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

Thesis submitted by
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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**).

Gerald Nyasulu 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 Information derived from the published and unpublished work of others has been acknowledged in the text and a list of references is given.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 Date

STATEMENT ON THE CONTRIBUTION OF OTHERS, FINANCIAL AND EDITORIAL HELP

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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.

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PART I

INTRODUCTION, LITERATURE REVIEW AND METHODOLOGY

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

Social welfare programmes play a crucial role in the development of a country. While more emphasis is given to economic growth and gross domestic product (GDP), it is generally accepted that development encompasses more indicators than just the economic performance of a country (UNDP, 2003; UNECA, 2005). Wellbeing of the populace is now considered as one of the most important indicators of development. Developing nations and the donor community have realised that some sections of society are left out in the process of development if no proper disaggregated development indicators are used to measure progress (AWID, 2002). Social Welfare programmes are introduced to cater for these marginalised groups of society (George & Wilding, 1994; UNDP, 2003; World Bank, 2006a; 2006d).

In recent years, however, it has come to the realisation of the donor community that while billions of dollars have been spent on social welfare programmes in developing countries, poverty continues to increase (UNDP, 2005). While some institutions like the World Bank (2008) claim that there has been some substantial economic progress at the global level, it has been only a few powerful and influential groups and nations that have benefited. Indeed, the rich continue to get richer while the poor continue to get poorer (AWID, 2003; UNDP-HDR, 2005). The majority of the population in developing countries (in some cases as high as 65% of the population) continue to live below national poverty lines (UNDP-HDR, 2005). As a result, the economic redistributive functions of most social assistance programmes have been questioned and calls made for more effective social assistance policies that help tackle the growing trends of poverty world wide, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa (UNDP-HDR, 2005; Minter, 1992).

One of the major reasons for failure to eradicate poverty in the last half of the 20th century has been the development paradigms that have been in use (Ultvedt, 2004; UNDP-HDR, 2005; AWID, 2002). Since attaining independence around the 1960s, most developing countries adopted development paradigms that were put in place by their colonial masters with little or no changes at all (AWID, 2003; Minter, 1992). These development paradigms lacked a broad-base support from the grassroots and focused on achieving economic growth at any cost (Minter, 1992; UNDP, 2003;

Chinsinga, 2003a). In the process, the masses were left out and the much sought after development proved elusive. It was this frustration for both developing nations and the donor community that led to the questioning of these development paradigms (AWID, 2002).

The current study sets out to examine an alternative development paradigm, the rights-based approach, and uses this paradigm to develop a broad poverty eradication framework. This alternative paradigm has been chosen because of its comparative advantages over the traditional development paradigms that are not participatory and lack broad-base action to address poverty eradication. These traditional paradigms also brought unspeakable misery to the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups by failing to uphold their human rights while pursuing development (Minter, 1992; UNDP-HDR, 2005). These paradigms often perceived inclusion of some human rights in the development discourse as a threat to economic growth. These paradigms viewed development and human rights as two separate agendas and often misunderstood them as opposing. The rights-based approach to development has unified these two seemingly competing needs into one. In fact some development commentators have described the rights-based approach as novel to the development discourse (AWID, 2002; Ultvedt, 2004; UNDP, 2003; OHCHR, 2004).

1.1 Back Ground To The Study

This study builds on earlier work I completed as a project officer with the Dedza Safety Net Pilot Project (DSNPP) in Dedza, Malawi from November 2000 to May 2003. My job involved day to day management of the project, facilitation of community participation, organisation and delivery of welfare transfers to village committees and liaison with two project consultants from the University of Reading in the UK. In order to understand the contextual issues surrounding this study, it is imperative that I explore some aspects of the Dedza Safety Net Pilot Project as it was my involvement with this project that birthed my desire to pursue further studies in social welfare programmes. The lessons I learnt during my involvement with the project also formed the basis for some of the decisions I took as this study developed.

The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project was set up by the Government of Malawi and its major donor partner, the Department for International Development (DFID) and was implemented by a non-government organisation called Concern Universal, Dedza Office. The main goal for the project was to pilot a system of direct welfare transfers (DWT) to work-constrained rural poor in the Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas (EPA). An Extension Planning Area is an area that has about one hundred thousand farming households and has an Agricultural Extension Office and personnel to provide the farming households with technical farming advice. Extension Planning Areas were formed by the Government of Malawi in 1970 to facilitate access to information and agricultural demonstrations on good farming practices. It is used as a local planning and information dissemination centre close to the farming households. An Extension Planning Area is headed by an Agricultural Development Officer (ADO) who reports to the District Agricultural Officer (DAO).

It was envisaged that the lessons generated from this pilot project would inform the design of an expanded direct welfare programme to be implemented country-wide as part of the National Safety Nets Strategy (NSNS), which had formed the third pillar of the Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (MPRSP, 1998). The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project had a strong monitoring and evaluation component because of the need to generate lessons which could later help in the design and implementation of the enhanced direct welfare programme for the whole country.

The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project tested three aspects of the direct welfare transfer process; the type of benefit, type of community management structure, and level of monitoring (Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002). The final results showed that a combination of cash and in-kind benefits had a greater positive impact on the beneficiaries' wellbeing. This was because cash gave them the flexibility to purchase what they needed while the in-kind benefit shielded them from price hikes when food was scarce. Community management structures comprising beneficiaries and their carers were the most honest and effective in delivering the transfers to the listed beneficiaries (Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002). This was attributed to the fact that these community management structures comprised direct or indirect programme beneficiaries. It can therefore be argued that being direct or indirect beneficiaries fostered a sense of responsibility and programme ownership which in return encouraged

honesty and integrity. None of the committees required close external monitoring to achieve the project goals. This was attributed to the training which all the committees received at the beginning of the project. It could be argued therefore that the training built capacity in the committees which enabled them to handle all the aspects of the project (Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002).

The performance of these community management structures from the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project motivated me to pursue the issue of community participation and capacity building further. I wanted to examine poverty alleviation programmes in detail with an aim of improving their efficiency while promoting community participation. I therefore enrolled in a masters degree programme by research in 2006 which was later upgraded to a PhD. This was necessitated by the fact that as I explored the literature, I noted various attempts to design safety net programmes from diverse standpoints. However, these approaches always used development experts' views to design and implement such programmes. I therefore realised that, as a rights-based approach project, it was imperative that such a project had to capture the views of the disadvantaged who are the primary stakeholders in safety net programmes. This need led to the expansion of the project to include focus group discussion meetings with disadvantaged and marginalised groups in rural Malawi. Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas were perfect choices for such an exercise because the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project was implemented in these two Extension Planning Areas. In this expanded project, I sought to engage some disadvantaged and marginalised groups who had participated in the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project and their local leadership.

This expansion of the project saw a shift from the original focus of the masters project. Some aspects of the masters level project were replaced by the focus group discussion meetings. Whereas previously a qualitative, document analysis would have been the primary source of data, as the project developed, the value of the field work became apparent. This saw the ascendency of the field study component to the centre of the current study. Nonetheless, results from a comparative analysis of thirty-six poverty alleviation programmes which was conducted as part of the masters level project were retained and are reported in Chapter Four. These results have been retained for the purpose of being compared to the poverty eradication interventions which were

suggested by the participants in the focus group discussion meetings. This has been done in Chapter Nine.

1.2 Goal and Aims of the Study

The goal of this study is to develop a rights-based poverty eradication programme that could be implemented in developing countries and be effective in eradicating poverty through the use of the rights-based development paradigm. This study sought to answer the question: What design and implementation features should a poverty eradication programme have in order to uphold fundamental human rights and be effective in eradicating poverty? This question arose because recent economic data show that while billions of dollars have been spent on poverty alleviation programmes in developing countries, poverty continues to increase (UNDP, 2003, UNDP – HDR, 2005).

This project sought to achieve the above stated goal by two means. The first aspect was conducting a document analysis of thirty-six social welfare programmes implemented in three developing regions of the world. Some programmes from two other regions were also included in the review because of their proximity to the three regions and congruence to the project aims. The second means was to use the rights-based approach as a conceptual framework of analysis and a methodological guide to engage local people in two rural communities in Malawi to:

1. Define poverty
2. Share their views on what human rights principles mean to an ordinary citizen
3. Conduct an assessment of rights not met or violated in relation to poverty
4. Brainstorm and discuss possible poverty eradication interventions and how these interventions would be implemented informed by human rights principles.

The project sought to engage these local communities because recent economic data released by the National Statistical Office (NSO) and the UNDP in Malawi, showed that 87% of Malawi's population live in rural areas and of these 65% live below the poverty line, with 22% of these, living in dire poverty (UNDP, 2003; NSO, 2005). Over the years, these rural communities have been targeted with different poverty alleviation initiatives that were aimed at improving their well-being. However, statistics indicate that Malawians in rural areas are poorer now than they were ten years ago (UNDP-HDR, 2005). Therefore their situation reflects that of many people in developing nations.

Some commentators claim that there is a wide consensus among development practitioners, the United Nations and its agencies, International Financial Institutions (IFIs) and governments in developing countries that the rights-based approach would make a positive contribution to sustainable development (UNDP, 2003; OHCHR, 2004; Ultvedt, 2004; AWID, 2002; 2003). However, the question that remains to be answered is how do you implement the rights-based approach to development initiatives, in particular, poverty eradication programmes? (OHCHR, 2004; Ewert, 2004).

Indeed, the rights based approach is "a great idea, but how do you do it?...the UN and other development agencies have struggled for years to understand how to actually implement the rights-(based) approach and they have not been able to come up with a model that works" (Ewert, 2004:1). These were remarks made by an excited but puzzled participant in one of the workshops facilitated by Lowell Ewert, the Director of Peace and Conflict Studies at Conrad Glebe University College, Canada. According to Ewert, such puzzlement is not isolated.

1.3 Significance and Originality

This study therefore seeks to make a unique and original contribution to the poverty eradication discourse by modelling how to use the rights-based approach as both a methodological guide as well as a theoretical framework with participants from two rural communities in Malawi. This study has provided practical guidance on how to engage primary stakeholders (beneficiaries) in designing and implementing poverty eradication programmes. This study goes beyond the current discussions on the 'need

to' to 'how to' apply human rights principles to poverty eradication programmes. Indeed, it has taken a major leap, from human rights principles on paper to human rights principles in practice by engaging primary stakeholders to develop a rights-based poverty eradication programme model which is ready to be implemented and tested.

1.4 The Participants' Role in Shaping the Research Focus

The original title of this project was The Design and Implementation of Effective Poverty Alleviation Programmes: The Rights-Based Approach. However, this topic was changed by the participants in the first focus group discussion meeting and confirmed by the subsequent groups, who argued that since Malawi became independent in 1964, the government and its donor partners have been talking about and implementing poverty alleviation programmes aimed at reducing the suffering of these disadvantaged and marginalised groups. However, the opposite has occurred. Poverty is increasing and the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups have become more vulnerable now to various economic shocks. Therefore these participants demanded that the focus for this research project should be 'poverty eradication'. This is in keeping with the principles of the rights-based approach and Participatory Action Research (PAR) which allows participants in a research project to help shape a research question and focus. This issue of changing the focus for this research has been discussed in detail in the Methodology Chapter and referred to throughout this thesis.

1.5 Presentation of the Results in this Thesis

The style used in this thesis for presenting the results differs from a traditional one in which the raw data is presented and then the researcher makes sense of the data before discussing it. The style adopted in this thesis reports two things simultaneously: the journey undertaken by focus group participants, which will be referred to as the process, and the different outcomes at different stages of that process. Two factors necessitated the adoption of this approach. The Participatory Action Research framework which was used in the field study values the process as much as the results. However, depending on the purpose of the research, the ensuing processes sometimes take pre-eminence over the outcomes. In the current research project, the participants were asked different questions at different stages of this process and their responses are reported as part of

both the process as well as being results in themselves. For instance, Chapter Five reports on both initial and rights-based definitions of poverty. These two sets of definitions of poverty are results from two different stages of the focus group discussions. These two stages are interspaced by a process called the 'engagement'. The 'engagement process' is discussed and reported on in Chapter Six. Thus depending on what I am reporting on at a particular time, the process may take pre-eminence over the results and vice-versa. The transformation that occurred for the participants as they participated on this journey is a result in itself and the various outcomes at different stages of this journey, which are products of the process, are also results. The implication of this approach is that these 'process outcomes' and 'content outcomes' are reported and discussed simultaneously from Chapter Five through to Chapter Nine.

1.6 The Limitations of the Current Study

As already stated, the current study conducted a document analysis of thirty-six poverty alleviation programmes from Sub-Saharan Africa, South Asia, Latin America, North Africa and the Caribbean and also engaged poor people from two rural communities in Malawi. Given the enormous number of social safety net programmes implemented world wide, this list and analysis are not exhaustive. While the results and recommendations presented in this thesis may have wider policy implications in the poverty eradication discourse, the developing world is faced with numerous challenges which in some cases are unique and specific to individual communities. One of the major limitations with qualitative research is that the views of the participants are bound by specific context, time and place. Therefore what is presented in this thesis, for instance, the views of the participants from the focus group discussion meetings is true for the participants at the time of the discussions in their particular context. These factors may put some limitations on the generalisability of the recommendations.

1.7 Thesis Outline

This thesis is divided into two parts. Part I contains the Introduction, Literature Review and Methodology. Part II contains Findings and Discussions, and Summary and Recommendations. Part One reviews a number of background issues before moving to examine in greater detail the features of a rights-based approach paradigm to

development. In this chapter, the thesis discusses the place of safety net programmes in the wider development discourse, the goal and the aims of the study, the significance and originality of the study, and its limitations. Then the background to this study is presented followed by the participants' role in shaping the focus of the study. Finally, this chapter discusses the approach used in presenting the results in this thesis. Chapter Two explores a cross section of literature within the development discourse. Since development is a cross-cutting subject, literature from a range of disciplines and backgrounds has been reviewed and included in this literature review. This literature includes social, community, economic and political development. Literature by Western writers that was relevant for this study has also been included. At the end of the literature review, the rights-based approach to development is introduced and discussed in detail. This section on the rights-based approach begins with an exploration of its emergence and then discusses the advantages of using the rights-based approach to development. Justification for using the rights-based approach to poverty eradication programmes is also discussed. In Chapter Three, the methodology used for this study is set out. The Methodology Chapter presents the theoretical frameworks used in this thesis, and then goes on to discuss the specific processes and methods used in the field study in Malawi. The chapter finishes with a discussion of logistical and ethical issues.

Findings and Discussions, and Summary and Recommendations have been presented in Part II of this thesis. Part II contains seven chapters. Chapter Four presents results from the document analysis and their implications. Chapter Five introduces the participants to the focus group discussion meetings conducted in rural Malawi before presenting the definitions of poverty. Chapter Six presents the meanings of the eight human rights principles. Chapter Seven presents rights violated in relation to poverty; Chapter Eight presents rights-based poverty eradication initiatives which were proposed by the participants in the focus group discussion meetings. Chapter Nine discusses in details the major themes arising from the above chapters and then presents a rights-based poverty eradication programme model. Lastly, Chapter Ten contains a summary of the thesis and recommendations.

1.8 Conclusion

Chapter One has introduced the research project, its background information and its goal and aims. Other issues covered in Chapter One are the significance and originality of study, limitations of the study, the participants' role in shaping the focus of the study and the presentation of the results in this thesis. The next chapter presents a review of the relevant literature.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

This project explores the application of a human rights-based approach to poverty eradication programmes, with specific application to addressing poverty in rural Malawi and wider implications for poverty eradication and development in general. The project combines two major approaches to exploring these issues; an analysis of social welfare programmes in a number of regions in the developing world conducted through public document analysis, and a field work component involving focus group discussions with rural Malawians intended to illuminate the experience of poverty eradication programmes and the place of a rights-based approach. The chapter explores the many ways in which poverty has actually been defined and conceptualised.

A rights-based approach to poverty eradication sits within the wider context of social welfare responses to poverty and the broader field of development, particularly as that term is used to refer to the efforts of countries in the global North to provide assistance of various kinds, and for various reasons, to countries of the global South. Establishing the parameters of this context involves understanding the historical and ideological basis of both traditional and alternative approaches to social welfare, development and poverty eradication. A key feature of this context is the use of safety-net approaches in their various forms.

The specific focus of the project is on the establishment and implementation of human rights-based approaches to development and poverty eradication in particular. It is therefore necessary to establish the basis of such an approach through a consideration of the concept of human rights, and a review of the influence that the human rights paradigm has had on recent approaches to development. From this position, it is then possible to consider the broad advantages of a human rights-based approach to development and the specific advantages of such an approach when applied to safety-net style poverty eradication programmes.

This literature review therefore covers a number of areas and issues related to the use of human rights-based approaches to development, with a goal of poverty eradication. The chapter begins with an acknowledgement that development is a problematic concept, after which a brief historical overview of development is considered from a general

perspective. A discussion of definitions and theories of development then follows. These definitions and theories have been considered from three view-points namely capitalist, socialist and alternative development. Two major concepts arise from the alternative development discourse, which are the notion of poverty and the human rights framework. These two concepts are considered in succession beginning with poverty followed by an exploration of the human rights framework. Examples of how poverty has been defined have been provided, followed by a brief discussion on social welfare programmes. Several controversies are explored in the social welfare discourse. The discussion of the human rights-based approach begins with a brief historical background followed by the definition of a human rights-based approach. The eight human rights principles which are at the heart of the rights-based approach are also explored. Finally, the advantages of applying the human rights-based approach to both development and poverty in particular are explored.

2.1 Development: A Problematic Concept

In order to begin to understand the specific issues involved in developing poverty eradication programmes, it is necessary to establish the broader development context within which such programmes exist. It is therefore imperative that such an endeavour should begin by examining development as a concept. Ife & Tesoriero (2006) begin their discourse on the concept of development by acknowledging that this term is a problematic one to define. They argue that "In some circles development has become a dirty word, because of the devastating consequences of the dominant form of global economic development on the nations of the majority world" (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006:103). Peet & Hartwick (1999:2) share these sentiments about the entire development enterprise. They argue that development is a

> complex, contradictory phenomenon, one reflective of the best of the human aspirations and yet, exactly because great ideas form the basis of power, subject to the most intense manipulation and liable to be used for purposes that reverse its original ideal intent.

