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THE EFFECT OF RURAL DEVELOPMENT ON PEOPLE'S LIVING  
STANDARDS: THE EXPERIENCE OF MALAWI'S  
RURAL DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS.

DAWN CHIMBE

A Thesis  
in  
The Department  
of  
Sociology and Anthropology

Presented in Partial Fulfilment of the Requirements for the Degree of Master of Arts  
at Concordia University  
Montreal, Quebec, Canada

December 1993

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **The Effect of Rural Development on People's Living Standards: The Experience of Malawi's Rural Development**

**Dawn Chimbe**

This study examines the effects of rural development in Malawi. Rural development refers to different programs and activities designed to help raise the economic and social standard of living of rural people by alleviating poverty. The study uses data collected by the government through the National Statistical Office, other government departments and some scholars. It also uses qualitative material collected through intensive interviews and observation, to examine whether rural development has helped improve the standard of living of rural people.

Utilizing agricultural production data, the study analyzes whether rural development has enhanced productivity in rural areas by increased access to different resources of production. It also assesses the efficiency of rural development in the provision of social services in order to alleviate poverty. Due to the government's emphasis on economic growth through promotion of export cash economy, the smallholder subsector and provision of social services received less attention. The study concludes that rural development policies in Malawi, have to a larger extent, not alleviated rural poverty.

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## INTRODUCTION

Since the end of second world war, many countries in the developing world have relentlessly searched for programs and policies that would improve the standard of living of their rural populations. Most of the rural population has little access to resources of economic production. It also has the lowest levels of education, poorest health, least access to safe water and sanitation and high infant mortality rates which together, makes them less productive. A plethora of rural development efforts and practices have since been carried out and the success of such programs has been the subject of debates between the scholars, planners, policy makers and development agencies. The debate in question mainly surrounds the degree to which rural development has managed to alleviate poverty in the rural sector.

Even though any program aimed at improving the standard of living in rural areas is an aspect of rural development, the term "rural development" has had many different connotations. For many governments, planners, policy makers and development agencies rural development has been synonymous with agricultural development or the development of productive resources found in rural areas (Yimam, 1990). Today, rural development refers to programs and activities designed to help raise the economic and social standard of living of the rural society by alleviating poverty (Chambers, 1983:5; Colclough, 1993:2). Most scholars define absolute poverty, which is the major concern

in this study, as a condition of life characterized by malnutrition and poor health, lack of economic productive resources, illiteracy, diseases, high infant mortality and low life expectancy (Chambers, 1983:11; Attwood, 1992:4; UNDP, 1992:20). In this study, I shall adopt the above definition of rural development since it is in line with the study's main concern.

Rural development should, among other objectives, achieve sustainable economic growth, reducing the effects of poverty. It must also allow participation of rural people in the process of development. The state of rural development, according to its advocates, requires the involvement of the rural people in different aspects of rural life while they try to modernize their production techniques through the diffusion of innovations. Through rural development, the government in its role as the provider of services, should aim at improving and providing a higher standard of living, one that is characterized by improved socioeconomic material conditions, greater opportunities to earn a living and better access to basic socioeconomic institutions and services. This means that the agenda for rural development must be one that pays attention to rural people's realities of poverty, especially their conditions of living and priorities to earn a living (World Bank, 1975, 1988; Chambers, 1989; Lipton and Maxwell, 1992).

In Sub Saharan Africa, efforts to improve socioeconomic conditions of rural population have been the focus of governments, development agencies and scholars (Uma Lele, 1975; World Bank, 1988). With a majority of the population in the rural

areas, and their economies heavily dependent on subsistence agriculture, the hope for improving the region's socioeconomic status requires paying more attention to rural development (Gulhati, 1989; Yimam, 1990). The result has been a formulation of many rural development programs receiving attention in the development literature, and in the lending programs of some organizations such as the World Bank (World Bank, 1981).

Many Sub Saharan countries have implemented rural development strategies with varying successes. Whether the programs have helped to reduce poverty or not, is a question that has dominated debates in Africa's development literature (Lele, 1975; Mutizwa and Helsing, 1991; World Bank, 1981). Nevertheless, it is not the purpose of this thesis to discuss problems related to rural development in developing countries or Sub Saharan Africa, but rather to examine the extent rural development has benefitted Malawian rural population through poverty alleviation.

The situation of the rural population in Malawi is no exception to these debates. Since Malawi gained independence from the British in 1964, several rural development programs have been introduced. The most notable one that concerns this study is the National Rural Development Program (NRDP), started in 1977. With about 90 percent of the population of eight million living in rural areas and dependent on agriculture for a living, rural development has major implications for the living conditions of the rural poor in Malawi. The NRDP aims at: (a) enabling poor households to expand employment and income earning opportunities by increasing their productivity and, (b)

provide increased access to basic services that would improve their living conditions, such as access to health, education, water, sanitation, etc.

The successes of rural development programs in Malawi are far from being conclusive. Among the many questions asked, the one that comes up quite often is whether and to what extent rural development policies have had any impact on rural poverty both in absolute and relative terms. Since the implementation of rural development only a few studies have attempted to evaluate its performance with a focus on both agricultural productivity and improvement in the standard of living (Pryor, 1990; Trivedy, 1988; Ghai and Radwan, 1983). Other studies have, however, managed to analyze rural development on specific areas affecting rural life, such as nutrition (Kishindo, 1990), female participation in the labour force, food security and agriculture production (Kaunda, 1990; Office of President, 1990). The lack of many studies to comprehensively evaluate the impact rural development has had on the rural people is due to the political situation. Malawi's leadership does not tolerate an alternative view that contradicts the state's version of achievement of rural development.

There are some studies (Mwakasungura, 1986; Trivedy, 1988; Mhone, 1992), however, that have asserted that the Malawian model of rural development has failed to redress poverty despite some economic growth. These studies make further claims that significant groups of rural people have experienced very little improvement in living standard or have suffered a decline in income and consumption. In this study, I examine

the effects of rural development programs on the living standard of the rural population based on survey data and qualitative material.

### **Research Question**

The main research question the study intends to examine is whether Malawi's rural development policies have had any effect on rural poverty alleviation based on some measurable indicators of rural development. These are: agriculture productivity, infant mortality, education and life expectancy.

### **Objectives of the Study**

The first objective of this study is to examine the ideological and economical rationale that induced the Malawi government to implement the adopted rural development programs. This involves analyzing the development policies that the government has followed since independence. The second is to investigate the effects of rural development programs on smallholder agriculture production. This involves analysis of peasants' access to resources of economic production such as land, credit and technology. The third is to examine the effects of rural development on provision of social services to the rural population. This involves analysis of the efficiency of social programs based on accessibility to and use of social services by rural people. Although not the main focus of the study, mention is also made of gender differences in access to resources of agriculture production and participation in social service.

To address the objectives of this study, several questions are raised:

1. What is the importance of rural development to Malawi?
2. What was the state policy on rural development since independence, and what sociopolitical forces have shaped its evolution since then?
3. What are the government's stated and unstated economic objectives?
4. Has the government achieved its stated and unstated aims and objectives?
5. What were the intended and unintended socioeconomic consequences for the population in rural areas?

In addition, questions are asked pertaining to those on the receiving end of the programs. What has the government done, or not done, or has failed to do to effect change for the rural people? Who was intended to benefit and who have actually benefitted? Who determines the beneficiaries and what are the criteria used? What are the attitudes of the beneficiaries towards government intervention? How do those that have benefitted compare with those that have not? Who are left out by the programs and why? What effect has it on their livelihood? To answer these questions, this study examines the following propositions.

The first deals with the government's main objective in rural development, to increase the contribution of rural people to the national cash economy. This is seen as a means of raising rural people's income levels and achieving development in rural areas through a 'top-down' process where benefits of development would filter down to the remote

rural areas. Whether this assumption has worked in Malawi or not is one of the issues to be examined in this study. The rationale for the above assumption is that policy makers and practitioners involved in implementing rural development policies are mainly interested in achieving empirical results namely, increasing agricultural productivity to supply urban and international markets. Policy makers' other concern and interest are primarily the earning of foreign currency and the extraction of revenue for public and private investments.

There are also the peasant farmers whose main concern is to maintain the capacity to produce enough for consumption and exchange surplus on local markets. Due to a number of factors that influence peasant production, integrating them into the world economy is likely to place them into a position of social and economic marginalization. The result of this is more likely to be adverse on their food production, nutritional status and overall health leading them into perpetual poverty.

This study also looks at the assumption that rural people's participation and decentralization found in rural development programs is rhetorical. Rural development calls for participation of the rural population, yet, lack of peasants' participation is cited as an obstacle to attaining development goals (Dickerman and Bloch, 1991; Janvry and Sadoulet, 1989). For example, the idea that rural development might be initiated by the rural people themselves does not enter into the conception of government's "rural development". Despite an emphasis on full participation, the rural population is more

of subordinate than equal partners, and their ideas are usually suppressed, averted or pre-empted by development agencies.

### **Organization of the Thesis**

The first chapter presents a theoretical survey concerning major ideological traditions that have informed the practice of rural development in developing nations. It addresses the changes that have taken place in development thinking since the second world war by examining the position of poverty reduction in the debates. According to modernization scholars, rural development can successfully alleviate rural poverty through economic growth policies. In the 1970's, scholars advocated the role of the state in the realization of rural development through promotion of growth with redistribution policies. Development thinking in the 1980's required that the role of the state be reduced in line with structural adjustment prescriptions causing cut backs in most government spending. The strategy for rural development in the 1990's starts with priorities of poor rural people, reducing rural poverty. This has reinstated the position of man or woman as the centre of rural development.

The second chapter discusses the socioeconomic background of Malawi. Chapter two also presents a brief history of colonial and post independence society in Malawi by looking at the distribution of population and resources between urban and rural areas. The last part presents a short background information on Salima district; a case study area where the qualitative material was collected.



The discussion in chapter three outlines rural development policies in Malawi. It traces the change in development strategies from the colonial to post colonial period. It goes on to discuss the trend of rural development in the transformation of the rural areas by examining the policies followed after independence.

Chapter four discusses the methodology of the study. The research has used both secondary data and primary qualitative data analyses. Secondary data analysis is used to analyze changes that have occurred with respect to national and local agricultural production and social indicators selected. Primary qualitative data examines the local (village level) situation regarding both agriculture production and social indicators.

Chapter five examines the effects of rural development on agricultural productivity on a national level and a micro level (Salima). It examines how economic growth policies pursued by the government are a threat to availability of economic productive resource such as land, credit and technology. This chapter also discusses the effects of high population growth on the resources have led to land shortages thereby impeding food and cash productivity of the rural peasants.

Chapter six looks at rural development and the provision of basic services to the rural population. It examines the use of and access to basic social services provided through rural development programs. The living standard of most peasant households shows that they have not experienced much change in their livelihood. Due to high population

growth the social services provided by the government are diluted and fail to have much impact on standard of living. Investments in social services have not kept pace with increases in population. This is shown by government cut backs in public spending allocated to social programs. The last chapter summarizes and concludes the discussion asserting that rural development has not yet significantly alleviated poverty in rural Malawi.

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **RURAL DEVELOPMENT: A THEORETICAL OVERVIEW**

#### **Introduction**

In the 1990's, poverty reduction is back on the agenda of rural development in developing nations. The renewed emphasis on poverty reduction represents a significant departure from previous variations of neoclassical approaches which emphasized economic growth and the assumption that poverty and extreme inequalities would be eradicated if a country achieved enough economic growth (Huntington, 1971; Lewis, 1967; Hunt, 1989).

The study of rural development has emerged following shifts in development thinking based on experiences of the post World War II period. The design and content of rural development, therefore, is influenced to a large extent by the debates that prevail at the time the program is in operation (Lipton and Maxwell, 1992; Colclough, 1993). Many years of experience with rural development planning, administration and implementation in developing nations, indicate that some problems that have been associated with rural development have also provided valuable lessons to the evolution of rural development as a field of research. Today, rural development continues to evolve as more lessons emerge. This continuing evolution is valuable for Third World

development since the challenges of poverty alleviation in the rural areas of less developed countries (LDC's) remain to a large extent unfinished.

In this chapter, the concept of rural development will be examined within the context of some post World War II ideological trends in development thinking. Also analyzed is how human development has been featured in dominant paradigms that have informed rural development policy over the last two decades or so. Finally, a review of how rural development policies in developing nations have been influenced by changes in strategies of achieving human development for the majority of the rural population will be carried out. To illustrate some of the above mentioned changes, this study will select some experiences from Malawi's National Rural Development Program (NRDP).

### **Origins of Rural Development Debates**

For a period of at least 25 years after World War II, development was based on directing surplus production from agricultural sectors to the industrial sector. In reality, that was a transfer of resources from rural to urban areas (World Bank, 1988; Janvry and Sadoulet, 1989). The reasoning behind this approach was that a country's increased economic growth, as measured by its gross national product (GNP), would necessarily bring about the much needed impetus for rural development. The proponents of economic growth theories, such as Rostow (1964) put great emphasis on capital accumulation through expansion of the industrial sector and investments in urban areas

(also known as the modern sector) as the best way to achieve development (So, 1990)<sup>1</sup>. Most developing countries in Latin America, Africa and Asia adopted an industrial development strategy. Factories were constructed in cities to manufacture domestic and consumer goods. The rate of urbanization also increased with urban areas being developed more rapidly than rural (Weaver et al., 1979).

While the industrial sector in urban areas was being promoted, economic growth strategy ignored and subordinated the rural agricultural sector. The role of the rural population involved in the traditional agriculture sector was to strengthen the industrial led growth through: (i) the provision of rural surplus labour to work in further industrialization projects; (ii) the production and supply of cheap raw materials for industrial processing; (iii) their position as a ready market for the manufactured products (Lewis, 1967).

The passive position ascribed to the agriculture sector by theorists of modernization has been questioned by many scholars (Seers, 1969; Singer, 1989) and later by other development agencies such as the World Bank (1975). For instance Singer (1989) queried:

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<sup>1</sup> Economic growth theories are part of larger debates on theories of modernization that stressed the role of capital accumulation through technological modernization as a means of attaining development. For further debates on economic growth and modernization, See Bloomstrom and Hettne, 1984.

"How could agriculture provide a market for industrial goods unless rural incomes were raised? How could agriculture release surplus labour unless productivity was increased? How could growth trickle down to the poor when the great mass of the poor lived in rural areas **and most industrial development was urban based?**"<sup>2</sup> (Singer, 1989:79).

A growing dissatisfaction with the effectiveness of economic growth approaches emerged following a realization that growth was creating a dual economy, with one sector rich (modern industrial in the urban) and another poor (rural agricultural). This dualism was mainly caused by failure of the benefits of economic growth to trickle down to the majority of the poor especially in rural areas as hypothesized<sup>3</sup>. The dissatisfaction was further heightened by a marked failure of growth strategies to achieve real human progress in terms of a decrease in poverty, an increase in employment, and the promotion of a more equitable income distribution. Mexico's experience with growth policies was representative of most developing nations. Despite a GNP rise of at least 6 to 7 percent annually for period of 15 years, unemployment and income disparity between the rich and poor had also increased (Wilber, 1979).

Without totally dismissing the merits of economic growth in development, the World Bank recognized that the long run effects of economic development for the growing rural population would, to a larger extent, depend on expansion of the modern

---

<sup>2</sup> The emphasis has been added

<sup>3</sup> Economic growth as the essence of development encouraged the tolerance for income inequalities created as necessary for growth in the early stages of development (Lewis, 1967; Huntington, 1971).

sector. However, it cautioned that too strong an emphasis on the modern sector was apt to neglect the growth potential of the rural areas (World Bank, 1975). The failure to appreciate this rural potential for growth was the major reason why growth in the rural agriculture sector was slow, leading to an increased incidence of rural poverty. A major implication of these economic growth policies was an increase in rural-urban migration leading to growing urbanization and the associated problems.

During the late 1960's, many studies (Chenery et al., 1974; Ahluwalia, 1978; ILO, 1979) were carried out by scholars, governmental, and international agencies reviewing the effectiveness of economic growth policies on rural development. Most of these studies revealed that rural development, conceived in terms of economic growth, had failed to promote the development of rural areas (Long, 1977). The socioeconomic condition of many people in rural areas of developing countries not only failed to improve but in some cases had actually deteriorated. Consequently, absolute and relative poverty was reported to have increased in most rural areas of the developing nations (Adelman, 1975).

In a paper entitled "The meaning of development" Seers (1969) set out a critique of the economic growth practice which became critical to human objectives of rural development. He argued that the proper goals of development were not merely to attain economic growth, but rather to eliminate absolute poverty, increase employment opportunities and promote an equitable distribution of income. The same views were

supported by Chenery and others (Chenery et al., 1974) who advocated that development strategies should lead to "growth with redistribution", while Streeten (1979) recommended that development strategies should guarantee the satisfaction of "basic needs". The World Bank supported by its financial expertise summed up these efforts and conceived rural development strategies that would help create more equitable patterns in the distribution of income and other benefits of development.

The importance of these debates is that they marked the turning point between the dominance of earlier "growth paradigms" and the ascendancy of a new one, typified by aims of reducing absolute poverty, increasing productive employment and satisfying the basic social needs of all the people. This also marked an important shift in development goals and priorities from economic growth towards the direction of "human development" at the centre of development debates.

### **Rural Development as Growth With Redistribution 1970-1980**

Since the 1970's, a new approach to rural development in terms of human development and distributional goals was introduced and accepted by international and national development agencies. Poverty reduction and redistribution of income became influential standards of rural development at the level of international agencies and aid organizations. By mid 1970's, most donor agencies such as the World Bank, International Monetary Fund, etc., used the new rural development approach to mark a shift in their lending or investment patterns. Only projects that were expected to have



a greater effect on the living standards of the poor were readily funded in most developing countries (Colclough, 1993).

The immediate problem that faced rural development programs were outlined by the authors of **Growth with Redistribution** (Chenery et al., 1974; Seers 1977). Based on experience from some International Labour Organization's (ILO) missions in Colombia, Sri Lanka, and Kenya, they (Ibid) realized that most government programs for the rural poor tended to benefit the rural elites. Therefore, to ensure that such programs would benefit the poor, targeting policies were designed. These policies were specifically defined for rural target groups such as the landless, targeted by land reform programs (Chambers, 1989).

Guidelines recommended for implementation of growth with redistribution required the commitment of national governments through direct involvement in the investment and administration of rural development projects. The state involvement in rural development was in part encouraged as a result of considerable accomplishments achieved by some governments such as Sri Lanka. India's experience with growth and distribution policies (some growth with redistribution policies were actually initiated in India (ILO, 1979)) and efforts to sustain them through state policies and administrative mechanisms provided the rationale for state intervention in rural development (Chambers, 1989; Misra, 1985).

