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**THE DESIGN AND IMPLEMENTATION OF EFFECTIVE POVERTY  
ERADICATION PROGRAMMES: THE RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH**

Thesis submitted by  
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In August, 2009

For the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the School of Arts and Social Sciences,  
James Cook University

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## DECLARATION ON ETHICS

The research presented and reported in this thesis was conducted within the guidelines for research ethics outlined in the *National Statement on Ethics Conduct in Research Involving Human* (1999), the *Joint NHMRC/AVCC Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (1997), the *James Cook University Policy on Experimentation Ethics. Standard Practices and Guidelines* (2001), and the *James Cook University Statement and Guidelines on Research Practice* (2001). The proposed research methodology received clearance from the James Cook University Experimentation Ethics Review Committee (approval number **H2470**).

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Gerald Nyasulu

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Date

## **STATEMENT OF SOURCES**

### **DECLARATION**

I declare that this thesis is my own work and has not been submitted in any form for another degree or diploma at any university or other institution of tertiary education. Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.

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Gerald Nyasulu

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Date

**STATEMENT ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS, FINANCIAL AND EDITORIAL HELP**

Supervision: Debra Miles, PhD and Mr. Peter Jones

Financial Help: Partial upkeep scholarship and tuition fees exemption for one semester,  
School of Arts and Social Sciences, 2007-2009

Field Study Transport: Concern Universal (Malawi)

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Now unto the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen (1 Tim 1: 17 [KJV]).

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## **ABSTRACT**

The aim of this thesis is to explore the views of some of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups on how poverty eradication programmes should be designed and implemented. This aim is achieved by undertaking a document analysis of some poverty alleviation programmes and a field study conducted in rural Malawi early 2007 using a qualitative, rights-based approach to participative action research.

Recent economic data shows that while billions of dollars have been spent on international aid programmes in developing countries, poverty continues to increase. Poverty in most developing countries has been exacerbated in recent years by failed economic policies and high levels of corruption both in the developing world and among aid agents. This has led to frustrations on the part of both donors, manifesting itself as donor fatigue, and on the part of the poor people themselves who are demanding new approaches to dealing with poverty.

A qualitative, human rights framework informs all the aspects of the study. This framework provides the context for framing the research question and the choice of methodologies used in the project. The study was divided into two parts. The first was a document review of thirty six poverty alleviation programmes implemented in three developing regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia. The second part of the study involved six focus group discussion meetings with a cross section of rural disadvantaged and marginalised Malawians from Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas. The human rights framework provides the analytical lens for the interpretation of the document analysis results and the data from the focus group discussion meetings. It also informed and guided the conduct of the focus group discussion meetings. In particular, principles of participative action research were used.

A key result from the document analysis is that there are low to insignificant levels of participation by the programme primary stakeholders in the design and implementation of these social safety net programmes. All the programmes reviewed were designed and implemented by governments, or non-government organisations or donors while a few had partnerships between government and non-government organisations or a donor agency. The results from the field study show that these marginalised and disadvantaged

groups generally defined poverty from an economic perspective – lack of financial and material resources. However after they had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles, they now defined poverty as a violation of human rights. They also went further to propose rights-based poverty eradication interventions which they argued should be designed and implemented by marginalised and disadvantaged groups themselves. These participants proposed a radical shift from economic-based poverty interventions to human rights-based interventions that empower poor communities, upholding their fundamental human rights and effectively eradicate poverty.

This study therefore produces an argument for the need to adopt a rights-based approach framework in designing and implementing development programmes, and in particular, poverty eradication programmes. Practical steps, from the participant's point of view, on how such programmes could be designed and implemented are also provided.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Statement of access	ii
Statement of sources	iii
Statement on the contribution of others	iv
Acknowledgements	v
Abstract	vii
List of Diagrams	xvi
List of Tables	xvii
<b>Part I: The Study, the Literature and Methodology</b>	<b>2</b>
<b>Chapter 1: Introduction</b>	<b>3</b>
1.1 Background to study	4
1.2 Goal and Aims of the Study	7
1.2.1 Significance and Originality	8
1.2.2 The Participants' Role in Shaping the Research Focus	9
1.3 Presentation of the Results in this Thesis	9
1.4 The Limitations of the Current Study	10
1.5 Thesis Outline	10
1.6 Conclusion	12
<b>Chapter Two: Literature Review</b>	<b>13</b>
2.1 Development: a Problematic Concept	14
2.2 Brief Historical Overview of Development	15
2.3 Definitions and Theories of Development	19
2.4 Classifications of Definitions and Theories of Development	20
2.4.1 The Capitalist Development Paradigm	21
2.4.2 The Socialist Development Paradigm	23
2.4.3 Alternative Development	26
2.5 The Concept of Poverty	29
2.5.1 Statistical Definitions	30
2.5.2 Expert-derived and Ordinary People-derived Definitions	33
2.6 Social Welfare Programmes	37