Burkey (1996:2) also concedes that development is a "problematic construct and [therefore] use it [the term development] reluctantly for lack of a better alternative". Even a cursory review of the literature reveals a trend whereby most development commentators and researchers prefer to avoid including a definition of development at the outset of their discussions, while others use the term development in conjunction with a particular focus such as economic development, social, human or community development and sustainable, green or eco-development (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Thomas, 2008). This signifies the elusiveness of development as a concept (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Another challenge when defining this concept comes with the usage of other words often seen as synonymous with development. Such words include modernization, urbanization, Westernization and, in the 19th century language, civilization (Burkey, 1996; Thomas, 2008; Slim, 1995). In view of these difficulties with the concept of development, this literature review draws on sources from a cross section of disciplines which include community development, social development, economic development and discourses on human rights, both from legal and social perspectives.

I will now provide a brief historical overview of development as a concept and then look at some specific development theories and how development theorists have attempted to define development. The historical overview is discussed here before actually defining the concept of development because, as it will be seen below, this concept came to mean different things in different eras. It could be said that the conceptions of development are embedded in its historical context.

2.2 Brief Historical Overview of Development

The history of development has been written by several authors from a range of different perspectives. For example, Midgley (1995:37) traces the "evolution of social development as a practical approach for promoting social welfare". In particular, Midgley (1995:37) focuses on the "role of colonial administrators who first applied the term [social development] to social welfare in the years following the Second World War". For our current purposes however, we will look at development from a more general perspective and trace its links to the calls for respect for human rights and an alternative development paradigm.

Development as a discipline of study can be said to have emerged in the 1950s and the post World War II period when nations embarked on elaborate reconstruction programmes (Burkey, 1996; Slim, 1995; Thomas, 2008). The success of the U.S Marshal Plan in reviving and rebuilding the economies of the conquered nation-states in Europe gave Western economists a benchmark for modelling their blueprints for economic growth, which they began to export to the developing world. A significant political development around this period was the gaining of independence by many colonies. These former colonies turned to the economists from the United Kingdom and the USA for advice on how to develop their nations (Burkey, 1996). These economists were convinced that the unprecedented success with development aid programmes they had witnessed in Europe could be replicated in other parts of the world, such as the Sub-Saharan Africa (Burkey, 1996). These neoclassical economic theorists argued that economic growth was what was required and that its benefits would inevitably trickle-down to the poor masses.

However, by the end of the first United Nations development decade (1961-1970) it became apparent that the opposite had occurred. Instead of the expected trickle-down of economic growth, an economic evaporation had occurred. The rich nations had become richer while the poor nations had become poorer. This trend continued to get worse. Peet & Hartwick (1999:9) noted that by 1999, "Sixteen percent of the world's people living in 26 high-income countries [had] 80.75% of the world's income, while 56% of the world's people living in 49 low income countries [had] only 4.85% of the world's income". Even within the poor aid-recipient nation-states, the rich had become richer while the poor had become poorer. This led to these developing nations calling for a New and Equitable International Economic Order (NIEC) that would fairly distribute the benefits of economic growth (Burkey, 1996). The push to change the direction of development efforts came from many sources and took many forms. Two examples of movements which exerted significant pressure in this regard are the Cocoyoc Declaration in 1974 and the women's movement, which were powerful forces in pushing for a new development agenda (Burkey, 1996). These two examples are therefore worthy of some further exploration, as they illustrate some of the important dynamics at work in the field of development.

The Cocoyoc Declaration was the brain child of ten popular development experts who met in Cocoyoc, Mexico in 1974 (Slim, 1995; Burkey, 1996). At the end of their symposium, the participants issued a communiqué which criticized the prevalent development approaches and their philosophical underpinnings. The Cocoyoc declaration (1974) noted, among other things, that while the intention of the earlier economic development theorists were good, i.e. the belief that economic growth would automatically bring about increased living standards for all, the opposite had occurred after thirty years. In reality, the market forces favoured the most developed states and a few powerful elites. The declaration noted that three quarters of the world's resources were controlled by only a quarter of its people (Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974). Further concern was raised in regards to the biased trade relations that existed between the developed nations and the developing states. The declaration noted that the developed nations were purchasing raw materials at a fraction of the cost but would sell processed products at exorbitant prices. These unfair trading practices meant that the poor nations became even poorer while the rich nations became richer.

Perhaps one of the key contributions of the Cocoyoc Symposium was the clear articulation of the inner limits of man: how much can man consume and absorb; and the outer limits: the production and carrying capacity of the biosphere (Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974:7). The symposium noted that man should only meet his basic needs and not over produce and over consume, which they argued only results in an "ever increasing need for tranquilizers and mental hospitals" (Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974:6). The notions of over production and over consumption had their philosophical underpinnings in the prevalent notions of economic growth which assumed that production would continue to increase infinitely. The Cocoyoc Declaration (1974) cautioned that current use of world resources to meet needs should not jeopardize the ability of future generations to meet their needs. Thus the declaration managed to bring environmental limits to the forefront of the development agenda (Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974).

The Cocoyoc Symposium came up with several solutions to the above problems and challenges. Among them were the following: immediate abandonment of the philosophy of "growth first, justice in the distribution of benefits later" (Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974:5); increased self reliance among the poor nations, i.e. the idea that poor nations

should pursue detachment from an enslaving and exploitative world economic system; a direct appeal to individuals who were no longer willing to be used by the developed states as agents of exploitation to begin to help poor countries with environmentally friendly research and technologies that would help them develop; and the establishment of international regimes that would control the world's common property and ensure equitable distribution of its benefits. In essence, the Cocoyoc Declaration (1974:8) rejected the prevalent uni-linear economic growth model and called for the institution of a "new more cooperative and equitable international economic order", which recognized that the "point of departure for the development process varies considerably from one country to another, for historical, cultural and other reasons; consequently …the need for pursuing many different roads of development" (Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974:6). This declaration can be seen as the foundation of the Alternative Development Agenda (Slim, 1995; Burkey, 1996).

The women's movement also had a considerable impact on the development discourse in the 1970s (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Burkey, 1996). A number of authors recognize, for example, the work of Dutch economist Ester Boserup (1970) who brought to light the plight of women in the developing world, especially Sub-Saharan Africa (Burkey, 1995). Boserup (1970) is given credit for carefully demonstrating that women's contribution to overall agricultural production was critical in sustaining both local and national economies in the developing world (Burkey, 1995). Boserup (1970) analysed economic data from three continents namely Africa, Asia and South America and showed that colonialism and modernization were having negative impacts in the developing world. The Sub-Saharan African region was singled out as the worst affected. The western values that were imposed by the colonial overseas administrators, "redefined the concept of 'work' in African societies to exclude women's labour" (Burkey, 1995:3). These western values, in effect, devalued and undermined the contribution women make to the household's livelihood. Peet & Hartwick (1999:8) citing Snyder (1995:15) argue that "60-80% of the food producers in the 'informal sector' and 70% of informal entrepreneurs are women". According to Burkey (1996) Boserup's work (1970) provided an impetus for female professional development practitioners in the USA to pressure their government for aid policies that would alleviate the suffering of women.

The above developments coincided with the efforts of the international women's movement which successfully gained recognition as a political force at the UN level. Because of this recognition, the UN held three conferences for women in 1975 (Mexico City), 1980 (Copenhagen), and 1985 (Nairobi) (Burkey, 1996). The key outcome from these conferences was the elevation of the feminist development agenda onto the international political scene. This meant that feminist development perspectives provided an effective challenge and critique to the prevalent development notions which they argued were patriarchal and structurally designed in ways that oppressed women (Slim, 1995; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Another achievement is that the feminist movement managed to bring the plight of the 'girl-child' and women's rights in various areas to the fore of the development discourse (Burkey, 1996). Burkey (1996) finally notes that the feminist movement used their ability to organize and network to form powerful networks among activists, governments and non-government organizations world wide. Their calls and lobbying ability added weight to the argument of the need for alternative approaches to development (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006).

This brief historical account of development has traced the history of development from a general perspective. As noted at the beginning of this section, various authors have looked at the history of development from different perspectives. It was not the intention of this brief historical account to be exhaustive. However, selected literature and authors were explored which had a direct relevance to the goal of this section which was to trace the link between development and the calls for respect for human rights and the alternative development paradigm. In the next section, I will present a number of definitions and theories of development.

2.3 Definitions and Theories of Development

Burkey (1996:2) noted that the "field of development studies is a veritable jungle, inhabited by theories, counter-theories, approaches, paradigms and programmes of all sizes, shapes and colours". Therefore, the task of exploring definitions and theories of development is not an easy one. This task is further complicated by the lack of clear cut demarcation between definitions and theories of development. In many cases the definition caries within itself, implicitly or explicitly, an analysis of the causes of underdevelopment and how development could be achieved. Thus in the pursuit of

theories of development, one is bound to be talking about definitions of development as well. As Burkey (1996) further notes, each theory has attracted both criticism and counter-theories.

The focus of this thesis is not on exploring how development has been defined over the years and its subsequent theories. Rather it is an exploration of how to design effective poverty eradication programmes from a human rights perspective. Therefore for our current purposes, I will examine the ways in which earlier development theorists conceptualized development and how they argued it could be achieved. Then I will explore some critiques of such conceptions, especially those which form the foundation for the alternative development discourse. This is because poverty eradication and the human rights framework which is at the heart of this project fall within this alternative development discourse.

2.4 Classifications of Definitions and Theories of Development

As noted above, the terrain of development definitions and theories is a labyrinthine one (Burkey, 1996). Therefore some form of classification is necessary for organisational purposes. Two broad approaches to the classification and defining of development can be identified, the first of these focuses on purely economic factors and is illustrated by the analyses of Trujillo (2001), while the second looks at ideological factors and is presented in the work of Burkey (1996). Trujillo's (2001) classification deals with theories and definitions which have their underpinnings in micro and macro economic factors (Trujillo, 2001; Slim, 1995). Micro level economic approaches deal with the traditional and local economic factors and enterprises (Slim, 1995; Trujillo, 2001; Burkey, 1996). Macro level approaches deal with the national and international aspects of the economy (Trujillo, 2001). This level of the economy deals with multinational companies, national and international trading policies and interstate policies.

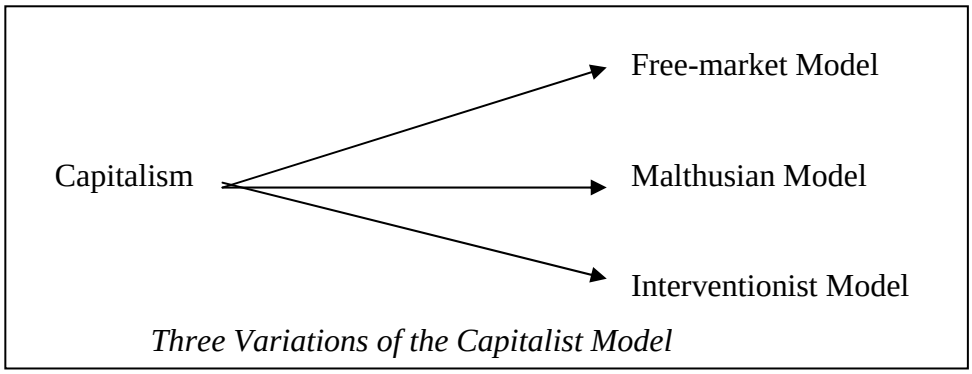
According to Trujillo (2001) there have been changes in the way development has been defined in the last five decades. These changes have been in accordance with economic, political and social trends. Trujillo (2001) points to an important distinction in the way the concept of development was earlier defined, and cites Olson (1996) and Hayami & Ruttan (1970) who, when focusing on micro-economic factors, defined development as

concerned with “economic transformation produced by structural transformation and institutional change”. The second view of development placed more emphasis on analysing macro-economic factors. Such an analysis resulted in defining development in terms of ‘economic growth’ as measured by Gross National Product (GNP). Therefore Trujillo (2001:171) concludes that “from these economic perspectives, understanding the differences in development is equivalent to understanding the characteristics of an economy and the causes of economic growth”.

Burkey (1996) offers another classification which differs from the one Trujillo (2001) explores. Burkey’s (1996) classification is based on ideological differences which have their roots in the cold war era and on the thoughts of progressive development writers who rejected the conceptions of development advanced by both capitalists and socialists. Using this approach, definitions and theories of development could be classed under three paradigms: capitalist, socialist (also known as radical political economy) and alternative development. However, Burkey (1996:4) cautions regarding capitalism and socialism that as distinct as these two camps may appear, they “do not constitute a simple dichotomy either in theory or in the actual (developing) world economies”. This is because in the postcolonial era, the newly independent states tended to have a combination of some characteristics of both paradigms in their economies (Burkey, 1996). The same could also be said of the current developed economies, and the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund (IMF), commonly known as the Bretton Woods Institutions, which claim to be true to a capitalist agenda, have increasingly pursued some socialist policies to redress the shortfalls of capitalism (Burkey, 1996). These dichotomies are further complicated by variations and strands of each paradigm with some contradicting each other (Burkey, 1996; Slim, 1995). Given their significant impact, it is worth exploring the capitalist and socialist paradigms and their various strands in order to clearly see their internal variations and some contradictions.

2.4.1 The Capitalist Development Paradigm

According to Weaver et al. (1989) there are three variations within the capitalist development paradigm, namely the Free-market, the Malthusian and the Interventionist models (cited in Burkey, 1996:4).



Three Variations of the Capitalist Model

The free-market model advocates for a free market governed by market forces. It therefore claims that for development to occur there is a need for private capital and for reduced or no government intervention at all in the market. The free-market model argues that the 'invisible hand' of the market is capable of allocating the benefits of economic growth to all (Slim, 1995; George & Wilding, 1994). This model is therefore a prime believer in the 'trickle down' effect of economic growth. However, the capitalist paradigm recognizes that there are some people who are left out of the economic loop and that such people require assistance (George & Wilding, 1994). Such people might include for example, the aged and frail, orphans and people living with a disability. The capitalist paradigm therefore provides a life-line in the form of some financial payments, vouchers or in-kind support. Although there are variations in size and kind, such programmes have widely been called safety nets. I will explore the issue of safety nets in greater detail later in this chapter.

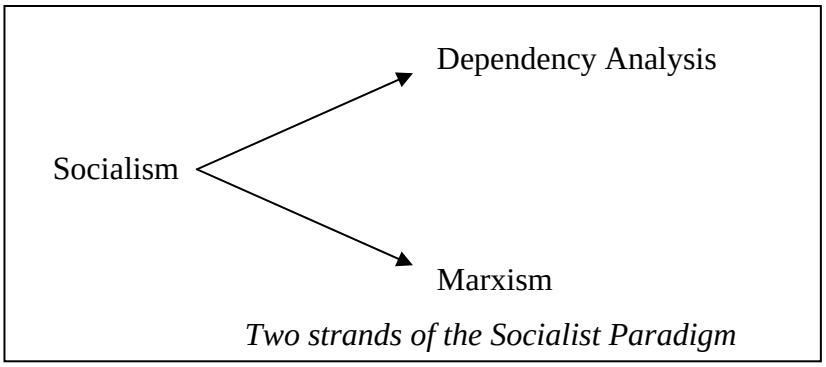
The foundation for the Malthusian model was laid by The Rev. Thomas R. Malthus in 1798 (Halsall, 1997). This classic work started as a rebuttal against "William Godwin (1756-1836) whose 'Enquiry Concerning Political Justice' argued in favour of a more egalitarian society and economics in order to end poverty" (Halsall, 1997). Malthus (1798) used two laws to formulate his ideas – the law of population growth and the law of the biosphere to sustain life. His key observation was that the rate at which population grows is faster than the capacity of the earth to support that population until there would reach a point when the earth can no longer support life. "Population, when unchecked, increases in a geometrical ratio. Subsistence increases only in an arithmetical ratio. A slight acquaintance with numbers will shew the immensity of the

first power in comparison of the second" (Halsall, 1997). Therefore he argued that for development to occur, resource scarcity should be addressed by controlling population growth. His underlying philosophy was that the available resources (Gross National Product (GNP) in modern day language) which mean the "value of the total final output of goods and services produced by an economy" at any one time would be more than enough if shared by fewer people (Peet & Hartwick, 1999:4). This would lead to high per capita incomes – which is Gross National Product (GNP), divided by the number of people sharing the benefits produced by that economy. Therefore the larger the population sharing the economic cake the smaller the piece to each individual and vice versa. For Malthus (1798), nation states had to curtail their populations in order to progress and develop.

The third strand under the capitalist paradigm is the Interventionist model. It is worth noting that in many ways, the Interventionist strand is contradictory to the free-market model (Slim, 1995; Thomas, 2008). The Interventionist model, while remaining true to the capitalist paradigm, does not believe in the rhetoric of the 'invisible hand of the free-market economy' and therefore urges "government intervention through regulatory and technocratic mechanisms to redistribute income and provide public goods" (Burkey, 1996:4). This strand argues that left to their own, markets would produce distorted development which would leave many locked out of the economic cake. Indeed at the end of the first development decade (1961 – 1970), the assertions of the interventionist model appeared to have been vindicated. The gap between the rich and poor states had widened and within the poor countries the rich had become richer while the poor had become poorer (Thomas, 2008; Burkey, 1996; Trujillo, 2001; Slim, 1995).

2.4.2 The Socialist Development Paradigm

The second of the major approaches to development is presented by the socialist development paradigm. Socialism as a development paradigm can be seen as having two strands, namely the dependency analysis and Marxism (Burkey, 1996:5).



Two strands of the Socialist Paradigm

The dependency analysis approach centres on the concept of unfair 'relations of exchange' (Burkey, 1996:5; Martinez-Vela, 2001). The central argument of this perspective is that developed nations achieved and maintained their economic growth and industrialization by exploiting colonies, which they had acquired, and other poor nations. The dependency framework analysts are aided by the world-systems theory to explain the relationship between rich and poor nations (Martinez-Vela, 2001; Burkey, 1996).

The world-systems theory as coined by Immanuel Wallerstein in 1974, deals with unfair relations between rich nation-states which are at the 'centre of economic activity', or the core, and the poor nations which are at the periphery. In this relationship, the core-periphery as it is called, there is a systematic siphoning of resources from the periphery to the core. This is achieved by neo-imperialistic or neo-colonialistic trade policies which favour the rich and powerful states. One such policy is the free trade policy which systematically transfers "surplus from the semi-proletarian sectors in the periphery to the high-technology industrialized core" (Martinez-Vela, 2001:4). Martinez-Vela (2001:4) notes that advancement in "technology is a central factor in the positioning of a region in the core or the periphery". This being the case, the core states do everything possible to deny, delay, derail or even sabotage technological advancement of the periphery. Indeed, these hegemonic advantages of the core help the rich and powerful states to "maintain a stable balance of power and enforce free trade as long as it is to their advantage" (Martinez-Vela, 2001:4). In this case, it could therefore be concluded that the rich nations depend on the poor and weak states for the acquisition and maintenance of their wealth and that it is in the best interest of the rich states that the poor remain impoverished.