## **The Target of Rural Development**

Who are the poor in the rural areas of developing countries? They are not a homogeneous group that can easily be classified (World Bank, 1980). They differ in where they live, source of income or degree of poverty. However, despite characteristics of the poor being diverse, most international and national organizations identified rural small farmers and the unemployed as comprising the majority of the poor. This definition is based on their characteristics of low income level, lack of economic productive resources such as land, high incidence of malnutrition, low life expectancy, high infant mortality and illiteracy (World Bank, 1988).

Programs targeting the rural poor emphasized the distribution of wealth through land reforms and the provision of services especially for the rural smallholder farmers. Most of the rural poor depend heavily on agriculture for their livelihood. As a result, many programs intended to raise their incomes centred on agricultural development with land reform as the main component. Land reforms emerged in many developing countries' rural development programs where smallholder agriculture was constrained by lack of land. In India, Egypt, Bangladesh and other countries, where land distribution was skewed against the poor, reforms emerged as a redistributive tool for rural development (World Bank, 1975).

Land reform, in its traditional sense, has taken place for many years since World War II as a response to demands for greater equality by the landless or peasants (So,

1990). The significance of land reform in the process of rural development for developing countries was to contribute to agricultural productivity and expanded employment opportunities for the poor (Chambers, 1989). Land reform alone is not enough to achieve the above mentioned objectives. A variety of other supporting institutional improvements, including the provision of easier access to credit systems, marketing facilities and provision of agricultural inputs must also be provided.

Apart from asset distribution through land reforms and agriculture, poverty reduction also involved the provision of basic social services to the population (Colclough, 1993; World Bank, 1988). The basic needs approach prioritized the most immediate human needs, giving more weight to satisfying needs such as food, clothing and shelter, followed by access to basic public services such as health, sanitation, the provision of safe drinking water, transport, education and cultural facilities. This approach has had a long lasting influence on rural development policies in the Third World, including Malawi, as will be discussed in later chapters.

Growth with distribution strategies have been implemented in many developing countries with some significant instances of success. One particular country that implemented with success the rural development aimed at the distribution and provision of basic social services to the population is China. Although not a capitalist country, China presented the world with an outstanding practical example of achieving a considerable degree of rural development. It successfully combined growth and

structural change with improvements in mass welfare. The development policy of China directly affected the lives of a majority of the rural population<sup>4</sup>. Whether other developing countries could emulate the Chinese rural development model under different assumptions, or adapt it to different social and political context is something that has been debated elsewhere (Wilber, 1979; Colman and Nixon, 1976; Hilhorst and Klatter, 1985). The significance of China's experience is that it strengthened international and national resolve to promote policies aimed at poverty alleviation and meeting basic needs in rural development.

The achievement of basic needs and the alleviation of poverty in developing nations required changes in existing government policy<sup>5</sup>. Popular participation in decision making and bottom up approaches were the essential elements to successful implementation of the basic needs approach (ILO, 1978). Given the undemocratic nature of many Third World governments, the most problematic aspect of this approach was its emphasis on mass participation, both during the formulation and implementation of policy initiatives. Therefore, democratic changes and decentralized public and private

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<sup>4</sup> China managed to increase food production per capita, develop small and medium scale rural industries which provided income and employment to rural population while at the same time producing for agriculture and basic consumer goods. See Lefebvre 1972.

<sup>5</sup> The International Labour Organization (ILO) proposed that basic needs could be met by increases in personal consumption such as food, clothing and shelters. It also involves access to basic social services such as health, education, sanitation and economic means of production (Streeter and Hicks, 1979; Leipziger, 1981; ILO, 1978).

productive institutions at the rural community level were required to effectively enable mass participation.

### **Structural Adjustment: A Different Agenda for Rural Development 1980-1990**

In the early and mid 1980's, the focus of rural development had shifted again. It was at this time analyzed in terms of structural adjustment, along with a new emphasis on markets (Lipton and Maxwell, 1992). It also appears that the type of thinking, that was to become dominant during the 1980's, intended to challenge the human aspect of development thinking which was typical of the previous decade. Chambers (1989) likewise observes that:

"If the 1970's were the decade of equity, 1980's have been the decade of efficiency. This is not to assert how much or how little either equity or efficiency have been achieved, but to say that these have been prominent in rhetoric and ideology" (Chambers, 1989:4).

### **What are Structural Adjustment Programs?**

Structural adjustment refers to a set of free market economic policies aimed at reducing the role of the state in the national economy. These policies are imposed on countries by the World Bank and International Monetary Fund as a condition for receiving financial assistance. Structural adjustment programs are designed to improve a country's foreign investment climate by eliminating trade and investment regulation, boost foreign exchange earnings by promoting exports and reduce government deficit through cuts in government spending (CIDMAA, 1992; Wuyts et al., 1992). In effect, in adopting structural adjustment policies, governments of developing nations are

expected to actively participate in limiting their sphere of power and involvement in the national economy. In reality, governments relinquished their responsibilities such as subsidies but do not give up their areas of powers.

### **Why Developing Nations Adopted Structural Adjustment Policies**

Rationalization for structural adjustment started after a series of reports by the World Bank at the end of the 1970's revealed great hopelessness about the prospects of achieving serious reductions in the incidence of rural poverty (World Bank, 1979). Many developing nations experienced economic crises in the late 1970's (Wuyts et al., 1992; Ghai, 1992). Due to international recession in the late 1970's, demand for Third World primary products was reduced. The economic crisis was further worsened by increases in oil prices. To maintain their operations, most governments in developing countries turned to borrowing from international financial institutions. By 1991, there were over 70 developing countries in Asia, Africa, Latin America and the Caribbean that had received adjustment loans totalling more than US\$ 41 billion (CIDMAA, 1992).

In Sub Saharan Africa, a 1981 World Bank report on development highlighted some policy and structural problems as reasons for the region's growing poor performance and slow growth (World Bank, 1981). The sources of poor economic performance in the region as projected and reported by the Bank and others are numerous and varied (UNECA 1989; Cornia et al., 1992; Colclough, 1993). Ghai (1992) ascribes that the need for most developing nations, particularly in Africa, to shift their

policies towards structural adjustment arose from pressure from their creditor countries and institutions, as well as falling terms of trade with industrialized countries.

Ghai further points out that the policies pursued by industrialized countries resulted in a sharp increase in world interest rates, thereby contributing to the debt burden of developing nations. There was also a sharp drop in export earnings and financial flows particularly for Sub Saharan Africa that resulted in massive deterioration of commodity terms of trade (Ghai, 1992).

Another immediate justification for the adoption of structural adjustment policies was due to some weaknesses in development policies that constituted structural barriers to efficient and sustained economic growth. These included excessive taxation of agriculture, indiscriminate protection of industry, overvalued exchange rates, extensive state intervention in resource allocation through administrative structures, inefficiencies of state enterprise and widespread mismanagement and corruption (World Bank, 1981; Griffith and Sunkel, 1986).

### **What went Wrong?**

Policy failures pointed out in Sub Saharan Africa as contributing to the problem of growth do not stipulate that most of these countries in the region ignored earlier concerns of poverty alleviation and income distribution as advocated by the Bank and

other international donor agencies<sup>6</sup>. What this critique of African development policy did was to present a rather contrasting policy, a "policy of revisionism" to use Colclough's (1993) term. He contends that:

"It reasserted the primacy of economic growth amongst policy objectives arguing -as had been 15 years earlier- that poverty would thereby be most effectively reduced. This, however, was merely reflective of a new orthodoxy on development theory and policy which was emerging from the Bank, under the leadership of a group of 'new liberals' who were increasingly influential with McNamara's successor, Clausen, and who were themselves reflective of wider trends and fashions shaping the economics profession as a whole" (Colclough, 1993:4).

The new thinking attributed the slow socioeconomic progress made by many developing nations to cause by excessive government intervention in national economies. The solutions suggested argued for government's sharp reduction in the economic operation so that more reliance could be put on the private sector. In agricultural and rural development, this implied competition in input supply and marketing by the private sector and inclusion of user charges and cost recovery for the social services that were initially subsidized by the government to reach the poor (Chambers, 1989). The solutions advocated for rural development during the structural adjustment period, discouraged rather than promoted government involvement.

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<sup>6</sup> Colclough (1993), however remarks that it is difficult to pinpoint examples of Sub Saharan countries that had moved sharply into the direction prescribed by the Bank during the 1970's. See also Chambers, 1989:5.



There is considerable literature dealing with rural development as seen through the eyes of structural adjustment, particularly on Africa and Latin America. However, assessments offered by different studies do not always seem to agree, and in some cases come to opposite conclusions (World Bank and UNDP, 1989, UNECA, 1989). Generally, most studies point to the less satisfactory performance of adjustment policies in Sub Saharan Africa than in other groups of countries<sup>7</sup> (Cornia et al., 1992). Most structural adjustment packages advocated and introduced, included:

"...currency devaluation, which raises agricultural incomes from exports, higher domestic prices for agricultural produce, derestricting food grain movements and deregulation of prices. Government recurrent expenditures were cut back and parastatals shrunk or disbanded" (Chambers, 1989:4).

How effective these proposed solutions have been to the attainment of rural development goals is an enquiry that requires more time and attention<sup>8</sup>. However, for present purposes, the important point is that over the last decade, the fairly central position which human development had taken while influencing rural development policies has all but disappeared. The important role of state intervention witnessed in India and other countries came to be viewed as inefficient and more often "corrupt".

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<sup>7</sup> The external trade environment is of overwhelming importance to Africa's and Latin America's economic performance. The effects of structural adjustment on those countries that do not depend very much on world trade such as India, China and Pakistan are less severe.

<sup>8</sup> A detailed examination can be found in Colclough (1991). It argues that structural adjustment theories that informed development policies during much of the 1980's are a version of state minimization that failed to consider the implications of wide spread market imperfections.

## **Rural Development in the 1990's**

The lack of a "human face" or lack of attention to human development pursued by structural adjustment policies was seriously criticized by adjustment critics<sup>9</sup>. Empirical evidence also started to mount showing that in purely economic terms, and particularly in Africa, adjustment had generally failed as an ideology for rural development (Harvey, 1991). This particularly pertains to the emphasis placed by orthodox adjustment policies upon the elimination of subsidies -including those for staple foods, constriction of public expenditures (which resulted in a reduction of public sector employees and also the amount of public social services available), and an increase in user charges and cost recovery for social services. Each of the above mentioned elements put together have threatened important dimensions in the achievement of human development (Cornia et al., 1987). These criticisms incited the World Bank to pay more attention to human factors of development.

Towards the end of the decade, **Adjustment with a Human Face** (Cornia et al., 1987), stimulated interest in programs on the social dimensions of adjustment. It also paved the way for a renewed commitment to poverty reduction as the major aim of development (World Bank, 1990). In a series of **Human Development Reports** (UNDP, 1990, 1991, 1992, 1993), the United Nations also set out the case for the transcendent importance of human development in national development approaches. All these

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<sup>9</sup> These include Cornia et al., (1987) who focus on the extent to which orthodox adjustment policies damage equity, employment and human development.

present sufficient evidence enough to show that a shift in thinking was taking effect in the 1990's.

Since we have not reached halfway through the decade of the 1990's, all of these current debates may or may not amount to a new development paradigm for the decade. However, if they do, as already shown by the number of studies and debates on human development (UNDP, 1992, 1993; Chambers, 1989; Lipton and Maxwell, 1992), then it presents a new agenda for rural development in the 1990's: an agenda that was started in the 1970's during growth with redistribution. The implications for rural development are that poverty and poverty reduction which in most developing countries are predominantly a rural phenomenon, have made a come-back as main objectives of development. General guidelines characterizing the human development approach to rural development have two equally important elements:

"The first element is to promote the productive use of the poor's most abundant asset-labour. It calls for policies that utilize market incentives, social and political institutions, infrastructure, and technology to that end. The second is to provide basic social services to the poor. Primary health care, family planning, nutrition and primary education are especially important" (World Bank, 1990:3).

Rural development within the framework of the human development paradigm is not very different from the conceptualization of development that dominated debates in the 1970's. There are several similarities between growth with redistribution, and human development (Colclough, 1993; Lipton and Maxwell, 1992). Human development strategies emphasize the need for labour intensity policies. They stress the need to create

employment for the poor particularly in the smallholder agriculture sector with a view to improve their productivity. For the urban poor, human development advocates want labour intensive self-employment ventures in the informal sector.

The main difference between the two approaches of rural development is the prominent absence in the new paradigm of the need for the redistribution of income and assets in favour of the poor (Colclough, 1993). But, as Lipton and Maxwell (1992) point out, this lack of attention of distributional issues can cause an increase in poverty since:

"..feasible growth alone may reduce poverty at unacceptably slow speed....and there are some countries where redistribution of basic productive assets (e.g. land) remains an issue. In such cases redistribution, at least of growing incomes, gains importance for reduction of poverty" (Lipton and Maxwell, 1992:10).

Finally, rural development as presently conceptualized through human development contrasts strongly with the way it was first brought into development debates and noticeably with its disappearance during the subsequent decade. The emphasis on human development as the goal of rural development has compromised both economic growth aspired to in the 1980's and redistributive goals of the 1970's.

During the 1980's, rural development entered a period of disequilibrium due to balance of payment problems and the debt crisis. What emerged was a period of structural adjustments imposed by the international financial organizations. The solutions proposed were market and price liberalization, reduction of the state role in the economy. Implications of structural adjustment programs have reduced the importance of human

development goals set during the period of growth with distribution. Most developing nations experienced a drop in the services and an increase in prices etc.

During the 1990's, rural development is analyzed in services for human development and labour intensive technologies. The role of the state has been re-evaluated with the two central aims of development, poverty reduction and sustainability involving a state come back in health, agriculture, education, environmental protection etc. This means that the priorities of the poor are first to be promoted. This has brought us back to the debate on human development abandoned during the structural adjustment period and thus to an agenda on which to base our evaluation of rural development in developing countries. It is within this context that this study of rural development in Malawi is conducted.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **MALAWI: SOCIOECONOMIC BACKGROUND**

#### **Introduction**

Malawi is a small long narrow country stretching 901 kilometres (km) from north to south and covering an area of 118,484 square kilometres. Although Malawi is almost the same size as Liberia, Cuba or Czechoslovakia, about 20 percent of the land is taken up by Lake Malawi and other lakes. 1987 census recorded a total population of 7,988,507 with the majority of the people living in rural areas<sup>1</sup>. Malawi shares borders with Mozambique to the east and south, Zambia to the west and Tanzania in the north (Figure 1).

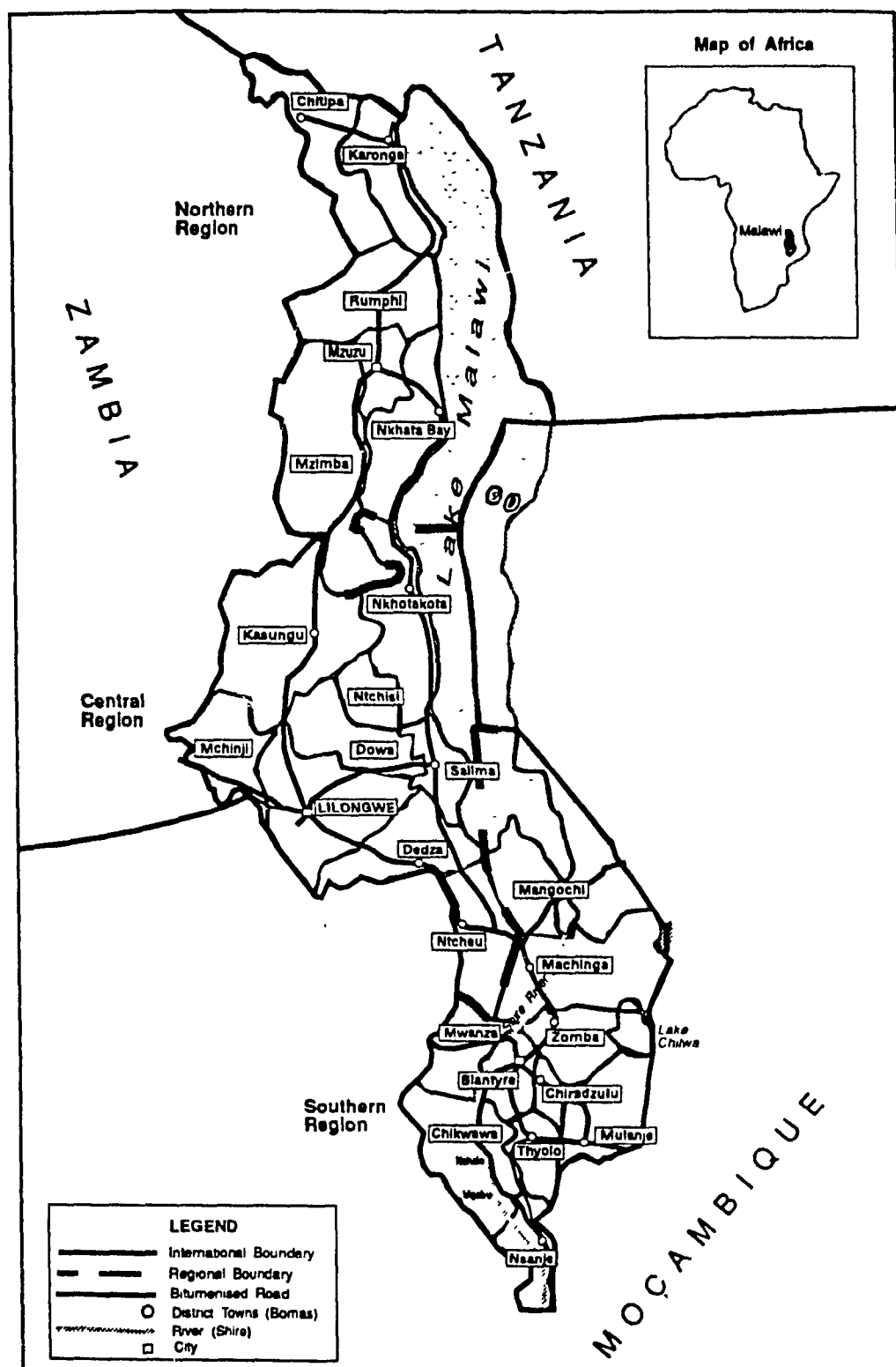
#### **The Political Economy of Colonial Malawi**

In order to understand the post-independence development policies, the colonial political economy of Malawi must be outlined. British interest started with missionaries led by Dr David Livingstone. Livingstone and other missionaries introduced Christianity and formal education to the local population. They also opened trade in ivory, tea and coffee with Britain which eventually paved the way for British rule.

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<sup>1</sup> This population figure is only for Malawians. It excludes over one million Mozambican refugees fleeing from civil war in their country.

