Institutions Are Important in People’s Lives**

Approximately 90 different institutions were identified by the communities in the ten sites visited. These institutions may roughly be categorised into six types: social service institutions, central administrative institutions, NGO/Donor institutions, financial institutions, agricultural related institutions, and retail/marketing institutions. Under social service, we have traditional as well as modern institutions. A list of these institutions is given below. There is one institution which was mentioned in one community only and this is “lake” meaning Lake Malawi. This was mentioned in the fishing community of Mbwadzulu in Mangochi district.

#### **i) Social Service Institutions**

Traditional:

- Chief, village headman, assistant VH (10)
- Kinsman/relative/grandparents (10)
- Marriage counsellor (9)
- Herbalist/witch doctor/traditional birth attendant (8)
- Friend (6)
- Funeral association (4)
- Graveyard diggers (2)
- Neighbour (2)
- Traditional court
- Nyau cult (masked traditional dance)

Modern:

- Hospital (10) including Under –five clinic (2)
- Church (10)
- School (8)
- Project Committee (Health, water, education and roads) (8)
- Court (6)
- District Commissioner, City Council, Village/Area Development Committee (6)

Church elder (4)  
Maize mill  
Others (Sports, home basic care, AIDS TOTO, and Banja la Mtsogolo)

**ii) Central administrative and political institutions**

Police (10)  
Agriculture (EPA, FA, VA) (9)  
UDF Party (8)  
Political Party Chairman (6)  
Government (6)  
Member of Parliament (4)  
Fisheries (2)  
Others (President, DEO, CDA, Ombudsman, teacher, labour office)

**iii) NGO/Donor institutions**

Christian Service Committee  
Canadian Physicians for Aid and Relief (CPAR)  
World Vision International (WVI)  
AFRICARE  
GTZ  
MASAF (Malawi Social Action Fund)  
GABLE (USAID's Girls access to basic learning and education programme)  
European Union  
IDA

**iv) Financial institutions**

Malawi Rural Finance Company (MRFC) or Malawi Mudzi Fund (5)  
National Association of Business Women (NABW) (4)  
Small Enterprise Development Organisation of Malawi (4)  
FINCA (3)  
Money lender (2)  
DEMATT (2)  
Women's World Banking (WWB) (2)  
SACCO (2)  
Malawi Union of Savings and Credit Co-operatives (MUSCCO)  
National Association of Small and Medium Enterprises (NASME)  
Bank

**v) Agricultural related institutions**

ADMARC (6)  
Farmers Clubs (4)

Farmers World  
Tobacco Association of Malawi (TAMA)  
Estate owner

vi) **Retail/marketing institutions .**

Grocery/store (6)  
ADMARC (6)  
Market (4)

The figures in parentheses indicate the number of sites at which these institutions were identified. Where a number is not indicated, it means the institution was mentioned at one site only. However, these numbers do not connote importance but rather prominence of the institutions.

As will be observed, among the traditional social service institutions, the traditional leader, kinsman, *nkhoswe* (marriage counsellor) and the traditional doctor are clearly the most recognised institutions. On the other hand, of the modern social service institutions the hospital, the church, the school and the project committee are most prominent. Among the central administrative institutions, the police tops the list seconded by agriculture. Under agriculture, the readily identifiable institutions are the Extension Planning Area (EPA), the Field Assistant (FA) and the Veterinary Assistant). The Malawi Rural Finance Company (or Malawi Mudzi Fund), the National Association for Business Women (NABW) and the Small Enterprise Development Organisation of Malawi (SEDOM) are readily identifiable as institutions in Malawi. Among the agricultural related institutions, the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) and farmers clubs are easily recognised in many communities. Among the retail and/or marketing institutions, the grocery/store, ADMARC and open air markets are recognised. By market here is meant the market centres that have been established in the rural areas with hierarchically determined opening days of the week. Saturday and Wednesday markets are the biggest. The non-governmental organisations and donor agencies appear to be least recognised as institutions in the communities and each one of them was identified by one community.

In summary we can say that the most prominent institutions are the local traditional leader, the kinsmen, the *nkhoswe* (marriage counsellor), the traditional doctor, the police, the hospital, the school, the project committees and the agricultural service institutions.



### **6.2.1 How Do People Rate These Institutions**

Institutions were ranked according to a set of criteria. People in the communities have their own particular criteria they use in order to determine the usefulness of a particular institution. Below is a summary of these criteria.

Helpful (Othandiza): Describes an institution that provides help when help is needed; one that they turn to when in crises. One that the community cannot do without; it is essential or a necessity.

Understanding (Omva madandaulo): An institution that responds to people's problems with concern and interest and then help or try to help them. One that is empathetic and democratic i.e. allows people to play a role in decision making process.

Conciliatory (Oyanjanitsa): An institution which unites and brings people together in a peaceful manner. It conciliates, moderates and reconciles people with differing needs and views. It brings harmony (social cohesion) and accommodates differing opinions.

Trustworthy (Okhulupilika): Describes the institution that can be relied upon; one that provides good advice and is itself exemplary. One that is dependable, hard working, fast and effective.

Impartial (Osakondera): Describes institutions which help anyone regardless of who she/he is or where she/he comes from. Other terms used were akin to fairness, just, not favouring

Kind (Okoma mtima): Describes institutions which help basing on the need. Do not despise people; have interest in people's activities; are loving and God fearing.

It is important to note that although these are generally agreed to be the criteria for a good institution, different groups rated the importance of each of these criteria differently depending on the type of institution being evaluated. For instance, for a hospital trustworthiness may be more important than conciliatory whereas for the village headman or the *nkhoswe* (marriage counsellor) conciliatory may be a more important criterion than trustworthiness. This means that depending on the criterion being used, an institution may be rated differently by the same group. For instance, while the kinship structure is rated high on participatory decision making, Malawi Rural Finance Company is rated low on this criterion as it is seen to impose decision on the people. The following quote is quite revealing:

...kinship structure at least allows some participation in decision making by close relatives. But there is very little participation in decision making by people in Farmer's Clubs...The Field Assistant is selfish and

lazy...give him 5 out 50. Malawi Mudzi Fund [now part of Malawi Rural Finance Company] just imposes decisions on people; give them 2 out of 50...We really count on the village headman during dispute settling and presiding over funerals...religious groups help during funerals...kinsmen help during funerals and neighbours help when one is broke and during funerals. However, the court and Farmer's Clubs actions cannot be predicted because those holding positions receive bribes...The Malawi Mudzi Fund has never given a loan to anyone in our village or those in the neighbouring villages...

The implication is that it is not appropriate to try and force a uni-dimensional hierarchical order of importance of institutions in the communities. Each institution has its own unique virtue but there is always a down side to it. For instance, when it comes to fairness one community rated the "court" 50 out of 50 because they said the court judges all cases without fear or favour (...sakondela or kuopa munthu ai...). On the other hand the hospital, even though considered very important on the criterion of helpfulness, scored 3 out of 50 because "the hospital staff are not faithful...they sell drugs intended for the use of the community. More over some institutions have multiple functions and roles which make ranking inappropriate.