The second strand under the socialist paradigm is the Marxist perspective which centres on ‘relations of production’ (Burkey, 1996:5). Marxist development theorists argued that the state should control the means of production which would enable it to distribute the benefits to each according to need (Burkey, 1996). The Marxists treated the capitalist agenda with suspicion (George & Wilding, 1994), viewing neoclassical economic theory (the capitalist paradigm) as favouring the powerful and rich to the disadvantage of the peasants and the poor. In this regard, Marxism viewed capitalism as actually “restricting economic growth” (Burkey, 1996:5). Marxism therefore sought to be more inclusive by embracing a diversity of strategies aimed at mobilizing ‘everyone’ to be a part of the means of production. These strategies, according to Burkey (1996), included mobilizing unions and grassroots movements, centralized planning and land redistribution.

Regardless of the different strands and some times opposing conceptions of development, the strands in each paradigm can be seen to share certain characteristics. For instance, the three strands in the capitalist paradigm use the individual as the unit of analysis. They all equate development with economic growth and assert that individuals and nation states act in self interest and that their ultimate goal is to increase productivity which in turn increases economic growth. In general, they define development as progress through stages of growth which is realized by “increasing gross levels of savings and investment (internal and external, private and state)” (Burkey, 1996:27). Similarly, the two strands in the socialist paradigm also share some common characteristics. They both use society as the unit of analysis and they both believe in the equality of all peoples and their right to share all material goods. In this regard, development is conceived and defined as a process of increased production through the state machinery and the equitable distribution of the benefits to all the citizens each according to need. Having briefly examined these two perspectives of development as discussed by Burkey (1996), we will now look at the third perspective, commonly referred to as alternative development.

2.4.3 Alternative Development

The term alternative development refers to the progressive thoughts of practitioners and theorists who argue that the current situation of underdevelopment is a result of development misconceptions manifested by the current paradigms (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Slim, 1995; Burkey, 1996). These development practitioners and theorists therefore call for a new and holistic approach to development (Slim, 1996). While calls for alternative development can be traced to as early as the end of the first development decade (1960-1970), such calls only gained significant momentum in the early 1990s (Burkey, 1996). This gain in momentum has been attributed, in part, to the collapse of the Eastern Bloc and, on the other hand, to increasing empirical evidence of the failure of the capitalist paradigm (Burkey, 1996; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Slim, 1995). Indeed economic data "reveal poverty so horrendous that is it impossible for ethical people to conclude that the modern history of the West should ever be repeated in anything like the same form" (Peet & Hartwick, 1999:11). Although resistance and suspicion from the capitalists remain, the plight and scale of human suffering cannot be ignored (Burkey, 1996). The prescribed development "bitter pill" which was claimed would cure poverty and underdevelopment has been swallowed and given time to work, only to result in more poverty, marginalization, greed, hypocrisy and unfair trading policies (Burkey, 1996; Thomas, 2008; Minter, 1992; Slim, 1995). These conditions have precipitated and crystallised the calls for alternative development.

Grouped under the heading of the alternative development paradigm are several theories, perspectives and approaches. At the heart of such alternative development models is an understanding that the development process is complex and that there is a need for a holistic approach (Slim, 1996; 2002; Burkey, 1995). Generally speaking, alternative development models aim to "develop and support community level structures which enhance empowerment and which challenge the oppressive structures of the existing order" (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006:104). Ife & Tesoriero (2006:105) have further argued that alternative development has the following characteristics:

> Little if any reliance on government structures; local-level development; grounding in the local culture rather than imposing a model from outside; indigenous leadership; specific addressing of the structures of disempowerment; and high levels of participation by local people.

Therefore, according to Ife & Tesoriero (2006), development is a process of the people, for the people and by the people.

Another development practitioner who discusses the concept of alternative development is Slim (1995). Slim (1995) provides seven characteristics of effective and genuine development which he refers to as the "basic ingredients of development". Slim (1995:143) argued that understanding these characteristics is crucial to understanding "what development is and how it comes about". These characteristics are change for the better; continuity; appropriateness; originality; equity and justice; sustainability, self-reliance and independence; and that every development takes time. I will now briefly touch upon a few of these characteristics. Effective development according to Slim (1995) must be culturally, socially, economically, technologically and environmentally appropriate to the community. He argues that genuine development "must have something in common with the community or society in question" (Slim, 1995:143). He further argues that appropriateness means that "development must make sense to the people and be in line with their values and their capacity" (Slim, 1995:143); He also argues for the role of originality – referring to development that's initiated by the people, nurtured by the community and shaped by the society and not an "imitation of somebody else's development" (Slim, 1995:144; Burkey, 1996). Thus Slim (1995) warns against the danger of imported development that it superimposes itself on a society and ultimately destroys it.

Slim (1995) also argues that effective development should be founded on principles of equity and justice. According to Slim (1995) these two should be the twin ingredients of any change for the better. However, he notes that in the process of change, conflicts and struggles are inevitable because any change will be embraced by some and at the same time resisted by others. He then introduces the concept of participation which he argues is a key aspect of equity. If development is going to be 'original' then the local people must be at the centre of the development process. This leads Slim (1995:144) to

contend that “true development can be achieved only by the people and can not be done to the people”.

Another characteristic of genuine development that Slim (1995) discusses is sustainability, self-reliance and independence. Slim (1995:144) calls these the “eggs that bind the mixture of the cake”. Slim (1995) argues that if the development originated from within the community and the community members have meaningfully participated at all the phases of the development process, then it will be sustainable and foster independence and self-reliance among the communities. Slim (1995:144) concluded his discussion on sustainability, self reliance and independence by bringing into perspective the concept of “intergenerational equity”. Intergenerational equity has been defined as ensuring that “the change for the better” is available “for future generations too, and not just at their expense”. Therefore any kind of development should ensure that it is sustainable and take into consideration environmental limitations. Other concepts related to this ingredient include eco-development or green development which according to Katherine Sierra, the Vice President of the World Bank Sustainable Development Programme means “Promoting economic growth strategies based on expanded infrastructure which are environmentally responsible and socially acceptable” (Sierra, 2008).

Finally, Slim (1995:144) notes that every development takes time. He argues that the push for instant transformation and development has been the “cause of many of the world’s most inappropriate development initiatives”. Both the developed and the developing nations have been, and still are, under pressure to see the results of the massive investments that have been made over the last half a century. While billions of dollars have been spent on poverty alleviation and other development programmes, poverty continues to increase (UNDP-HDR, 2005; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). These aid-defying trends and the failed economic prescriptions have increased the pressure for a quick fix of some sort. However, Slim (1995:144) explains that this pressure for quick results “stems from a wide spread naivety in the world’s major development institutions over the last 50 years, a naivety founded on an over-confidence in technological and economic development, without sufficient regard for social and environmental realities”.

The above characteristics and discourse lead us to an inescapable conclusion that development is a much more complex process than earlier development theorists envisioned (Slim, 1995; Thomas, 2008; Burkey, 1996). Indeed, the complexity of development led Clark (1991:36) to conclude that

> Development is not a commodity to be weighed or measured by GNP statistics. It is a process of change that enables people to take charge of their own destinies and realize their full potential. It requires building up in people the confidence, skills, assets and freedoms necessary to achieve this goal.

While it would have been nice to explore these controversies and debates more, space, time and the focus of this thesis does not permit such an elaborate exploration. The persuasive empirical evidence and discourses presented above make a convincing case for alternative development (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Burkey, 1996; Thomas, 2008; Slim, 1995).

We have so far looked at a brief historical overview of development, development theories and conceptions of development from three main perspectives – socialism, capitalism and alternative development. In the process, we encountered some concepts which will require further discussion and elaboration. These concepts are poverty and the human rights framework as used in connection with the alternative development paradigm. In the next section I will discuss the concept of poverty. I will also touch upon some controversies which are relevant to the poverty eradication discourse. These controversies are welfare state versus programmatic approaches; centralisation versus decentralisation; the top-down versus participatory approaches; and targeted versus universal programmes. Following this discussion, I will finish the literature review chapter with an exploration of the human rights framework.

2.5 The Concept of Poverty

Defining poverty and how to measure it has been a huge challenge for development practitioners, researchers, governments, multinational corporations and non-government organisations (Saunders, 2004; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004; Ratcliffe, 2007). In part, the problem has been exacerbated because of the elusiveness of poverty as a

concept. Largely, it has been conflicting political agendas and ideologies that have informed and guided the debates about finding a suitable definition and measurement of poverty (Saunders, 2004). Therefore it can be argued that the emergent definitions of poverty have been a product of the interests championed by the defining groups. It follows then that the definitions of poverty and the subsequent poverty alleviation strategies that flow from them have not always been in the interest of the poor themselves but rather have operated in the interests of the regimes and organisations purporting to be involved in poverty alleviation. We will examine some of these definitions now and briefly look at their implications.

To begin with, there are a number of broad categories recognized in literature into which definitions of poverty can be grouped. Some of these broad categories include statistical definitions, income-based definitions, living standards definitions, political definitions, capabilities definitions, expert-derived and ordinary people-derived definitions, and social definitions of poverty (Saunders, 2004; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004; World Bank, 2003; UNDP, 2005). Some researchers and development practitioners have also argued that poverty definitions are historical and can only be seen as true in their particular era (Saunders, 2004). In some instances however, the distinction between some of these broad categories is blurred and largely arise based on one's perspectives and agenda, for instance, statistical and expert-derived definitions as discussed below. While it is not the intention of this researcher to go through all of these broad categories of definitions in detail, a few will be touched upon here, particularly, those with direct relevance to the current research project.

2.5.1 Statistical Definitions of Poverty

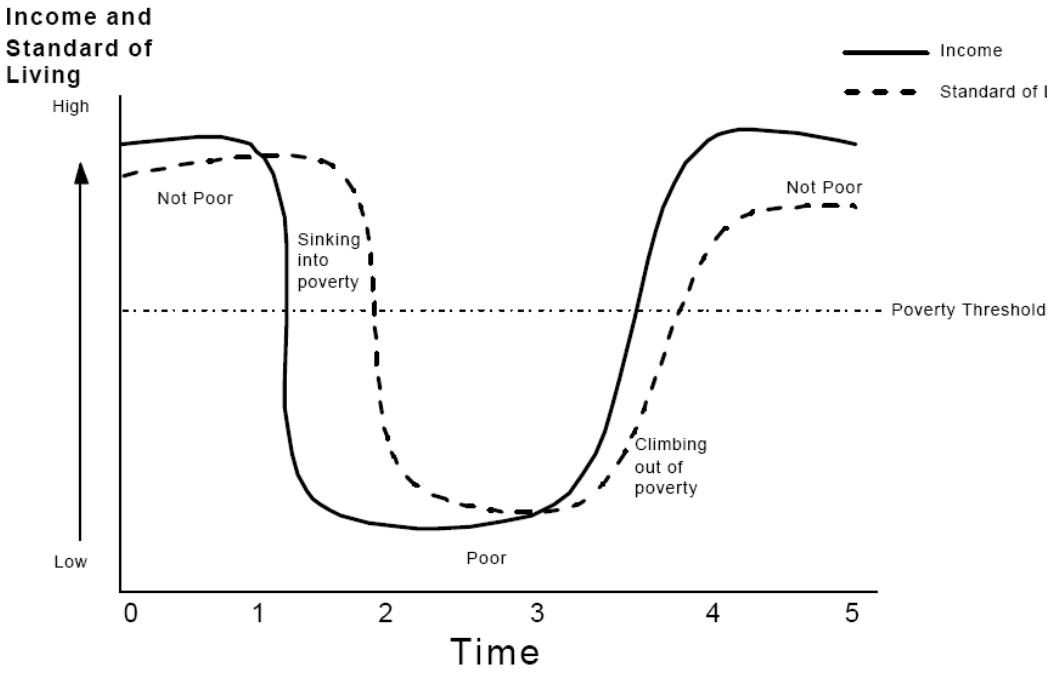
Statistical definitions refer to definitions of poverty that tend to use figures, numbers and percentages to define poverty (Saunders, 2004; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004). These statistics could for example, be economic or the lowest stratum of a population or social strata. Examples of statistical definitions of poverty include the definition used by the World Bank. The World Bank defines poverty as any income below US $1.25 a day for the poorest countries and US $2 a day for poor developing countries (Ravalion, 2003; UNDP-HDR, 2005; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004). This means that the World Bank is bound to use different poverty lines to define poverty depending on country

specific contexts. Specific countries also use this approach to define poverty. For example, highly industrialized countries like Japan, the UK and the USA tend to put their poverty line at US $14 or US $26.19 a day (Townsend, 1990:5 cited in Ratcliffe, 2007; Thinkquest, 2006). Whilst these examples look at poverty in terms of amount of dollars needed per day there are others that prefer a percentage of the population or social strata. For instance, if one ranks all the income levels of the entire population, it is sometimes deemed that the lowest 10% or 5% is poor (Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004). In this approach the main focus is not on the amount of dollars available to the individual in a day but rather as long as the person falls within the lowest end of the social strata, they are deemed to be poor.

Influential writers such as Rowntree (1910), Gordon (1989) and Townsend (1979) also define poverty based on one's income and ability to meet a particular standard of living. Rowntree (1910) defined poverty as a "situation where the total earnings of a family are 'insufficient to obtain the minimum necessaries for the maintenance of merely physical efficiency'" (cited in Thomas, 2008:3). Perhaps of particular interest are the concepts of income and standard of living as propounded by Gordon (1989), in which he uses these two concepts to demonstrate the dynamicity of poverty (refer to Diagram 1 below). He argues that caution has to be taken when measuring poverty because some households could be going through a transition phase. He argues that at this transition period, some households may have a high income but a low living standard while others may have a low income but a high living standard. In both cases the status of deprivation or wellness is a matter of time. This understanding of poverty is important because it demonstrates fully how the dynamicity of poverty could affect its definition and measurement. Gordon (1989) argues that if an individual or household has a higher income than their standard of living and should the income start falling, the standard of living will take longer to start falling. Both will continue to fall until the individual or household gets below the poverty line. When income goes up or increases due to finding employment, the household's or individual's standard of living starts to follow suit. However there is a lag between the income rise and subsequent increment in the standard of living. Gordon explains that the lag occurs because of "lag between starting work and getting paid" (1989:3). However, it could also be argued that this lag could be viewed in terms of the time it takes to change one's life style. Living standard is a cultural construction which comprises a set of culturally accepted assets, dress code,

attitudes and expenditure patterns (Cottam & Mangus, 1942). In some instances it may involve a change of housing or locations altogether. This takes time to build up and manifest, hence the lag between the sudden income increase and the slow rise in standard of living.

Diagram 1: Relationship between Income and Standard of Living



Source: Gordon, 1989:4

However defined, statistical definitions raise some questions because of the arbitrary nature of how these poverty lines are established. For instance, a person making US $2.20 a day will be deemed as not qualifying to be defined as poor under the “US $2 or below” a day definition. Some researchers have also observed that at the time when these figures were introduced in 1990, the actual value of the US dollar was $2.15 but was rounded down to $2 (Townsend, 1990). Further to this, the value of the dollar has been declining over the years. It is now close to two decades since this value was imputed and therefore the same amount of money may not buy what it used to buy two decades ago. Although there is an attempt to justify economically why US $1.25 or US $2 a day, it is important to note that there are double standards being applied here.

Indeed some people from rich and powerful states have their poverty lines pegged at US $14 or US $26.19 a day while those from the poor and weak states have their poverty line pegged at a dollar or two a day (Townsend, 1990). This sort of approach gives a wrong impression that some classes of individuals are deemed to thrive better in poverty than others. Townsend (1990) shared these sentiments. He argued that the definition used by the World Bank is too narrow and different poverty levels for different states have racist imputations. It can be argued that this observation and others are clear manifestations of unfair power relations within the capitalist system whose agenda is to serve the interests of the powerful states to the detriment of the less powerful and disadvantaged.

We have so far looked at the first category of definitions of poverty called statistical and we will now proceed to look at definitions coined by experts and those which take into consideration the views of ordinary people.

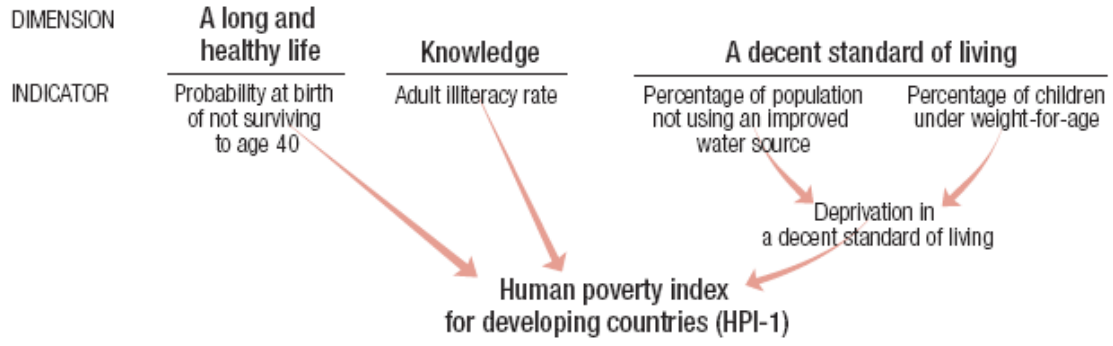
2.5.2 Expert-derived and Ordinary People-derived Definitions

Expert-derived definitions of poverty are those definitions coined by development experts (Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004; Ratcliffe, 2007). These experts could be development researchers and practitioners, economists, social scientists etc. In principle, these expert-derived definitions of poverty attempt to use the latest available expertise, statistical models and knowledge to define poverty. Examples of expert-derived definitions of poverty could include the Household Subsistence Level (HSL) and the Household Effective Level (HEL) which were developed by Potgieter in 1980 and widely used in South Africa (Suchard, 1984; Ratcliffe, 2007; Slabbert, 2004). The Household subsistence level uses computer modelling to determine how much income a household requires to barely survive. However, this method for defining and operationalising poverty was criticized for not taking into consideration other household needs which were essential like medical expenses, education, savings and insurance (Ratcliffe, 2007). This criticism led to the development of the Household Effective Level. The poverty line using the Household Effective Level measurement was higher than the Household Subsistence Level because it included the household necessities that were initially left out.