FIGURE 1. MALAWI: Showing International, Regional and District Boundaries.



In 1891, Malawi was declared a protectorate of the British government known as the British Central African protectorate later renamed Nyasaland. Declaration of protectorate status was partly aimed at protecting British citizens and interests (particularly missionaries and traders). The British ruled through local executive and legislative councils, effectively controlled by the colonial office administration in London. As a protectorate, more British and other Europeans settlers came to settle in Malawi. Most of the settlers established plantations and estates producing tea, coffee and tobacco while others opened commercial enterprises that traded in manufactured goods.

Malawi, then Nyasaland, was deemed poor because the country lacked economically exploitable mineral resources that could support an industrial base economic growth (Mhone, 1992). The country relied on the export of cheap migrant labour to South African mines and agriculture products as a source of economic growth. Agricultural development was promoted mainly through estates run by the European settlers with the majority of the peasantry serving as a labour reservoir to work in the estates or mines. According to Gann and Duignan (1962), from a purely economic and administrative standpoint, the federation succeeded in increasing the GNP from 338.3 million to 546.8 million pounds sterling between 1954 and 1961 respectively. But as most of the people lived a subsistence life, growth in GNP was mainly generated by a few European settlers and plantation owners. It did not represent the total economy including subsistence production. Consequently, the economic growth that was



experienced never influenced a change in the living conditions for the majority of African subsistence producers (Mhone, 1992).

British rule in Malawi lasted until 1961 when the first general elections were held. According to Chipeta (1992), the nationalist movement in Malawi was based on two main fronts. (1) The struggle over land between peasant producers and white settlers and plantation farmers; and (2) a sense of fear by the peasantry and African working class of a possible increase of White power within the structure of the federal government. The position of both African peasants and the working class against the federation provided a common front in the nationalist movement. Basically, there were only two parties that competed for election; the Malawi Congress Party which was the establishment of the nationalist movement, and the Federal Party composed mostly of Whites. The Malawi Congress Party won the elections and gained power under the leadership of Dr Kamuzu Banda. In 1964 Malawi gained independence and later (1966) became a republic with Kamuzu Banda as president.

## **Government**

Administratively, the structure of the country is divided into three regions and subdivided into 24 districts. The north has 5 districts, 9 in the centre and 10 in the south (Figure 1). Regional Administrators and District Commissioners are the heads of the regional and district administration respectively. Regions serve as decentralized second level administrative divisions of central government ministries and departments with

districts at the third level. The lowest level of administration are the Traditional Authorities (TA) headed by traditional chiefs. Their duties include tax collection from the villagers in their jurisdiction, land allocation and settling land or other domestic disputes.

### **People and Social Life**

Malawi can be described as a multi racial society comprising of Africans, Europeans and Asians.<sup>2</sup> Asians, particularly of Indian origin, are mainly traders running commercial businesses while Europeans are involved in plantation agriculture as well as other government positions particularly of a technical nature. Among the Africans, 58% are Chewa, 18% Lomwe, 13% Yao and 7% Ngoni (PC Globe, 1990). Chichewa is the national language of communication, spoken by over 75 per cent of the people, whereas English is the official language of commerce and the government.

The social life style of most Malawians, particularly in rural areas is predominantly defined by customary practices. The social system places an emphasis on conformity and group cohesion. Honour and respect accrue with age. For instance, major decisions in the household are made by the oldest member even though she or he may not be able to make a large contribution towards subsistence. Informal education which comprise activities such as initiation ceremonies and traditional ritual is also very

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<sup>2</sup> Whites form a very small percent of the population and are generally known as Europeans in Malawi because the first whites came from Europe.

much part of rural societies. Among other things, informal education instills respect for tradition and culture in young people and prepares them for adult life and social roles. Today, under the impact of cash economies, rural communities are experiencing a change of values. For example, other than age, money and material wealth have increasingly become means of commanding respect and influence.

Observation of traditional customs is different between urban and rural areas. Due to the diverse ethnic and traditional backgrounds of people in urban areas, the living arrangement lacks social institutions similar to the ones that promote cohesion and conformity in rural areas. However, this does not mean that traditions and customs are not observed in urban areas, but their intensity is rather more relaxed. Partly this is caused by the fact that residence groups in urban areas come from diverse geographical areas and do not always share the same values. Breaking customary rules and traditions in urban areas does not carry the same stigma as it would if the locality was that of a village which is also considered as home. When people in urban areas talk of a village, they usually refer to a setting or an area where an individual lived prior to coming to the urban centre. Urban residence in most cases is considered as temporary residence.

### **Kinship and Marriage**

A household characterized by extended family ties is the basic social unit in Malawian society. A household is defined by many scholars as a unit of persons or group of people generally bound by marriage or kinship ties who make common provision for food supply, and have a collective income both monetary and non-monetary

(Hirschmann and Vaughan, 1983; Alavi and Shanin, 1982). The members of the household may or may not sleep in the same dwelling unit. Kinship and marriage are major elements through which extended family ties are maintained and on which the social and economic existence of a household is dependent. Most ethnic communities in the north, some parts in the central, and in the southern tip of Malawi are patrilineal. In patrilocal society, marriage is symbolized by the payment of bride price by the groom to the bride's family. According to local customs, bride price symbolically gives a man the right to guardianship of children, if they have any, in case of divorce, and cessation of a woman being a member of her family household while she is married. In case of divorce, only the woman is allowed to return to her family. The children are left with the man. Inheritance of land and other material property passes through male lineage (Pike and Remington, 1965).

Most societies in the central and southern regions of the country are matrilineal, and they practice matrilocal marriages. In such societies, power is in the hands of the woman and her family since land allocation and inheritance is determined through the line of the woman. Marriage arrangement involves no payment of bride price, therefore, it is the man that leaves his family to live at his wife's household. Land and property is owned, controlled and inherited through matrilineage (Pike and Remington, 1965). In matrilocal societies, a man can only acquire land for cultivation by virtue of marriage. He has no customary or legal claims over it. In the case of divorce, the man alone returns to live with his family. The children are left in custody of the woman. These

days, both systems of marital arrangements are changing. Families prefer to settle wherever they can find land or work (away from their families) due to land pressure or education attainment. As a result, more nuclear families are emerging although they continue to maintain extended family ties (Hirschmann and Vaughan, 1983).

### **Land Tenure System**

Land is the most important resource for Malawi's economic development. The system of land ownership and land use is governed by both traditional customs and the government. There are three land tenure systems in Malawi: customary, public, and private land. At the time of independence, about 87 percent of the land was held as customary land. Only 3 percent was privately owned and the remaining 10 percent was public land (Pryor, 1990).

### **Customary Land**

According to Malawian traditions and customs, no one can "own" land in the western sense<sup>3</sup>. It can only be allocated to families for use by the chief who holds it in trust for the people/villagers. Individuals only have the right to cultivate it and these rights are passed on through matrilineal or patrilineal lineage depending on the community. This system ensures security of tenure to farming families as long as they farm the land. Land alienation occurs only if it is brought to the chief's attention that

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<sup>3</sup> According to local customs, land belongs to a divine being for everybody to use. That is why it is entrusted with the chief as guardian. For more information and discussion see Mwakasungura, (1986:2).

it is being misused or in disuse while others are in need of it or when it is turned into public land by the government.

### **Public Land**

Public land refers to land acquired or owned by local or central government for a particular use<sup>4</sup>. It includes forest reserves, land in towns and cities not privately owned, and land used for public buildings. The government can sell public land to become privately owned or turn it into customary land.

### **Private Land**

Private land is divided into two categories; freehold and leasehold. Freehold land was given to early British settlers during the early colonial days so that some could establish estates and plantations, while others could use it for other commercial purposes. During the colonial period, European settlers given land were also issued with "certificates of claim" to guarantee their land ownership. The certificate of claim gave white settlers legal rights over the land allocated to them which included homes and gardens of Africans in some cases<sup>5</sup>. Based on the legality of certificate of claim, most of the land in urban and rural areas remains private to this day. In some rural areas, freehold private land was bought by the government and turned into customary land

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<sup>4</sup> Before independence public land was called crown land.

<sup>5</sup> It was this systematic alienation of land from Africans that sparked peasant resistance to British rule in Malawi.

(Kydd and Hewitt, 1986). Leasehold land is either customary or public land leased for a specified period of time. The most common tenure period is ninety-nine years. Most Africans and non-Africans lease land mainly for commercial and agricultural purposes.

### **Land Availability and Demographic Trends**

The demographic situation in Malawi indicates a high potential for population pressure on the country's most valued resource endowment, land. At about 8 million, and density of 85 people per square kilometre, Malawi has one of the highest population densities in Africa. She also has one of the world's highest population growth rates recorded at 3.7 percent<sup>6</sup> (NSO, 1991). It is further estimated that 56 per cent of total surface area that can be used for agriculture, only 38% can actually be cultivated under present technological conditions available to Malawi (Mwakasungura 1986). This gives a population density of 180 persons per square kilometre on arable land alone. Based on these facts, no general conclusion can be drawn as to whether population pressure may result in continuing land fragmentation or in land reform and redistribution. Therefore the question of land availability and use in an overwhelmingly agricultural economy assumes great social and economic importance.

Malawi is predominantly rural, about 89 per cent of the population is in rural areas. Age distribution of population shows that about 46 per cent is less than 15 years,

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<sup>6</sup> Intercensal annual population growth rate is 3.7 per cent including about one million Mozambican refugees. Without refugees, the growth rate is 3.3 per cent which is still high by world standards.

50 per cent is aged 15 to 64 and only 4 per cent is 65 years or more. The age structure of Malawi has a high dependency ratio of 10 to 1. Dependency ratio is defined as population of less than 15 years of age and that aged 65 years or more, divided by total number of people aged 15 years to 64 years. Dependency ratio assumes that people under 15 and over 65 years are economically dependent on the population aged between 15 and 64.

The proportion of economically active people in rural areas is 68 percent with almost all (over 56 per cent) involved in subsistence agriculture.<sup>7</sup> The sex distribution of the economically active population is 67 per cent males and 68 per cent females. Despite an almost equal distribution between economically active males and females, females are largely engaged in subsistence agriculture (65 per cent) compared to males (46 per cent). In urban areas, only 46 per cent of the population is economically active with less than 10 per cent (those who live in urban fringes) classified as subsistence farmers. There are more economically active males (64 per cent) in urban areas than females (24 per cent) (NSO, 1991).

### **Economy**

Resources in Malawi are largely limited to land and labour. Apart from being one of 49 low income countries in the world, Malawi is also classified as one of the 29

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<sup>7</sup> According to census statistics in Malawi, the definition of economically active persons include all those engaged in subsistence farming - known as *mlimi*. National Statistical office (1987:11).



least developed countries (LLDC) (World Bank, 1992). Agricultural development allowed the country to be self-sufficient in food until around the mid 1980's (World Bank, 1988). Agriculture contributes substantially to domestic export earnings. For instance in 1981, about 90 per cent of the total export earnings came from agricultural produce. Agricultural activities are carried out by two sub-sectors: estate and smallholder. The estate subsector is mainly involved in growing major export cash crops like tobacco, tea and sugar. Of the three major export crops, only a small fraction is produced by smallholder farmers. Smallholder farmers mainly produce food crops for domestic consumption and sell any surpluses, but they also produce cash crops like cotton and groundnuts (peanuts) for domestic manufacturing industries.

#### **Provision of Basic Social Services**

Social services in Malawi are provided by the government. It provides funding for health, education and social welfare services. Equally important are Non Governmental Organizations (NGO). The role of NGOs is important because they mostly set up services in areas where the government has not been able to. Development of social service provision has led to growth of the NGO sector in Malawi particularly in the 1980's. There are 26 international and 11 national NGOs involved in refugee relief work, rural health, education, agriculture and nutritional programme. There are also many other church and service club organizations involved in social service delivery on a small scale (Simukonda, 1992).

The social and economic information on Malawi aims to set a background that has a bearing on rural development policies adopted in Malawi. To adequately analyze the processes of rural development, the study specifically examines the case of Salima as a case study district.

### **The Study Area: SALIMA**

Salima is one of the twenty four districts in Malawi. It is located about 100 kilometres (km) east of the capital city, Lilongwe in the central region. To the east of the district lies lake Malawi. The total area of the district is 2,239 square km of which 1,669 is suitable for agriculture. According to National Statistical office (1987), the population of the district is 188,300. This is approximately 2.4 % of the country's 8 million people in 1987. The population density in the district is 84 persons per square km, while the density for arable land is 112 persons per square km.

Salima was selected as the study locale partly because apart from being a traditional subsistence farming area, it is also a Rural Development Project (RDP) area within Salima Agricultural Development Division (ADD). Both subsistence farming and rural development project interventions present a typical setting to compare rural life situation within a development project area. As the area of Salima RDP covers approximately the whole district, the term Salima in this study refers to both RDP and the district.

There are two main ethnic groups in Salima, Yao and Chewa. Both are matrilineal communities. As previously stated, a man's right to cultivate a piece of land is acquired through marriage which can take place at an age as early as fifteen years.

### **Employment Opportunities**

Smallholder agriculture is the principle occupation of the local people in Salima. Although the district is along the lakeshore area, fishing is secondary and is practised in a few villages along the lake. Major crops grown are cotton, maize, cassava, rice, groundnuts and beans. Maize, cassava, rice, groundnuts and beans are grown for domestic consumption and sale or barter on local markets while cotton is grown solely for cash purposes.

The cycle of agriculture varies with particular crops although it is largely determined by rainfall patterns. In general, it begins in August with field clearing and tilling, preparing for early planting with the first rains in October. The implements used for cultivation are simple hand hoes. During the rainy season, maize requires weeding and application of fertilizers. Cotton requires weeding and spraying of pesticides. After the rains in April, May, June and July, maize is manually harvested, shelled and stored or taken to the markets. During the same period, cotton is picked and manually sorted or graded in readiness for the market which opens in July. During the dry season, people along river valleys open up dambo gardens where they engage in cultivation of

vegetables, maize and beans. This type of agriculture is done on a very small scale because the flood plains are not wide enough from the river bed.

Apart from crops, smallholder farmers in Salima also keep animals like goats, pigs and cattle. These types of animals are usually kept by those farmers who are relatively better off. The majority of small scale peasant villagers keep small stocks of animals like chickens, doves and ducks for their consumption. In addition to agriculture, most people rely on small scale income generating ventures to supplement their incomes. Such activities are agriculture related too since they involve selling of cooked foods, beer brewing, selling of grass for thatching roofs, selling firewood and mat making among many others. Other activities such as bicycle, radio and watch repair, carpentry and shoe repairing do also exist (mainly in local market centres) but are not very common. The main reason, it seems, is lack of an available market to support the services.

### **The Role of Women in Agriculture and Food Production**

Women in Malawi play a central role in various sectors of the rural economy. They have customarily provided the bulk of household agricultural and non agricultural labour undertaking major responsibilities in food production and income generating activities. Cultural diversity makes it difficult to generalize the gender division of labour in peasant production for Malawi. In Malawi as whole the majority of the population is women (52 percent). It is estimated that 93 percent of the women live in rural areas primarily engaged in agricultural activities (Chipande, 1987).

The division of labour based on gender is however, noticeable in some households than others. In some of households, men and women share tasks in agricultural production. For instance, in Salima, the division of labour that could be identified is based on the physical strength required to perform certain tasks such as, felling of trees and clearing the land is done by the men while women prepare the field for planting. Other tasks such as, weeding, taking care of the crops, harvesting, and storing the crop in barns are shared between the men and women. The barn is usually constructed by the men and the women plaster it with mud.

In a considerable number of households, the men are usually involved in non farm activities such as wage employment, fishing, trading or self employment in trade (Chipande, 1987). This means that the women are left on their own to carry out agricultural production. In most of such households, the women are mainly responsible for household food production as a major requirement. Women's involvement in food production includes food crop cultivation, fertilizer application (if any is applied), weeding, and harvesting. Women are also responsible for food processing, food storage, and food distribution at the household level which eventually has an effect on food security.

Food processing is a major responsibility of the women because it involves food preservation to prolong food availability in the household. Most of the food that requires processing is maize, cassava, millet or sorghum which involves pounding and/or taking

it to a grinding mill which might be situated several kilometres away from the household. Fish, meat or vegetable salting and drying are also common food preservation techniques carried out by women (Hirshmann and Vaughan, 1983). All this work concerns preparation of what the family eats as well as its nutrition status. Apart from these tasks, there are other domestic chores which also are carried out by the women. They include gathering of firewood for fuel, the fetching of water for all domestic purposes including bathing for the entire household. Generally, a woman's work day in Malawi is longer than that of their male counterparts (Chipande, 1987). This is further supported by studies conducted in Ghana where it was reported that women's work day averaged 14 hours (Ardayio, 1986).

Women are not only responsible for the bulk of food production but they are also involved in some cash crop production. These are usually cash crops which are commonly produced and nationally priced and marketed by the Agricultural Development and Marketing Board (ADMARC). These are crops like; cotton, maize and groundnuts. Other crops such as sweet potatoes, sugar cane, beans and vegetables are also sold informally as cash crops. However, where cash crop is involved, in most cases the women's contribution is not reflected in the benefits realized from sale of most cash crops. In certain cases the women may not have a say in the sale or proceeds from the sale of cash crops which are controlled by their husbands (Brydon and Chant, 1989). In Salima, questions related to decision making in the households was not fully developed to have a conclusive understanding of who is responsible for what in the

household. However, it is an important issue that requires further investigation as the assumption of most development agencies and extension staff is that it the men that make most decisions. As a result, the women's interests have not been incorporated in the planning of most development programs.

## **Conclusion**

Salima is like most rural areas in Malawi. The impact of rural development on living standard is dependent on local people's efficient utilization of physical resources, land and water located in rural areas as well as government support. This is true particularly for women who comprise a majority of the population and are the main contributors to domestic and household work. Whether rural development projects have made an impact on the socioeconomic and material conditions of the local people is the focus of the following chapters. The state of smallholder productivity in rural communities and provision of support services by the government is to be examined in the context of the material and physical resources available to the local population. To do this, the study must identify the measures that would reflect the performance of rural development in the country.