Nonetheless, communities were able to identify institutions which they considered important in their lives. About a quarter of all the institutions were identified by five or more discussion groups in 5 or more sites. The rest were brought in either by four or less discussion groups. The majority of these institutions were only identified by only one discussion group. For example, the *Nyau* cult was brought up only in a men's group and a youth group in Dowa district only.

The institutions that were identified by at least five different discussion groups included the hospital, school, village headman, kinsman, police, *nkhoswe* marriage counsellor, agricultural field assistant and the church.

The village headman was generally ranked high (1<sup>st</sup> to 3<sup>rd</sup>) by almost all the groups i.e. men, women and youth. This is true whether one is looking at urban or rural communities or predominantly agricultural or fishing communities or in the highly populated communities in Chiradzulu and Mulanje. The village headman is ranked high mostly because people believe he/she is helpful during times of bereavement, sickness and illness. He/she is also important in settling disputes. In many communities the VH was considered impartial in the sense that he/she helps people regardless of affiliation, relation, belief or gender. Some people however said that some chiefs are favouring and they sell other people's land.

The *nkhoswe* (marriage counsellor) was more frequently identified by women than by men. This probably because women are usually complainants and victims in household disputes and hence need the *nkhoswe* services more than the men. However, while the women consider the *nkhoswe* a very important institution, they have reservations about its performance. *Ankhoswe* work day and night settling disputes. *Amagwira ntchito ndi*

*mame* (They work up early in the morning with dew still on the grass). They are the pillars of *mabanja* (families) (*Ankhoswe ndiwo amanga banja*). However, the common complaint is that some counsellors favour their kin and therefore fail to perform their duty. This is probably why they were rated from 3<sup>rd</sup> to 9<sup>th</sup> place.

The kinsman as an institution was mostly recognised by men and less so by the women and youth. However, the kinsman was ranked very high (1<sup>st</sup> to 2<sup>nd</sup> place) among the institutions. This is because of being helpful during times of crises e.g. funerals, hunger and illness. The lack of prominence of this institution is probably due to the fact that people take kin help always for granted. Traditionally and especially in the extended family system relatives are expected to help out in times of hardships. Where women identified kinship they did not rate it so highly probably because marriage delinks them from their kins especially in patriarchal marriages (e.g. Khwalala village). It is also important to note that there were different types of kin identified viz: grand parents, parents, brothers and sisters, sons and daughters, uncles, aunts, nephews, nieces and so forth. It is likely that these differ in their importance depending on the situation.

The hospital, like the village headman, is one institution which was easily recognised by almost all groups in all the communities. The hospital is important because it provides medical care, under-five clinics, anti-natal clinics and reduces mortality of both adults and children. In all groups, it was rated very high (1<sup>st</sup> to 4<sup>th</sup> place). However, there are serious complaints about the performance of this institution as can be noted in the following quotation from a women's group at Mbwadzulu community in Mangochi:

“...the hospital is important because it is where treatment of various illnesses can be found...but it is not effective because:

*Mankhwala othandiza anthu kulibe. Tingovutika ndi kuyenda ndi kumangopatsidwa aspirin muwili.* [There is no medicine to treat people with. We just trouble ourselves travelling to the hospital just to get two aspirin tablets].

*Amangolandira bwino anthu olera okha, osalera ayi.* [They just receive well those that are following family planning methods, those who are not, are not received well].

*Akuti munthu azipita ndi kope kuti ikhale ngati tikiti.* [They say we should bring exercise books to the hospital to be used as tickets].

*Sakulimbikira ntchito, amangoluka zidoilo.* [They (hospital staff) are not hardworking or dedicated to duty, they just knit doilies].

*Amachotsa anthu m'chipatala asanachilitsitse kuti odwala ena agoneko.* [They discharge patients before they have recovered fully so that other patients can be admitted].

...if the hospital was to be effective, the following measures should be taken: *azipereka mankhwala othandiza*. [They should give effective medicine]. *Asiye nkhanza*. [They should stop being harsh towards patients]. *Azichita changu*. [They should attend to patients quickly]. *Asamachotse odwala asanachile*. [They should not discharge patients prematurely]. *Matenda sakutha chifukwa chosowa mankhwala*. [Diseases are not ending due to lack of medicine]. The hospital was built in the 1950s and was not properly designed, the labour ward is near the under five/pre natal clinic. So when one (woman) is crying in the other (labour) room, another one is laughing in the next (under-five or per-natal) room].”

Clearly, the women place a great deal of importance to the hospital. However, the hospital has failed miserably on many criteria. While these are the common criticisms of the hospital, in some sites the hospital was very far away or non-existent altogether. The box below highlights the malaise of the institution (hospital).

***Box 1: A Profile of the Hospital Institution***

Hospitals are very important in our lives. They are more important today than they were in the past because of the increase in the number of illnesses that do affect us. Many people no longer rely on traditional medications. Everyone rushes to the hospital when she or he falls sick. We rely on hospitals for good health. Even though there are some changes of late, public hospitals have been quite helpful. They have extended assistance to everyone, rich or poor, disabled or not, rural or urban.. This is very commendable and we wish if the hospital staff could stick to their professional ethics and values.

They are no longer reliable. Drugs and essential equipments are often in short supply. We believe this is the case because of persistent devaluations of our currency (*kutsika mphamvu kwa ndalama ya Kwacha*).

This has been made worse by the increase in the numbers of the sick due to the AIDS pandemic. Health standards have miserably gone down. We therefore feel that it is not possible to talk of quality life except for those who can afford decent medical care from the private hospitals.

Our plea is that the government should try as much as possible to adequately provide for these hospitals. We hear the government has sold off some of the public enterprises (PEs) , the money realised from this exercise could be used for procuring drugs in our hospitals. The government should consider strengthening links with traditional healers to make up for the persistent shortage of drugs in our hospitals. Traditional healers could be an alternative but their practices are unhygienic. We can not be going to traditional healers after many years of independence.

Finally, the government should consider the involvement of the public in the day to day management of these hospitals. We should be able to offer our views on how certain operations or problems can be improved or solved. If we are granted this opportunity, we shall not heap all the blame on government for poor quality of services in our hospitals.

The herbalist and traditional birth attendant (TBA) are also easily recognised in the communities. In eight sites the herbalist or traditional birth attendant was identified by at least one group. It appears that women identified the herbalist more often than men. Of the 13 groups that identified herbalist as an institution, 7 were women groups, three were men's, two were mixed and only one youth group identified the herbalist. Why women should identify herbalist more than men is not immediately clear. One explanation could be the fact that the TBA is the most readily available health specialist (for delivery purposes) to most women in the rural areas. All the same, the rating for the herbalist was low from 7<sup>th</sup> to 12<sup>th</sup> place. The women again rated this institution higher than the men.

The Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) was mentioned by several groups in six sites. In four sites reference was made to a "market" but it is not clear whether this was in reference to ADMARC. ADMARC was mentioned by men, women, youth and the mixed groups. The rating of ADMARC ranged from 1<sup>st</sup> to 7<sup>th</sup> place. There was no difference in the ranking based on gender or age. In those groups where ADMARC was ranked high it is because "...apart from the high prices they charge for their commodities, they perform their duties as expected...ADMARC is our granary. [ADMARC *ndi nkhokwe yathu*]... We get maize whenever we need it. ADMARC is the most needed institution because we can foresee shortfalls of food production especially with the increase in fertiliser prices and the loss of soil fertility. So we need an ADMARC depot."

"In times of scarcity, ADMARC is a source of last resort for food supplies. When the people cannot get maize elsewhere for example from relatives, they turn to ADMARC. The stocks may be inadequate but they never completely run out. If they are quite limited, the maize in stock is rationed to cater for everybody...We always find it. ADMARC has always rescued us despite that sometimes the marketing personnel demand kick backs. The prices are fairly reasonable".

However, in many cases ADMARC was down-rated because, "...as is an institution that is most needed, it is not performing as expected because it favours other people in the society." One group said, "They do not allow some of us to buy the whole bag but when grocery owners and agriculture personnel come they sell them the whole bag." Furthermore, it takes time for maize to come when it gets out of stock. Also "ADMARC personnel deliberately use weighing scales that do not work properly in order to steal some of the commodities [maize] either when selling or buying."

## ***Box 2: Profile of ADMARC***

We regard ADMARC as a very important institution in our lives. It is the only dependable source of maize which is our staple food. If there was no ADMARC we would have problems in getting maize.

However, ADMARC is not serving us in the way we would have wanted. The staff are corrupt. You are served quickly if you bribe them. Sometimes the staff lie that they have run out of maize when there is enough in stock. They prefer to sell the maize to big businesses in town who in turn resale at very high prices. If this malpractice could be eliminated, ADMARC could be the most important and effective institution.

ADMARC and hospitals are examples of institutions which are important but not effective. ADMARC personnel are corrupt and dishonest. If an individual does not have extra money for bribes, he or she cannot be assisted. People go out without (food) maize because of selfish personnel. On the other hand, hospitals do not always have adequate drugs and essential medical equipment. The hospital staff are less caring and corrupt. The people in Masasa indicated that the majority of hospital personnel insist on bribes in order to offer adequate services to the patients. The people in Masasa go to hospitals and ADMARC but they do not get the help they require.

The agricultural field assistant was another institution which was identified in a majority of sites and by many groups. Like in the case of ADMARC, the FA mentioned by all types of groups: men, women, youth and mixed. The rating ranged from 1<sup>st</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> place with the majority of the groups rating it between 3<sup>rd</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> place. The youth groups appeared to be more favourable to the FA than the other groups.

The FA is an important but not effective institution. "Everybody needs food for daily life. We receive instructions from the FA for us to realise high yields." However, people believe the FAs have abandoned their responsibilities. In many sites they were considered to be no longer responsible, responsive and helpful. The following quotations will be enlightening.

"...although the agricultural field staff provide help in certain times of need like when termites attack crops in the community, they lack behaviour and seriousness because they sometimes go drinking during working hours and do not involve people in decision making involving their activities."

"Though the Agricultural Field Assistant is no longer effective, he helps in times of crisis. He assists the community to acquire chemicals to spray their crops in events of disease outbreaks and pest infections. He, for example, helped the community fight mealy bugs and army worms which invaded our fields. We would not have harvested anything had it not been for his assistance."

“The Agricultural Field Assistant only visit the gardens of those people he knows so why should we depend on the institution that has no interest in us?”

“We don’t trust the Agricultural Field Assistant fully. As we have said earlier on he only visits the gardens of those people he knows so our trust in him is not that much.”

“The Field Assistant is very lazy. He does not provide help when needed due to his laziness.”

Clearly, the FA is not a highly reputable personnel in the Ministry of Agriculture yet the people in the communities value his/her work greatly. The box below summarises the story about the FA.

***Box 3: Agricultural Field Assistant Profile***

Mr X (real name withheld) is our Agricultural Field Assistant. The Office of Agricultural Field Assistant is very important because we predominantly depend on agriculture for our livelihood. The services of Mr X are therefore in great demand especially now that our community is vulnerable to floods and drought. We need him to teach us recommended farming practices and techniques of maximising harvest and risk reduction in times of drought and heavy rains.

Mr X used to be a very serious man with his job. But now he rarely goes out to visit farmers and offer them the advice he used to. The decline in food production in our area is partly because of his laxity. He is always at home. May be he has become very used to the place and feels he is like anybody else.

However, we cannot send him away because he promotes football in our village. He is our football coach. Although he is ineffective as an Agricultural Field Assistant, he is very good as a football coach. Our team's performance track record is excellent. We would not be wrong to say that he is no longer an Agricultural Field Assistant but a Football Field Assistant. We are in a dilemma but still we need his services as an Agricultural Field Assistant. We wish if we had the mandate to caution him.

School was mentioned as an important institution in people’s lives because it helps the children a lot, through preparing them for a future life. In this respect the school is considered helpful. What is interesting is that the school as an institution was not ranked highly; the rating ranging from 2<sup>nd</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> place. The majority of the groups ranked the school 3<sup>rd</sup> place. However, just as many of the groups ranked the school at 6<sup>th</sup> place.

The women’s groups particularly down rated the school. The youth groups were more favourable and the men’s fell in between. It is also interesting that there is no difference in the rating between urban and rural groups. The school profile done by women in Dowa offers some explanation for these results.

#### **Box 4: School Profile by Women**

We consider school as an important but not effective institution within our community. When we talk of school we mean both primary and secondary schools which are right within our neighbourhood. The secondary school has just been established. It used to be a Distance Education Centre (DEC). It is now a Community Day Secondary School.

The Schools are miserably failing in their noble duty of providing our children with the right quality of education that they deserve. We do not like the idea of a Community Day Secondary School. Though it is just some months old, the impact on the lives of the students themselves and the community as a whole is really bad. The teachers do not have any control over the students since they rent houses within the community. Their morals have deteriorated. Most of them drink heavily and smoke marijuana (*chamba*) and literary marry. We have several student families here. Instead of concentrating on education, they are learning how to use condoms. The school is no longer a centre of education but a family planning institute. A boarding secondary school is ideal if our children are to benefit at all from education.

The situation is not any better for our primary school. We hear the government introduced free primary education and provides for all essential requirements, note books, pens and pencils. The pupils have never received these items. We still have to provide them ourselves. We strongly believe it is not the government's fault but it is sheer malpractice on the part of the school's management. We have seen several teachers going around selling note books and pens. In addition the teachers are not dedicated to their duty. Often pupils go back home without attending even a single lesson. We hear they are demotivated because of poor working conditions. Their salaries are particularly inadequate. It is not surprising that they divert free primary education resources to supplement their miserable salaries. This has adversely affected the standards of education at school. Only ten pupils have been selected to secondary schools in the last six years. The number of students selected has peaked up this year possibly due to the introduction of the Community Day Secondary School. The government should consider increasing teacher's salaries so that they should be satisfied and serve our pupils with dedication and confidence. The majority concentrate on private tuition in order to supplement their salaries.