The United Nations Development Programme (HDR, 2006:407) uses a range of indices to measure and define poverty. The aggregation of these indices is called the Human Poverty Index (HPI). The United Nations Development Programme defines the human poverty index as a "composite index measuring *deprivations* in the three basic dimensions captured in the human development index (HDI)—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living". The Human Development Index is defined by the United Nations Development Programme (HDR, 2006:407) as a "composite index measuring *average achievement* in three basic dimensions of human development—a long and healthy life, knowledge and a decent standard of living" (emphasis mine).

The human poverty index seeks to define and measure poverty using the above range of indicators. For example, life expectancy measures the probability at birth of not surviving to the age of 40, malnutrition of children under the age of five measures the percentage of children who are underweight, literacy measures the percentage of the population from the age of 15 years and above who are illiterate, and access to services measures the percentage of the population that has access to sustainable potable water (UNDP – HDR, 2007/2008).

The human poverty index for poor nations is calculated from three factors, namely, long and healthy life which is rendered as Life Expectancy, Knowledge which is rendered as Literacy and Deprivation of a decent standard of living which is a derivative of two functions; percentage of population not using improved water source and percentage of children under the weight-for-age (UNDP – HDR, 2007/2008). The UNDP presents this formulation with the following:



UNDP HDR, 2007/2008: 357

These examples are just some of the expert-derived definitions of poverty. As we can see above, experts use complex mathematical or statistical models to define and measure poverty. Complexity however, does not guarantee accuracy. By contrast, ordinary people-derived definitions of poverty are those definitions that take into consideration the perceptions of ordinary people (Narayan & Petesch, 2002; Ratcliffe, 2007). These ordinary people may range from those living in poverty to those who are not poor themselves. These perceptions are used to define poverty, measure poverty and construct poverty lines. One of the key products of the poverty perceptions by ordinary people has been a poverty line which is called the Perceptual Poverty Line (PPL) (Ratcliffe, 2007). The perceptual poverty line is constructed where the household's actual income is equal to what the household considers as the minimum to make ends meet (Ratcliffe, 2007). However, it should be noted that this method of defining and operationalising poverty is subjective. Poverty researchers in South Africa found that when the household's income has increased, the household's perceived minimum amount to make ends meet also increased. When their income dropped, their perceived minimum amount to make ends meet also dropped (Ratcliffe, 2007).

Other examples of ordinary people-derived definitions of poverty are the Leyden Poverty Line (LPL) (Ratcliffe, 2007; Narayan & Petesch, 2002), the democratic definition of poverty and the Own Economic Welfare (OEW) which is established by asking a household to gauge their own position on a poverty ladder (Ratcliffe, 2007). I will only discuss the Leyden Poverty Line here and the Democratic definitions of poverty in the next paragraph as other examples of ordinary people-derived definitions of poverty. The Leyden Poverty Line was developed by Goedhart et al in 1977 and was named after the place where it was first used in the Netherlands (Ratcliffe, 2007). Basically, the Leyden Poverty Line survey asked respondents an Income Evaluation Question (IEQ) where they were asked to indicate what they considered to be "an appropriate amount of money" related to each of the following six financial case scenarios: very bad, bad, insufficient, sufficient, good and very good (Ratcliffe, 2007). The amounts that the survey respondents indicated were then used to compute estimated individual Welfare Functions of Income (WFIs).

The developer of the Income Evaluation Question, Praang (1993) and Van den Bosch (2001) claimed that the Welfare Functions of Income were actually the "cardinal and interpersonal comparable measures of poverty" (Ratcliffe, 2007:38). Goedhart et al (1977) explained further that these adverbial labels 'very bad' to 'very good' are then "transformed into numbers on a zero-one scale identifying these evaluations with equal quintiles". "In this way," Goedhart continued "one obtains points on a graph of the individual's welfare function" (quoted in Ratcliffe, 2007). Therefore using this method any household is classified as poor if its take-home income "falls below an income amount, which corresponds to a specific utility/welfare level measured by the welfare function of income" (Ratcliffe, 2007).

The democratic definitions of poverty tend to define poverty in terms of extent of participation in society (Ratcliffe, 2007). The focus is on whether the individual or household has what would enable them to fully participate in society. Critics of this approach have pointed out that this definition of poverty raises important questions like "what is full participation in society?" (Ratcliffe, 2007:40). Ratcliffe takes this question further by looking at the value behind the question: "Is the question on 'normal' (average) patterns of current participation or on views about what 'normal' should be (but isn't yet) like?" (Ratcliffe, 2007:40). Therefore the major focus in democratic definitions of poverty is not on the process of defining poverty being democratic or participation in a democratic process like elections but rather whether a household or individual is able to participate in what the society defines as "socially essential". Thus, this merely comprises a "definition of poverty in relation to the minimum living standards that the majority of the people believe to be essential…" (Gordon & Potantiz, 1997 quoted in Ratcliffe, 2007).

The Centre for Analysis of South African Social Policy (CASASP) adopted this method and conducted 50 focus group discussion meetings with a cross section of the South African people (Ratcliffe, 2007). The findings of the focus group discussion meetings were used to develop a list of socially accepted items and services that every household should have. Any household that did not have access to such items and activities was considered to be poor or deprived. Other initiatives were also employed to perfect this list of socially perceived necessities. One such initiative was a social attitudes survey conducted by The Human Sciences Research Council of South Africa (HSRCSA) in

2005. The list of socially accepted items and services which resulted from the South African Social Attitude Survey (SASAS, 2005) has been included in Appendix 01. This list is currently used in South Africa as a benchmark in the measurement of poverty. This list was compiled from items and services that were defined as essential by at least 50% of the participants in the focus group discussions.

The above definitions of poverty are just a sample of various attempts by different countries, organisations, researchers and development practitioners to define poverty. As I mentioned above, there are different categories in which definitions of poverty could be classified. In this literature review section we have looked at examples of statistical and expert-derived and ordinary people-derived definitions. Considerable attention was paid to the development of poverty definitions in South Africa and the way the United Nations Development Programme has defined and measured poverty. Which ever way poverty is defined, it has direct implications on the design and implementation of poverty alleviation programmes. It is in light of this direct implication that an exploration of these definitions was relevant. In Chapter Five, these definitions will be compared to the ways participants in the six focus group discussion meetings conducted in Malawi defined poverty before and after being introduced to the eight human rights principles. I will now proceed to discuss the concept of safety nets as used in the poverty alleviation discourse.

2.6 Social Welfare Programmes

As earlier mentioned, the capitalist paradigm, faced with the reality of poverty, has had to make provision for those incapable of participating in the markets. This led to the development of social welfare programmes which targeted the most vulnerable and marginalized (George & Wilding, 1994). Although these programmes started as small and were often seen as an inconvenience to the capitalist paradigm, their definition and scope has increased. It had been argued that it was the government's responsibility to implement social welfare programmes and as such this led to the establishment of welfare states (George & Wilding, 1994). However, it was also argued by some that the established welfare states became too large and inefficient (George & Wilding, 1994). The welfare states also had the tendency to tax the working citizens more in order to meet the ever-increasing demand for welfare assistance. This led to a debate about the

best way possible for providing assistance to the disadvantaged and marginalised groups: was it by establishing social welfare states or maintaining small and strictly targeted programmes? For our current purposes, a consideration of social welfare programmes will be restricted to 'safety nets' which are a subset of the wider welfare programmes. This is because of all social welfare programmes, safety net approaches have been implemented most often in the developing world in a bid to alleviate poverty.

2.7 Definition of Safety Nets

The World Bank has defined Social Safety Nets as "non-contributory transfer programs targeted to the poor or those vulnerable to poverty and shocks" (World Bank, 2006a). Burt, Pindus & Capizzano (2000:7) view social safety nets as a "set of programs, benefits, and supports designed to ensure that people do not lack the basic necessities of life—shelter, food, physical safety, health, and a minimum level of financial resources". They have also argued that social safety nets empower vulnerable people to change circumstances that make them disadvantaged. Gundersen, C., Morehart, M., Whitener, L., Ghelfi, L., Johnson, J., & Kessel, K. et al, (2000:1) define a safety net as "a policy that ensures a minimum income, consumption, or wage level for everyone in a society or subgroup".

The above definitions indicate the question-begging implications of defining safety nets purely within an economic model (AWID, 2002). Such definitions must then define poverty as a lack of financial resources (AWID, 2002; Ultvedt, 2004). The definitions can create a circular argument, and if the parameters of the problem are narrow, then innovative and broader solutions to poverty cannot be developed. While Burt, Pindus & Capizzano (2000) go beyond economics to raise the notion of empowerment, it is not clear from their paper how meeting somebody's basic needs would empower them to change the circumstances that make them disadvantaged. The economics-based definitions of poverty and safety nets clearly indicate that while safety net programmes have existed for decades, there has not been any attempt to redefine them in line with other frameworks, in particular, from the alternative development paradigm. Consequently, it can be argued that human rights have been violated in the name of pursuing development but economic well-being still remains elusive for billions of poor people.

There are several controversies that still attract considerable debate within the poverty alleviation discourse and around the design and implementation of social welfare programmes in particular. Such debates range from how to design social welfare programmes, how and who should benefit, to how and who should be involved in the implementation of such programmes. For our current purposes, we will only explore the following debates: Welfare state versus programmatic approaches; Centralisation versus Decentralisation; the Top-down versus Participatory Approaches and Targeted versus Universalist Approaches. We will then conclude the literature review with an exploration of the human rights framework and the rights-based approach in particular.

2.8 Welfare State versus Programmatic Approaches

The welfare state grew in its importance in many countries after the Second World War (George & Wilding, 1994). While different authors have given different explanations for the emergence of the welfare state, it is clear that economic recession in some areas that followed after the War played a crucial role (Burkey, 1996). The welfare state found its expression from different political ideologies necessitating profound differences in their operations, including the extent of involvement of the market and the types of social welfare programmes implemented. The extent of the state's involvement in the running of the economy and provision of social assistance determines whether a state qualifies to be a welfare state or not (George & Wilding, 1994). Most developed and industrialised states generally qualify as welfare states although they often claim to be true to the capitalist paradigm and its economic policies. Nowadays, however, welfare states are increasingly coming under immense pressure because of their huge state budgets and high taxation tendencies (George & Wilding, 1994).

Developing countries are usually far from becoming welfare states. They lack the economic base that would drive large welfare provision schemes (Jeter, 2002; Thurlow, 2002). They depend on financial assistance from developed countries and other international development assistance sources for budgetary support and their programmes (UNECA, 2005). More often than not, community structures are still intact and most disadvantaged and vulnerable people depend on informal social assistance

(Sharma, 2004). Informal social assistance, the private sector and non-government organisations have therefore been found to play an important role in provision of social protection programmes in developing countries (Sharma, 2004). Strengthening these programmes appears to be the best way forward for developing countries rather than trying to establish welfare states. Having looked at whether social welfare clients are better served with a welfare state or welfare programmes, we will now explore another controversy which is whether the provision of welfare should be centralised or decentralised to best provide effective assistance.

2.9 Centralisation versus Decentralisation

Centralisation has been blamed for high overhead costs in the provision of social assistance (Conning & Kevane, 2000). One of the major criticisms of welfare states is that they have a tendency to become large, centralised and inefficient (George & Wilding, 1994). It is also argued that centralisation can alienate service users and leave them feeling disengaged and helpless (George & Wilding, 1994; AWID, 2002; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Decentralisation is therefore often seen as the preferred option. It has been argued that decentralisation fosters participation by different stakeholders (Chinsinga, 2003a; Conning & Kevane, 2000). In line with the major role played by the informal, private and non-government sector in provision of social assistance (Sharma, 2004), decentralisation would provide a platform and policy framework for meaningful participation by all stakeholders (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). The next controversy to be discussed, the top-bottom versus participatory approach, deals with how to design and implement social welfare programmes, and development programmes in general.

2.10 The Top-Down versus Participatory Approaches

The traditional top-bottom approach to poverty alleviation has come under heavy fire in recent years due to continued increases in poverty world wide (van Donge, 2004; Minter, 1992; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Traditionally, rich and powerful states dictated to developing and poor states what should be done and how (Burkey, 1996; Minter, 1992). However, after decades of attempts to eradicate poverty, evidence suggests that there is an increase in poverty worldwide (UNDP-HDR, 2003; 2005; Minter, 1992). It can be argued that the top-down approach has been one of the reasons to blame because the

poor countries were forced to adopt aid packages and approaches that were not compatible with the socio-economic status of their populace (Slim, 1995; Burkey, 1996; Thomas, 2008; Minter, 1992; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006).

In proposing components of sustainable development, Slim (1995) and Ife & Tesoriero (2006) argued that development should be compatible with the culture and context of the local people. However, the developed countries and International Financial Institutions have tended to export already designed programmes that were developed for a different country with a totally different context to another country (Burkey, 1996). Among such programmes are Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) and the rushed privatisation of state owned enterprises (Slim, 1995). Instead of alleviating poverty these programmes and aid packages have created more problems and plunged whole countries into chaos due to increased unemployment and introduction of unaffordable service fees (Slim, 1995; Minter, 1992). In Minter's words:

> The package of fiscal reforms spelled out a tight austerity policy bringing pain and suffering for the people and political risks for governments. The World Bank and the IMF had admitted that the "shock effect" of SAPs would be painful, but insisted that the bitter medicine would bring economic health within a few years. The bitterness was tasted to the full but economic health was nowhere in sight (http://www.africaaction.org).

Almost three decades later the situation still remains the same (Mapp, 2008; Thomas, 2008). Regardless of the failures of various development programmes and lessons generated in each evaluation phase, little if anything has changed. Most aid organisations and developed nations still use the old capitalist paradigm of top-down to design and implement their aid programmes (Burkey, 1996; Mapp, 2008; Thomas, 2008).

However, there have been increased calls in recent years that development processes have to be participatory (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Chinsinga, 2003a; Babu, Brown & McClafferty, 1997; UNDP, 2003). The African Charter (1990:1) defines participation as "The empowerment of the people to effectively involve themselves in creating the structures and in designing policies and programs that serve the interests of all." The

rich and powerful states now understand that change can not be induced solely from the outside. It is a process that evolves from within and if anything, all it needs is to be encouraged and supported (Chinsinga, 2003a; Slim, 1995; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Indeed in recent years, there have been more attempts to engage developing countries in determining development options and aid packages (Minter, 1992; Babu, Brown & McClafferty, 1997). However, the forms of engagement with the developing countries have often been superficial and, at times, not meaningful at all. Ife & Tesoriero (2006) have discussed the concept of meaningful participation and its perils. They have demonstrated that there are different levels of participation and that the lower levels are undesirable and tyrannical (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). This issue will be discussed in detail later under the rights-based approach. I will now proceed to discuss the last controversy that we want to look at. This controversy centres on whether social welfare programmes should be targeted or universal.

2.11 Targeted versus Universalist Approaches

Debate continues on whether social assistance should be targeted or universal. The major divide has been along political lines. The proponents for targeted social assistance, for instance, argue that social assistance should be targeted because it is only the most disadvantaged, left out of the economic loop, who need assistance (George & Wilding, 1994). Among such proponents is the position represented by the capitalist New Right political paradigm. Democratic Socialists, on the other hand, have the view that social assistance should be universal to avoid stigmatisation of recipients and discrimination against non-recipients (George & Wilding, 1994). Mkandawire (2005) discusses the pros and cons of both targeted and universal social assistance. He notes that while targeted assistance is limited in dealing with poverty, universal assistance would require huge sums of finances to implement. He however advocates for universal assistance because targeting benefits would still end up costly to implement because of the complicated targeting methods and lack of capacity in developing countries to effectively implement such a complicated targeting mechanism.

However, evidence from the developing countries shows that universal assistance is a non-starter due to financial constraints (Ravallion, 2003). The Government of Uzbekistan, for example, discontinued its universal approach and opted for targeted assistance schemes due to a lack of resources (Micklewright & Mamie, 2005). South Africa, the most powerful economy in Sub-Saharan Africa, has attempted to establish a welfare state with universal assistance but it is struggling to establish programmes due to financial constraints (Jeter, 2002). Overbye (2005) seems to provide a solution by suggesting that developing countries could start with small and targeted schemes which could be extended overtime. He also advocates for a multi-sectoral approach which helps different groups with different vulnerabilities to be targeted with different social protection programmes.

We have so far discussed four controversies within the poverty alleviation discourse, namely Welfare state versus Programmatic approaches; Centralisation versus Decentralisation; Top-Down versus Participatory Approaches; and Targeted versus Universalist approaches. These controversies are far from being resolved. Each position has its pros and cons and contains serious implications for poverty eradication policies and how these programmes are designed and implemented. For our current purposes, answers to some of these dilemmas will be provided by the rights-based approach paradigm and by listening to what the people living in poverty had to say for themselves. Therefore the next section examines the Human Rights-based approach in detail and provides a framework which may address some of these controversies. Further exploration of these issues will be provided in Part II of this thesis where I present the data from the participants in the focus group discussion meetings which were conducted in rural Malawi.

2.12 The Human Rights-Based Approach

I will now introduce the human rights-based framework beginning with its historical overview.

2.12.1 Brief Historical Background

As stated above, human rights are at the heart of the alternative development paradigm. In this respect, the alternative development paradigm aims to put the individual at the centre of all development endeavours (Slim, 1995; Mapp, 2008), and the rights-based approach uses human rights as a framework to guide the development process (Action Aid, 2008). The rights-based approach to development is founded on the 1948 United Nations Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Ultvedt, 2004; Ljungman, 2004; AWID, 2002; Mapp, 2008). In response to the holocaust during the Second World War, the framers of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights came up with a document that identified and combined five sets of rights – civil, political, economic, social and cultural rights. The aim of the framers of this document was to prevent such a holocaust from ever happening again and to provide a standard for the granting and respect of human rights.

The combination of these five sets of rights in one document was, however, problematic because of the different ideologies that prevailed at the time (Ljungman, 2004). The western democracies with their capitalist ideology championed only civil and political rights while the eastern countries with their communist ideology tended to champion economic, social and cultural rights (Ljungman, 2004; AWID, 2002). Ife & Fiske (2006:297) put it this way:

> The ideological divide between the West (led by the United States of America) and the East (the Soviet bloc) was central in bringing about two covenants on human rights: the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (with its emphasis on 'freedoms' making it acceptable to the liberal democracies of the West) and the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights (with less emphasis on freedom and more on the provision and distribution of resources making it more palatable to the socialist republics of the East).