2.7 Definition of Safety Nets	38
2.8 Welfare State versus Programmatic Approaches	39
2.9 Centralisation versus Decentralisation	40
2.10 The Top-Down versus Participatory Approaches	40
2.11 Targeted versus Universalist Approaches	42
2.12 The Human Rights-Based Approach	43
2.12.1 Brief Historical Background	44
2.13 What is the Human Rights-Based Approach to Development	47
2.14 Emerging Themes	48
2.14.1 Action	49
2.14.2 Guidance	49
2.14.3 Empowerment	50
2.15 Fundamental Principles of Human Rights-Based Approach to Development	51
2.15.1 Participation and Inclusion	52
2.15.2 Universality and Indivisibility	52
2.15.3 Accountability and Rule of Law	53
2.15.4 Equity and Non-discrimination	54
2.16 Advantages of Using the Rights-Based Approach to Development	55
2.17 Advantages of Applying a Rights-Based Approach to Poverty Eradication Programmes	58
2.18 Conclusion	61
<b>Chapter Three: Methodology</b>	<b>62</b>
3.1 The Theoretical Framework	64
3.2 Human rights – The Overarching Framework	64
3.3 The Quantitative versus Qualitative Research Frameworks	65
3.4 A Qualitative Approach	70
3.5 Participatory Action Research	73
3.5.1 Action Research	73
3.6 Historical Overview	75
3.7 The Principles of Participatory Action Research	76
3.7.1 Empowerment of the Disadvantaged Groups	77
3.7.2 The Process	77
3.7.3 The Outcomes	78

3.8	Limitations of Participatory Action Research	79
3.9	Challenges of Participatory Action Research	80
3.10	Overview of Methods	83
3.10.1	The Document Analysis	83
3.10.2	Limitations	85
3.11	The Field Study	86
3.11.1	Rationale for the Target Group	86
3.11.2	Logistics	87
3.11.3	Recruitment of the Participants – The Processes	88
3.11.4	Selection of Villages to be involved in the Current Research Project	89
3.11.5	The Recruitment of the Leaders	92
3.11.6	Meeting Venues and Facilities used	93
3.11.7	Distance to the Focus Group Discussion Meeting Venues	93
3.11.8	The Conduct of the Focus Group Discussion Meetings and the Interaction of Genders	94
3.12	My Role	97
3.12.1	Data Capture in the Focus Groups and Semi-Structured Interviews	100
3.12.2	Data Translation and Transcription	101
3.12.3	Data Analysis	101
3.13	Ethics	102
3.13.1	Confidentiality	102
3.14	Conclusion	103
 <b>Part II: Findings and Discussions; Summary and Recommendations</b>		 <b>104</b>
 <b>Chapter Four: Comparative Analysis of Current Poverty Alleviation Programmes</b>		 <b>106</b>
4.1	Role of Government, Donors and Non-government Organisations in Implementation of the Programmes	106
4.2	Leakage to Non-eligible Recipients	107
4.3	Conditions Attached to the Different Safety Net Programmes	107
4.4	Involvement of Local Communities and Institutions in the Design and Implementation of the Programmes	108

4.5 Conclusion	108
<b>Chapter Five: Meeting the Participants and the Definitions of Poverty</b>	<b>110</b>
5.1 Meeting the Participants of the Focus Group Discussion Meetings	110
5.1.1 The Participants Profile	110
5.1.2 Age	112
5.1.3 Gender Distribution	112
5.1.4 Education	112
5.1.5 Occupation of Participants	113
5.2 Definitions of Poverty	115
5.2.1 Initial Definitions of Poverty	115
5.2.2 Definitions of Poverty after the Rights-Based Approach Discussions	119
5.3 Conclusion	124
<b>Chapter Six: Meanings of the Eight Human Rights-Based Approach Principles</b>	<b>125</b>
6.1 Participation	126
6.1.1 Initial Meanings of Participation	128
6.1.2 The Transition	129
6.1.3 Conclusion	132
6.2 Inclusion	133
6.2.1 Initial Meanings of Inclusion	134
6.2.2 The Transition	134
6.2.3 Inclusion for All	135
6.2.4 Conclusion	136
6.3 Universality	137
6.3.1 Universality for All	138
6.3.2 Conclusion	140
6.4 Indivisibility of Human rights	142
6.4.1 Initial Meanings of Indivisibility	143
6.4.2 Deep Meanings of Indivisibility	143
6.4.3 Conclusion	144
6.5 Equality	145