Poverty adversely affect the chances of girls to persist in school. A good number of girls both in primary and secondary schools fall in love with either teachers or old people as a means to satisfy their needs. Many become pregnant drop out of school altogether. It is sad that our girls are failing to fully take advantage of the free education initiative.

Most of the primary school blocks are in a state of disrepair. They definitely need to be renovated but to successfully do so, we will need external assistance. We cannot afford to mobilise adequate funds to buy iron sheets, timber and cement.

The free primary education initiative is very welcome. The schools could be effective if the teachers were dedicated and responsible, the free materials were made available and that the secondary school was a boarding one. The morale of the secondary school students has tremendously gone down. We hope you are going to do something about our concerns.



What is clear from the profile is that school is an important but not effective institution. It does not live up to the community's expectations. Instead of providing their children with education, it has unfortunately turned into a source of ill behaviour. Pupils smoke, drink and indulge in premarital sex.

There are many institutions that were identified. Some were very unique to certain sites but nonetheless very interesting. We cannot possibly discuss all institutions here. But a few boxes will be given to highlight some of them.

***Box 5: A Profile of a Women's Funeral Association***

We are not blowing our own trumpet. Ours is both an important and effective institution. It is entirely a women's body. Men used to be members but they have, since three year ago, been expelled. They often abused the funds of the group. Our main duty is to offer assistance during funerals. We, for instance, buy food, cloths for wrapping up dead bodies (*nsanda*), cook, fetch water and firewood. Although men are not formally recognized member, they still do assist us. For example, they are the ones who often go to town to buy pieces of cloth.

We do casual labour (*ganyu*) in order to raise funds for the group. Sometimes we make contributions. We have managed to buy, among other things, plates and a paraffin lamp which are used during funerals. We extend our services to all regardless of the well-being category to which they belong. But we mostly assist those who cannot support funeral services on their own.

This body brings unity amongst ourselves. Every woman is automatically a member. Leadership positions are filled on a yearly basis. There is a reasonable leadership turn over. The leaders are elected by a yearly village level convention [forum]. Sometimes we do disagree but our leaders try as much as possible to restore unity. If the crisis is too much for our leaders we call for the village headman's intervention.

We sometimes have problems in fulfilling our mission statement. We, for example, fail to provide food for some funerals because of lack of funds. Unfortunately, this is interpreted as discrimination [favouritism]. We are planning to have our own garden but we are not sure if we shall be able to adequately provide for the essential farm inputs.

Note: It is both an important and effective institution because it assist in times of crisis and provide the right kind of assistance. In addition, it fosters unity amongst women which promotes social cohesion across all well-being categories within the village.

***Box 6: A Profile of the Nyau Cult [Gule wa Mkulu: the big dance – Nyau dancers]***

The Nyau cult has deep roots in our cultural heritage. The members are very co-operative. It is very easy to mobilise them during times of need. The hallmark of the cult is a dance [masked dancers] that is performed during funeral service of the initiated, when installing new chiefs and initiation ceremonies [zizangala]. It claims to teach male youth morals and ethics of our community, offers advice to the would be chiefs through song and is a conduct preserving our cultural heritage from one generation to another. It is exclusively an institution for males though, very rarely women are admitted.

It is an effective but not important institution. We can as well do without it. Many boys have dropped out of school. Sometimes, the functions mentioned above do coincide with the school calendar. Once you are called upon to render your services, you cannot refuse. Instructions have to be taken without any hesitation, debate and let alone questions. If one acts to the contrary, the consequences are bitter. You are either severely beaten or bewitched. It is either school or tradition. The latter always triumphs. Many people have messed up their opportunities of education because of the obligations to the cult. It does not necessarily promote good behaviour among the youth. It is a farce. It promotes the use of abusive language and theft. New recruits are often sent out to hunt chickens within the neighbourhood and their practices disproportionately defy the basic rules of hygiene. Sometimes, for example, the food of new recruits is spiced up with dog's fecal matters.

Why do we need it? After all it practices social seclusion. Why is it that women are not freely admitted into the cult? This is one of the sources of women's oppression and marginalisation in our community. The Youth should join the cult not out of obligation but free choice.

***Box 7: A Profile of a Police Camp – the only time people rated the police as effective***

This is one of the most important institution in the area and it is effective. The camp comprises Police Mobile Force Officers, they came to the village some time ago, when there was a civil war in Mozambique. Their aim was to make sure that there was law and order among the Mozambican refugees settling in the area. However, during that time, Police were large in numbers but they were accused of victimising innocent people especially men and raping women. But this has been solved by changing the Policemen every month. The Policemen help in catching thieves, thugs, tracing gun shots - though rare nowadays due to peace in Mozambique. They also help in loan recovery and guard market places to avoid any disorders. The people feel that the Police at the camp are doing a very good job. They are equipped with guns and hand-cuffs. When they catch and apprehend wrong doers, they sent them to Police station at Ntcheu Boma. For example, last month, Police caught a girl who strangled her newly born baby to death and sent her to Ntcheu Police Station.

**Box 8: A Profile of Women's Friends from Mozambique**

This is an important and effective institution. The friends of Mozambique either come to Malawi and Malawians go there to sell and buy or exchange goods. When Malawians go to Mozambique, they take goods like hoes, fish, baskets, soap and sugar. In return they get maize, salt and household kitchen utensils, lamps, flasks, cooking oil, finger millet and beans. The problem is that friends from Mozambique buy Malawian goods at lower prices. They state that they price themselves and do not accept those set by Malawians. But they charge high prices for their goods and do not allow us to bargain. Sometimes they tease Malawians, saying that they have never seen starvation and they mockingly request Malawians to bring the "hunger" tied on a cloth when going to Mozambique so that they can see it. Some Mozambicans are good whilst others are bad and the bad ones abuse Malawians verbally and may even rob them of their goods and chase them away.

### **6.3 People's Control or Influence over the Institutions**

People appear to have control or influence over some of the institutions which have been identified by different groups in the community. On other institutions they feel they have no influence or control of any kind. The stories indicate that people may have control or influence especially in informal organisations unlike formal organisations. They do not have any control over such institutions as the police, hospital, Farmers World (a corporate firm) etc. However, "...we have control over the *Nyau* cult, the church, the village headman, the marriage counsellor, women funeral groups, friends, etc. We can, although to varying degrees, influence the decisions of the village level [grassroots] institutions."

The participants in groups also indicated that they would like to have inputs in the operations of the 'formal' institutions. "It is ironical that, in these formal institutions (government institutions [mabungwe a boma]) which are very important in our lives, we do not have any influence or control over them. We cannot rely on our Member of Parliaments (MPs), they are virtually ineffective".