The implications of this division were far reaching. The United Nations failed to reach an agreement to accord legal status to the Universal Declaration of Human Rights document as a whole (Ljungman, 2004). Ultimately, while the intentions of the framers were good, the document as a whole was not legally binding and therefore did not

provide any legal basis for enforcement. In order to circumvent this problem, the United Nations came up with two separate covenants, with one containing political and civil rights and the other, economic, social and cultural rights (Mapp, 2008). Individual countries opted to ratify either covenant and their compliance depended on their political will (Mapp, 2008). The United Nations therefore ended up separating its development initiatives from its attempt to enforce compliance with human rights (Ljungman, 2004). In recent years however, many countries have ratified different human rights conventions and covenants, although compliance remains an issue (Mapp, 2008).

The fall of the Soviet Union in 1991 and the subsequent political reorientation of the Eastern Bloc provided a window for the resurrection of the debate on human rights in general (Ljungman, 2004). Indeed, a combination of factors around this time caused the debate to gain momentum. Some writers attribute this increased momentum to countries from the global south which had joined the UN in previous years. These countries observed that a use of human rights principles in pursuit of development had great potential to improve the living conditions of their populace (AWID, 2002). Other writers like Ljungman (2004) place more emphasis on post-Cold War civil conflicts and the emergence of a powerful international civil society. It was, however, the explicit recognition of development as a right by the United Nations in 1986 that provided a platform for the current thinking of development discourse (AWID, 2002; Ultvedt, 2004; Ljungman, 2004). This recognition changed everything. The international society was now no longer faced with two competing and seemingly irreconcilable goals but one, which is both a means as well as an end.

In the years that followed, the United Nations engaged different institutions, including the Bretton Woods Institutions, to come up with a paradigm that incorporated the realisation of human rights and development. Bretton Woods Institutions include the World Bank Group and the International Monetary Fund, which were founded in a town called Bretton Woods in Hampshire in the United States of America in 1944 (DIRC, 2004). Later, the United Nations Secretary General called for internal reforms in the work of the United Nations and embarked on mainstreaming human rights in all its programmes (Ultvedt, 2004; OHCHR; 2003). Different international non-government organisations such as CARE, Save the Children and The Department for International

Development (DFID) started developing approaches that incorporated a realisation of human rights in their development programmes and projects (Ultvedt, 2004). More recently and significantly, the United Nations Millennium Declaration was endorsed by 189 heads of states and governments in 2000. They resolved "to respect fully and uphold the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [and to] spare no effort to promote democracy and strengthen the rule of law, as well as respect for all internationally recognised human rights and fundamental freedoms, including *right to development"* (Ljungman, 2004:3-4) (Emphasis mine).

Although many papers have been written and conferences held about the rights-based approach to development, there has, however, been little realisation of such an approach in practice (AWID, 2002; Ultvedt, 2004; OHCHR, 2004). It can be seen that the early attempts by several organisations are still in their infancy stage. Many developed countries and International Financial Institutions (IFIs) are yet to translate rights-based approach principles into practice. Hypocrisy and selective application of rights-based principles still exist (AWID, 2002; 2003; UNDP, 2003). For instance, some International Financial Institutions and developed countries still use traditional approaches to development by dictating to aid and loan recipients how to spend the money (Slim, 1995). These 'orthodox conditionalities' are accompanied by unworkable structural adjustment programmes that are punitive than progressive in nature (Minter, 1992).

In recent years, many International Financial Institutions have claimed that they involve host countries to develop aid packages (AWID, 2002; 2003). The claimed consultations however, have often been used to rubberstamp a range of 'economic fix it all' policies that violate human rights (AWID, 2003). Blinded by the myth that economic growth will lead to development and well-being, all their efforts are concentrated at policies that 'amass' rather than 'distribute' (AWID, 2003; Slim, 1995; Burkey, 1996). For instance, poorest countries are still advised to reduce expenditure on education, social services and health and introduce service fees in order to save finances. It can be argued that this advice not only violates the right of poor people to access education and health services, but is also undesirable because such rights are locked into each other. One can not enjoy a right to good health without having access to health services. And without good health, one can not exercise their right to participation in a political system.

Violation of one means violation of all (Mapp, 2008; AWID, 2002; Nango online, 2006).

2.13 What is the Human Rights-Based Approach to Development?

The remarks which I reported in the Introduction Chapter made by an excited but puzzled participant in one of the workshops facilitated by Lowell Ewert highlight the perplexities in the mind of many individuals (Ewert, 2004). While there may not yet exist a single 'model that works', different organisations and human rights and development practitioners have at least come up with several definitions that share some central tenets as will be shown below. It has also been reported that several organisations such as Oxfam and Action Aid have been learning lessons and generating check lists for operationalising human rights-based approaches to development (OHCHR, 2005; UNDP, 2003).

AWID (2002) defines the rights-based approach as an approach that "uses established and accepted human rights standards as a common framework for assessing and guiding sustainable development initiatives". They therefore conclude that "central to a rights-based approach is the protection and realisation of human rights" (AWID, 2002:1). The Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights defines the rights-based approach as:

> … a conceptual framework for the process of human development that is normatively based on international human rights standards and operationally directed to promoting and protecting human rights. Essentially, a rights-based approach integrates the norms, standards and principles of the international human rights system into the plans, policies and processes of development (Foley, 2003:3).

Of particular importance is the definition put across by the former Secretary General of the United Nations Kofi Annan (1998) when he said:

> A rights-based approach to development describes situations not simply in terms of human needs, or of development requirements, but in terms of society's

> obligations to the inalienable rights of individuals, empowers people to demand justice as a right, not a charity, and gives communities a moral basis from which to claim international assistance when needed. (Annan, 1998, quoted in Foley, 2003:3).

Slim (2002) looks at the rights-based approach to development from a broader but equally important perspective. He argues that a rights-based approach:

> means having the courage to build local, national, and global movements that argue for specific duties to be met by governments, corporations, and individuals that will enable all people to enjoy their rights. Above all, it involves abolishing the development enterprise as a neo-colonial programme of correction administered from the rich to the poor and replacing it with a common political project that recognises everyone's equal rights and judges the behaviour of all on the basis of how they realise or violate their rights (cited in Ljungman, 2004:2)

2.14 Emerging Themes

Three major themes emerge from the above definitions of the rights-based approach to development. These themes seek to answer three questions in the development enterprise: what will be achieved? This theme corresponds to what Ultvedt (2004:4) calls Action. Secondly, how will it be achieved? This corresponds to what Ultvedt (2004:4) calls Guidance. And lastly, who is affected by the action or outcome? Ultvedt (2004:5) calls this Empowerment. A discussion of these three themes will help bring to light major issues in the rights-based approach to development discourse. I will now discuss these three themes in succession beginning with action, followed by guidance and lastly empowerment.

2.14.1 Action

Action is one of the three themes that emerged from the definitions of poverty. It can be argued that action as a theme goes beyond what was done and examines the impact of a development endeavour on different stakeholders. To this effect, the rights-based approach is a development paradigm that allows us to question the goal of a development initiative (Ljungman, 2004; AWID, 2002). Unlike traditional development paradigms which measure progress only by abstract concepts like 'economic efficiency and growth', this approach looks beyond what has been or will be achieved (AWID, 2003:6). It analyses the results of a development endeavour from different angles such as feminist and pro-poor expenditure perspectives. It also brings into perspective two important goals of human existence and endeavours: development and the realisation and enjoyment of human rights. More importantly, the rights-based approach to development demonstrates that it is a fallacy to assume that economic growth necessarily leads to the realisation and enjoyment of human rights (Ljungman, 2004; Ultvedt, 2004). The rights-based approach therefore captures an important principle in development discourse that rights are both a means and an end while development is not (AWID, 2002; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). I will now discuss the second theme which is how a particular development outcome will be achieved.

2.14.2 Guidance

Guidance is another theme that emerged from the definitions of poverty. Guidance examines the means taken to achieve a particular development goal. This could be summed up as 'the end does not justify the means'. As already alluded to elsewhere, the International Financial Institutions and the developed countries were obsessed with the need for economic growth when assisting developing countries (Slim, 1995; Minter, 1992; AWID, 2002). This orientation led them to come up with economic policies that had far reaching repercussions for the implementing governments (Slim, 1995; Minter, 1992). It can be argued that gross violation of human rights occurred under the structural adjustment initiatives because all pro-social expenditures were to be reduced and service fees introduced (Shah, 2001; Whirled Bank Group, 2006). The International Financial Institutions exported unmodified economic policies formulated for a different country into another without taking into account political and socio-economic factors of

the host country (Whirled Bank Group, 2006). Ife & Fiske (2006:10) see this sort of approach to development as too often "…the imposition of development programmes designed by the powerful and privileged on the powerless and unprivileged".

The rights-based approach therefore provides an opportunity for all stakeholders to question the process followed to achieve particular goals. As will be demonstrated under the third theme, the rights-based approach brings all development players onto a level playing field at which they can engage and participate meaningfully in the development process. Indeed, 'meaningful participation requires more than mere consultation' which can only occur when the playing field has been levelled (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; AWID, 2003). It is only on such levelled ground that it is possible to check whether principles of human rights are followed in the process of pursuing a development goal. These principles include participation and inclusion, universality and indivisibility, accountability and rule of law, and equality and non-discrimination (Ultvedt, 2004; UDHR, 1948; UNDP, 2003). These principles will be discussed in more detail later.

2.14.3 Empowerment

This last theme explores the roles of the various stakeholders involved in a development process. Slim (2002) mentions four major categories of stakeholders in his discussion of the rights-based approach to development. These are individuals, local, national and global or international movements. He further talks about networks and the interdependency of these stakeholders and their roles in fostering an environment in which individuals are able to realise and enjoy their rights. On an operational level, these four categories of stakeholders could be classified into two groups depending on the role played: duty-bearers and rights-holders (Ljungman, 2004; Ultvedt, 2004; AWID, 2003; Ife & Fiske, 2006). In his definition, Kofi Annan (1998) talked of the "society's obligations to respond to the inalienable rights of individuals", and declared that the rights-based approach to development empowers rights-holders to "demand justice (development) as a right, not a charity…" (cited in Ljungman, 2004:2).

This classification of stakeholders helps clarify where rights, responsibilities and obligations lie, and provides a basis for bonafide expectations of assistance (Annan, 1998, quoted in Ljungman, 2004:2). Talking about rights and responsibilities, Ife & Fiske (2006:3) argued that discussing rights without, in the same breathe, also talking about responsibilities "is engaging in an incomplete conversation" because there are no rights without responsibilities. Ife & Fiske (2006:3) argue that "It is not enough simply to claim a right, there also needs to be an allocation of responsibility on others to act accordingly". A child is a rights-holder when demanding assistance from his parents, who in this instance are duty-bearers. The child and the parents both become rights-holders when demanding assistance from local institutions which in this case are the duty-bearers. Local institutions and the community are rights-holders when demanding assistance from the national government which in this case is the duty-bearer. And finally the national government becomes a rights-holder when demanding assistance from the international or global community which in this case is the duty-bearer (Slim, 2002; Annan, 1998; Ultvedt, 2004).

The above three themes capture the heart of the rights-based approach to development. They provide a "moral basis (to developing countries and disadvantaged communities) from which to claim international assistance when needed" (Annan, 1998 quoted in Ljungman, 2004:2). They help clarify in simple terms the complicated process of using the rights-based approach to development and place rights and obligations where they belong. We will now continue with the discussion of the rights-based approach with an exploration of the eight rights-based approach principles.

2.15 Fundamental Principles of Human Rights-Based Approach to Development

The rights-based approach principles were derived from the Universal Declaration of Human Rights of 1948 (Ultvedt, 2004). These principles act as both a summary and practical standards which when applied to a development programme will ensure that human rights and freedoms are promoted and respected. These principles are participation and inclusion, universality and indivisibility, accountability and rule of law and equality and non-discrimination.

2.15.1 Participation and Inclusion

The human rights principle of participation could be summarised by the slogan "Nothing about us without us" (Werner, 1998). Each human being has a right to be meaningfully involved in processes that will have outcomes which will affect them regardless of their financial position, race or gender. Realisation of this right takes on two fronts: empowering the populace to meaningfully participate and the creation of an enabling environment that promotes meaningful participation (Werner, 1998; UNDP, 2003; Ultvedt, 2004; AWID, 2002). However, Ife & Tesoriero (2006:151) have cautioned against the perils of participation. To begin with they have noted that the meaning of participation is "difficult to readily understand or identify" because "its meanings are often attached to the many different interests and agendas at play in community life and in political decision making". They have also noted that some forms of participation are hypocritical and as such do not qualify to be referred to as participation at all. These forms of participation have been referred to as "varying degrees of tokenism" (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006:155). Arnstein (1969) in her ladder of citizen participation similarly discusses the varying degrees of levels of participation. Understanding these varying degrees of participation is important as it ensures that only meaningful forms of participation are encouraged and allowed.

Inclusion entails deliberate actions to accommodate the marginalised and voiceless. The need for meaningful participation and inclusion has a direct impact on how programmes are articulated, designed and implemented (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Affirmative actions need to be taken to ensure inclusion. These may, for example, include allocating a specific number of positions to disadvantaged groups in programme committees. The next set of principles to be discussed is Universality and Indivisibility.

2.15.2 Universality and Indivisibility

The human rights principle of universality could be summarised by the slogan 'All human rights for all' (UDHR, 1948; Nango Online, 2006). It emphasises the equality of all human beings and that none should be discriminated against when it comes to the enjoyment of rights. The adoption of a rights-based approach helps to ensure that

programme designers and implementers make an extra effort to locate the voiceless, excluded and marginalised groups in society, and to hear their views (Boothe, 2001).

The human rights principle of indivisibility could be summarised by the phrase 'Violation of one means violation of all' (AWID, 2002). Indeed human rights are understood to be indivisible and interdependent. This understanding forms a major criticism for those who advocate for only economic and civil rights. One right can not be pursued in isolation from the rest and one right can not be pursued to the detriment of another (AWID, 2002; 2003; Boothe, 2001; Ultvedt, 2004). Practically, this entails involving all rights-holders from the beginning of programme conception. In this sense, the rights-based approach brings an important perspective in the fight against poverty by taking a holistic approach (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Slim, 1995).

2.15.3 Accountability and Rule of law

The role and importance of stakeholders was one of the three themes that emerged from the definitions of a rights-based approach to development which was discussed above (Ultvedt, 2004; Slim, 1995). These stakeholders were categorised into two groups: rights-holders and duty-bearers. Identification of rights-holders and duty–bearers at each level is crucial to ensuring that there is no relegation of responsibility by the state and the international community (Ljungman, 2004; AWID, 2002; Ultvedt, 2004; Ife & Fiske, 2006). Indeed, this process should form part and parcel of any poverty eradication programme cycle. Therefore the principle of accountability calls for duty-bearers to be accountable to rights-holders.

The human rights principle of the rule of law brings a new dimension to development work, the legal framework. Rights are inalienable and must be enforced by the rule of law (AWID, 2002; UNDP, 2003; UDHR, 1948). The rights-based approach therefore brings all government branches, the Executive, the Legislature and the Judiciary, and ordinary citizens together as partners in development. No one is above the law and therefore the abuse of office by some influential people should be addressed through the judicial system. This also means that any arbitrary decisions by government should be challenged in the courts of law by the populace (Ife & Fiske, 2006). To this effect,

Boothe (2001:7) concludes that “without a sound legal framework, without an independent and honest judiciary, economic and social development risks collapse”.

Political events in recent years serve as typical examples of the reversibility of development gains if the rule of law is not upheld. Cases in point include the unrest in Kenya following the disputed Presidential and Parliamentary elections of December 2007 (Shan, 2008). Kenya, which was viewed by many as an example of positive economic and social development, was plunged into chaos following the results of the disputed elections. The opposition and its supporters alleged that the Electoral Commission of Kenya was the cause of the unrest because it failed to discharge its duties professionally and by sticking to the constitutional provisions (Shan, 2008). The courts of law which were supposed to arbitrate between the opposing political sides were also accused of being pro-government and as such did not have a higher moral ground to stand on. Following the unrest, billions of dollars were lost in government revenue, property and infrastructure, many people lost their livelihoods and divisions appeared among different tribes (Kilner, 2008; Mynott, 2009). Many people have not yet returned to the displaced homes and lands because of the fear and suspicion that remains following the compromised political settlement between the ruling and the opposition parties.

2.15.4 Equality and Non-discrimination

All human beings are entitled to enjoyment of rights regardless of their race, origins, financial circumstances and gender (UDHR, 1948; UNDP, 2003). The principle of equality enforces a code of conduct in which all human beings must be treated equally. Where this fundamental principle is not consistently applied, it leads to discrimination against some sections of society. There are no grounds that justify such discrimination. The argument here is that whether it is a disability or poverty levels, no one shall be discriminated against on any basis (UNDP, 2003, Ultvedt, 2004).

The need to ensure equality and non-discrimination has direct implications on how poverty eradication programmes are designed and implemented, in particular safety nets. All groups of people within a territory must have an equal share of the economic growth cake. In practical terms, the government should have policies which are

deliberately pro-poor to redistribute economic gains to all in society (UNDP, 2003; AWID, 2003). This approach would put poverty alleviation, and safety nets in particular, on top of the government agenda. However, equality and non-discrimination goes beyond the redistribution of the benefits of national economic growth. It also deals with issues of access (UNDP, 2003). For instance, all children must have equal access to education and health care. No one should be discriminated against on grounds of gender, race or region.

The realisation of these rights calls for responsibility on the part of governments to ensure that, for example, schools, health centres and potable water are provided (AWID, 2002, UNDP, 2003, UDHR, 1948). The government bears the duty of making sure that each child has access to schools and other facilities within reasonable walking distance (Ife & Fiske, 2006). However, access to school does not guarantee education unless enough teachers and teaching materials have been provided. Similarly, access to heath centres does not guarantee medical services unless enough doctors and medication are provided (UNDP, 2003). Therefore, local authorities, national governments and the international community have responsibility to ensure that facilities and services are provided for poor people to access (Ife & Fiske, 2006).

We have so far looked at a brief historical background of the human rights-based approach; some definitions of the rights-based approach and three themes which arose from those definitions namely action, guidance and empowerment, and the eight human rights-based approach principles. We will now look at the advantages of the rights-based approach which have been identified within the wider development discourse. This discussion will begin by looking at the role of human rights in the development and fulfilment of the United Nations Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). Later, we will look at the advantages of using a rights-based approach to poverty eradication programmes.