## CHAPTER 3

### RURAL DEVELOPMENT: THE MALAWI GOVERNMENT APPROACH

#### Introduction

Malawi is essentially an agricultural society. The agricultural sector generates about 37 percent of the gross domestic product (GDP) compared to about 13 percent from manufacturing. The rest of the GDP comes from the service sector. In the manufacturing sector, most industries are classified as agricultural processing plants<sup>1</sup>. Exports consists of primarily farm products, about 20 percent of the total GDP, with tobacco accounting for over 70 percent of the total export earnings. Over 75 percent of the labour force of the country is employed in agriculture related activities and at least 85 percent of the country's 8 million people derive their livelihood from small-scale farming. The average holding size for over 50 percent of the peasantry households is less than 1 hectare (National Statistical Office, 1992). Rural development in Malawi is therefore very important to the development of the country as a whole. This section, examines the government's development policy since independence. Also to be explored is whether the rural development strategy pursued in Malawi is consistent with its stated goals or not, and also whether or not the defined target population (rural smallholder

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<sup>1</sup> Most manufacturing industries include tea factories, cotton ginneries, textile factory, tobacco factories, oil and grain milling and cold storage plants.



peasant farmers) has experienced an improvement in the general standard of living or socioeconomic wellbeing.

### **Ideological and Political Views of Development**

Malawi's rural development should be understood within the context of development policies pursued soon after independence. However, as a background to post-independence development policies, some socioeconomic and resource challenges which the newly independent Malawi inherited from the colonial administration will be outlined. At independence, Malawi was a small economy with low potential for economic growth due to a lack of mineral resources (Mhone, 1992). Agriculture alone was deemed insufficient to stimulate growth, as the influence of modernization theories at that period promoted industrialization as a means to achieving economic growth. Nevertheless, the government had no choice but to strengthen agriculture as the leading sector of economy in order to finance other development projects.

At the time of political independence, Malawi's agriculture sector was divided into two: estate and smallholder. In terms of number of people engaged, the smallholder sub-sector is bigger than the estate. The smallholder sub-sector is dominated by subsistence farming and low production levels. Output from the smallholder subsector was regarded as not enough to generate savings to invest into industry. The estate sub-sector was promoted to improve the productivity of export crops, the only way the country could earn some income to invest in the economy. At the time of independence,

the estate subsector was dominated by European settlers who had been given large pieces of land by the colonial government.

Malawi's geographic position is in a region where neighbours are involved in intense mining activity. In most of these countries, South Africa in particular, mining activity relies on labour from countries within the region, including Malawi. This situation was effectively utilized by the colonial government through the export of migrant labour to work in the mines, particularly those in South Africa. Lacking mineral resources and due to lucrative salaries offered by mining economies of (Southern Africa), export of labour to other countries was part of government policy to earn income (Nyasaland Government, 1959). The merit of this practice was that it helped to reduce unemployment in the countryside. Therefore, although estates provided some employment, most young able bodied men preferred to work outside the country rather than to work in estates within the country.

### **Development Policies at Independence 1964-1970**

During the struggle for political independence, the main players who led the nationalist movement in Malawi were educated Africans who worked as teachers, government clerks, medical assistants or clergy. According to Kaunda (1992), the above group opposed both the colonial masters who had more power and the traditional rulers. They formed a middle class with their civil service positions, separating (upper class) plantation owners from the (lower class) peasantry of colonial society. As their

livelihood depended on the colonial system and were based in urban areas, Kaunda (1992:64) observes that: "Their objective common interests were characteristically different from those of the rural masses". For purposes of rallying popular support for political struggle, nationalist leaders selectively used peasant grievances particularly on land as their platform. This approach raised anticipation of political and social change among the masses. But in a true sense what connected the two groups was a common resentment of the colonial system.

When formulating development strategy after independence, policy makers were aware that agriculture held the key to overall economic growth. Growth in agriculture would feed the country's growing population, generate foreign capital required to develop other sectors of the economy and increase income levels of the population. The first post-independence plan that focused on promoting peasant agriculture marked the beginning of rural development concern in Malawi. The plan explained that production in agriculture had to increase at a phenomenal rate, so that reliance on it as a source of income had a meaningful content not only to the few, but also to the majority of rural small farmers. Rural development at this time was equated with agricultural development. Rural development efforts were designed to encourage and assist the peasantry to undertake cash crop farming (Nyasaland Government, 1962). Further commitment to focus on peasant grown cash crops was also evident through agriculture development expenditure. The majority of funds were allocated towards research and the extension of peasant grown crops especially maize (corn) (Kydd and Hewitt, 1986).

Kydd (1985) also notes that almost all local resources allocated to the Ministry of Agriculture went into smallholder projects. Plantation agriculture received very few resources.

Economic growth following independence was relatively slow. The period was marked by weather fluctuations from year to year resulting in a decline of agriculture output in some years. This according to Mkandawire (1992), made smallholder tobacco production experience of inter-annual variations with two poor harvests of maize. By the end of 1960's, doubts were raised about the smallholder subsector's ability to generate and sustain growth that would provide the government with sufficient income for investment. The expansion of the export-oriented estate sub-sector was seen as potentially the only dependable way to achieve economic growth and earn foreign currency.

### **Rural Development Policies in the 1970's**

Having started on a low key to improve the economy, the government's major concern during the 1970's was to increase and maximize foreign earnings through the expansion of primary exports. This passion facilitated not only a policy shift from smallholder agriculture to large scale farming but also precipitated an alteration of the agrarian system with respect to land issues. According to Pryor (1990), the promotion of individual large scale farming as opposed to smallholders is a defensible development strategy if three conditions are met. These are:

"(1) If resources directed to estates are more productive than if spent on the rest of smallholder sub-sector. (2) If there is some trickle down effect of benefits from the wealthier part of agricultural sub-sector to the poorer. (3) If the poorer part of the agricultural sub-sector is not disadvantaged by other government policies, by natural conditions, or by its interaction with the wealthier part of the sub-sector" (Pryor, 1990:67).

Whether these conditions were achieved in Malawi or not is debatable, but as data analysis indicates, these strategies adversely affected smallholder production in many ways.

Export oriented policy promoting large scale farming recommended large land transfers from customary land utilized by smallholder farmers. The government revised the customary land tenure system by amending the Land Act in 1967 permitting the change of customary land tenure to individual or private ownership<sup>2</sup>. Smallholder land transfers to estate occurred under the impression that wide areas of customary land were not efficiently used. Consequently, subsistence agriculture would not be affected particularly with respect to access to land.

Indeed, as expected, agricultural production grew by 5.6 percent during the decade 1970-1980 (Silumbu, 1992). New private estates increased with land acquired from the smallholder sector under customary tenure. Official political encouragement empowered top civil servants, ministers and those with capital to open and own large scale private

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<sup>2</sup> Changes that took place to customary land tenure with regards to registration and amendments to the Land Act during the late 1960's are detailed by Kamchedzera in Mhone (1992:188-204).

farming ventures<sup>3</sup>. Several incentives were introduced to facilitate expansion of the estate sub-sector. They included the acquisition of large pieces of land at very little cost and assurances of financial assistance direct from commercial banks. For instance, during 1970's, commercial banks increased their lending to estates from MK0.1 million in 1970 to MK13.6 million in 1975 to MK81.9 million in 1979 (Mkandawire, 1992).

Economic growth from export oriented agrarian policy started to show its effects in the form of land constraints experienced by most rural peasant farmers (Mhone, 1992). Smallholder farmers were being displaced from their land to less productive marginal areas. Most of their land, customary land, was privatized to open large scale farming and grow export crops. By mid 1970's, according to Mwakasungura (1986), 850 estate owners had about the same land as 73,500 peasant households. Table 3.1, shows the steady decrease in proportion of customary (peasant) land and the rapid increase of private estate land from 1970 through 1982. The down trend of in estate land in relation to customary experienced in 1983 to 1986 is chiefly a result of new land being claimed by peasant farmers thana reversal of estate land to customary (Mwakasungura, 1986).

As a major determinant of social and economic well-being, land alienation meant lower smallholder income levels, low food production capacity and underemployment. A steady movement of peasant labour to estate agriculture started to take place, either

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<sup>3</sup> The president encouraged Civil Servants, Members of Parliament, Cabinet Ministers and the business community to open up estates in various parts of the country where they would produce cash crops for export.

to work as seasonal labourers or permanent wage labourers. It also instituted differentiation into society by transforming the African petite-bourgeoisie into a land owning and propertied class.

**Table 3.1    Proportion of Customary to Estate Land 1970-1986**

	1970	1979	1982	1983	1985	1986
<b>Estate</b>	23.2	40.8	55.6	52.5	46.8	46.9
<b>Customary</b>	76.8	59.2	44.4	47.5	53.2	53.1

Source: Statistical Yearbook 1979/86.

### **Rural Development Projects 1970-1980**

The World Bank introduced the concept of rural development in Malawi in the 1970's. Rural development was conceived in terms of economic growth, in particular, the possible contribution of agriculture to industrial growth. The programs initiated at the time aimed at incorporating the peasants into production for the market as a way of bringing about rural development. While the government was busy promoting large scale farming, the World Bank and other donor agencies were interested in promoting small scale labour intensive ventures and smallholder

productivity. In agricultural economies like Malawi, the Bank viewed smallholder agriculture as a major component of the entire rural development process to fulfil society's objectives. The implication was to encourage peasants to change modes of production from subsistence based to one based on production for the market (World Bank, 1975).

With smallholder production geared for the market, an increase in peasant production would be achieved through the provision of extension, credit, the use of new seed varieties, and other services on a comprehensive scale. However, there were structural and infrastructural obstacles identified as preventing smallholders from attaining high productivity. It was necessary to transform some of these social and legal structures, such as; the land tenure system or the poor rural road network that delayed supply of inputs. Transformation, the World Bank argued, would strengthen the provision of agriculture services in a few designated areas then later be replicated throughout the country.

The Rural Development Projects (RDPs) also supported the settlement schemes approach where the government took land away from customary tenure in the name of development. Settlement schemes were set up in areas of high agricultural potential to be exploited and settled by people wanting land for cash crop



farming<sup>4</sup>. Chipeta (1992) states that adoption of a transformation approach was not based on any assessment of its efficiency, but simply on a subjective judgment of its feasibility based on the theoretical thinking at that time. As the emphasis in World Bank projects was on cash crops for export, more attention was evidently paid to "progressive" smallholder farmers who devoted more land and resources to cash crops. The women and peasant farmers were often by-passed by extension and production technologies. RDP's also contributed to rural differentiation between the progressive cash crop farmers and subsistence peasants with regard to the distribution of personal income and access to resources for production in the rural sector.

RDP's did not significantly increase the output of peasant farmers because their coverage was selective to progressive farmers in few areas. This failure meant that peasant farmers were still having low income earnings from their agricultural production. The problems of the program were attributed to the rural development project packages. They were formulated without input from a target population; namely, peasant farmers. Consequently, the programs were growth oriented to the effect that peasants did not matter. The projects were so capital intensive and so expensive that they could not be repeated on a countrywide scale, therefore the strategy was not meant for sustained development.

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<sup>4</sup> Most settlers to the schemes come from districts that experience land shortage. Before being accepted they undergo some agricultural training. The conditions of admittance to the scheme consists of a signed agreement to abide by stipulated objectives and rules of the scheme.

### **National Rural Development Program (NRDP) in the 1980's**

Until 1977, development policies in Malawi emphasized priority for economic growth and efficiency hence the emphasis on large scale export agriculture. Rural development initially referred only to improvements in agricultural production. Social services received very little attention as the public expenditure on health, education, water supply and social welfare were severely constrained (Office of President and Cabinet, 1987). Changes in the meaning of development to include both economic and social factors of well-being rendered Malawian development policies of economic growth through agriculture modernization and commercialization obsolete.

The government reacted by instituting a National Rural Development Program (NRDP) as a mechanism for realizing new goals of development through growth and poverty reduction. The NRDP was a result of a growth with redistribution policies which scholars and international development agencies advocated in the 1970's as comprising the new meaning of development (Chenery et al., 1974). This approach focuses on poverty alleviation measures while ensuring that economic growth is sustainable and income is equitably distributed among all segments of the population.

To achieve its objectives, the NRDP aimed at increasing peasant production and low incomes. It also aimed at improving the peasant welfare, their standard of living and their access to social services. This entailed giving priority to stimulating the productivity of peasant farmers and promoting small scale enterprises as a way of

increasing their earning opportunities. NRDP also requires improvements in the social sector by: (1) Expanding primary education priorities. (2) Devoting larger public spending on social services particularly on health care, rural water supply and sanitation, improving rural transport etc. Consequently, the NRDP policy of the 1980's was theoretically a good tool for tackling rural problems, especially through its emphasis on the social component of development; that being poverty alleviation.

While the government's rural development projects included the social component, development thinking had changed, emphasizing the need for structural adjustment programs. The structural adjustment programs in Malawi started in the 1980's. They have continued through various phases and have moved towards a deregulation of prices and marketing, rationalization of statutory organizations, currency devaluation, restraint on wages and the removal of subsidies on food and social services (CIDMAA, 1992; Mhone, 1992). The mandatory cuts in government spending have severely reduced public health care, primary education and other social services on which the poor depend for poverty reduction.

It is within this context that this thesis suggests that the potential for a rural development process must come from the rural people themselves, based on their needs and priorities. Consequently, it is within this framework that the effects of rural development on the living standards of rural population shall be reviewed

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

The effect of rural development on poverty alleviation will be examined using material collected from various national surveys, such as the census, national agriculture surveys and family formation surveys. This data is supplemented by primary qualitative material I collected from Salima during the summer of 1992. Other data is drawn from various sources, such as the World Bank, that have looked at Malawi's experience on rural development and poverty alleviation in recent years.

#### **Data Sources**

##### **a. Government Survey Data**

The first are official statistical documents published by the Malawi government through the National Statistical Office (NSO) as well as other government departments. These reports include the Census Reports, National Family Formation survey, National Survey of Agriculture, Statistical Yearbook and other publications that deal with demographic, economic and social changes in Malawi.

The practice of compiling contemporary statistical work in Malawi is relatively new and less matured than the standards of more developed countries like Canada.

Therefore, for political or technical reasons, the data may vary in accuracy, but, these remain the best consistent sources of official data that is disseminated to other users, such as the United Nations.

**(b) Literature Survey**

The second source of data is compilations by the United Nations' agencies such as the United Nations Development Program (UNDP), and also the World Bank. These are complemented by the work done by Malawian and non Malawian researchers, who have made important contribution to various aspects of the field. These sources were identified through literature surveys of published and unpublished documentation containing not only theoretical aspects but also statistics of empirical research on social and economic variables.

**(c) Primary Data**

Qualitative data was collected from three areas selected in Salima district (the case study area). The selection of Salima as an ideal survey area was based on my previous career experience and knowledge of the area. I had worked in the area previously on several occasions pertaining to rural community services for people with disabilities. These engagements enabled me to establish rapport with some district government employees and some local people. As a result, access to the research setting through the cooperation of the local people was made easier.

The advantage of combining both qualitative and quantitative methods is that each method has insights to offer, insights that neither one alone could provide. For instance, quantitative data alone cannot provide a descriptive analysis of rural life in the villages and how it is perceived by the rural people. Also the use of two methods together helps to minimize biases that are associated with each method. Consequently, each method supplements the shortcomings of the other in order to increase the reliability of the findings and conclusions drawn.

### **The Sample**

The people interviewed were drawn from 30 households in three villages. The selected villages were purposely sampled to reflect the existing variations in the social services and resources available to rural communities. The criteria used to reflect this variation was the village's relative accessibility from the district administrative centre. Of the three villages selected; one is easily accessible, the second one is the least accessible and the third lies between the two extremes from the district centre. I reached the decision of which villages to include in the study after a number of inquiries. Different extension officers from the health department, agriculture, education and community services were asked, based on their assessment which village they considered difficult to access from the centre; the one which is more accessible from the centre; and the one in between the two. The households interviewed were selected based on

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<sup>1</sup> Detailed discussion on the advantages of applying either method or both as a tool for research is presented by Cook and Reichardt, 1979.

convenient sampling procedures, ie. only heads of the household's<sup>2</sup> present during the field visits were interviewed if they consented (Singleton et al., 1988).

### **Operational Definitions**

The operational objective of this research is to focus on what comprises rural development programs in the Malawian situation in order to analyze the problems of rural poverty. This means that the demands of meaningful and effective rural development include conceptualization and empirical translation of rural development policies. By implication, such demands require acceptance of certain definable elements as more or less measurable indicators of reduction of poverty in the rural communities. It is the task of this section to explore and identify some variables of rural development in light of the current theoretical framework that emphasizes both economic and social goals.

### **Measures**

In this research, rural development through poverty reduction will be viewed in terms of variables that satisfy people's social, economic and material needs. Thus, on the basis of available data sources, the following shall be considered as major poverty reduction variables of rural development:

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<sup>2</sup> According to the local definition, the head of household is usually an elderly person responsible for making day to day decisions mainly those concerning subsistence. She or he may not necessarily be making much contribution towards the household's sustenance.

**(a) Access to education facilities:**

Literacy rates are usually used as an attribute referring to the accessibility and availability of educational facilities. In this research, literacy rates, primary school enrolment ratios and government expenditure on education are used to measure access to education.

**(b) Access to health services:**

Operationally, access to health services is defined in terms of official records that show the ratio of health personnel to the population, government expenditure on health, the nutritional status of people, life expectancy, and infant mortality rates.

**(c) Access to clean drinking water and sanitation:**

This is operationalized in terms of the proportion of household with access to different sources of water and also sanitation.

**(d) Access to important resources of production:**

In operational terms, this refers particularly to land availability and it is measured by the size of land holding, agriculture productivity for food and cash crops, use of inputs and extension, and marketing or pricing of agriculture products.

Access is defined as availability for use. Thus, if social services and resources are not within effective reach of, and being used by the people in the rural areas, the facility or service cannot be said to be available or accessible. The ease of access has



been determined on the basis of household surveys in the rural areas, direct observation as in the case of piped water and information from a member of a household as regards to use and intensity.

It must also be mentioned that the list of variables used to measure how best rural development is reducing the incidence of poverty in Malawi is by no means exhaustive. The present effort should, however, only serve to point out the key issues that deserve further attention. Therefore, additional efforts along this line are required to expand the topic through exploration and identification of other indicators of rural development which are not covered by this method.

### **Collection of Data**

Most literature on Malawian rural development research revealed methodologies that utilized a formal structured questionnaire as an essential part of data gathering. While acknowledging the merits of a formal structured questionnaire over unstructured open ended method (Singleton et al., 1988), this study utilized the latter method to collect qualitative data. The main reason was to compare the outcome of data collected by the government and other agencies with the actual situation in the villages. An unstructured, open ended method (also known as intensive interviewing technique), as

a tool for qualitative data collection (appendix A) was applied together with participant observation<sup>3</sup>.

Although there are no universally agreed upon criteria for the selection of research field workers, certain qualities are desirable (Singleton et al., 1988). During the fieldwork, the assistance of two officers from the Malawi Council for the Handicapped (MACOHA) was sought. They were each paid an equivalent of 150 Canadian dollars since it involved taking time away from their work. Both had diplomas in agriculture from the University of Malawi, which meant they had considerable knowledge on the topic and were familiar with rural development issues in Malawi. Although their work mainly concerns households with disabled members, they are in contact with the local rural communities on a regular basis. This aspect enhanced accessibility to the study locale.