Hence the control or influence is mainly at grassroots level institutions only as it will be shown below:

Chief: People do have influence over this institution despite the fact that this is a traditional formal institution and the chief is the highest authority and the people cannot question this authority. One is able to influence the chief because there are channels. For

instance, several groups indicated that the village headman can easily be influenced. The villagers can, through their representatives, tell the village Headman what to do and when to do it. Chiefs can implement any decision handed from their men-folk. Moreover the village headman is readily accessible. People can now, for example, influence when to rehabilitate roads, and can decide where to dig graves of still born babies.

Grandparents: This is an informal institution and people have so much control and influence over this institution. People are able to tell grandparents their problems and they are advised on what to do. It is easier to influence Grandparents because they interact with them almost daily. Most of them care to listen.

School: Even though this is a formal institution, people have some control over it since they have a local level School Committee which consists of the community members and the committee have a say on how the school is run especially at grassroots level.

Hospital: People do not have any control or influence over this since it is run by government and private clinics are personal business and people cannot say anything on that.

Police: People do not have any control or influence over the Police because it is run by government and it is run according to government laws and rules.

The women mentioned FINCA (a micro finance institution for women) as an institution that they have an influence over. They help in decision-making for the running of the institutions. On the other hand, some groups felt that the ruling of court is unpredictable but believe that influential people can control the court through bribes. Below are some quotations highlighting some of the feelings people have over different institutions.

“We feel we have power and influence over church and village funeral association. These institutions are formed by local community members.”

“We do not have influence over police because we don’t normally sit together to discuss certain issues.”

“We do not have influence over the hospital because they don’t take our advice. The hospital is one of the most important institution to the community but it does not help us. All hospital staff are not members of our community; they were just sent here by the government.”

The lesson from these stories is that communities would like to have some influence over institutions that are so close to their lives. What comes out clearly is that people feel they have control if they are represented either through committees or deputies/counselor (in the case of chiefs). They thus feel they participate in making some of the rules for the school because of the school committee. It is important that if representation is to work, people must be involved in the selection of their representatives and the representative should consult with the people on important issues for discussion. Otherwise, people still

feel powerless. For instance, institutions such as FINCA, they are represented but in some cases people do not have the opportunity to make an input into the decision making process because the representatives hand down prescribed rules and regulations which they bring to the attention of all stakeholders. Yet people expressed interest not only to influence but also control the operations of the most important institutions. One group summarised the problem very well when they said, "the problem is that without our inputs, insights and aspirations, these institutions often come up with options that do not adequately address our needs. They are less familiar with the realities of our life here".

## **7.0 GENDER RELATIONS**

Like the previous section, relations on gender shall be discussed using the rural urban dichotomy. Generally though, these relations are not very different.

### **7.1 Urban Sites**

Discussions in the three urban sites revealed that responsibilities between men and women both within the household or at community level are shared on the basis of cultural expectations. Some tasks are suitable for women and others for men.

#### ***7.1.1 Responsibilities in the Household***

What emerges from the discussion with people in the three urban sites is that it is natural for women and men to have different responsibilities either within households or at community level. This is largely because of the processes of socialization and enculturation. From the moment a child is born, it is treated on the basis of its sex. The treatment of a boy child is different from the treatment of the girl child. The responsibilities of men and women are thus passed on to them as they grow up. It was pointed out though that there are some responsibilities that do not recognise sex boundaries. These include cultivation and chopping fuel wood.

Women by and large are mostly engaged in cooking, farming, washing clothes, ironing clothes, going to the market to buy food, plucking vegetables from the garden, sweeping, cleaning kitchen utensils, fetching water, mopping, smearing and mopping floors, going to maize mills, cutting grass, nursing babies, building houses, moulding bricks, and home sanitation. Men's tasks on the other hand include digging latrines, building houses, chopping firewood, carving hoe and axe handles, making mats, tin smith, slashing, doing casual labour and moulding bricks.

A few exceptions did come up here and there. One group in Mzuzu for instance pointed out that those men and women who are divorced or their spouses are dead or they have never married (Bachelors and Spinsters), carry out tasks that would have normally been done by men or women. When women are sick, have gone to maize mills, funerals or taken children to hospitals, men do often assist with some routine household chores like cooking. Sometimes women carry out men's work if the men themselves are not quick enough to act. For example, women do thatch houses or build bathrooms. Most men said that they cannot assist their wives with the routine household chores because that is precisely the reason they married. Others said that they are willing to assist their wives but they are reluctant for fear of being looked down upon by their community. If for example a man would fetch grass for thatching houses, he would become a laughing stalk in the community. Men sometimes extend a helping hand to women with their routine household chores if they are sick or have gone away to a hospital or funerals.

Most groups indicated that the division of responsibilities within households is very much biased against women. Their burden of responsibilities relative to men's is heavier. Some men argued though that most women spend all their time at home and it is inevitable therefore that they have a disproportionate share of household responsibilities. They said that it would even be boring for the women just to stay idle. Some women on the other hand argued that the tasks that men do at the household level are done once and it takes a while before they do them again. Hence, their burden is said to be lighter. The women on the other hand have to undertake their tasks on a daily basis.

### ***7.1.2 Responsibilities in the Community***

There really was no consensus on the share of responsibilities between men and women in the community. Most men were of the view that men and women have now equal responsibilities and perform same amount of tasks within the community. Women on the other hand feel that there has not been any significant improvement in their share of community responsibilities. The reason cited by women was that they are doing exactly what they used to do ten years ago. The men and youth groups attributed the changes to the opening up of country politically. This has altered the attitudes of both men and women. Cooperation between men and women has increased, they can now work together.

On the surface though, the two have different responsibilities. The women at the community level are involved in cooking during communal functions like funerals and development activities: drawing water, collecting flour when there is a funeral in the community, rehabilitate and clear roads and cleaning the surrounding of communal assets like community clinics. Men on the other hand build bridges, rehabilitate and clear roads, mould bricks, build toilets, dig water tunnels, lead funeral services, dig graves, and if there is a funeral in the community the men are responsible for soliciting money (usually in the morning) and firewood (especially for use at night) from the people. This is worth noting because women are also collecting flour for the same funeral.

### ***7.1.3 Role in Decision making in the Household***

There is a general feeling that now women have a voice in the day to day management of their households. Even though the subject flared heated debates in some groups, most groups indicated that women are now quite influential in the day to day management of households. Ten years ago, the role of women in the home was simply to take instructions from their husbands without question. Today, they can question, argue and debate with their husbands. The change has come about because women no longer rely exclusively on their husbands for their livelihoods. Many men have been retrenched, are jobless and do not have any steady sources of income. As a result, women have assumed the role of a bread winner in many households.

Decisions made by women in the home include what food to buy, what to eat on a particular day, suggest on the number of children to have, taking children to health facilities and sometimes negotiate with their husbands to stop drinking. Decisions by



men include the making of the budget for the household, sending children to school, where to build a house, what property to buy, and sending children for initiation ceremonies (men being in-charge of boys).

Some people though felt that women were in relative terms more influential ten years ago than today. The one party system of government made them more powerful since they could get away with anything. The women could frame up their husbands if they had disagreed on family issues. To avoid the wrath of the party (MCP), the men simply gave in to their wives' demands.