2.16 Advantages of Using the Rights-Based Approach to Development

Human rights are the basis and engine behind the formulation and achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (UNDP, 2005; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Mapp, 2008). Since the dawn of the millennium, the international community has concentrated a

considerable amount of effort at achieving the Millennium Development Goals. These goals have a broad consensus demonstrated by 189 heads of states and governments signing the United Nations Millennium Declaration, which endorsed the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (Ljungman, 2004; Ultvedt, 2004). With this great momentum, the Millennium Development Goals provide an opportunity for human rights to form part of government agendas. Jeffrey Sachs, a special advisor to the United Nations Secretary General on Millennium Development Goals declared "Human Rights are and should be instruments for the empowerment of the MDG agenda" (Quoted in Ultvedt, 2004:3). Therefore use of the rights-based approach to development does not only achieve a development goal but also ensures that the development endeavour is in harmony and compliant with international human rights conventions and standards.

Lack of monitoring and accountability have been singled out as two major problems in the developing world which act to impede development (NEPAD, 2001). While billions of dollars have been transferred to developing countries, it can be argued that most of it has been lost through corruption or expenditures that were not pro-poor (NEPAD, 2001; Blunt, 2002; LaFrainiere, 2005). In recent years, even the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) debt cancellation initiative has been questioned as to whether it is actually making any impact on the lives of the most disadvantaged poor (Shah, 2001). The rights-based approach is therefore the preferred approach to development because it provides for a platform for monitoring government activities by ordinary people, non-government organisations and the international community, and therefore holding governments accountable (AWID, 2002; Ultvedt, 2004; Boothe, 2001).

The rights-based approach recognises development as a right and not as charity (Annan, 1998; Slim, 1995; Burkey, 1996; Mandela, 2008). Human rights are indivisible; therefore the right to development is indivisible. The recognition of the indivisibility of the right to development is important because it provides a strong basis for commitment to development from both the international as well as national governments (UNDP, 2003). It stresses the urgency needed for action now to bring the most disadvantaged out of the dire poverty in which they are living. On the other hand, it is an instrument which local communities can use to claim assistance both nationally as well as internationally (Annan, 1998; Slim, 2002).

The rights-based approach also attempts to rise above the capitalist and communist economic theory debates. Instead of countries engaging in often unproductive arguments and counter-arguments, the rights-based approach can operate as a unifying force and provide an impetus towards creation of a safe and fair world (UNDP, 2003; 2005; Ultvedt, 2004). The use of the rights-based approach as the engine driving the Millennium Development Goals provides hope for their realisation, unlike other goals such as 'Health for all by the year 2000' which failed miserably because they lacked such a common approach (Hall & Taylor, 2003).

Furthermore, the rights-based approach empowers beneficiaries to become rights-holders. This empowerment is important because traditional development paradigms were often dehumanising and alienating (AWID, 2002; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). The traditional paradigms regarded disadvantaged people as beneficiaries and therefore passive recipients of development initiatives (AWID, 2002; Ultvedt, 2004; UNDP, 2003). A rights-based approach recognises that disadvantaged people are rights-holders and therefore claim-holders. They possess local knowledge and are better placed to determine solutions to their own problems (World Bank, 2006c; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Under this approach, disadvantaged people are recognised as equal partners in development with the rest.

Developing countries have been urged to ensure that their development initiatives and political systems are broad-based with participation from the grassroots (UNDP-HDR, 2004; 2005). It can be argued that traditional development paradigms and political orientations are unable to achieve this. A switch to the rights-based approach provides a platform for participation from the grass-roots. Broader participation may lead to more stable governments and the development agenda would amass the required support from the grass-roots (Minter, 1992; UNDP, 2003; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006).

It is argued that sustainable and productive change does not come from without; it must come from within (Slim, 1995). The continued alienation of disadvantaged people and the practice of regarding them as aid recipients only enforces a dependency syndrome (Minter, 1992). Disadvantaged people become part of a solution when they are meaningfully and actively engaged in the development discourse. This tactical and psychological switch from 'part of the problem' to becoming 'part of the solution'

energises the rights-holders towards change. Indeed, the rights-based approach which allows for active participation of rights-holders in all stages of the programme cycle has the potential to lead to sustained change from within and ultimately to the transformation of whole societies (AWID, 2002; Slim, 1995; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006).

A further advantage of this approach is that analysing poverty through the lens of a rights-based approach provides 'a richer understanding of the different dimensions of poverty' (AWID, 2002:4; OHCHR, 2003). Traditional development paradigms viewed poverty as economic deprivation. It was assumed and advocated that "sound and prudent economic policies" would fix it all (AWID, 2003:6). Half a century down the line with sustained efforts in implementing poverty alleviation programmes, there are still billions of people and whole regions living in deep and deplorable poverty (UNDP-HDR, 2000; 2005). Therefore the rights-based approach creates a new window of hope to redefine poverty and come up with appropriate responses. These responses are based on human rights principles and command the full support of rights-holders and duty-bearers, both nationally and internationally.

It is therefore clear that there are many advantages in the use of a rights-based approach in relation to development in general. In light of the fact that this particular research project is so specific and deals with poverty eradication, it is imperative to discuss the specific advantages of this approach to poverty eradication programmes. In the next section I therefore explore these advantages as they pertain to the social welfare discourse and poverty eradication programmes in particular.

2.17 Advantages of Applying a Rights-Based Approach to Poverty Eradication Programmes

Social safety net programmes are primarily concerned with the alleviation of poverty. Traditional development paradigms defined poverty as a lack of financial resources (OHCHR, 2004; Ultvedt, 2004; Boothe, 2001). The efforts of such approaches to address poverty were shaped by economic theories that had no particular regard for the circumstances affecting disadvantaged people (Minter, 1992; OHCHR, 2004). In many cases, there were no attempts to level the playing field, empowering the disadvantaged groups and creating an environment in which these groups could realise their aspirations

and dreams. More often, the success of these approaches was pegged to time. It was believed that with time the benefits of economic growth would trickle down to all in society.

The rights-based approach defines poverty from a totally different perspective. It looks at poverty as a violation and denial of human rights (AWID, 2002). The realisation that poverty is a denial of human rights provides an impetus for drastic action now because the realisation and enjoyment of human rights can not wait for the 'invisible hand' of the economic markets. Use of the rights-based approach therefore accords the urgency for commitment and action that poverty eradication programmes require.

Poverty alleviation is the main agenda for the Millennium Development Goals. The international community has committed itself to halve the number of the poor, currently at 2.6 billion world-wide by 2015 (UNDP, 2003). Different institutions have identified safety nets as one of the major strategies for achieving this goal (UNECA, 2005; Ravalion, 2003). Traditional safety net programmes were modelled on neo-liberal economic policies derived from romanticised economic theory. It is therefore not surprising that these safety net programmes have often been ineffective and consequently the number of the poor has increased in the developing world (UNDP, 2003).

Human rights are the engine that is propelling the Millennium Development Goals agenda. It is therefore argued that safety net programmes which form part of the Millennium Development Goals poverty alleviation strategy have to be modelled on the rights-based development paradigm. In this way, their focus will no longer be to simply meet financial and material needs, but rather on actually doing away with structures of oppression (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). No government working in isolation would be able to achieve such meaningful development. We are living in the days of increased multinational corporations and an international society which has tremendous ability to determine and affect national government agendas (AWID, 2003). A rights-based approach is the language of the international community in the millennium (Ultvedt, 2004; UNDP, 2005). Therefore taking advantage of the current environment and this momentum, poverty eradication programmes have to speak and be empowered by this

same language. In so doing, there will be synergies between and among poverty eradication programmes, states and the international community.

Financing poverty eradication programmes has been one of the major challenges for national governments in developing countries (World Bank, 2006b). Soft budget lines in health, education and social services have been disproportionately targeted each time a need arises to reduce government expenditure (Boothe, 2001). The current consensus and impetus to achieve the Millennium Development Goals, has brought an unprecedented opportunity to access financing at the international level. Indeed, the rights-based approach stresses building networks and sharing of responsibilities. Therefore, poverty eradication programmes that reflect principles of human rights in their design and implementation stand to benefit from financing arrangements from International Financial Institutions and the international community.

The success of poverty eradication programmes ultimately depend on their ability to bring about the transformation of societies (Slim, 1995). As already discussed elsewhere, transformation can be seen as a process that comes about when rights-holders are participating in all stages of programme design and implementation (AWID, 2002). Use of the rights-based approach to design and implement poverty eradication programmes provides the platform for meaningful engagement and participation by rights-holders (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Mapp, 2008).

The recognition of development as a right and not a charity also goes a long way to changing the image of poverty eradication programmes. In many ways, disadvantaged and marginalized people have been treated as second class citizens who are at the mercy of society (AWID, 2002; 2003). With the recognition of development as a right, comes increased awareness by governments and the international community that disadvantaged and marginalized groups are rights-holders and not mere beneficiaries of some government or non-government organisation's charitable actions. This change also places poverty eradication programmes as a priority on government agendas. In instances where neglect and de-prioritisation of poverty eradication programmes continue, the rights-based approach provides a basis for holding the government and the international community accountable.

Lastly, the rights-based approach to development can be seen as a powerful tool for participatory monitoring and evaluation. Use of this approach to design and implement poverty eradication programmes provides readily available monitoring and evaluation tools that can form part of actual programme design and implementation (Coady, 2004; UNDP, 2003). Its grounding in human rights principles ensures that the rights-holders are at the centre of such monitoring and evaluation exercises. It also provides tools for a broader analysis of programme results to understand what the results mean to different groups of rights-holders. This is often not possible with other approaches whose analysis uses abstract concepts like economic efficiency and growth (AWID, 2003). Such approaches often have no capacity to zero-in and see what the results mean to particular groups of rights-holders like the 'girl-child', female-headed households and people living with a disability.

2.18 Conclusion

In this chapter we have explored the development landscape. We started with looking at development as a problematic concept, then provided a brief historical overview of development and looked at theories and definitions of development. We explored Trujillo's (2001) conception of development based on micro and macro level economic factors. We also explored Burkey's (1996) classification of development, which provides three paradigms, namely capitalism, socialism and alternative development, where the last of these developed in response to the shortfalls of both capitalism and socialism. In the process, we were introduced to various concepts that required further discussion. We therefore explored the concept of poverty and some of the controversies in the poverty alleviation discourse which are directly relevant to this project. Most of these controversies centred on the design and implementation of social welfare programmes. We have finished this chapter with a detailed discussion of the human rights-based approach and its comparative advantages. I will now present the Methodology used in this research project in the following chapter.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

Social Justice is the underpinning framework in social work and community development (Mapp, 2008; Kenny, 2007). Social justice is a concept that presents both a means and an end (Mapp, 2008). As a means, social justice aims to deal with human suffering using approaches that will uphold and foster equality and empowerment (Kenny, 2007). Among approaches that make social justice a means, are theories and paradigms that look at social problems from a human rights perspective. A human rights perspective is a lens for analysing and explaining disadvantage using key human rights concepts, documents and covenants (Mapp, 2008). Any violation of such provisions as contained in these documents and covenants is regarded as a violation of human rights which manifests itself as social injustice. Principle of these documents is the United Nations Declaration on Human Rights (UNDHR) which was ratified by heads of states and governments in 1948 (Mapp, 2008; Ultvedt, 2004).

As an end, social justice aims to bring about a fair and just society for all humans regardless of gender, race, age, economic status or any other qualifying factor (Mapp, 2008; Ife & Fiske, 2006; Kenny, 2007). According to Kenny (2007:23) a "society in which groups of people are oppressed, excluded or disadvantaged and in which there is inequality of power and resources, is one where social justice is denied". Kenny (2007:23) further argues that social justice "expresses the values of equity and fairness". In this regard, social justice is concerned with four major themes, namely equal distribution of the economic cake, equality of rights, fairness and equality in accessing services, and levelling the playing field to create equal opportunities for meaningful participation at all levels of society (Kenny, 2007). It would therefore be argued that social justice empowers individuals and societies to deal with structural, systemic and personal disadvantage in order to realise and enjoy their human rights (Mayo, 2002; Slim, 1995).

The realisation and enjoyment of human rights is at the heart of the social justice framework (Kenny, 2007). The social justice framework seeks to respond and address causes of disadvantage, marginality, exclusion and oppression (Kenny, 2007). According to Wells (1940:91), who is credited with articulating the foundation of what is known as the Human Rights Charter,

> Every man is a joint inheritor of all the natural resources and of the powers, inventions and possibilities accumulated by our forerunners. He is entitled, within the measure of these resources and without distinction of race, colour or professed beliefs or opinions, to the nourishment, covering and medical care needed to realise his full possibilities of physical and mental development from birth to death. Notwithstanding the various and unequal qualities of individuals, all men shall be deemed absolutely equal in the eyes of the law, equally important in social life and equally entitled to the respect of their fellow-men.

It is the goal of social justice to see all human beings enjoy common humanness. Kenny (2007:25), making reference to Ife (2004:84), argued that, as with social justice, human rights are also "concerned with establishing our common humanity". This premise that both social justice and human rights are concerned with securing and promoting a shared common humanness makes them inseparable. Indeed Ife & Tesoriero (2006:58) also point to this inseparable nature of rights and social justice. They argue that "Social justice implies some view of fairness or equity, and the principles on which notions of fairness or equity are based generally involve some reference to rights". Ife & Tesoriero (2006:58) therefore conclude their argument by saying that "rights are fundamental to any understanding of social justice". Thus social justice uses international human rights conventions as references and standards to measure the extent of disadvantage and progress (Kenny, 2007; Mapp, 2008). At the same time, the enjoyment and realisation of human rights for all peoples is the goal of social justice.

The field work component of this project sought to engage the most disadvantaged and marginalized from two communities in rural Malawi to analyse their disadvantage from a human rights perspective. In particular, this project used a qualitative research framework and the Participatory Action Research paradigm to provide the principles and the methodological process for the conduct of the research. The human rights framework was also the lens and platform that was used to engage, analyse and interpret the findings. I will examine the Participatory Action Research paradigm in detail in this chapter. I will also explain the theoretical underpinnings for this project and examine the reasons that influenced my choice for qualitative over quantitative research frameworks. Its worthy mentioning here that while the overarching framework for my

research is a qualitative one, there are other sections of the project that have used methodology from the quantitative research framework. I will discuss this point later in the chapter. The human rights framework and the rights-based approach in particular have been covered comprehensively in the Literature Review Chapter. However, I will be making reference to some of its underpinning tenets in this chapter.

3.1 The Theoretical Framework

The study used human rights as its overarching theoretical framework. However, specific methods which fall within the human rights framework were applied at different stages and processes of this research project. I will now discuss the human rights as the overarching framework and then later will discuss the specific methods.

3.2 Human Rights – The Overarching Framework

The study used the rights-based approach (OHCHR, 2006; Ultvedt, 2004; UNDP, 2003) both as a methodological guide and as a theoretical framework of analysis. The conduct of the entire field research was rooted in the human rights framework. At the heart of the rights-based approach is the valuing of local knowledge, human experiences and the creation of a platform upon which people can meaningfully participate in analysing issues affecting them and take a leading role in developing initiatives aimed at their general wellbeing (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; AWID, 2002; Ultvedt, 2004). Werner (1998) summarised these notions with the slogan ‘Nothing about us without us’.

Ife & Tesoriero (2006:121) discuss the ideas of “valuing local knowledge, valuing local culture, valuing local resources, valuing local skills and valuing local processes” in their discussion of change from below. In this regard, Ife & Tesoriero (2006) have argued that the community members themselves are the experts and so the researcher should listen to and learn from them. Ife & Tesoriero (2006:122) have summarised this principle by the phrase “The community knows best”. In keeping with this principle, this project sought to engage disadvantaged and marginalised groups from two rural communities in Malawi to listen and learn from them (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Mitlin, 2000).

With a human rights-based approach as the overarching methodological framework, more specific methodological orientations were considered. I will now firstly discuss the qualitative and quantitative research frameworks and then focus on Participatory Action Research as a methodology which I used in the field study component. This will be followed by a discussion of what influenced my choice of the qualitative research framework.

3.3 The Quantitative Versus Qualitative Research Framework

For several decades, there has been debate among researchers as to which of the broad research frameworks, qualitative or quantitative, is superior (Humphries, 2008; Thomas, 2008). At various times, one framework has claimed victory over the other. For instance, Levine wrote in 1993 "Quantitative social science," which is called the "real social science," faced opposition but it "won the battle" (cited in Neuman, 2006:13). A decade later, Denzin & Lincoln (2003a) argued that "qualitative research expanded greatly and is rapidly displacing outdated quantitative research" (Neuman, 2006:13). It is not the intention of this thesis to explore the controversies in this debate in great detail and proclaim the supremacy of one over the other. However, I will briefly explore both quantitative and qualitative research frameworks and then reflect on what influenced my choice for the methods used in different sections of the project. In the next section I explore some key features of each research framework, contrast them and then later highlight current trends where a considerable number of researchers have argued that aspects of the two could successfully be used in the same study.

Quantitative research is said to be more concerned with measurable, objective facts which are derived by employing scientific or statistical methods (Neuman, 2006; Humphries, 2008). This is contrasted to qualitative research which is more concerned with constructing social reality and providing the participants with an opportunity to interpret their every day experiences (Neuman, 2006). This is achieved by focusing on interactive processes, events and, as Sarantakos (2005) discusses, "capturing the world in action" (cited in Neuman, 2006:13). Quantitative research is also concerned with reliability of data. In contrast, qualitative research is more concerned with the authenticity of the data collected (Neuman, 2006).

The two research frameworks also differ in that quantitative research separates theory from data, the researcher from the research participants and from their subjective reality. Quantitative research is also said to be independent of context. This is different from qualitative research where theory and data are fused, the researcher is involved with the participants and the research itself is situationally constrained (Humphries, 2008). Other writers have described this interaction between the researcher and the participants in quantitative research as studying reality from outside while seeing qualitative research as studying reality from inside (Humphries, 2008; Neuman, 2006).

The last point of difference that I would like to talk about is the mode of data analysis and the presentation of findings. Quantitative research analyses data only after collection and usually presents it in the form of statistics, tables and graphs (Humphries, 2008). Qualitative research, on the other hand, analyses data during and after collection and tends to use thematic analyses. The presentation of qualitative data is often in a form of narratives and accounts of peoples' lived experiences (Neuman, 2006). Table 1 below summarises these and other differences between quantitative and qualitative research approaches.