Bearing in mind that the officers are well known in the area, they facilitated informal discussions with district officers whose views in most cases represented the government position at the local level. Most of the district officers are members of the District Development Committee (DDC). A district development committee is a multidisciplinary structure of different governmental and non-governmental agencies involved in implementing rural development activities in the district. The interview

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<sup>3</sup> The technique involved a guided conversation aimed at eliciting information useful for the research objective while at the same time making note of all observable characteristics on the household.

guide for this group included questions on problems and successes of their programs in rural areas (see appendix B). The advantage of the officers to enhance access to the study area was taken cautiously so that the households selected for interview were not the ones they knew before.

Second, field visits were made to interview villagers in their households using the questionnaire guide. Before starting an interview, interviewees were informed of their right to decline the interview or question(s) at any time. It turned out that only three households refused to be interviewed. The rest were eager to talk about their work and problems, particularly those concerning agriculture production and water supply. I conducted 14 interviews and the two assisting officers conducted 8 each.

Observations were made concerning the availability and lack of certain facilities in the households visited. For example, the type of roofing and building materials used for the house, availability or lack of latrines, refuse disposal pit, food storage barn, radio, livestock and other property. There were also two women's groups involved in income generating activities that were interviewed and observed (appendix C). Notes or responses were recorded during and/or immediately after the interviews to avoid loss of information.

To conclude, this chapter has shown the data sources, collection of research material and how the respondents were selected for the study. It has also operationalized

how the concept of rural development can be empirically interpreted through variables chosen. It is the empirical application of these variables and indicators in a rural setting that will be used in this research to examine whether rural development has helped to alleviate poverty for rural people in Malawi.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **RURAL DEVELOPMENT AND AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMS.**

This section examines the trend and impact of rural development on smallholder agricultural production. It analyzes the question of land availability as it relates to other factors that influence agriculture productivity. The analysis draws material from a macro level (national) with specific micro level information examining the case of Salima. Lastly, the chapter examines some structural problems that impede the smooth implementation of rural development programs.

Smallholder agriculture programs under the NRDP aimed to achieve food self-sufficiency and expand the cash economy by involving peasant farmers to produce export cash crops. The approach followed focused on the provision of support services such as extension services, market facilities, access to credit, inputs and other related services. Although these services are important to the improvement of smallholder production, access to land transcends other factors of production and the rate of agriculture returns.

#### **The Availability of Land**

Land availability for peasant farming in Malawi is influenced by customary land transfers to estate and population pressures on the remaining arable land. The trend of customary land transfers started in the 1970's and continued unabated into the eighties.

For instance, in 1980, there were 1200 private estates for tobacco (mostly Malawian owned), 61 for tea, and a small number of other types of estates. By 1985, the number increased to 4100 estates in total, thus increasing land leased for estate agriculture by 400,000 hectares with most of land transferred from customary land (Pryor and Chipeta, 1990).

Given that large land transfers occurred on the most productive customary land, trends in population growth suggest increased density on arable land. Malawi's population growth of 3.7 percent is one of the highest in the world. For instance, population density increased from 107 in 1977 to 180 per square kilometre in 1987. The rate of land fragmentation resulting from increased densities on customary land has accelerated and it is projected to continue at a similar rate if nothing is done (National Statistical Office, 1992). Since the sale of land does not exist, access to land is resolved by new covert land market transactions that have emerged among the peasantry, making socioeconomic positions an important issue in land matters<sup>1</sup>.

From 1980 to 1985, over 50 percent of all smallholder farmers in Malawi owned less than one hectare of land (National Statistical Office, 1992). The result of small land holdings is that many peasant land holdings are susceptible to further fragmentation as the population continues to grow at the same rate of 3.7 percent per year. In the face

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<sup>1</sup> The most common land transaction is called "kubwereketsa" which means to lend. Land is lent to someone on agreement that after cultivating it, the operator will either give the owner part of the harvest or an agreed sum of money after the sale of crops.

of land shortage, most farmers no longer practice rotation to let fallow land recover some of its lost fertility. Erosion control and soil conservation procedures are not properly followed leading to land degradation in most rural areas (Ministry of Agriculture, 1990). A further result of the pressure on land is that marginal land previously considered not suitable for agriculture is now opened and cultivated.

The situation of declining land availability in Salima is mainly the result of population growth. Salima has a total population of 197,911. About 91 percent of this population is classified as rural, living in household units with an average size of 4.4 (National Statistical Office, 1992). As indicated in Table 5.1 below, Salima's population density continues to increase; exerting more pressure on available land resources. Consequently, the average garden size is declining while the average household size at current population growth rate of 3.15 percent (Salima) is increasing.

In this study, there was no accurate way of measuring land holding sizes, therefore, respondents' estimation is here considered as correct. Based on these estimates, holding sizes ranged from less than 0.5 hectares to more than 2 hectares, with a majority, 60 percent (18) having holding sizes between 0.5 and 1 hectare. Of the 40 percent (12) households that reported having more than 2 hectares land holding, 33 percent (10) were settlers at Chinguluwe agriculture settlement scheme. There exists differences in land size between farmers on the scheme and those outside it. The major

difference between land in the settlement scheme and that in the villages outside it, is tenure.

**Table 5.1     Average Land Holding Size, Household Size and Population**  
**Densities for Salima by Year**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Average Land Holding Size (Ha)</b>	<b>Average Household Size</b>	<b>Pop Density* (Sq/Km)</b>
1986/87	0.54	4.4	66
1987/88	0.96	4.7	69
1988/89	0.74	5.2	71

Source: Salima ADD Evaluation Data Book.

\* Estimates from Salima Health department.

Land tenure in the villages is controlled and governed by traditional or customary land tenure systems, while the one in the scheme is controlled by the government. Customary held land outside the settlement scheme is prone to fragmentation while government land on the scheme cannot, as both tenure and occupation are controlled by the government through the Department of Agriculture. At the settlement scheme, land is allocated to settlers based on their ability to utilize it effectively. The settlers



capability is judged by physical health status and labour availability which is largely decided by household size or ownership of oxen. Generally, very few households could claim to be absolutely landless at present, although it is a potential problem arising from land fragmentation.

According to 70 percent (21) of the households interviewed, lack of sufficient land holding size was reported as the main restraint to increased production. All these respondents except one were from villages outside the settlement scheme. The settlers on the scheme have more access to land since it can be allocated to them as long as they are capable of utilizing the allocated plots. Their main restraint to an increase in productivity according to a majority of them, is labour availability. The fact that absolute landlessness is nonexistent but mentioned as a major obstacle to productivity, implies that farmers realize the sensitivity of this issue. However, when asked if they would move elsewhere if land was available, most people claimed that they never thought of moving out of the area. People on customary land are less likely to seek land elsewhere even when the holding size continues to diminish.

From the results 40 percent (12) of all households outside the scheme reported that soils were no longer productive. The soils are depleted and become unproductive due to excessive cropping without replenishing their fertility. Due to intensity in land use, most small farmers can no longer afford to practice fallow rotation methods, that leave land idle for sometime in order to regain its fertility. The farmers, however, felt

that application of fertilizers on their fields would improve the yield, but most were unable to purchase or obtain credit for fertilizers. The factors that limit some farmers access to credit and inputs are discussed later in this chapter.

The impact of population pressure on land and land transfers on the peasant farmers is that it has encouraged rural differentiation based on land holding size. This is evident in the ability to produce cash and food crops, access to credit, access to extension and other production technologies. The size of holding also determines the rate of returns denoted by volume of harvest (Kishindo, 1990; Centre for Social Research, 1988; National Statistical Office, 1992). For instance, during the 1982-1985 period, the maize yield remained constant for farmers with holdings less than 1 hectare while it increased for those with 3 hectares or more (National Statistical Office, 1992).

### **Land Holding Size and Cash Crop Production**

Size of land holding is the most important variable that determines smallholder production. Social differentiation based on the size of land holding intensifies the commitment to produce for the market by farmers with large holdings. This in turn, escalates social stratification associated with it based on income inequalities. For instance, tobacco and cotton data for 1982-1985 show that farmers with holding sizes more than one hectare devote more land as a percentage of total cultivated area to cash crops than those with less than a hectare (Table 5.2). During the 1982-83 period, 58 percent of peasant households with less than one hectare cultivated 10.7 percent of the

total area planted with cotton and 38 percent of the total cultivated area planted with tobacco. This contrasts with 4.2 percent of households with 3 or more hectares of holdings cultivating 29 and 31.7 percent of all land planted with cotton and tobacco respectively.

Tobacco and cotton are two major cash crops for peasant households. Tobacco, the most important cash crop in Malawi, accounts for more than 75 percent of total export agriculture. Smallholder tobacco production over the 1982 to 1985 period declined for households with less land while it has either remained constant or increased for those with large holdings.

**Table 5.2 Percentage Distribution of Total Cultivated Area by Main Cash Crops. 1982/85**

<b>1982/83</b>	<b>0-0.99</b>	<b>1-1.99</b>	<b>2-2.99</b>	<b>3.0+</b>
<b>Crop</b>				
Cotton	10.7	37.5	22.9	28.9
Tobacco	37.9	16.3	14.1	31.7
% HH*	58.2	29.5	8.0	4.3
<b>1983/84</b>				
Cotton	9.8	33.3	29.0	27.9
Tobacco	6.7	34.0	29.9	29.4
% HH	53.2	31.9	10.5	4.4
<b>1984/85</b>				
Cotton	20.2	40.8	20.7	18.3
Tobacco	8.5	35.9	30.6	25.0
% HH	55.2	30.8	9.8	4.2

Adapted from Annual Survey of Agriculture 1982/83-1984/85. National Statistical Office, Zomba 1992.

\*Household

Table 5.2 also shows that although the share of tobacco to the total cultivated area was relatively high in the year 1982/83 for smallholders with less than 1 hectare, this share dropped in subsequent years. The trend of land grown with tobacco on holdings 1.0 to 2.99 has increased over the same time period while there is a steady decrease on land larger than 3 hectares.

In Salima, cotton is the main smallholder cash crop, although some households grow hybrid maize as a cash crop. The official cash crop yield as presented in Table 5.3 shows that the yield fell during the 1990/1991 season, but otherwise it remained about the same. Results from interviews indicate that 60 percent of households that grew cotton have experienced a decline in yield due to a number of reasons. To realize a good yield, cotton requires a lot of care including timely application of chemical inputs, particularly pesticides. A major complaint of farmers within and outside the settlement scheme was that they experience delays in receiving the inputs from the agriculture department. These delays are mainly caused by bureaucratic procedures in deliveries of inputs. The smallholder farmers also complained of high prices at which they are sold the inputs. The high prices of inputs reduces the rate of returns after they sell their cotton. Both low returns and delayed input deliveries contribute to low level of motivation among the farmers to engage in cash cropping that contribute to the falling cotton yield.

**Table 5.3    Cotton Production and Yield per Hectare in Salima 1989-1992**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Area (Ha)</b>	<b>Yield (Kg/Ha)</b>	<b>Total Prod (000s Kg)</b>
1989/90	7760	590	4578
1990/91	8500	450	3825
1991/92	7617	600	4570

Source: Salima Rural Development Project Office.

Perhaps a more important reason for smallholder farmers' low returns is the low price at which their produce is bought by ADMARC<sup>2</sup>. It resells the produce bought from smallholder farmers on the world market. The difference between the selling price earned by ADMARC at world market and the average price it pays to small farmers is very wide (see Table 5.4). In 1976, smallholder farmers were paid an average of 24 percent of what ADMARC got from reselling their produce at world market prices. The government has retained this trend of marketing since independence, enabling ADMARC to gain huge profits from the arrangement (Mwakasungura, 1986).

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<sup>2</sup> ADMARC is an acronym for Agriculture Development and Marketing Corporation. It is charged with marketing of all agriculture produce on land other than privately owned or leased, this technically means all smallholder produce in the country.

**Table 5.4    Proportion of ADMARC price paid to smallholders 1976-1979**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Average Price to growers Kwacha/lb</b>	<b>Average price at world mkt Kwacha/lb</b>	<b>Proportion of growers price as % World mkt</b>
1976	0.156	0.653	23.9
1977	0.187	0.661	28.3
1978	0.194	0.637	30.5
1979	0.208	0.500	41.6

Adapted from Mwakasungura, 1986:68

Since ADMARC regulates the market prices for small farmers' produce, it draws almost all peasant farmer into the low priced primary commodity production for the world market. The profits accumulated by ADMARC from this arrangement have been invested in estate agriculture which it runs and agricultural processing plants located in urban areas. The low market price was cited as the main factor deterring some farmers in Salima not to grow cotton. They claimed that it was like working for the government without pay, considering the time and energy invested in the activity as compared to the returns.

It is very difficult to determine or estimate in monetary terms the incomes of smallholder households. This is because most economic transactions are informally conducted without being written or translated into monetary terms. However, ownership of material property such as livestock, a motorcycle, grocery store etc., in rural areas is considered a good indicator of material wealth of a household. In the study, the general material condition of the majority of households observed in the villages was poor. Only 16 percent of the households (5 out of 30) owned livestock other than chickens. Only 10 percent (3) of the households had cattle while two households owned goats and pigs. Three of the 5 households with livestock other than chickens were settlers from the settlement scheme. Comparatively, the material conditions of farmers in the settlement scheme were relatively better than of those living in villages outside the scheme.

### **Food Crop Production**

Generally, the state of food production in Salima shows a declining trend. Official maize production figures as shown in Table 5.5, suggest that there has been a decline in food production over the years despite more land being opened for cultivation. Yield of local maize per hectare declined from 870 Kg/Ha in 1990, 749 Kg/Ha in 1991 to 285 Kg/Ha in 1992. A Drastic drop in 1992 production was mainly a result of the drought that affected most of Sub-Saharan Africa.

Field observation revealed an acute absence of maize storage barns (Nkhokwe) on most households indicating that there was not enough maize to store. The few



nkhokwe observed on some households were either empty or contained very little maize yield. In Salima, 70 percent of households (14 out of 20) interviewed outside the settlement scheme reported to have experienced a decline in yield of maize the last two growing seasons and that it resulted in food shortage. There are two main varieties of maize grown in Malawi; (1) local maize grown mainly as food crop and (2) hybrid variety, primarily grown for sale. All the households interviewed grow local maize variety for food although its yield per hectare is lower than that of hybrid varieties. High yield quality makes hybrid maize varieties ideal to be grown as a cash crop.

**Table 5.5 Total Maize Production and Yield per Hectare in Salima (1989-1992).**

<b>Year</b>	<b>Area (Ha)</b>	<b>Yield (Kg/Ha)</b>	<b>Total Prod (000s Kg)</b>
1989/90	23165	870	20154
1990/91	23179	749	17361
1991/92	24042	285	6852

Source: Salima Rural Development Project Office.

To meet the food shortages, households develop different survival mechanisms by engaging in other activities to supplement their incomes to buy food. Apart from farming, almost all households reported some involvement in extra agricultural activity to supplement their incomes. Some have basket or mat weaving skills and sell the products at local trading centres. Others are engaged in fishing, or growing dry season maize and beans, along river banks mainly for commercial purposes. River bank plots are not very big in size and they range from half an acre to one. The maize harvest is either sold green or cooked at local markets. The green or cooked maize fetches a good price at local markets because it is harvested and sold when the maize growing season is over. The beans are mainly dried and sold in small quantities.

#### **Land Holding Size and Access to Credit, Extension and Inputs**

Other variables pertaining to peasant production include access to extension, credit and inputs. Available evidence suggest that rural differentiation mediated by holding sizes is accompanied by differential access to major factors of production. The level of adoption of new technologies and inputs also varies with size of land (Table 5.6). Farmers with land holdings larger than 1 hectare are more likely to adopt or use new production technologies and inputs than those with less than 1 hectare.

For example, Table 5.6 shows that maize on holdings larger than 1 hectare is more likely to be applied with fertilizers than that on land holdings less than 1 hectare. From 1982 to 1985, an average of 27 percent of the total area devoted to maize was

applied with fertilizers. About 11 percent of local variety maize on land under 1 hectare was fertilized and 63 percent of land less than 1 hectare under hybrid maize was applied with fertilizers. Comparatively, about 40 percent of local maize on land over 3 hectares was fertilized while 90 percent of hybrid maize on land bigger than 3 hectares was fertilized. Most small farmers prefer to grow local maize variety over hybrid for their subsistence consumption. Financial and labour constraints are the major reasons why most small farmers prefer to grow local maize to growing high yielding hybrid varieties. Local maize varieties grows well with fewer inputs and they are easy to store after harvest due to resistance to insects.

**Table 5.6    Use of Fertilizer on Maize by Size of Land Holding in Malawi (1984/85)**

<b>Land Size</b>	<b>Maize Variety</b>	<b>Total Area grown '000 Ha</b>	<b>Area fertilized '000 Ha</b>	<b>% area fertilized</b>
<b>1984/85</b>				
0-0.99	Local	239.5	26.5	11.1
	Hybrid	4.6	2.9	63.0
1.0-1.99	Local	318	70.8	22.3
	Hybrid	23	19.2	83.5
2.0-2.99	Local	148.1	42.2	28.5
	Hybrid	27.3	23.1	84.6
3.0+	Local	92.7	36.8	39.7
	Hybrid	32.9	29.6	90.0

Adapted from Annual Survey of Agriculture 1982/83-1984/85. National Statistical Office, 1992.

In Salima, although small land holdings limit the extent to which most households can increase cash and food production, more access to credit and extension would improve their production levels. As the major priority of all households interviewed concerned producing enough food to satisfy their subsistence requirements, extension and credit is crucial to the maintenance of food security. Access to credit helps to remove financial constraints experienced by most small farmers in order to adopt new technologies to improve their productivity. In most cases the credit is used for the acquisition of fertilizers, insecticides and new seed varieties. The following section examines the record of agricultural credit and extension in reaching smallholder farmers.

In theory, agricultural extension and credit are open and available to all farmers. No one involved in agriculture is supposed to be denied access to extension or credit. In practice, the system basically fulfils the requirements of predominant farmers with large holdings of at least 1 hectare or more. The majority of peasant farmers with holdings less than a hectare have very little access to extension and credit. There seem to be many reasons associated with the peasants' lack of participation in credit and extension services (Kaunda, 1990; Birkhaeuser and Evenson, 1991). Due to limited time and space allocated for this study, this aspect of rural development was not fully investigated, therefore it is an area I would consider for further research. However, a cursory analysis is presented below.