#### ***7.1.4 Role in Decision making in the Community***

Most of the groups agreed that women now make inputs into community level decisions. Ten years ago, they did not have any voice. Men made all the decisions. The women were simply to follow the instructions. They now have thus been enfranchised. For example, women today can decide on where to locate a clean water point. They can even decide about where to build a new health facility. The changes have come about because of the change in the political system and that a good number of women are enlightened and empowered.

#### ***7.1.5 Violence against Women in the Household***

Patterns of violence against women and men at the household level shows problems common to the two sexes and some that are sex specific. Table 14 indicates that problems common to both sexes include: beatings, transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, extra marital affairs, being left alone overnight, selfishness and meanness of either the wife or husband when relatives of the other visits the family and verbal abuse and obscenity (cursing).

**Table 16: Violence across gender differences at household level – Urban sites**

<b>VIOLENCE</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>MEN</b>
Being beaten	Y	Y
Given STDs	Y	Y
Not buying clothes/food for the household	Y	
Being left alone overnight	Y	Y
Obscenity	Y	Y
Being denied employment opportunities	Y	
Ill-treating of step children / relatives of the spouse	Y	Y
Assault	Y	
Locked out of house at night	Y	Y
Failure to provide for the household	Y	
Husbands leave home when the child is sick, are out for sometime	Y	
Not leaving enough money for the household	Y	
Prostitution		Y
Rape	Y	
Being beaten when you refuse to their proposal	Y	
Men leaving their wives at night and going out with other women	Y	
Selfishness	Y	Y
Women leave their husbands at night and go in town dressed in mini-skirts		Y
Husbands/wives stingy	Y	

Problems specific to women are men not caring for their households (no food, no clothes), being stopped from getting employment, leaving a woman alone when a child is sick and rape (forced sex). Acts of violence specific to men were not many and most of them boiled down to women being unfaithful.

Some people, especially men indicated that levels of violence within households are not different for both sexes. Acts of violence against either sex are said to have increased over the past years. Some of the violence was blamed on the one party system of government that ruled the country. People said that the one party system interfered with their private family lives. Some women are said to have taken advantage of that and abused their husbands. Most people said that women would neglect their family obligations on the pretext that they were away on party functions. In turn husbands beat them up or abused them in any way they wanted.

The rise in the level of violence against women at the household level is also blamed on political change. Both men and women said that nowadays most young women do not respect their husbands and this prompts men to be aggressive.

### 7.1.6 Violence against Women in the Community

Acts of violence at the community level are not many but the few acts that are there have gone worse. The violence against women at the community level takes the form of rape, being castigated in public, stripped naked and robbed. For men, the violence is usually amongst themselves. They fight each other at beer drinking places, over women and rob each other. The nature of violence against men has not changed at all over the past ten years.

**Table 17 : Violence across gender differences at community level – Urban sites**

VIOLENCE	WOMEN	MEN
Rape	Y	
Gossip	Y	Y
Use of abusive language	Y	Y
Fighting	Y	Y
Being beaten	Y	Y
Being bewitched if they refuse to fall in love with men	Y	
Castigating each other especially when drunk		Y
Arrests without valid reasons		Y
Robbery	Y	Y
Being insulted	Y	Y
Not respected	Y	

Violence at community level was said to be virtually non-existent ten years ago because of the MYP. But these days women are being raped, beaten-up and robbed. Men are beaten up and robbed in broad-day light. The levels of violence within the community have worsened because there is no longer a reliable security system. The rise in the cost of living, lack of employment opportunities and the escalating poverty levels have contributed to the increase in the levels of crime and violence. Most people are desperate to earn a living.

### 7.1.7 Do women feel they have more or less power today

Most groups distinguished three categories of women within their communities. The categories are as follows: those who are working, doing small-scale businesses and who do not have anything to do. This last group of women were said to be worse off because they have to struggle for their daily subsistence. This is the case because most have husbands that are not employed. Most discussants stated that times have changed and women need not rely on their husbands who do not have well defined (substantive) means of livelihood. Women have to compliment the efforts of their husbands to adequately provide for their households.

From the above discussion it is clear that levels of well being among the women vary depending on the work or business they are engaged in. Women are said to be better off if they are able to acquire basic necessities such as soap, salt, flour and kitchen utensils without the assistance of their husbands. They also consider themselves more powerful both at household and community level than they were ten years ago. This is the case because they are now able to contribute to, and influence major decisions at both levels. It was a tall order ten years ago. This transformation has come about because of the opening up of our society politically and the relaxation and erosion of some traditional practices and beliefs.

## **7.2 Rural Sites**

Just as in the urban areas it was a common view of the groups that responsibilities between men and women are culturally predetermined. The division of tasks and responsibilities between men and women is simply inherited. They are passed on from one generation to the next.

### ***7.2.1 Responsibilities in the Household***

Women in the rural areas (just like their counterparts in the urban areas) are mostly engaged in sweeping, cooking, drawing water, pounding, fetching firewood, looking after wells, farming and nursing babies. Men's responsibilities in the rural areas on the other hand include fishing, grading tobacco, building houses, ploughing, digging toilets, buying clothes, feeding livestock for those who have some, opening up new gardens and making poultry cages.

In nearly all groups, indications are that women shoulder a heavier burden of responsibilities at the household level. Worse still, most groups indicated that the burden for women has progressively increased over the last ten years. It was said that many men are not as responsible as they used to be. The number of widows and divorced women (female headed households) has increased. These women have taken on responsibilities that would have been normally been undertaken by men. Thus, at the household level women have considerably more responsibilities than men. The situation has not changed at all in the last ten years. And neither does any group project any change in the immediate future. The women are oppressed and are generally captives of their own culture. Men feel that they are superior and cannot therefore bow so low as to do 'women's' work. They spend most of their free time drinking and want to be served by the women.

### ***7.2.2 Responsibilities in the Community***

At community level, the responsibilities of women and men are essentially the same as those at the household level. It all depends on the activity that the community is undertaking. In general women in rural areas at the community level are involved in ensuring proper sanitation of communal water points, fetching firewood, drawing water and carrying sand for development projects. They carry out these tasks especially during wedding ceremonies, funerals and self help communal projects. Men on the other hand act as pall bearers, mould bricks, construct bridges, maintain roads and sometimes they coffins there is no money to purchase one.

Unlike in the case at the household level, at community level the burden of responsibilities falls more on men because they carry out disproportionately tiresome tasks. These require too much energy and women cannot simply do them. Women, for example, it was said, cannot dig graves. But some people still argued that the share of women responsibilities at this level outweighs that of men.

Most groups pointed out that the responsibilities of women and men have essentially remained the same. They have remained thus because they are a product of culture which has not changed much. The responsibilities that men and women have in the community are an expression of cultural beliefs. They further indicated that the pattern of responsibilities is unlikely to change in the near future unless their culture undergoes some revolution. Some people even said that it is seen as a taboo for men to carry out women's tasks. The youth in Kowerani Masas for instance said that any man who does women's tasks is degraded and labelled all sorts of names. It becomes a great source of discomfort.