6.5.1 Conclusion	149
6.6 Non-Discrimination	149
6.6.1 Conclusion	154
6.7 Accountability	154
6.7.1 Conclusion	159
6.8 Rule of Law	160
6.8.1 Conclusion	162
<b>Chapter Seven: Rights the Participants Identified as Violated</b>	<b>164</b>
7.1 Access to Information	164
7.2 Access to Opportunities and Resources	166
7.3 Accountability	167
7.4 Right to be Heard and Express one’s opinion	170
7.5 Right of Association	170
7.6 Right to Clean Drinking Water	171
7.7 Right to be Informed	171
7.8 The Bottom-Up Approach	171
7.9 Right to Education and Civic Education	172
7.10 Equality	173
7.11 Formation of Alliances and Belongingness	174
7.12 Meaningful Participation	174
7.13 Non-discrimination	175
7.14 Right to set Meaningful Prices for their commodities	175
7.15 Transparency	176
7.16 Self-reliance and Self-management	176
7.17 Conclusion	177
<b>Chapter Eight: Rights-Based Approach Poverty Eradication</b>	
<b>Interventions Suggested by the Participants</b>	<b>179</b>
8.1 Civic Education	179
8.2 Empowerment Programmes	184
8.2.1 Programmes which Promote Access to Smallholder Farmers	
Clubs and Other Beneficial Associations	186
8.3 Establishment and Training of Village Development Committees	189

8.4 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)	195
8.5 Conclusion	200
<b>Chapter Nine: Development of a Model</b>	<b>201</b>
9.1 Discussions	201
9.1.1 The Definition of Poverty	202
9.1.2 Meanings of the Eight Human Right Principles	209
9.1.3 Rights Violated in Relation to Poverty	212
9.1.4 Suggested Rights-Based Poverty Eradication Interventions	214
9.2 Rights-Based Approach Programme Model	220
9.2.1 Rights-Based Approach Poverty Eradication Strategy and Policy Framework	221
<i>The Role of the International Community</i>	229
9.2.2 Capacity Building	231
9.2.3 Community Mobilisation	236
9.2.4 Programme Development	238
9.2.5 Fundraising and Partnership Development	239
9.2.6 Implementation	241
9.2.7 Monitoring and Evaluation	242
9.2.8 The Rights-Based Poverty Eradication Programme Model	242
9.3 Conclusion	244
<b>Chapter Ten: Summary and Recommendations</b>	<b>246</b>
10.1 Thesis Summary	246
10.2 Key Recommendations	250
10.3 Conclusion	252
<b>References</b>	<b>253</b>



<b>Appendices</b>	<b>277</b>
Appendix 1: Essential Items and Services, SASAS, 2005	277
Appendix 2: Analytical Tool for Safety Net Programme Review	279
Appendix 3: Information Sheet	280
Appendix 4: Consent Form	281

## List of Diagrams

Diagram 1: Relationship between Income and Standard of Living	32
Diagram 2: Steps in the Qualitative Research Process	72
Diagram 3: Map of Africa, Malawi and part of Dedza District	91
Diagram 4: Composition of Different Focus Groups	95
Diagram 5: The Focus Group Discussion Process	99
Diagram 6: Distribution of Participants in the Focus Group Discussion Meetings	111
Diagram 7: Comparison of Genders by Education	113
Diagram 8: Gender Differences by Occupation	114
Diagram 9: Thematic Summary of the Initial Definitions of Poverty	117
Diagram 10: Thematic Summary of Rights-Based Definitions of Poverty	123
Diagram 11: The Transition Phase	127
Diagram 12: Local Leadership Structure and Complaint Procedure	168
Diagram 13: Rights-Based Poverty Eradication Programme Model	243

## List of Tables

Table 1: Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Research	67
Table 2: Rights Violated in Relation to Poverty	212
Table 3: Suggested Rights-Based Poverty Eradication Initiatives	215
Table 4: Differences between the Reviewed Social Safety Net Programmes and Poverty Eradication Initiatives Suggested by Focus Groups Participants	217
Table 5: Summary of Skills Development as Suggested by Focus Group Participants	233
Table 6: Uses of Information and Communication Technologies	234



Source: Werner, D. (1998).