Throughout Salima, there is a network of Farmers' Clubs' through which agricultural credit for inputs is issued. From 1987 to 1991, the proportion of all farmers belonging to clubs increased from approximately 9 to 13 percent (Ministry of Agriculture, 1990). Table 5.7 reveals an increase in the actual number of farmers joining clubs in order to obtain agriculture credit. Until 1988/89, club membership did not include female heads of households. Although membership to farmers' clubs is increasing, most farmers' clubs ceased to function because of failure to pay back outstanding loans by some members. The recovery rate of seasonal credit continued to decline from 1987 to 1991 agriculture season. Out of all farmers who took credit in 1986/87, 88 percent paid back. Recovery rates for subsequent years were 83 percent, 81 percent, 82 percent and 79 percent for 1987/88, 1988/89, 1989/90 and 1990/91 respectively (Salima RDP, 1992). Farmers interviewed complained of erratic rainfall, drought, poor yield, and low monetary returns as factors contributing to credit default.

In the study, only 13 percent (4) of the households interviewed claimed to belong to farmers' clubs although official figures show an increase in farmers getting access to credit. Another 10 percent (3) of the households once belonged to a club the past two seasons but it was no longer functional because of default by some members. As one would expect, all the households that belong to farmers' clubs have large land holdings and three of them are in the settlement scheme. Most farmers with land less than a

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<sup>3</sup> Farmers' clubs are groupings of farmers pursuing a common interest in specific agricultural activities. The way clubs operate is that as a group, each member is responsible for directly guaranteeing that seasonal credit taken by other members of the club is paid back.

hectare do not use inputs purchased with credit. It can only be speculated that the few households that use some inputs buy with cash realized from sales of beans and other off farm income.

**Table 5.7 Total Number of Farmers Clubs and Membership in Salima 1987-1991.**

Season	No. of Clubs	Men	F.H.H*	Married Women	Total Members
1986/87	257	3298		734	4032
1987/88	218	3083		911	3994
1988/89	290	5015	331	958	6304
1989/90	320	4301	514	1322	6137
1990/91	369	4380	328	1533	6241

Adapted from Salima ADD Evaluation Basic Data Book.

\* Female Headed Households

Almost all smallholder farmers who do not belong to farmers' clubs felt that applying fertilizers could improve productivity of their land. However, 40 percent of the respondents felt that taking fertilizers on credit involved some risk which they were not

prepared to take. They expressed fears of failing to pay back the credit if the rains did not come, or in case of sickness where the gardens would be left unattended to. This fear was instilled in some farmers because of the way credit defaulters were dealt with in the past. Failure to pay back seasonal credit resulted in confiscation of household property by fellow club members and extension officers.

Apart from dispersing credit for agricultural inputs, extension officers provide technical advice to farmers. The main forum for providing extension advice to farmers at the local level is through Block meetings. A Block is a geographic area comprising of at least three or more villages within the same locale. Basically, a block is the platform through which extension policies, programs and advice are implemented to smallholder farmers. On paper, each block is supposed to be visited at least twice a month by an agricultural extension officer called a Field Assistant. Agricultural Field Assistants are expected to hold meetings and demonstrations as well as to visit individual farmers in the blocks.

The present average ratio of Field Assistants to farming families is 1 to 953 families. The practice of disseminating extension advice to farmers is considerably diverse from one officer to another. Thirty percent of the farmers reported meeting extension officers only once during the previous growing season. Individual visits to farmers were non-existent, except those in the settlement scheme. In the scheme area, farmers reported attending two block meetings and at least two personal visits from

extension staff to their households and gardens. Most farmers outside the settlement scheme felt they would benefit a lot from visits from extension staff although nearly all of them had never attended a block meeting the previous season.

In a discussion with one Field Assistant, he pointed out a number of problems that challenge adequate dissemination of extension information. The first was the composition of villages that form a block. It was reported that in some cases, social conflicts between members from different villages within the same block make other farmers reluctant to attend meetings. Although cited as a problem, this is not a major concern at least in the villages studied. The extension staff also reported meeting some resentment from farmers because of their participation in credit recovery. The role of extension staff in credit recovery has resulted in poor relationships with some smallholder farmers making it difficult to deal with them. Also circumstances surrounding the organization of peasants lives in rural areas, such as funerals, initiation ceremonies, garden work, etc., influence the lack of schedule for block meetings making attendance to such gatherings low. People who usually attend these meetings are generally a small fraction of the farmers. Extension meetings at the blocks are mistaken for farmers' club meetings, therefore most farmers feel that such meetings are for only those who took credit and not for everyone (Interview with an Agricultural Field Assistant).



The main problem with extension services available for rural development is the content of the messages. It appears the messages are geared towards farmers with larger landholdings who grow cash crops. Generally, agriculture Field Assistants concentrate on messages dealing with growing cash crops such as cotton, hybrid and composite maize varieties and fertilizer application (Trivedy, 1988). Only a small proportion of farmers grow cotton and hybrid maize. Smaller farmers mostly grow local maize and other food crops, therefore the information conveyed is considered irrelevant to most farmers with smaller holdings.

Since it is large smallholders that can relate very well to most of the extension services and advice, they are presumed to have a greater capability to innovate with new technologies. As a result, agriculture extension staff provide most of the available resources to them. This practice creates a bias in the way access to extension and credit services are utilized by smaller farmers. Preferential access to extension favouring certain groups of small farmers and not others reinforce inequalities in rural communities. For instance, in the 1982/83 season, only 4.5 percent of farmers with less than a hectare were visited by an extension worker at least twice during the growing season. Corresponding proportions for holders of 2-2.99 and 3 or more hectares are 11 percent and 26.7 percent with a frequency of 3 visits for farmers with 2 hectares or more (National Statistical Office, 1992).

## **The Involvement of Women in Rural Development**

The issues of gender and access to productive resources covers a wide area that cannot be dealt with in this limited space. However, it cannot also be totally ignored since the majority of the population in Malawi are women. Most of these women own less than 1.0 hectare of land and very few participate in agricultural programs (Ministry of Agriculture, 1990). Although women constitute the majority of the Malawian population, and contribute directly to almost all agricultural process, more especially to household food production, they are seldom the direct beneficiaries of resources such as credit, extension and technology. Table 5.7 has already illustrated on this aspect regarding accessibility to credit. This is largely because rural development programs in Malawi, like in most other developing countries have not been gender sensitive and overtly in favour of men.

Land is regarded as the most significant productive resource which determines agricultural productivity. Since the majority of women own less than 1 hectare of land, their access to other resources such as credit, inputs and extension services are limited. The attention of most agricultural development programs and extension has been on large smallholders than those with less landholdings. The introduction of cash crops and monetization of the economy also has had a profound effect on the land tenure systems and consequently on women's access to land. Very few women compared to men have the financial and labour resources to compete for land. As already outlined, with the promotion of export cash crops, the best lands have been taken away for the cultivation

of cash crops, while food production has (and hence women farmers) been pushed to less productive marginal lands (Mwakasungura, 1986).

Credit is often cited as women's biggest constraint in agricultural production. Although in theory credit is accessible to rural women, in practice, it is very difficult for women farmers to receive it. There are a number of explanations that account for this such as, male bias of the mostly male extension staff (Hirschmann and Vaughan, 1983). Due to the shortage of women in agriculture extension positions, almost all the agriculture Field Assistants in Salima district are male and they tend to be more in touch with male than female farmers. Female farmers often are last to be informed of some extension messages. Although this area of rural development was not exhaustively investigated, it is an area that requires further investigation.

According to an assessment by one extension officer, participation of women at block meetings is very low despite attempts to involve more women to have access to credit. Efforts to involve and increase the participation of women in rural development have mainly concerned involving them in group credit or cooperatives. The credit groups which women form aim at capital generation and also to pool labour for individual and collective good. The cooperatives usually involve small scale trading dealing with one or two agricultural commodities, or direct involvement into crop production. Besides having an important economic function, the cooperatives also serve as social networks for the members. For example, if a woman is sick, the members of

the group would assist with some tasks at her household or sometimes even cultivating her garden, with the knowledge that such support would be available to them in some future.

In Salima, women farmers' clubs have been formed over the last years with the amount of credit given out substantially increasing. The number of women clubs in Salima increased from 31 in 1988/89, 63 in 1989/90 to 83 in 1990/91 (Salima RDP, 1992). Despite this picture, only a minority of women farmers in the district do benefit from these clubs. And it is usually those women who hold influential positions in the local community; positions like church leaders, and or political party leaders. Only three married women interviewed in the study ever belonged to a mixed farmers' club. However, there were three women groups which were operating on a collective basis, one in each area. Their activities will be discussed later.

The promotion of women's groups although it has a long way before involving all rural women is an indication that the role of women is realized as crucial to agricultural and household food production. In most instances as is the case in Salima, it is the women themselves that identify their needs. The groups have improved and provided some income generating opportunities; provided access to extra household labour at critical times; access to some credit and extension to households that had less access to such opportunities.

Even though roots of poverty in rural economies may date far back before Malawi became independent, recent factors associated with development pursuits place rural households at a disadvantage. Land transfers to create and increase the export economy promote competition for local land while rapid population growth also exert pressure. This also resulted in development of rural inequalities based on household land size. The overall significance of household land size is that it differentiates household's capacities to gain access to government resources and services. Farmers with large holdings are likely to engage in cash crop farming and form a dominant social group in rural areas. Differentiation within smallholder farmers is fundamental to understanding the environment in which agrarian development policies have operated. Evidence from different studies also suggest that household land size is directly correlated to productivity, access to extension services, inputs and household income (Chilowa, 1991; National Statistical Office, 1992; Mhone, 1992).

### **Structural Obstacles in the Implementation of Rural Development**

The implementation of agriculture programs in Malawi has highly centralized administrative structures (Kaunda, 1990, 1992). Rural development is dominated by teams of technical and extension staff operating at different levels of government. The conceptual aim of rural development requires that attention be focused on local initiatives and resources that can be used to implement rural programs. The participation of local people defining their own problems and development goals should be encouraged. Use of local human resources to institute rural change helps to engage it in gainful

employment. To achieve such an objective, accessibility to all programs must be open and fair to all, land based differentiation notwithstanding. The role of technical and extension staff should be limited to one of advisory and motivation to bring about change.

Different social scientists have attempted to explain why rural people lack enthusiasm to participate in development efforts targeting them (Chambers, 1983; Cohen, 1987; Kaunda, 1990). Cohen (1987), explains rural population's non-participatory behaviour in terms of lack of material possession. He attributes poor material conditions of the majority of the rural population as systematically preventing them from being productive. It also inhibits improvement of their technical skills thereby retarding their creative capability. Smallholder farmers form the majority of a poor socioeconomic class that shows high political apathy, low feelings of political efficacy and feels isolated from the main stream. As a result, the rural elite with more land and relatively higher incomes than the majority, end up participating and benefitting from rural development programs.

In a study conducted in one rural development project in Malawi, Kaunda (1990) revealed that bureaucrats dominate the planning and implementation process of such programs. The main reason is attributed to the centralization of the decision making process which disregards representation from farmers or other rural institutions. Local extension staff tend to be more responsive vertically to their departments heads, leaving the needs of the poor households mostly unfulfilled to the expected levels. Although

decentralized planning and people's participation are critical to rural development, the rural development planning process has remained a centralized and government controlled process.

### **Conclusion**

The emphasis of rural development on economic growth through the cash economy created a number of problems on smallholder production. Infiltration of a cash economy into the rural areas increased the household demand for cash. It also affected rural differentiation based on household land holding size. The size of land determines the nutritional status of a household; whether it can produce enough to meet subsistence requirements or not. Size of land also affects accessibility to the other productive resources, such as credit, extension and inputs. Access to resources of production is important for the production of commercial crops which in turn influences the income levels of rural households. Effectiveness of rural development on agricultural productivity is a question of how agricultural technology is being adapted and diffused to smallholder farmers.

Agricultural production for peasant farmers at the local level is experiencing changes that in many ways do not encourage peasants to increase their productivity. As most of the people are subsistence farmers, the general policy of the government on agriculture has achieved little success. Land holding sizes for individual peasant households has declined over the years as a result of land fragmentation, land transfers

from customary to private and pressure on land from population increase. Market prices of smallholder produce are systematically regulated to the disadvantage of smallholder farmers. The huge profits realized from the resale of smallholder produce are invested in other sectors of the economy other than in smallholder sector. National and local trends in the study area show that declining holding sizes result in diminishing returns from sale of crops and thus a decline in peasant incomes.



## **CHAPTER 6**

### **RURAL DEVELOPMENT and PROVISION OF BASIC SOCIAL SERVICES.**

One of the most important ways in which rural development influences the lives of the majority of the peasants is through the provision of basic social services. Social programs complement agricultural programs in order to improve the standard of living of the rural population. This chapter analyzes the effect of rural development programs with respect to the provision of social services in Malawi by examining the situation in Salima. It also reviews whether the government through rural development programs has improved the access to and use of social services by the rural population, based on the performance of selected indicators.

According to the Statement of Development Policies 1987-1996 (Office of President, 1987), the National Rural Development Program (NRDP) is committed to the provision of basic social services to the rural population. The government's aim is to reduce poverty, illiteracy and prevalence of disease (Office of President, 1987). The social services, particularly in rural areas, received very little government attention. Rural development included improving the social welfare and living standards of rural people in the 1980's. During that period, provision of health, education, water, sanitation, and other related services, became an issue promoted by the government in rural development (Office of President, 1987).

## Health and Nutrition

Good health increases productivity of the rural peasantry. A healthier society can be created by making health facilities, clean drinking water and improved sanitation accessible to the population. Improvements in the health status of a society are observed by changes in mortality rates, life expectancy and nutritional status of the majority of the population.

Access to health facilities helps the population become more productive as number of sick days are reduced. Before the AIDS epidemic, three major causes of deaths in children of less than 4 years of age were malaria, measles and nutritional deficiency. Malaria, respiratory infections and diarrhoeal diseases are the leading causes of death for children aged 4 years and older (Malawi Government, 1990). These are high occurrences of preventable morbidity and mortality rates. Although government data indicates that Malawi's health care system has improved in the delivery of services to the rural population<sup>1</sup>, life expectancy has remained between 45 and 46 during the 1980's and among the lowest in the world (National Statistical Office, 1991). The Infant mortality rate in Malawi is also very high at 150 children for every 1,000 live births. The Infant mortality rate has remained above 145 per 1000 between 1980 and 1990 (Appendix D). Rural areas have higher infant mortality rates at 162 per 1,000 births than urban areas with 90 per 1,000 (National Statistical Office, 1987).

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<sup>1</sup> About 80 percent of the population in Malawi lives within at least an average of 8 kilometres radius from a health facility compared to distances ranging from 10 to 15 in the 1960's (National Statistical Office, 1991).

One way of analyzing improvements in health is to assess the amount of resources invested in the delivery of health services. Chipeta (1992) has described the delivery of health services in Malawi as inadequate due to low priority accorded to it by the government. For example, the share of recurrent expenditure on health services fell from 5.5 percent in 1972 to 5.2 percent in 1982. Comparatively, other countries in the region such as Zambia spend more money as a proportion of government expenditure. In 1983, Zambia spent 8.4 percent of its total expenditure on health (Yimam, 1992). In terms of per capita, the recurrent expenditure in real terms was 2.5 Malawian Kwacha (MK) (an equivalent to 1 Canadian dollar) per head in 1980/81 as against MK0.44 in 1969/70.

Table 6.1 shows the amount of fiscal resources spent and allocated to the health sector. From 1984 to 1991 per capita expenditure on health has ranged from 8.6 to MK12.9. Considering that the local currency has been devalued more than four times during this period, no change has occurred in per capita health expenditure. During the same period, health expenditure as a proportion of total government expenditure has remained between 6.6 percent and 7.3 percent. At the present rate of population growth (3.7%), health expenditure is not enough to help sustain the health care system so as to have an impact on the overall health status of the people. The lack of adequate resources results in ineffective delivery of health services to the rural population.

**Table 6.1: Government Health Expenditures at 1987/88 prices in Malawi**

	<b>84/85</b>	<b>85/86</b>	<b>87/88</b>	<b>88/89</b>	<b>90/91</b>
<b>Pop (000)</b>	7,011	7,223	7,750	8,022	8,289
<b>Total Govt Exp (000 MK)</b>	828,996	890,684	858,700	992,679	1,465,854
<b>Health Exp (000 Mk)</b>	60,806	58,413	58,959	69,021	106,859
<b>Percent Exp</b>	7.3	6.6	6.9	6.9	7.3
<b>Govt Per Capita Exp (MK)</b>	118	123	111	123	176
<b>Per Capita Health Exp (MK)</b>	8.6	8.1	7.6	12.9	12.9

Adapted from: Economic Planning Department 1991.

Some of the problems experienced within the health sector are transportation, a shortage of trained doctors, nurses, medical assistants, and the overall congestion in most hospitals. The average 8 kilometres distance to the nearest health facility in most cases inhibits accessibility to health services in the rural areas where transportation is a problem. Rural road networks are without tarmac and motor vehicles are scarce, so that patients are either carried by stretcher or walk long distances to hospitals. While the problem of transportation has not improved and continues to impede accessibility to health services, it is impossible for the government to invest in medical centres in every village. The shortage of health manpower is outlined briefly in Table 6.2. It shows how

high the ratios of population to health staff are in Malawi. This means that only very few people have a chance of being examined by a qualified medical doctor when they fall sick. This is usually the case in rural health centres where doctors' visits are rare.

**Table 6.2 Health Staff and Population Ratio per Year**

	<b>1984</b>		<b>1989</b>	
<b>Population</b>	6,840,000		8,020,000	
<b>Staff</b>		<b>Ratio</b>		<b>Ratio</b>
<b>Medical</b>	84	1:81,000	121	1:66,000
<b>Clinical</b>	698	1:9,800	983	1:8,160
<b>Nursing</b>	1,286	1:5,320	1,442	1:5,560
<b>Dental</b>	24	1:285,000	36	1:222,780
<b>Pharmaceutical</b>	42	1:162,850	32	1:250,600
<b>Laboratory</b>	97	1:70,500	104	1:77,115

Adapted from Economic Planning Department 1990.

In Salima, the overall structure of health service delivery has improved. There are now 12 health centres compared to 7 in 1975, and one district hospital. The district hospital was built in 1988 replacing an old structure that was poorly equipped. Each health centre serves between 10,000 and 20,000 people and is run by 1 medical assistant, 1 enrolled nurse or midwife, and 1 health assistant. Health centres are located in remote rural areas. They do not have beds, therefore, they only treat minor illnesses that do not

require specialist treatment. The most common illnesses treated at health clinics are malaria, diarrhoea and respiratory infections.