### ***7.2.3 Role in decision making in the household***

Women's major decisions at the household level relate very much to the kitchen and activities around the home. They, for example, decide on what food to prepare and when to prepare it, types of crops to be planted and when to be planted. This unfortunately excludes high profit making crops like tobacco which until recently and still now is predominantly a men's domain. It was also indicated that sometimes women do decide on the size of their families and when to buy clothes. The men on the other hand decide on the buying of clothes and the type of animals to rear. Decisions on family planning are sometimes jointly made between husbands and wives.

### ***7.2.4 Role in Decision making in the Community***

Most groups indicated that the role of women in decision making at community level has improved. Some women though pointed out that they did not have any voice in issues affecting the community. Their role, they said, was simply to listen and implement any decisions made by their menfolk. Generally, it was felt that the position of women regarding decision making in the community has improved.

Though the range of decisions for either men or women have not changed, most groups felt that women have progressively become relatively powerful over the past ten years. The reason is that they are no longer discriminated against in village level action committees. Some women are members of important committees in the communities. They now have an effective voice on what is to be done, when it is to be done and how it is to be done. It was clear from the discussions though that there is still a long way to go before women can really be said to fully participate in decision making in the community. Some people indicated that not many women are considered for leadership positions because they are regarded to be less knowledgeable and shy.

### **7.2.5 Violence against Women in the Household**

Violence against women at the household was said to take many forms. The most commonly listed acts include: being overworked, beaten, insults, verbal abuse, being kicked out of a home, extra marital affairs, excessive drinking, divorce, forced sex, neglect when ill, not being provided for and being restricted on what to eat especially when there is good food in the house.

Violence on men on the other hand include being castigated at, beaten, extra marital affairs, being locked out, given cold water for bathing, being denied sex, given love portion<sup>8</sup>, being banned from chatting with some individuals, and being denied food. On extra marital affairs the women in Mbwadzulu defended themselves. They said that it was all the man's fault. The women said that they are sometimes forced to go out with other men for sex especially where the man is a perpetual drunkard who drinks almost everyday such that he fails to perform as a man (in bed) on most days. Some women in the same women-only group said

*“when men sleep out or stay without making love to us for a week or more, our sexual parts dry up (kumauma), as such, we go out to other men to get softened (kuti akafewetse)”.*

In the same community other forms of violence against men reported included wives being mean/stingy especially when relatives of the husband come for a visit, pretending to be ill so that they should not go to the gardens in order to meet other men, and rudeness.

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<sup>8</sup> A love portion was defined as some traditionally prepared medicine that when eaten makes men not to move away from homes, do not go out with other women and eventually become madly in love with the woman who has applied the medicine. They are mostly mixed with relish.

**Table 18: Violence across gender differences at household level – Rural Sites**

VIOLENCE	WOMEN	MEN
Having extra-marital affairs	Y	Y
Being shouted at /obscenity	Y	Y
Step children shouting at women	Y	
Denying husbands of food		Y
Refusing to wash clothes		Y
Refusing to prepare bathing water and make a bed for the husbands		Y
Leaving the wife alone for many days	Y	
Wife disappearing		Y
Disobedience		Y
Rudeness		Y
Prostitution	Y	Y
Jealousy	Y	Y
Fury	Y	
Not giving them money	Y	
Wife battering/beating	Y	
Fighting	Y	Y
Theft	Y	Y
Abandoning kids and wives	Y	
Refusing to buy soap, relish	Y	
Refusing to cultivate	Y	
Being bullied	Y	
Not buying them clothes	Y	
Excessive beer drinking thus spending money carelessly	Y	
Scolding	Y	Y
Breaking of marriages	Y	
Counting of pieces of meat in a pot / husbands controlling food	Y	
Taking relish to girlfriends	Y	
Not looking after parents of the spouse	Y	Y
Taking away all property from wives after divorce	Y	
Not giving relish to husbands		Y
Going away without the consent of the husband		Y
Meanness/Stingy ( <i>umbombo</i> ) when there are relatives of the other spouse	Y	Y
Sneaking and sleeping out for most days	Y	Y
Leaving a lot of work to husbands		Y
Feigning illness	Y	Y
Harshness	Y	
Polygamy	Y	
No child spacing	Y	
Being chased away	Y	Y
Sleeping with them while they have new babies	Y	
Stealing money from husbands to give to their mothers		Y
Being oppressed	Y	
Clothes being burnt	Y	
Giving strict rules like exact time for taking food, when to visit relatives etc	Y	

<b>VIOLENCE</b>	<b>WOMEN</b>	<b>MEN</b>
Refusing to eat from home	Y	
Lack of respect / being unruly		Y
Giving commands to husbands		Y
Being poisoned / giving them termic		Y
Being overworked	Y	
Ill-treating step children	Y	
Not escorting wife to hospital when sick	Y	
Use of love portions		Y
When the woman stays near her relatives, she likes going there to summon the husband if there are any quarrels		Y
Disregard in decision making	Y	
Eating out in restaurants when people are starving at home	Y	
Buying fish and telling wife to eat potato leaves	Y	
Women selling food without the husband knowing		Y
Women snatching husbands salary		Y
Being forced to sleep out if they come home late		Y

Perceptions as to the incidence or occurrence of these acts in the households are varied. Some people believe that these acts were widespread a few years ago and that they occur much less now. These even say violence against either sex was balanced. The common view though is that violence ten years ago was much less and most of it was against women.

Currently violence is said to be on the rise and it is still overwhelmingly against women. There is a rise in violence against men yes, but the rise is nothing compared to what women are experiencing. Some older women feel that violence is on the increase in both the household and at community levels. They said that this is so because these days girls are getting married whilst young so that they do not behave as expected – ‘they are very rude to their husbands’ *“Ali ndi mwano, amalowa mbanja ogenagena”*. Literally, “they are rude, start married life as if they have been married before”. Because they are not mature, they take marriage lightly and childishly so that they end up not respecting their husbands and thus causing violence to increase both ways to the women themselves and to men as well. People said that the violence either way in the past was less than today because in the past women were well advised on how to respect their husbands so that there was mutual respect

Many people are pessimistic about the future and they do not see the trend changing in the near future either. Women will continue to be major victims because culture marginalises them. It does not empower them to interact with men as equals.



### 7.2.6 Violence against Women in the Community

Just like with violence in the household, violence at the community level takes many forms. Acts of violence against women at the community include being shouted at by drunks, being stripped naked, raped and gossiped by fellow women. Men on the other hand are subjected to shouting from women, having their shelters in the fields or shores taken apart and fighting at beer parties.