Table 1: Differences between Quantitative and Qualitative Research Frameworks

Quantitative	**Qualitative**
Measure objective facts	Construct social reality, cultural meaning
Focus on variables	Focus on interactive processes, events
Studies reality from outside	Studies reality from inside
Employs a fixed research design	Employs a flexible research design
Captures a still picture of the world	Captures the world in action
Reliability is key	Authenticity is key
Value free	Values are present and explicit
Theory and data are separate	Theory and data are fused
Analyses data only after collection	Analyses data during and after collection
Chooses methods before the study	Chooses methods before and during study
Independent of context	Situationally constrained

Many cases, subjects	Few cases, subjects
Statistical analysis	Thematic analysis
Researcher is detached	Researcher is involved
Uses closed questions	Uses open methods of data collection
Employs scientific/statistical methods	Employs naturalistic methods

Sources: Adapted from Humphries, 2008:7 and Neuman, 2006:13

In spite of these differences between quantitative and qualitative research, some researchers have argued that each brings a set of strengths which could be harnessed and as such they could be considered complementary in a number of ways. Neuman (2006:14) pointed out that "by understanding both approaches, you will know about a range of research and can use both in complementary ways". Oakley, a feminist researcher and proponent of the qualitative research framework, while remaining suspicious about quantitative methods wrote:

> As to quantitative research more generally, the very charting of women's oppression required quantification surely: we needed figures for women's schooling and education vis-à-vis that of men, the distribution and work of women in the paid and unpaid labour markets, women's earnings, the burden of health problems and so forth, in order to say to what extent the situations of men and women were (are) structurally differentiated" (cited in Humphries, 2008:9).

In an example directly relevant to this project, Barahona & Levy (2002) argue that statistical (quantitative) principles and participatory (qualitative) principles could be used successfully to generate national statistics. Their assertion is based on a study that was conducted in Malawi during the 1999 – 2002 period while working on the Targeted Input Programme (TIP) implemented by the government of Malawi and its donor partners. Barahona & Levy (2002:1) argue that

> If PRA [Participatory Rural Appraisal] is combined with statistical principles (including probability-based sampling and standardization), it can produce total population statistics and estimates of proportion of households with certain characteristics (e.g. poverty).

This is a further indication that the schism between quantitative and qualitative research frameworks is being bridged and research can be designed to get the best of both worlds.

Another researcher who also discusses the integration of quantitative and qualitative methods is Thomas (2008). Thomas (2008:280) argues that with increased integration between disciplines and research methodologies comes a new research framework which he calls 'qual-quant'. Thomas (2008) follows the debate that has tried to highlight the supremacy of one research framework over the other. I will now briefly explore this debate as it is relevant to this project. This debate highlights how the frustrations of developing nations and marginalised people with the prevalent definitions of development and the methods proposed to end poverty have propelled researchers and development practitioners to explore new ways of framing poverty and development. Of particular interest for this research is how broadening the conception of development and poverty led to an integration of disciplines and research methodologies which otherwise would have remained independent.

Thomas (2008) has argued that increased frustration with the lack of development in the last half of the century has generated criticism with the ways in which development has been defined. How poverty is defined determines the approaches that may be used to address it (Slim, 2002; Ohiorhenuan, 2002). Critics of the proposed approaches to end poverty pointed out that the way development was defined by these earlier theorists was often too narrow (Slim, 2002). There was therefore a need to broaden the definition of development to make it more inclusive by linking it to poverty (Ohiorhenuan, 2002). Taking into consideration the multi-dimensional nature of poverty, as was seen in the Literature Review Chapter and elsewhere, the emergent definitions of development were increasingly becoming multi-disciplinary. These definitions tried to incorporate other dimensions such as human capabilities and well-being into the concept of development. However as the years went by the claimed development was nowhere in sight. This failure was attributed in part to a lack of cohesiveness and integration among the multiple social science disciplines which were used to define development (Thomas, 2008; Kanbur, 2002; Hulme & Toye, 2006).

This situation then led to a proposal from other development practitioners to shift from multi-disciplinary approaches to inter-disciplinary approaches. According to Sumner & Tribe (2008a:753) this shift denoted an "increasing level of integration between the constituent sciences". Under the inter-disciplinary banner, researchers claimed to deeply integrate approaches and research methods from several disciplines "from the beginning, through the analysis until the final recommendations for policy" (Thomas, 2008:6). Sumner & Tribe (2008a) also point to another higher level of integration which is not discussed by Thomas (2008). This has been called trans-disciplinarity. Trans-disciplinarity has been defined as "complete integration of two or more disciplines with the possibility of forming a new discipline" (Sumner & Tribe, 2008a:753). Indeed this increased integration saw the emergence of a new discipline in the 1950s, which came to known as Development Studies (Thomas, 2008; Sumner & Tribe, 2008b).

Of late, there has been a new way of defining and measuring well-being and poverty. This new approach has been called 'cross-disciplinary' (Hulme & Toye, 2006). This has been in an attempt to avoid the limitations of inter-disciplinary and trans-disciplinary approaches which were criticized for still being overly narrow and failing to take into consideration the complexities of development and the dynamicity of poverty (Harriss, 2002). Cross-disciplinary, as defined by Kanbur (2002:483), is the "generic term to mean any analysis or policy recommendation that is based substantively on the analysis and methods of more than one discipline". Sumner & Tribe (2008a:753) have defined cross-disciplinary as a "generic term meaning any kind of mixing of disciplines". The emergence of such strong integration of disciplines and research methodologies from the qualitative and quantitative research frameworks has led to some writers describing it as a 'Qual-Quant' approach (Thomas, 2008:280). Indeed Thomas (2008:284) concludes his discourse on the greater possibilities this integration has brought by arguing that:

> Conceptual broadening of poverty has affected and in turn been affected by the dialogue between disciplines and methodologies. Whereas the interaction between disciplines has progressed from 'multi-disciplinarity' to 'inter-disciplinarity' and, of late, 'cross-disciplinarity', bridges between methodologies have been built, making the classical dichotomous divide into qualitative and quantitative somewhat blurred.

Considering the comparative advantages of 'qual-quant' (Thomas, 2008:280), the current research, while being informed and guided by the qualitative research framework, used some methods from the 'quantitative world'. I used quantitative analysis where I wanted to produce and present statistical data. For instance, a comparison of educational attainment for the participants in the focus group discussion meetings was presented as bar graph. Another example of the place where quantitative analysis was used is when conducting poverty alleviation document analysis. Here my major concern was to compare leakage levels statistically. The results have been presented as percentages. In this regard quantitative analysis has been used within the qualitative research framework (Humphries, 2008; Neuman, 2006).

3.4 A Qualitative Approach

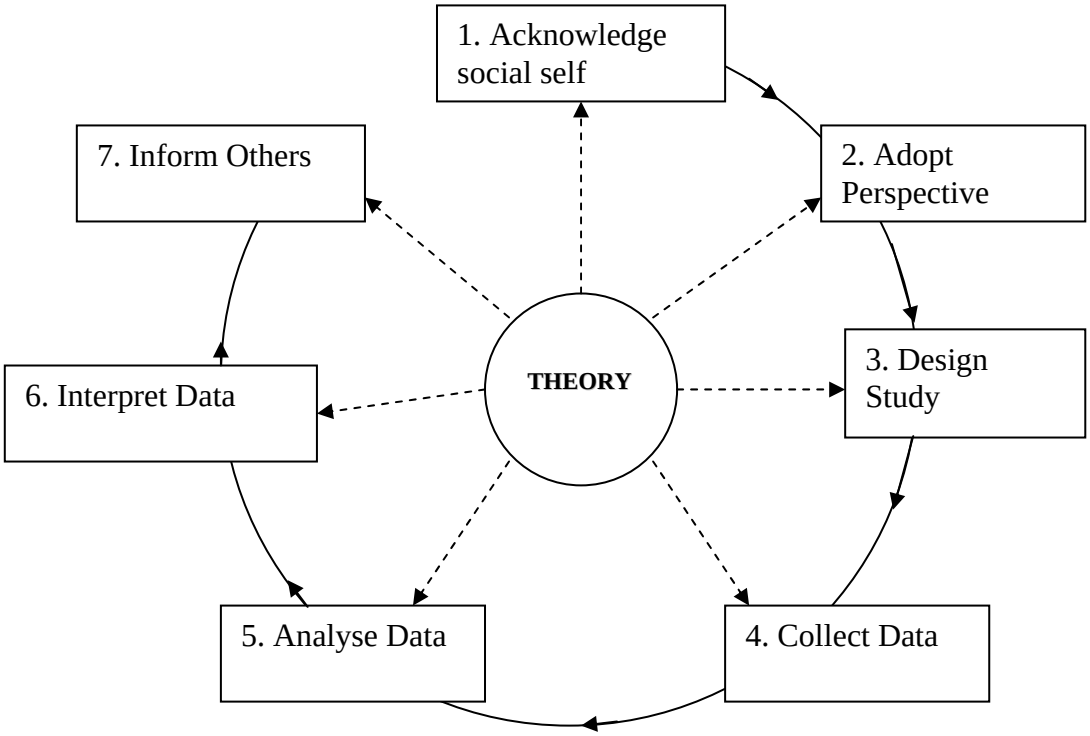
My choice for qualitative research approaches was influenced by the need to engage with the most disadvantaged and to generate knowledge in a non-closed manner (Neuman, 2006; Humphries, 2008). This is congruent with the philosophy of the qualitative research framework which also provides a range of methodologies compatible with this philosophy (Humphries, 2008). Rather than being predominantly concerned with figures and quantities, this project was more exploratory in nature (Petersen, 2006; Humphries, 2008; Neuman, 2006), in that I did not know what to expect from the participants (Neuman, 2006). Rather than focusing on testing design models which have been suggested by development practitioners, this project set out to engage with the most disadvantaged groups to find out what their views were on issues of poverty and how they thought it could be eradicated (Serr, 2004; Matlin, 2000). The project sought to engage the participants to hear their stories, ideas and to capture the richness of their everyday lived experiences. Matlin (2000:1) has called this approach 'Learning from the experts'.

One of the principles of the qualitative research framework is to employ a flexible research design (Humphries, 2008). This allows for a continued process of reflection by the researcher, and for making changes to the design and methodologies employed as data collection progresses (Humphries, 2008; Neuman, 2006). As mentioned in the introduction chapter, the participants in their capacity as 'experts of their lived experiences' changed the topic to talk about how to eradicate poverty rather than simply

alleviate it, which was the initial focus of this research project. As argued above, this was in line with the tenets of a qualitative research framework and in particular Participatory Action Research which is discussed below. The participants positively used their influence to change the direction of the discussions and to focus on their pressing concerns (Humphries, 2008; Thomas, 2008; Serr, 2004).

A qualitative research framework was also preferred because of its process steps (refer to diagram 2 below). While both quantitative and qualitative researches as discussed by Neuman (2006) can be presented as a seven step model, they substantially differ in the first and second steps. I will briefly contrast quantitative and qualitative models based on these first two steps and then highlight the congruence of the qualitative model's steps to the actual steps in my research project. Quantitative research begins with selection of a topic. By contrast, qualitative research starts by acknowledging the social self. Acknowledgement of the social self was crucial for me in my research because of the earlier work I completed with the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project. I brought that experience with me to this study. The other reason why acknowledgement of the social self was important for me is because of my personal background as briefly discussed below. The second step in the qualitative research framework is the adoption of a perspective. By contrast, quantitative research framework has the generation of the 'focus question' as its second step (Neuman, 2006). Adoption of a perspective to inform my study was in some respects as important as the results themselves. I am committed to the human rights framework both as a methodological guide and a tool of analysis for the data. Below are the steps in the qualitative research process. These are the very steps that my research went through as discussed above and elsewhere.

Diagram 2: Steps in the Qualitative Research Process



Source: Neuman, 2006, 15.

Lastly, Ife & Tesoriero (2006) have argued that participative methodologies such as participatory action research place more emphasis on the processes rather than the results. They have also argued that any one concerned with bringing about a fair and just society should have a firm grounding in the human rights framework as the framework informing their practice (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). In qualitative research the values of the researcher are present and explicit (Neuman, 2006). This is not possible with the quantitative research framework which claims to be value free and that the researcher is detached from reality (Humphries, 2008; Neuman, 2006).

My firm belief in the human rights framework is grounded in my personal experiences as someone from the developing world. Born and raised in an aid-recipient country, I have seen and experienced the evils and hypocrisy of failed economic policies and empty summit communiqués. In such experiences was born the desire to empower the most disadvantaged and to be a megaphone for the faint and exhausted voices of the vulnerable. Therefore a qualitative research framework and a human rights approach were congruent with my personal philosophy. Indeed as Ife & Fiske (2006:12) have

argued “a human rights approach offers a clear, comprehensive and practical framework for guiding one’s practice”.

Within a qualitative approach, capturing the views of the most disadvantaged and learning from the experts, the people living in poverty (Matlin, 2000), was at the heart of this project. Such being the nature of this research, Participatory Action Research was chosen as a specific method because it allows for maximum interaction between the researcher and the participants (Neuman, 2006; Humphries, 2008). This was in line with my goal – to maximally engage with the most disadvantaged. I will now outline briefly the central tenets of Participatory Action Research and discuss its inherent advantages which aided the cause of my project. As argued elsewhere, the principles guiding Participatory Action Research sit very well with a human rights framework (Humphries, 2006). Cassano & Dunlop (2005) have discussed Participatory Action Research in great detail and have nicely demonstrated how its tenets are congruent to the principles of the rights-based approach. They have also drawn parallels between Participatory Action Research and social work processes and outcomes. I will therefore draw on their analysis in my discussion of Participatory Action Research.

3.5 Participatory Action Research

Defining Participatory Action Research begins with understanding Action Research (AR). I will therefore begin by examining Action Research and then move to discuss Participatory Action Research.

3.5.1 Action Research

Action Research has been defined as a particular research approach concerned with “engagement with the social world and empowerment for relatively powerless people…(and) the changes that take place in the course of the research are bound to be in the interests of ‘the researched’ ” (Humphries, 2008:69). Humphries (2008:69) further explains that action research has an explicit goal of changing the “life chances of disadvantaged groups, and an underlying principle of the approach is not merely to understand the world, but to change it”. Neuman (2006:28) has defined action research as “applied research that treats knowledge as a form of power and abolishes the line

between research and social action". Neuman (2006:28) has further explained that action research "focuses on power with a goal of empowerment; research seeks to raise consciousness or increase awareness; and research is tied directly to political action". Lastly, Neuman (2006:28) also noted that action researchers hold an assumption that the ordinary people they work with "can become aware of conditions and learn to take actions that can bring about improvement".

Ife & Tesoriero (2006) have also defined action research. Their definition is particularly important for this research because they have clearly shown the relationship between Action Research and Participatory Action Research. Action Research has been defined as "where the research is actually undertaken by a program of action, trying both to understand the world and change the world at the same time" (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006:309). This has been contrasted with collaborative research which "is not done by a single researcher looking at a community, but is a cooperative exercise involving all people concerned in designing the project, gathering data and implementation" (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006:309). Collaborative research as Ife & Tesoriero (2006) argue involves collaboration and a two way construction of knowledge between the researcher and the researched community. Ife & Tesoriero (2006:309) have described this process as a "collaborative dialogical process of education". It is the combination of action and collaborative research that "produces an approach in research that has been termed participatory action research" (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006:309).

It follows then that Participatory Action Research has all the benefits of both Action and Collaborative Research. As it will be seen further below, Participatory Action Research is said to involve all the research participants from "designing the project, gathering data and implementation" (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006:309). The research participants are involved in defining the research question, designing how various procedures in the research process should happen and they equally own the results (Humphries, 2008). In fact, the relationship between the researcher and the participants is that of equal partners in development (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Humphries, 2008; Neuman, 2006; Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). This relationship will be further discussed later.

The above description of Participatory Action Research represents the ideal scenario. In reality there are, however, often some limitations to the extent and level of involvement by participants in all the processes of such research projects. The current project encountered some of these limitations which will be discussed later. For now, we will look at the history of Participatory Action Research and then later I will provide its underpinning principles.

3.6 Historical Overview

Participatory Action Research originated from Asia and the developing world in the early 1960s (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). It later made its way slowly into Europe and North America. Other writers have traced the emergence of Participatory Action Research to the work of Paulo Freire who "promoted the 'pedagogy of the oppressed' in Latin America, influencing what eventually became participatory action research (PAR)" (Thomas, 2008:3). Thomas (2008:3) has argued that Participatory Action Research found its way into the mainstream development discourse owing greatly to the work of Robert Chambers who "promoted a scathing criticism of the 'rural development tourism of urban based powerful experts". Thomas (2008:3) further explains that it was this critique that lay the foundation of what later evolved into Participatory Action Research. He explains:

> The critique was transformed into concrete tools and methodologies, initially in the form of rapid rural appraisal (RRA) and subsequently as participatory rural appraisal (PRA). The emphasis of the new approach was on active engagement of the experts (scientists, development professionals) with the lay people (farmers, poor villagers), involving a shift of power from the former to the latter.

This evolution is said to have continued as years passed by. From Participatory Rural Appraisal came Participatory Learning and Action (PLA) which later evolved into Participatory Poverty Assessment (PPA) before evolving further into what we now call Participatory Action Research (Thomas, 2008).

3.7 The Principles of Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research has been described as a "system for knowledge production in which participants have a role in setting the agenda for the research, participating in the data gathering and analysis and controlling the use of outcomes" (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005:2). In this regard, and as discussed above, the participants are equal partners with the researcher in the production of knowledge, setting the research agenda and analysing the findings (Thomas, 2008; Humphries, 2008; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). This project provided an opportunity to experience, to some extent, the reality of the above mentioned principle of Participatory Action Research. As explained in the Introduction Chapter for instance, the original title of this research project was "The design and implementation of effective poverty alleviation programmes: The rights-based approach". However, this was changed by the participants who argued that they are tired of programmes that claim to alleviate their poverty. They argued that it has been decades since poverty alleviation has been on government and donor community agendas and that it was time now to be talking about poverty eradication. Poverty eradication therefore became the new focus of the discussions in all the meetings.

The key principle of Participatory Action Research is working in bottom-up ways with grassroots groups to help them meet their needs and aspirations (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006) and so break down some of the traditional barriers between 'expert researcher' and the 'researched' (Neuman, 2006; Thomas, 2008; Humphries, 2008; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). With recent poverty statistics stacked against the wisdom of the so called 'expert researchers', it was really imperative that this barrier should be broken down. Since my research sought to engage with the disadvantaged and hear their views as equal partners in development, Participatory Action Research was best suited to accomplish this goal. According to Cassano & Dunlop (2005) Participatory Action Research is concerned with three areas in its quest for a fair and just society for everyone: empowerment of the disadvantaged groups, the process for conducting research and the outcomes of that research. I will now discuss the above three points in succession.