According to the health department in Salima, 73 percent of the population is regarded as having access to health services<sup>2</sup>. The district hospital has 202 beds and is supposed to be a referral for the peripheral health centres. The district hospital is relatively well equipped and has sufficient personnel that can provide treatment by specialists. Interviews and observation revealed that the distance to a health institution affected people's willingness to use health services. People who live close to the district hospital reported more visits to the hospital when they are sick. It was the same with people who live near health centres although some claimed they preferred to go to the hospital instead of a health centre. From observation, people near health centres have lost confidence in these centres because the staff can only provide rudimentary medicine such as aspirin or chloroquin. To the villagers, visiting a district hospital assures them recovery because they are likely to be given "strong medicine".

Households interviewed in a village farthest from the district centre reported that they rarely went to the nearest health centre which was about 6 kilometres away. Since the common mode of transport is walking and bicycling (for those households that own a bicycle), the distance is too long for a sick person. Traditional healers and grocery

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<sup>2</sup> This figure of 73 % is defined by the population living within 8 kilometres radius of a health institution.

stores are the main providers of medicine. Of the two, the latter provides only non prescriptive medicines, such as aspirins, cough mixtures and malaria drugs. Traditional healers are the most popular for a number of reasons; (1) traditional healers are found in most villages, therefore, saving people the time to walk long distances to health centres or hospital, (2) traditional medicine is cheaper and affordable by most poor rural households, and (3) the belief that some illnesses are caused by witchcraft and hence could only be effectively treated by traditional healers. The major disadvantage of reliance on traditional medicine is that when treatment fails, people go to the hospital when it is too late to cure the disease.

The district hospital also runs mobile clinics for women at health centres and selected villages situated far from health clinics. The hospital based outreach programs include services for children under 5 years of age, health education, immunization and antenatal clinics. At one of the clinics in Salima, observations and interviews revealed that a large percentage of mothers attended clinics consistently during the first year of the child. Most of the child weight monitoring records showed that children were weighed every month when a clinic was conducted. The proportion of mothers with children more than one year old was evidently small at the clinic suggesting a high drop out rate. According to a community nurse present at the clinic, the drop out rate is high after a child is ten months old because, usually children finish receiving immunization at that age. At this point, most mothers feel there is nothing more to gain from

continued attendance of the clinics. This finding suggests that women are quite aware of the importance of immunization to children.

This is further supported by hospital records which show an increase in antenatal clinic attendance by women. Attendance increased from 11,936 in 1989 to 12,770 in 1991. Although this is the case, many women at the clinic reported to have given birth in their villages with the help of elderly women or traditional birth attendants<sup>3</sup>. Some mothers said that they found the advice offered at clinics not applicable to their circumstances. For instance, they cannot afford some of the food they are recommended to eat during pregnancy or to feed the children, for example, meat, because they either do not keep any livestock or they lack money to buy it.

Real changes in provision of health care in Salima are associated with the new district hospital. The number of beds increased from less than 100 to 202 with better equipment and more specialized medical personnel. Mobile clinics were introduced to remote areas. Although the mechanism for delivery of health care was enlarged, the impact on the health of people has not been significant. For example the infant mortality rate of 222 per 1000 is much higher than the national average of 150 per 1000. The prevalence of preventable diseases is common and more people in very remote areas rely on traditional healers for medical treatment. The reason for this dismal performance of

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<sup>3</sup> These are elderly women who assist pregnant women give birth in villages. Most births in rural areas still take place in the home and are supervised by traditional birth attendants who till recently did not have any formal medical knowledge.



the health department in Salima and Malawi as a whole can be attributed to increase in population and little government commitment to support health services. Fast population growth is diluting health care services provided by the government. Secondly, the government development policy failed to emphasize promotion of health status of the population as illustrated by low expenditure on health.

Apart from health services, the nutritional status of people also determines their general health condition. Malnutrition in Malawi is one of the major direct and indirect causes of infant, child and maternal morbidity and mortality (Ministry of Health, 1988). According to the Economic Planning department (1991), poor nutrition of the mothers accounts for 15 percent of babies born alive that die before reaching their first birthday. Malnutrition is also one of the major causes of death for; 32 percent of children who fail to reach the age 5; 4 percent of pregnancies<sup>4</sup> that end in death of the fetus; and 2 percent of pregnancies that end with death of the mother. As a cause of both infant and child mortality, malnutrition weakens a child's resistance to diseases. The result is that diseases like measles and diarrhoea, rarely fatal in the industrialized countries, become the major causes of early childhood deaths. In adults, malnutrition has almost similar results. It reduces resistance to diseases but more, it adversely affects the individual's capacity to work especially in rural areas where most household work is manual and physical.

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<sup>4</sup> This data for pregnancies should be interpreted with caution as not all pregnancies are reported to clinics.

Malnutrition also adversely affects women particularly during pregnancy. The nutrition status of the mother during pregnancy is important for the development of the fetus and the mother. The women are particularly affected in rural areas since most of the household work is done by them. It reduces their capacity to do most of the chores such as drawing water, cooking, general hygiene, etc., which eventually affects the entire household's living standard.

Evidence from studies on the nutrition status of people suggests there are a number of factors associated with it (Economic Planning Division, 1990). The most important of them all is a lack of food security<sup>5</sup> emanating from difficulties faced by smallholder farmers particularly those with less than 1.0 hectare of land. Assuming there is no possibility of making more land available to peasant farmers to raise their holding sizes, the Economic Planning Division (1987) has forecast a steady decline in mean farm size. Since agricultural production increases with size of land holding, the present trend of food production levels will not suffice to guarantee food self sufficiency (Economic Planning Division, 1991). The World Bank classifies households that cultivate less than 1 hectare of land in Malawi (58 percent) as unable to attain minimum household calorie requirements<sup>6</sup>.

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<sup>5</sup> Food security in Malawi implies access by people to adequate foods at all times of the year. The essential elements of food security include availability of food and the ability to produce or purchase it (Malawi government, 1992:18)

<sup>6</sup> To meet minimum food requirement with adequate calories, an adult person in Malawi requires at least three (90 Kilograms) bags of maize (World Bank, 1991).

According to the District Health Inspector, the prevalence of malnutrition in Salima is very common. Most diseases suffered by children are attributed to malnutrition. Over 56 percent of the children under 5 years of age have been recorded as suffering from malnutrition related diseases. Lack of protein is the most common type of malnutrition. It is most prevalent during the planting season (starting November) when food is scarce. Visible signs of this malnutrition include: swollen face and stomach, thin limbs and rough dry skin. It is also the major cause of child mortality.

### **Water Supply**

In Malawi, water related and water borne diseases are a major cause of high morbidity and mortality among children particularly in rural areas. Therefore, besides malnutrition, inadequacies in clean water supply and poor sanitation also easily manifest themselves in child health through spread of infectious diseases. Diarrhoeal diseases caused by poor sanitary conditions and drinking contaminated water are common among children and they are in some cases fatal.

There is lack of data for different time periods to compare changes in the provision of the water supply undertaken over the years. According to the National Statistical Office (1987), 73 percent of households in rural areas have no access to clean water compared to 30 percent in urban areas. In rural areas, 57 percent of the households use the well as their main source of water while 16 percent get water from rivers, springs and lakes. In urban areas, 27 percent of households use the well as their

main source of water with only 3 percent getting water from rivers and springs. Only 14 percent of households in rural areas get their water from a piped source and 12 percent from boreholes, 40 percent of which are non-functional. Non-functional boreholes are either broken down and the government is planning to fix them or have completely dried up.

The sources of drinking water in Salima have been identified as the major habitat of water borne diseases such as cholera and diarrhoea (Salima Health Department, 1992). While outbreaks of cholera are rare, diarrhoea is common and it constitutes one of the major causes of infant mortality. Children are very susceptible to preventable diseases borne by drinking contaminated water. Provision of clean water in the district is carried out by the Ministry of Health, the Department of Water Supply, the Ministry of agriculture and World Vision International. The district rural water source statistics indicate 461 protected shallow wells, 405 boreholes and 83 piped water taps. Piped water is provided by the World Vision International covering 9204 households in 87 villages. A number of wells dry up every year during the dry season, but due to drought in 1992, most shallow wells (75 percent) had dried up. Similarly, 45 percent of boreholes have either dried up or developed some mechanical problems, leaving only 55 percent functional.

In the survey, 46 percent (14) of households interviewed reported their source of water as a protected well or borehole situated within a distance of 0-1.5 kilometres.

However, because of mechanical fault in the case of the borehole or drying up, some of these (12 households) were actually utilizing alternative sources of water; a river or unprotected wells. At one household, the woman said it takes her about an hour to walk to another village to get drinking water from a borehole. More households (53 percent) use unprotected wells or rivers as their source of drinking water. Asked why they do not use boreholes or protected shallow wells as source of their drinking water, most of them mention distance to the source as the main problem. This was further supported by the District Health Inspector, who said that women were willing to walk a distance of at least 2 Kilometres to get water. Beyond that distance, the enthusiasm is lost. However, in general the impression obtained from interviews and observations is that people treat streams and wells as dependable sources to meet part or all of their water needs such as bathing or washing. Furthermore, none of the households boiled the water drawn from the unprotected sources. The water is drunk untreated, although it is known that during the rains and drought the water sources become more polluted. Access to clean water in the area shows a gloomy future for the health of the majority in rural areas. Health statistics indicate that the population with access to safe water is declining from 77 percent in 1989, 31 percent in 1990 to 34 percent in 1991 (Salima Health Department, 1992). The result of this declining trend could be speculated as caused by insufficient resources to maintain the water sources. This is particularly true with boreholes when mechanical fault develops or protected wells when dry.

## **Sanitation**

It is stated that the sanitary situation in Malawi is not satisfactory (Economic Planning department, 1990). About 57 percent of rural households do have some form of sanitation ranging from pit latrines with sanitation platforms to traditional unimproved pit latrines. About 40 percent of the rural population do not have any facility at all. Comparatively 15 percent of the population in urban areas have access to a water borne sewerage system, while 65 percent have access to pit latrines, including unimproved ones. Only 10 percent of the urban population have no facilities (National Statistical Office, 1987).

Data showing accessibility to sanitation in Salima is presented in Table 6.3. Based on the survey by the Ministry of health, the number of households with pit latrines has risen from 38 percent in 1988 to 52 percent in 1991 (Salima District Health, 1992). In the same way, households with bathrooms has increased. It is only the percentage of households that have refuse pits that is declining. In the study, only 36 percent (11) households interviewed reported to have pit latrines and 26 percent (8) had refuse pits. There was a noticeable lack of pit latrines and refuse pits in most households headed by females. The main reason was that constructing a pit latrine requires intense physical work which women are not traditionally used to. Absence of latrines and refuse pits means there is no proper way of disposing garbage as well as other wastes in some households. These eventually are washed into streams or unprotected wells contaminating water sources. In general, most households do not attach high priority to

sanitation and with relatively more female headed households having poor sanitary conditions, it means they are prone to infectious diseases (Ministry of Health, 1990). For instance during the period of field work in most villages south of the district there was an outbreak of dysentery disease which is caused by drinking contaminated water.

**Table 6.3      Percentage of Households with Access to Sanitation Facilities for**  
**Salima 1988-1991**

<b>Facility</b>	<b>1988</b>	<b>1989</b>	<b>1990</b>	<b>1991</b>
Latrines	38	39	48	52
Bathrooms	45	48	49	51
Refuse Pit	35	38	33	34

Source: District Health Inspector, Salima.

The health impact on access to clean water supply can best be judged in conjunction with sanitary conditions prevailing in an area. The two are inter-related and both affect health conditions of the living environment. Although the majority of people are in rural areas, the provision of water supply and sanitation has not received adequate attention in rural development policy. This can be assessed from the slow improvements in the proportion of people having access to sanitary facilities and a safe water supply.

### **Education**

In Malawi, education policy is considered a catalyst for development through provision of specific skills that are in short supply. Broad based education with wide

accessibility to the population is strongly related to attainment of economic development (World Bank, 1988). Education develops the necessary skills to sustain growth of an economy and improve people's standard of living. It also provides skilled manpower employed in agriculture and other sectors of the economy.

Education in Malawi is primarily government supported. Table 6.4 shows the government expenditure aimed to improve the present education situation as a proportion of the total national recurrent expenditures. Expenditure on education as a percentage of total recurrent expenditure has fallen from 11.3 percent in 1983/84 to 7.2 percent in 1989/90. Similarly, the trend in the share of education as a proportion of the GDP at market prices has been declining. It was at 3.3 percent in 1984/85, dropped to 2.3 percent in 1987/88 and 2.4 percent in 1989/90.

**Table 6.4      Education Expenditure as Percentage of National Recurrent Account and also as a Share of Gross Domestic Product 1983-1990.**

<b>Year</b>	<b>83/84</b>	<b>84/85</b>	<b>86/87</b>	<b>87/88</b>	<b>88/89</b>	<b>89/90</b>
<b>% of Recurrent Expend.</b>	11.3	9.6	9.3	9.7	9.1	7.2
<b>% of GDP (Market Prices)</b>	2.6	3.3	2.8	2.3	3.1	2.4

Source: Statement of Development Policies 1987-1996



Generally, gross primary school enrolment has increased since independence. Enrolment increased from 44 percent in 1965 to 62 percent in 1985 (the male ratio increased from 35 to 75 percent and female ratio rose from 32 to 51 percent). Total enrolment in primary schools is biased towards males comprising more than 55 percent of all the pupils and the girls less than 45 percent. Despite a gross enrolment increase, the education system in Malawi is in a state of crisis. Total primary enrolment at 64 percent in 1986 is far below the average for Sub-Saharan Africa which is at 73 percent.

The impact of improvements and efficiency in the education system in Malawi can be seen through the current levels of literacy. Although the literacy rate has increased from 18 percent in 1977 to 45 percent in 1987, a great majority of the total population are illiterate (National Statistical Office, 1991; Economic Planning Division, 1990). It is estimated that out of 3.5 million people aged 15 years and older, about 61 percent are illiterate. Of the 45 percent literate people in 1987, a majority were men. Illiteracy among women is 71 percent (Government of Malawi, 1992).

The government as well as some writers (Ministry of Education, 1990; Moyo, 1992), point at high drop out rates, pregnancy and early marriage as major factors contributing to high levels of illiteracy among Malawian women. But an analysis of employment records in all paid sectors of the economy including the civil service, showed that the proportion of women to men is very small. Women comprise less than 20 percent of the total number of people employed (National Statistical Office, 1987).

Probably the under-representation of women in paid employment discourages girls to remain in school since paid jobs are seen as predominantly for males. Due to the important responsibilities women hold in Malawian society, this area of study requires further investigation particularly regarding the factors that would motivate female pupils to stay in school.

Most people interviewed in Salima are aware of the importance of education. They know that education develops skills necessary for the sustenance of economic growth and better standard of living. Even more important to most households is the realization that an educated child is likely to look after his or her siblings in future. Most households send their children to school in order to secure a better life for the household in future. Table 6.5 shows an increase in the trend of primary school enrolment for Salima. At the beginning of the school year, in October, enrolment is generally higher than in July at the end of the year. The difference results in an increase in the drop out rate, especially during the month of December when every pupil is supposed to have paid school fees. As the table shows, the drop out rate for boys increased from .09 in 1988/89 to .15 in 1989/90 and since then it has been decreasing. The drop out rate for girls in 1988/89 and 1990/91 was in the negative indicating an increase in enrolment while 1989/90 and 1991/92, the drop out rate increased from 0.13 to 0.3. Factors causing these fluctuations in the proportion of girls staying in school were not investigated during the field work but provide a basis for further investigation.

However, it can only be speculated that sometimes girls are sent to school late when the term is already in session because of the need for economic and household contribution by young girls. There are also a number of social, economic and cultural constraints that need to be investigated contributing to differences in drop out ratio between males and females if equal access to education is to be achieved. The current trend nationwide is that despite the availability of educational institutions, opportunities are rather restrictive to the majority, particularly women.

**Table 6.5 Primary School Enrolment Ratio for Salima 1988-1992.**

Year	Total	Sex		Drop out Ratio		
		Male	Female	Male	Female	Total
<b>1988/89</b>						
October	21,869	12,364	9,505			
July	21,375	11,241	10,134	0.09	-0.07	0.02
<b>1989/90</b>						
October	30,659	19,739	10,920			
July	26,267	16,766	9,501	0.15	0.13	0.14
<b>1990/91</b>						
October	32,372	22,742	9,630			
July	30,803	20,298	10,505	0.11	-0.09	0.05
<b>1991/92</b>						
October	37,147	20,413	16,734			
July	31,710	19,927	11,783	0.02	0.30	0.15

Source: District Education Officer, Salima.

Adult illiteracy is very high in most villages in Salima. For example, in the study about 80 percent (6 out of 8) of all female headed households interviewed were illiterate. Generally, according to the district education officer, the proportion of illiterate women is higher than that of men in Salima. The Ministry of Community Services runs free adult literacy classes in some villages. The teachers for adult literacy schools are chosen by the villagers and work on voluntary basis with a token allowance of about K10.00 per month. Attendance to these classes is poor. Most people, particularly women, were interested in attending classes but complained of household chores as the main inhibiting factor. In some households, adults seemed so preoccupied with income generating activities and household chores that they never gave much thought to attending literacy classes.

The education system in Malawi has been associated with some problems relating to the quality and efficiency of the service rendered to the population (Office of the President, 1987). Rapid population growth and overwhelming response by parents in sending their children to school has resulted in more children each year seeking places in primary schools. This exerts pressure on schools that are already pressed for resources. According to the Education Development Plan (1985-1995), the social demand for education currently exceeds supply. At the present time, about half of all primary school going age children are not in school. Despite a net enrolment ratio of 53 percent, the quality of education is increasingly dropping. Classrooms are more overcrowded each year with teaching materials becoming scarce (Moyo, 1992). The

average student teacher ratio remains to be high. It was 65 students to 1 teacher in 1980/81, 60 to 1 in 1984/85 and 64 to 1 in 1989/90 (Ministry of Education, 1988).

### **Population Growth and Provision of Social Services**

In the previous chapter, mention was made to population growth as one of the major internal factors affecting the socioeconomic development in Malawi. Much of this reference was made to the serious implications which a fast growing population has for the available land resources and also social services. The demographic situation in Malawi is somewhat misleading. On the one hand, Malawi has one of the highest population growths, and on the other, it has one of the world's highest mortality rates and lowest life expectancy. It is both the fertility and mortality that must be taken very seriously as indicators of population problem in the country.

Negative aspects of population growth on the provision of social services have been documented (Kelly, 1988). In Malawi the rapid population growth could be attributed to the poverty experienced by rural people with regards to investments in economic and social services. In economic terms, this concern relates to the impact of population on the pace and composition of savings and investment. The two major effects of rapid population growth in a country like Malawi on rural development are that: (a) population growth lowers the overall ratio of capital to labour since such demographic trends cannot raise the rate of savings; (b) population growth shifts the

public spending into areas such as, health and education at the expense of more productive sectors of the economy.