**Table 19: Types of Violence at community level**

VOIOLENCE	WOMEN	MEN
Gossip	Y	Y
Theft	Y	Y
Abusive language/rudeness	Y	Y
Being beaten	Y	Y
Rape	Y	
Fighting	Y	Y
Being denied the chance to do casual labour	Y	
Jealousy	Y	Y
Being cheated		Y
Bewitching	Y	Y
Confiscation of goods		Y
Women cursing each other	Y	
Being cursed by drunkards	Y	
Being stripped naked	Y	
Being oppressed during cases	Y	
Scolding	Y	
Despising		Y
Being shouted at	Y	
Being poisoned in the beer		Y
Being denied beer		Y
Being shouted at		Y
Not respected	Y	
Breaking of men's boats deliberately at the lake		Y
Cutting down tree shades where men use for resting at the lake		Y
Being hijacked		Y
Refusing to work during community activities		Y

The picture of violence in the community in terms of comparing past and present is difficult to discern. Some groups said that there was more violence against women in the community ten years ago than now. The reason they give is that then women were not enlightened and the men could do anything to them without them reacting. Culture was said to contribute to this because women were to be subservient to men. *'Whatever a man says, listen'*. Some people in the groups though used the same argument to show that there was less violence.

The opposite is said to be true these days. There is a rise in violence against women because more women are enlightened and can stand up to the man. This brings them into direct

conflict with the man who would still want to show his superiority. People in Mbwadzulu stressed that in the last decade there have not been significant changes to the levels of violence. It was said that the situation is worse nowadays because most people have no traditional values that used to bring together old couples. With the freedom circulating in the political spheres, most women feel they can come face to face with their husbands, creating some conflicts in the process.

#### ***7.2.7 Do women feel they more or less power today***

Many groups feel that there has been change towards the way the woman is treated in society. This change though appears cosmetic and not worthwhile. Women are still overburdened with routine household chores which, gives them no opportunity for self development. Further, literacy levels are so low that women by default are thus powerless when positions of power are contested for.

To conclude, cultural beliefs and practices are major structuring forces of the patterns of gender relations in the urban and rural communities. Most groups strongly emphasised that the distribution of responsibilities and the pattern of relations between men and women are a cultural heritage. They are passed from one generation to another.

## Conclusion

Findings from this study indicate that people define quality of life on the basis of access to the most depended upon livelihood resource in each geographical location, possession of assets, access to physical needs and personal freedom and recognition. In other words, definition of quality of life to most people revolves around: the right to economic activities, the right to acquire and own property, the right to adequate food, shelter and decent medical care, right to personal freedom, education, personal liberty, recognition and other basic civil and political rights. This study has revealed that most people in many areas in Malawi consider the status of well-being (good quality of life) on the basis of the level to which each of these rights have been achieved by each particular individual, household or community. Consequently, denial of these either through natural processes or socio-political environment leads to poor quality of life. Households that are considered to be in high well-being classes have livelihood resources (for example well paying employment, high agricultural production, fishing equipment, have businesses), have nice shelter and would afford decent medical care and better education. Further, such households live peacefully without any squabbles either from within their families, community or society at large.

The study has also revealed that most people feel that about 70-80% of Malawians belong to lower well-being classes compared to the estimated 30-40% a decade ago. Low agricultural production, high levels of unemployment, high prices of commodities, diseases, high death rates and illiteracy have been cited as the main reasons that have made most people to decline in their well-being status in the last decade. Most people though appear to have resigned their fate and they do not see themselves improving in the near future. They are generally fatalistic and they believe that people in the upper well-being classes will continue to improve because economic opportunities (e.g. credit facilities) are open and wide for them and they can easily influence decision making to their advantage. The ever rising cost of living, hunger, high prices of farm inputs, reduced soil fertility and land holding, high prevalence of diseases including HIV/AIDS, poor medical facilities, rising crime and insecurity and the weakening extended family support structures are posing a great challenge to most people. Further, poor road infrastructure, inadequate medical facilities and services, long distances to the police and high levels of unemployment have been and they continue to pressurize most people. This, most people said, is forcing them to rely on casual labour (at the disadvantage of their gardens), revisiting their consumption patterns, heavy debts, prostitution and theft. In some instances, some families are breaking up consequently affecting the woman and children. The study has also shown that people feel that there are certain sectors of the communities that are more vulnerable to declining well-being and crisis situations because they have weaker support systems and that the society at large has no adequate mechanisms to support them. The aged, orphans, sibling or female headed households, the disabled, the unemployed and most households in the lower well-being classes are singled out as the most vulnerable.

People have several formal and informal organisations, values, norms existing amidst their communities which play important roles in their lives. Some of these are conciliatory (e.g. chiefs and *nkhoswe's* – marriage counsellors). Others bring together people belonging to different well-being classes examples of which are weddings, funeral and community

development activities. Some of these are most needed in people's lives but their activities or presence in the communities are rated poorly because of inefficiency, lack of resources, favouritism etc. such that people have lost trust in them.

Most of the women especially in rural areas said that they perform most of the household activities apart from farming. In general, most women feel that although gender talks have become common, they are still performing most of the household duties and they only participate in decision making that revolves around food preparation and slightly on using family finances. However, most women also said that nowadays they are able to decide their family sizes or when to start using family planning methods especially in urban areas. At the community level, there appears to be a 5/5 split of activities between men and women. They all participate in development activities and that both men and women hold positions in committees and can decide on important issues like where to drill a borehole or construct a clinic.

Patterns of violence against men and women shows problems that are common to the sexes and some that are sex specific. Violence that was indicated to be common to both sexes include beatings, transmission of sexually transmitted diseases, extramarital affairs, being left alone overnight, verbal abuse (obscenity), selfishness, meanness of spouses when relatives of the other partner visits the family. Most women said that they are bared from getting employment, forced into unwanted sex and raped. At the community level, acts of violence against either sex were said to be minimal compared to the household.

## **Recommendations**

1. Need for a strengthened outreach component in the Poverty Alleviation Programme of the Government of Malawi. Since 1994, poverty alleviation through strong emphasis on community participation in community development has formed the backbone policy of the Malawi government. School blocks, clinics, roads, bridges and boreholes have been constructed across the country through a social fund – the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF). People have greatly participated in these activities through mainly labour provision. This study has shown that most people have generally resigned their fate and are fatalistic about their future. This type of attitude needs to be addressed through a strengthened outreach and civic education programme that seeks to address attitude behaviour. The Poverty alleviation programme should have a strong component on eradicating such feelings. Change in people's attitudes is very important and central to participation and would therefore contribute greatly to the future of the poverty alleviation programme.
2. Need to diversify the national economy. The study has shown that hunger is people's main cause of ill-being status resulting from low food crop production. High prices of inputs, less land holding, dependency on casual labour all have been named as main factors leading to low agricultural production. Past studies have also demonstrated this need and consequently recommended to the government and the donor community to explore ways of diversifying the national economy from heavy reliance on agriculture (tobacco tea – cash and maize for food). The government of Malawi needs to seriously consider diversifying her economic base and the agricultural sector. The government needs also to research into other crops that would be viable for the country's conditions and attract a high adoption rate based on their output and financial returns.
3. The Malawi government needs to formulate deliberate credit policies and programmes targeting the poor sectors so as to allow them benefit from such programmes.