Family planning could be regarded as one of the most important components of population policy (Yimam, 1990). Family planning aims at preventing unwanted pregnancies and births which helps to improve the health of the mother and children. The Malawi government position on family planning is modest. It has not openly subscribe to any specific policy, and yet at the same time is not opposed to family planning programs being provided by public and private agencies.

Traditional methods of child spacing such as, abstinence and prolonged breast feeding have been practised in Malawi for quite a long time . The introduction of modern contraceptive methods is fairly recent. Based on the past and present population growth rates, one could say that traditional methods of family planning have not been successful at controlling population growth. However, the degree of success or level of acceptability of the modern family planning program in Malawi is therefore bound to vary from one area to another due to economic, cultural and religious factors.

As reported by the Ministry of Health (1990), Malawi's population policy has not been effective in reducing the rate of growth. Although family planning programs have been executed at the national level, their impact on the birth rate is an area that needs further investigation. The main target of the population policies in Malawi have been

mothers. According to the Ministry of Health (1988), only 6.7 percent of all the women reported to use the child spacing techniques they learnt from family planning. Most of these women were from the urban areas and had at least some secondary education. The knowledge of child spacing methods has been disseminated to a very small proportion of people in the country. For instance, only 30 percent of all married women and 25 percent of all the females (both married and unmarried) have some knowledge of child spacing methods (Ministry of Health, 1988). The proportion of women and men who have ever used any birth control method was recorded to be 8.6 percent for women and 8.8 percent for men. The rural urban differences in proportion of people using some method of birth control is 2.3 percent in rural areas as opposed to 10.7 percent for women in urban areas. For men the proportions are 1.8 in rural and 7.4 in urban. From this data, one could say that most family planning services are located in urban areas. Knowing that a majority of people are in rural areas, there should be efforts to extended these programs to the rural areas through rural development.

Population projection in Malawi reveals a that the population will continue to increase in the foreseeable future. It is projected to increase by at least 50 percent by the year 2000. Such population growth will have a profound impact on the potential for socioeconomic development. The effect of population will exert more pressure on the country's limited resources including land, environment and the social services such as, health and education.

While Malawi's rural development problems are caused by high population growth and inadequate resources, it is argued that if more women were educated, the country's economy and standard of living would improve (Economic Planning Division, 1990). With about 70 percent of the women engaged as full time farmers in the smallholder subsector, they are the key workers and producers in the national economy. They also have a major responsibility of caring for their families especially children and the welfare of the households. Based on a Family Formation Survey (National Statistical Office 1987), there is an inverse relationship between the education of a woman and their family size. Women with no formal education had an average of 4 children, while those with a primary education or higher had an average of 2.9 and 2.5. Education for many women affects their fertility by raising the opportunity cost of time that could be spent on child rearing activities. Educating women would make them more responsive to adopting modern technology for agriculture productivity, nutrition and overall health status of their households.

### **Empowerment of Women in Development**

Activities targeting women in rural development were introduced to overcome some identified obstacles that prevented their participation. Targeting women intends to achieve the following: (a) increase their participation in mixed farmers clubs/groups or organized women's groups; (b) increase income earning opportunities for female farmers in agricultural related activities; (c) increase their participation in credit programs and (d) improve their home management skills to improve the entire family's health condition.



Participation in women's groups encourage women to take more interest in activities that influence the livelihood of their families and the society as a whole (Ministry of Agriculture, 1990).

In Salima, the Department of Agriculture through a department for women's programs is trying to involve women in different activities. The aim is to help them gain access to various resources, such as credit that discriminated against them. It seems that the most important problem faced by women is low income levels since most of them rely only on agriculture. Women's programmes have opened other avenues of earning extra income which were not available in the past. For instance, the three credit groups visited during field work were involved in vegetable growing, piggery and cotton farming.

The cotton farming group had sold their cotton and were in the process of sharing profits, paying back credit and planning for the following growing season. There are fifteen women in the group, all of whom acquired land from a village headman and credit from the agriculture department. They prepared the field together but give each other turns to perform other chores like spraying chemicals and applying fertilizers. The returns from their collective efforts are said to be much higher since they supplement the individual's efforts in their own fields. The group of 11 women operating a piggery had not yet started getting returns but were optimistic of the future. They had a stock of 6 sows and one male. Four sows were expected to have piglets within four weeks. The

group started in 1989 with the aim of raising chickens but they switched to piggery because the chickens died of diseases. So it meant that the women were supposed to pay back the chicken loan from the returns of the piggery. Last, the vegetable growing group was comprised of 21 members. They started in 1987 with the aim of generating extra income from selling vegetables. The size of their garden is approximately 0.2 hectare. The group also started the garden with a loan from the agriculture department. They work as a group on their garden particularly when watering which is usually done with watering cans.

In all the above mentioned groups, women seem to be happy since they are in control of ventures that are supposed to bring them some income. It also brings awareness to other women in the villages about their eligibility to credit facilities. Because of the loan, they are assured that extension officers will pay frequent visits to advise them on better techniques, thus making them more exposed to extension advice. Working on a group project also serves as a demonstration for some women who may decide to embark on such projects on their own.

Based on observations and interviews with participants, the major problem with all three projects seemed to be with the way extension advice is given to the groups. More failures and problems are attributed to the planning stage of the projects where extension officers are supposed to give failed information about the project. With the exception of the cotton group, the two other groups are struggling to pay back their

credit. The piggery group charged that their chickens would not have died had the extension officer brought drugs in time for vaccination. They also claimed that the extension officer did not give them detailed information about raising chickens and that they would require vaccines which were not included in the project budget. In the meantime, they faced the problem of acquiring feed for the pigs. Animal feed is found at the district centre, some 15 Kilometres away. The women lacked transport or money to hire a car. Finally, the vegetable group faced serious problems since they had never gained any monetary returns to share, but they did take some vegetables home for consumption. Since 1987, all the returns from the sale of vegetables went into loan repayment. They received a loan including a lot of implements which they never needed or used. The location of the garden is far from a river where water could have been made accessible through irrigation. The water is drawn from a borehole where women have to stand on a line waiting with other villagers. In the event of the borehole developing a mechanical problem the vegetables will dry because the alternative source of water is very far away from the garden.

## **Conclusion**

Like the approach for improving agricultural productivity, improving and provision of social services to the rural population has many facets. The social service sector is comprised of health, education, water supply and sanitation. The provision of basic health services in rural areas have been improved. However, shortage of staff, drugs and equipment reduce the effectiveness of these services. The problems confronting rural

people at the local level in Salima seem universal. Population growth continues to increase without a strong national policy to check it. Ongoing rapid population growth is exerting pressure on the limited government's ability to satisfy the most basic of human needs and social services. All these factors have contributed to the low life expectancy and high infant mortality rates experienced over the last decades.

## **SUMMARY, RECOMMENDATIONS And CONCLUSIONS**

In this study, Malawi's rural development efforts have been examined to assess the effect on the reduction of rural poverty. Discussions on poverty alleviation have emphasized the central role played by the state in determining the direction and nature of rural development (Alavi and Shanin, 1982). This has been the case because it is the government that provides the structure within which the process of rural development takes place.

In the first chapter, we have seen the theoretical framework within which rural development policies have been pursued by most governments in developing nations. Major ideologies in development thinking have changed several times in the past three decades, and with it the prescriptions for and explanations of poverty alleviation. In the 1960's, the focus of attention was on economic growth. This was based on the conviction that rapid growth would increase the incomes of the rural poor. A raise in incomes would lead to a healthier lifestyle reducing the morbidity and mortality rates in developing nations. Disappointing performance with poverty alleviation experienced by many developing nations, despite some growth led to a rethinking of strategies.

New strategies focusing on growth with redistribution and satisfaction of basic needs, were conceived in the 1970's. Growth with redistribution emphasized that more attention be paid to social services that would satisfy the basic needs of the people.

During the 1980's rural development thinking emphasized the efficiency of the markets and structural adjustment programs. These required government cut backs in public spending and boosting economic growth by promoting export economy. In the 1990's rural development debates have returned to the human aspect started in the 1970's. Poverty alleviation and the need to make people the centre of development has influenced the attention be focused on social as well as economic needs.

Within the above framework, the performance of Malawi's rural development strategy in the 1970's and 1980's was outlined. The strategy pursued by the Malawi government so far emphasized achievements in economic growth based on agricultural production. The state encouraged the establishment of private capitalist farms and estates to engage in the production of cash crops for export. For some time until the 1980's, economic growth policies paid off. Malawi enjoyed some economic growth because of the export cash crop led the economy and had favourable world terms of trade. The larger farmers and estates were thus accorded all the attention they could get from the government in order to maintain their privileges such as, land acquisition, access to agriculture loans from commercial banks, etc.

Owing to this thrust and direction of production, the condition of poor people particularly in the rural areas deteriorated. The promotion and expansion of the estate subsector resulted in the reduction of peasant farmland. Land transfers to estates led to the displacement of rural farmers to less productive marginal areas. The result was a

decline of their food and cash crop production eventually leading to low incomes and food insecurity.

Although there are few studies that have been conducted with macro-micro linkages, most of the data collected from Salima seem to approximate national trends. Land shortage, although it has not yet reached a critical point, is a serious threat to future productivity and the survival of poor households. Apart from land transfers, another major cause of land shortage is population pressure on arable land. Land availability and distribution determines access to other resources of production such as inputs, credit and extension. It is mostly farmers with large holdings (ie. more than 1 hectare) that benefit from these resources. The lack of participation in most agricultural activities does not mean that peasants are resistant to improved methods of land utilization or to introduction of modern technologies (Chilowa, 1991). On the contrary, it is the government that tends to concentrate on larger smallholder farmers.

The case of the Salima Rural Development project also reveals that the role of the Malawi government in pursuing development policies for rural areas has not been neutral. It has not balanced divergent societal interests in development by promoting those with less land. Rather, it seems to have performed an indirect but crucial role in structuring socioeconomic relations based on land distribution. In the process of resolving the distribution of resources the government policy has sided with specific social and economic groups, namely those with more land and involved in growing cash

crops. The need to show quantifiable results that prescribed development objectives are being attained has led to relegation of the social economically weaker groups with less land holding into marginal positions.

Despite the change in development thinking towards poverty reduction and promotion of peasant agriculture, the government continued to promote estate agriculture for economic growth. The peasant subsector received a secondary role in the overall economy to the estate subsector. Peasant agriculture gets less attention even though it is the largest (in terms of numbers) and occupies the central place in poverty reduction. Marketing conditions for smallholder products are not favourable to increasing their incomes due to government regulated pricing policies through the marketing board (ADMARC). Profits realized from the sell of smallholder produce at international markets are invested in urban areas and the estate sub-sector which ADMARC operates.

Poverty reduction also requires government efforts in provision of social services to rural population. As evident by low social indicators and deteriorating living standards, achievements in this particular area have been minimal. The emphasis on policies aimed at achieving economic growth, meant that the social services received a secondary attention. Furthermore, the fast rate at which the population is growing is exerting pressure on the limited facilities and resources thus, diluting the services. In some cases like health care, structural improvements have been made with more primary



health care facilities constructed. However, the quality has remained unimproved due to low budgetary expenditure allocation and high population growth.

As the main provider of basic social services, the government's efforts in Salima fall short of catering for the whole population in rural areas. Health problems affecting most people and children are a result of poverty common in most households. Starting with low agricultural productivity to a lack of adequate food, malnutrition retards people's ability to work by being vulnerable to diseases. High illiteracy rates particularly for women, further reinforce the cycle of poverty among smallholder farmers. Inadequate education implies that people cannot learn to absorb new information, formulate and evaluate alternatives, which have profound implications on people's poverty situation.

On social services, it is a fairly safe conclusion to say that given the resource poor economy of Malawi, and present socioeconomic situation, the population increase is exerting intense pressure on the government's ability to satisfy most basic human needs. It has been established in the foregoing that population growth is exerting extreme pressure on the sectors of health and nutrition, education, land, water and sanitation. However, dealing with population factors alone may not reduce the incidence of poverty prevalent in most rural areas. The total government expenditure on social services has to go up to reflect the population growth. The expenditure on social services has

increased in real terms but not in relation to the population growth and thus falls short of providing increased access.

A brief overview on the position of women shows that they are a crucial to the survival of a household in Malawi. The majority of all rural women in Salima and Malawi in general are farmers. They have a large responsibility for being food producers in society, yet evidence shows that they receive very little attention with regards to agricultural inputs, extension and credit facilities. Reasons for the little attention paid to women farmers in spite of new government efforts to recognize their importance is an area that would require further investigation if current policies are to significantly change and reflect the role of women in rural development.

The present efforts to increase the participation of women in women's clubs is believed to draw membership from better off women who are usually married. These are usually the who can afford time off child care, domestic and agricultural duties (Brydon and Chant, 1989). Female households, young mothers and the rural poor are hard to reach. Participation in women's clubs also assumes that the women are free to participate and equally with men in any opportunity offered. This probably ignores the fact that in general, women have unequal access to the basic factors of production and are therefore less able to participate than men in rural development.

Although rural women's development has received some attention during the past decade, it is very clear that the programs have not resulted in full integration of the women into the overall economy. It is important therefore that research is also carried out to provide some conclusive data on gender inequalities on access to basic services and factors of production in order to incorporate women's interests into the planning process.

While there are no immediate solutions laid out in this thesis, the analysis so far has presented the view that most of the rural problems are related to high population growth. It is assumed that a strong national policy on population control measures would help alleviate rural poverty (Economic Planning Division, 1990). A continuation of the present population trend can only help drain the savings that would increase from productivity and growth if invested in social services.

An effective long term population policy can be achieved by educating women. Education of women must be given priority if real reductions of poverty are to be achieved. Education of women is a necessary input to increasing agricultural productivity and production, reducing infant mortality, child mortality and morbidity, and thus increasing life expectancy.

It is also the conclusion of this thesis that the root cause of most rural problems concern land availability to most rural households. Even though it might be too early

to speculate on land reform as a possible solution, but, if undertaken cautiously so as not to raise people's expectation beyond reality, it would help alleviate rural poverty. For instance, Trivedy (1988), proposed the estate sector should be involved in the exercise by making it release part of the landholdings which was taken from smallholders.

It must be acknowledged that the field of rural development investigated is broad, the time frame wide, and the geographic area immense. To this effect, it would have been better if the sample for the qualitative material had more respondents and observations than only the 30 included. As a result of the expanse of rural development and the limitation imposed by time allocated for the field study, not all the various aspects of rural development could be studied. Therefore only a fraction of the many variables were able to be included, however, those not given enough time are for future studies, such as the issue of gender in rural development.

A study of a subject as vast as this is also bound to have other shortcomings; for example, the following points are noted: (a) The wide range of topics to be covered necessitates a comprehensive approach, but the time factor and the lack of up to date information or previous research material in some areas dictated the type of data selected for use. Following this, there is a likelihood that particular issues may be omitted: for instance cash crop production for smallholder farmers. (b) The study methodology assumes that the changes observed between data from the two time periods is a result of

rural development policies. It fails to take into account the changes that would have taken place if there was no intervention.

What is required in an analysis of rural poverty in Malawi is a recognition of the interrelated dynamic factors of poverty. Many of such factors cannot be documented for Malawi because of lack of previous research. The findings of this research aim at endorsing the need for further investigation into the effectiveness of rural development programs in relation to poverty alleviation in the future.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **Guide for Observation and Unstructured Intensive Interview**

1. Who is the head of the household? (Male) (Female)
2. How many people are there in the household?
3. How many are children?
4. What do the members of the household do to earn some income?
5. How much is it? (Estimate in Malawi Kwacha).

#### **Health Related Questions**

6. Are there children in the household aged 1-5 years?
7. Do they attend Under Five Clinics?
8. How often? (To be estimated by the number of vaccinations received.)
9. How far is the nearest hospital?
10. Where do the members of the household go for medical treatment?
11. How far is the facility?
12. What is the source of drinking water?
13. How far is it from the household?
14. Does the household have a latrine?
15. Does it have a rubbish pit?

**Education**

16. How many children in the household go to school?
17. How many are boys or girls?
18. If some do not go to school are they girls or boys? (Reason)
19. How far is the school?
20. Are there any adult literacy classes in the area?
21. Does any member of the household participate in adult literacy classes?

**Empowerment of Women in Development**

22. Are there activities or programs in which only women participate?
23. What are they? (List)
24. Are there leadership positions with women as incumbents?
25. Do you think there are more females than males in local institutions and structure such as credit clubs, village committees, etc., why?

**Agriculture**

26. What crops does the household grow?
27. How big is the household's landholding? (Estimate)
28. What crops are grown for food?
29. Did the household produce enough food crop last year?
30. What crops are grown for cash?
31. Did they buy or exchange anything in the household with food?

32. Did the household produce enough to sell last year?
33. Does any member of the household belong to a local farmers' club or women's group?
34. If yes, how active are the members in group activities?
35. Did any member of the household receive any inputs on credit from any source?
36. If not, why?
37. How often does an agricultural extension officer visit the household or their farm?



## **APPENDIX B**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR EXTENSION OFFICERS**

**Name of Department**

**Position**

1. What is the objective of your department?
2. What are the strategies or policies for achieving the objectives?
3. Are the operations of your department confined to a specific geographic area?
4. Who are the beneficiaries of your programs?
5. Who do you think benefits from these programs?
6. What problems do you face in trying to achieve the objectives of your department?
7. What are the suggested solutions?
8. What solutions have you suggested in view of the problems you meet in your daily work?
9. Statistics of program beneficiaries and achievements, etc.

## **APPENDIX C**

### **INTERVIEW GUIDE FOR WOMEN GROUPS**

**Name of Village**

**Activity of Group**

1. When did the group start?
2. Whose idea was it?
3. How did you go about it?
4. Did you seek any assistance from somewhere?
5. If yes, what type of assistance?
6. If yes from whom or where?
7. What was the your initial contribution if any?
8. How do you operate?
9. Do you have a leader(s)?
10. If yes, who selected her or him?
11. What is the role of the leader?
12. What do you benefit from this activity?
13. What are the problems faced? If any?

## APPENDIX D

### TREND OF SELECTED SOCIAL INDICATORS IN MALAWI 1980-1990

(Infant Mortality Rates (IMR), Life Expectancy, and Primary School Enrolment)

	1980	1985	1987	1988	1989	1990
<b>Pop '000</b>	6091	7362	7911	8201	8501	8812
<b>IMR '000</b>	169	155	150	149	147	146
<b>Life Expec</b>						
<b>Male</b>	43	44	44	45	45	45
<b>Female</b>	45	47	48	48	49	49
<b>Primary</b>						
<b>Enrol. %</b>		60	62	66	72	
<b>(6-13 years)</b>						

Adapted from The African Development Bank (1993).

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