3.7.1 Empowerment of the Disadvantaged Groups

The theme of empowerment of the most disadvantaged groups features highly in development and poverty literature (AWID, 2002; 2003; UNDP, 2005; Cassano & Dunlop, 2005; Ife & Fiske, 2006). According to Kenny (2007:163) empowerment refers to "the ways that power relationships are changed in the interests of disadvantaged, oppressed or exploited groups". Ife & Tesoriero, (2006:65) have pointed out that "empowerment aims to increase the power of the disadvantaged". Different authors have argued that if poverty is going to be eradicated then the most disadvantaged groups should be empowered to determine their own future (AWID, 2003; Ultvedt, 2004; Slim, 1995). Ife & Tesoriero (2006) have taken this concept further and argued for self determination and self reliance among the disadvantaged groups. As mentioned earlier in the literature review, the United Nations Commission for Human Rights (2005) has also been arguing in the last decade that the only way poverty could be eradicated would be by empowering the disadvantaged groups to become masters of their own development. Specifically, by advocating for a rights-based approach, the United Nations Commission for Human Rights recognized that empowerment is a human right. It therefore advocated for the rights-based approach in all of United Nations programmes because it carries an empowerment theme.

Ife & Tesoriero (2006) have argued that not allowing the disadvantaged groups to be self reliant is disempowering. This view has been shared by other authors and development practitioners (Chinsinga, 2003a; Ultvedt, 2004; UNDP-HDR, 2005). This project sought to give a voice to the voiceless thereby empowering them to speak for themselves. The rights-based approach as a research framework provided for this opportunity and Participatory Action Research provided the tools and platform for engaging the most disadvantaged groups.

3.7.2 The Process

Participatory Action Research is also concerned with the process involved in conducting research. In particular, Participatory Action Research advocates for equal participation of all concerned stakeholders in the research process (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005; Humphries, 2008). This method recognizes both the researcher and the participants as

experts in their own right (Humphries, 2008; Neuman, 2006) and therefore allows for a formation of a subject/subject relationship between the researcher and the participants as opposed to the traditional subject/object or 'researcher/researched' relationships prevalent in other research paradigms (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005; Neuman, 2006; Humphries, 2008). It is this partnership that is at the heart of the Participatory Action Research process. Participatory Action Research allows for meaningful interaction between the researcher and the research participants. In this interactive process, the researcher brings to the community a wealth of knowledge and the community members use some of that knowledge to shed light on and interpret their lived experiences. It can be said that the researcher and the research participants enter into a partnership of collaboration to produce knowledge. This partnership levels the playing field to allow for genuine engagement of the participants in the research processes as experts of their lived experiences.

This study sought to engage disadvantaged and marginalised groups from two rural communities in Malawi. The participants in the focus group discussion meetings were recognised and treated as experts of their lived experiences and were allowed to articulate their circumstances using human rights principles. The full step by step process of how the focus group discussion meetings were conducted has been described in a later section.

3.7.3 The Outcomes

The goal of this project was to answer the question – how do you design and implement poverty eradication programmes, using the rights-based approach, which are both effective in eradicating poverty and at the same time uphold fundamental human rights. However, Cassano & Dunlop (2005) have cautioned that emergent processes of "collaboration and dialogue that empower, motivate, increase self-esteem and develop community solidarity" should take pre-eminence over outcomes and results (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005; Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). Throughout my field study, I was mindful of the fact that the process of engaging the most disadvantaged groups was at least as important as the outcomes themselves.

Participatory Action Research is concerned with co-construction of knowledge (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005) and indeed, this was one of the aims of this research project. Having identified the eight human rights principles, I sought to take this knowledge with me to these most disadvantaged groups, and together as equal partners, co-construct knowledge on how effective poverty eradication programmes could be designed and implemented from a human rights perspective. This is in line with what Ife & Tesoriero (2006:309) have argued by noting that when all people concerned with a research project are involved in "designing the project, gathering data and implementation", it becomes a "shared project which does not privilege the researcher over the researched and does not see the flow of knowledge as one way (from researched to researcher), but rather sees it as a dialogical process of education".

In the case of the current study, the participants were asked to define poverty at the beginning of the meetings and then given information on the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles. They were then given the space to engage with this information. This was the climax of the focus group discussion meetings. Subsequently, they were asked to articulate several issues relating to their circumstances. The depth of their articulation and understanding of their circumstances, and their resolve to take an initiative to influence and effect changes when they go back to their villages indicated that these participants did not just feedback what they thought I was interested in hearing from them. While I came away with the data from the focus group discussion meetings, the participants' positive comments on their feedback form indicated that these participants went away with raised awareness and consciousness. This win/win scenario highlights the power of Participatory Action Research process as described by Cassano & Dunlop (2005). There are however some limitations associated with the Participatory Action Research process. I will now explore these limitations.

3.8 Limitations of Participatory Action Research

Participatory Action Research is said to involve participants in all the processes of the research from research design to use of the results (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). However, in many cases this can not occur because of several limiting factors. This was also the case with the current project. As a PhD project, the current research project included a preparation phase in which I reviewed literature and worked on the research

proposal which was subsequently approved by the James Cook University Graduate Research School. This phase was therefore beyond the involvement of the research participants. The participants were however involved in the field component which was conducted in Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas in rural Malawi. This means that by the time I was ready to engage in the field research, I already had the research goal and question formulated. The actual questions which the participants were to discuss in the focus group discussion meetings had already been tentatively decided and approved by the James Cook University Human Ethics Committee. However, when I went to conduct the focus group discussion meetings in the field, the involvement of the research participants was optimised. For instance, as discussed in the introduction chapter and elsewhere, the participants changed the focus of this research from poverty alleviation to poverty eradication. The participants were further involved in setting up the focus group discussion meeting venues, co-facilitating some sessions; and leading and feeding back discussions from subgroups. Data translation, coding and analysis and thesis writing was done by this researcher without the involvement of the participants. It is however envisioned that debriefing sessions will be conducted with the participants following which they will be instrumental in spreading the research findings and recommendations.

3.9 Challenges of Participatory Action Research

Cassano & Dunlop (2005), along with many other writers, highlight some further challenges with the Participatory Action Research paradigm (Reason, 1994; Humphries, 2008). Firstly, negotiating and establishing a relationship between the researcher and the community members can be a challenge (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). The community members who are the insiders may see the researcher as an outsider. They may not be willing to collaborate and share their knowledge with the researcher who is the outsider. Due to their collective lived experiences, the community members have access to the community's "hidden transcripts" (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005:3) which may not be known to the researcher or to which the researcher may only have limited access. Other writers refer to this phenomenon as the contrast between 'emic/etic' perspectives (Thomas, 2008). This could have been a real challenge for me because in all the focus group discussion meetings the participants were drawing on cultural, historical and spiritual perspectives which could have been completely foreign to an outsider. This

could easily lead to misunderstanding and misinterpretation of the discussions. Some of these challenges were mitigated as I have spent almost half of my life so far in the district where this research took place. I was born there and grew up there. My first and second jobs after graduating from college were in this same district. In both positions, I worked with these same communities and some of the leaders although I can not claim to be a complete insider.

Another challenge associated with the Participatory Action Research process, is the level of suspicion that may exist. The participants may be sceptical of the researcher's intentions and motives. This may lead to a power struggle between the researcher and the community participants (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). Stoecker (1999) cited in Neuman (2006:28) noted that "grassroots participants often fear that professional researchers will use findings only to enhance their own careers". I recognised this possibility and therefore I took time from the beginning to explain the goal of the study and its methodology. The local leadership had been briefed about the goal and aims of the study and had been given all the necessary documentation. The participants were fully involved in the field component of the research process and they were a part of the decisions that were made. Their views were seriously taken into consideration. Further, trust from the participants had been won by the fact that I had worked in these areas previously.

Proponents of Participatory Action Research have cautioned of the need for establishing healthy boundaries and maintaining objectivity. This was a real challenge for me because I had worked with these communities in the past. The second dimension to this challenge for me was to disassociate myself from the work of Concern Universal because I was no longer working for Concern Universal and neither was I representing any organisation. However, in each meeting I made my position clear that I was not representing any specific organisation. The communities were very supportive and understood that I was a student and that the research was independent of any organisation or government. Therefore this explanation helped deal with the problem of raising false expectations. Healthy boundaries were maintained in all the meetings as I was not the central figure in the meetings. However in line with the central tenets of Participatory Action Research, I fulfilled a "supportive, catalytic function and did not dominate the research process" (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005:2). Instead the participants

were discussing and sharing ideas among themselves. Many individuals were able to lead different segments in the meetings and report back the discussions of their subgroups to the entire group. This leadership role played by the participants helped break the researcher/researched mentality in the minds of the participants as they embraced the discussions that they were about their perspectives and how they would change their lives.

Lastly, Cassano & Dunlop (2005) refer to Ristock & Pennell, (1996) who talk about the power struggle that can ensue between the researcher as an outsider and the participants as the insiders. They argue that this sort of power struggle can manifest in different ways. In some instances, the participants may change the agreed upon topic or refuse to take part in the Participatory Action Research process altogether (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). The researcher may silence his own voice in other instances as he tries to encourage active participation from the research participants. My experience with conducting the six focus group discussion meetings was quite contrary. There was active participation from all the participants. Malawian culture, especially that prevalent in the Central Region of Malawi where this research took place, is characterized by respect. There was mutual respect between myself as the researcher and the participants. As was the strategy from the beginning, my responsibility was to introduce the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles and how they came into being. And then the participants discussed what these principles mean to an ordinary citizen. Some sessions were facilitated by me while others were facilitated by some participants on a voluntary basis. At the end of each focus group discussion meeting, the feedback was positive. If anything, the participants reported on their feedback forms a process of enlightenment and transformation occurring in their lives and a commitment to spread this message of the eight human rights principles in their villages with or without any outside support.

These challenges represent significant issues which must be recognised and addressed by the researcher. In the case of this research they were all dealt with thoroughly in the research design and the processes employed as reported above. Having discussed the tenets and challenges of Participatory Action Research, I will now shift from the overarching theoretical framework to discuss the details of the project and the specific methods employed. As discussed in the Literature Review Chapter, the rights-based

approach with its central tenets - the eight human rights principles – provided a congruent set of tools that were relevant and complementary to the Participatory Action Research paradigm. It was this mutual complimentarity that influenced my choice of these tools and the qualitative research framework.

3.10 Overview of Methods

As mentioned above, this project used a qualitative, rights-based approach to Participative Action Research (Neuman, 2006; Ljungman, 2004; Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). Two major methods for collecting data were used, namely document analysis and field work which was conducted in rural Malawi.

3.10.1 The Document Analysis

The document analysis component of this research project involved a cross-regional comparative analysis of thirty-six social safety net programmes from Sub-Saharan Africa, Latin America and South Asia. These three regions were selected because they all fall under what is known as the 'developing world' and are assisted by elements of the same donor community, for example, The World Bank and the International Monetary Fund (Harris, 2006; Neuman, 2006). While huge differences exist among individual countries in these regions, the majority of the population is classified as poor. These programmes were identified primarily through project review documents produced by various consultants working for the World Bank Group and other donor aid organisations. These review documents are accessible in the public domain. The distribution for the programmes reviewed across the three regions is as follows: Sub-Saharan Africa – ten, Latin America – six, South Asia – twelve. Additionally, eight programmes from North Africa and the Caribbean were also included because of their proximity to the three key regions, and their congruence with the project aims. These programmes were selected for inclusion in this analysis on the basis of:

a) Availability of public information about the programme;
b) Goal of programme;
c) Effectiveness of programme within the economic model framework; and,
d) Scope of coverage of the programme (Barrientos & Smith, 2005).

The analysis was conducted at three programme levels: design, implementation and outcome, to ensure comparable analysis. A series of analytical questions were asked at each level. The responses were computed into a specially designed table which I had developed for this purpose (**Appendix 2**). This tool allowed for a systematic analysis and comparison between the regions and between the programmes. At design level, I asked the following questions: How was the programme/project designed? What processes were involved in the design? Who was involved in the design? At implementation level, I asked the following questions: How was the programme implemented? What processes were involved in the implementation? Who was involved in the implementation? And finally at outcome level, I asked the following questions: What were the outcomes? How were the outcomes measured? Who was involved in measuring the outcomes?

The analysis focused on looking for similarities and differences in processes at each stage and examining what effect the differences had on the programme outcomes (Harris, 2006). The cross-regional comparative analysis allowed for an examination of different programmes/projects implemented in a variety of contexts and settings (Neuman, 2006). This approach highlighted significant similarities and differences in designing and implementing safety net programmes at any of the three levels that were compared. Indeed, it was imperative to review a range of projects from various regions in order to find best practices which might have not been clear or not even present in one context or region because some safety net programmes are context-specific. Selected results from this process have been summarized and presented in Chapter Four because some results would have been more relevant for the previously envisioned masters level project and not the current PhD project. The human rights framework was used as a lens for scrutinizing these results. The selected results have been grouped under the following headings:

1. Role of government and donor/non-government organisations community in implementation of programmes
2. Leakage of the benefit to non-eligible beneficiaries
3. Conditions attached to different safety net programmes

4. Involvement of local communities and institutions in design and implementation of the programmes

These themes were selected because they highlight some of the criticisms levelled against current poverty alleviation programmes. For instance, it was noted in the Literature Review Chapter that current development programmes and poverty alleviation programmes in particular lack participation from the grassroots. It was also noted that some donors export whole programmes which were designed for a particular country to another without any modifications though the prevalent contexts between the countries are different. The document analysis process highlighted and captured some of these issues as will be seen in Chapter Four.

3.10.2 Limitations

The document analysis process also revealed some limitations. The overarching limitation is that only thirty-six programmes were included in this analysis. I am however aware that there are an enormous number of similar programmes that are or have been implemented in the developing world. The other limitation was that the documents used in this analysis were public programme evaluation reports which were obtained online. These reports often lacked background information as to the origins of the programmes. The other limitation relates to the fact that the evaluators of the programmes used particular tools in the evaluation exercise and focussed on particular issues. Other issues may therefore have surfaced if a different set of tools were used in the evaluation. At the same time, other issues might have emerged if I had the time and resources to conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants and beneficiaries of these programmes. Nonetheless, the information obtained from the document analysis forms a reasonable basis for comparison with the proposals suggested by the participants in the focus group discussion meetings in Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas. This comparison has been conducted in Chapter Eight.

3.11 The Field Study

The second phase of the research project involved field work in rural Malawi. This field component consisted of a series of six focus group discussion meetings with an average of ten voluntary participants per meeting drawn from over thirty-five villages. As well as focus group discussions, a smaller number of semi-structured interviews were also conducted. These semi-structured interviews were conducted to follow up on emerging issues from the focus group discussions that needed clarification or further information. Key informants were also used to shed light on some specific issues especially on government operations. The processes and ways in which the focus group discussion meetings were conducted have been discussed in various sections of this Chapter. The results have been presented in the second part of this thesis.

3.11.1 Rationale for the Target Group

The target group for the fieldwork component of this research was people living in the two rural communities of Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas in Dedza District in Malawi (refer to diagram 3 below). This group was chosen because 87% of Malawi's population lives in rural areas and of these, over 65% live below the poverty line, with 22% of these living in dire poverty (UNDP, 2003; NSO, 2005). Over the years, rural communities have been targeted with different poverty alleviation initiatives that were aimed at improving their general wellbeing. However, statistics indicate that Malawians in rural areas are poorer now than they were ten years ago (UNDP - HDR, 2005). Such being the case, these rural communities were ideally placed to participate in this project.

While any other rural community would have been appropriate to participate in this project, Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas provided a unique opportunity to talk to people who were familiar with the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot project. As already mentioned in the Introduction Chapter and elsewhere, this research sought to build on the experiences and lessons learnt from the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project. Further, working with the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project gave me the necessary experience to engage with these local people. The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project also gave me the

opportunity to develop culturally sensitive research skills that were very important in the conduct of the current study.

3.11.2 Logistics

As mentioned in the introduction and above, the field research took place in rural Malawi. This meant that I had to travel from Australia. In this section I will report on the logistics and the actual things that were done in preparation for the field work and all of the logistical issues around the focus group discussion meetings. Upon arrival in Malawi in January 2007, all the information that was to be handed out to the participants was translated into Chichewa which is the national language of Malawi. To ensure accuracy and clarity in the translation, the translated papers were handed to selected Bachelor of Arts students from Chancellor College, a constituent college of the University of Malawi, who translated the papers back into English. Where disparities were observed, discussions were held. After satisfactory translation, the documents were printed and photocopied ready for distribution.

In the mean time, I contacted twelve different establishments asking for support with transport within Malawi. These establishments were government departments, donor and non-government organisations. Among the establishments were The World Bank Mission Office in Malawi, the Department for International Development Malawi (DFID), The United Nations Development Programme – Malawi and other non-government organisations that included Care Malawi, Oxfam and Concern Universal. Some government departments which were contacted included The National Research Council of Malawi and the Department responsible for Poverty Alleviation. All the donor organizations gave me a similar response, stating that they do not support individuals but rather support government poverty alleviation initiatives. They indicated that their funding strategy was to sponsor government programmes or provide direct budgetary support to the government of Malawi. Most of the non-government organisations indicated that they were unable to support my research because it wasn't a part of their projects. I was amazed with the lack of flexibility on both the part of non-government organisations and the donor community, considering the relevance of this research and the initiative I had taken as a self-funded student. The National Research

Council of Malawi and the department responsible for Poverty Alleviation did not even respond to any of the letters and enquiries.

Concern Universal came to my rescue. They provided me with a motor cycle which was very convenient for the research considering that I had to travel to villages some of which could not be accessed by a vehicle. I only had to provide fuel and other consumables. The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project was originally implemented by Concern Universal and they showed interest in the outcomes of the current study. Concern Universal also provided me with office space which was used as my research base and provided me with the list of villages which had participated in the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project. I also had access to office facilities like a photocopier and the Internet in order to stay in touch with my supervisors.

3.11.3 Recruitment of Participants – The Processes

The entry point in rural Malawian societies is the village headman or Traditional Authority (T/A) or sometimes the Secretary to the Area Development Committee (ADC) which is headed by the Traditional Authority. The choice of the entry point is crucial as it helps to get in touch with the right gatekeeper to provide you with the right advice on how to go about the issue at hand (Neuman, 2006:387-389). In my case I chose to use the Secretary to the Area Development Committee. As explained below, this was a very good decision. I first met with the Secretary to the Area Development Committee in Kabwazi Extension Planning Area which is under Traditional Authority Chilikumwendo. After discussing with him the research process and the aims, he advised that I had to first let the Traditional Authority know and agree that this research project could take place in his area. He also advised that it was not necessary for me to travel to all the thirty-five villages and attend all the thirty-five open village meetings that would be convened by the village heads. The original plan was to convene open village meetings at which I would announce the aims of the research and ask any one interested to meet me at a designated place outside the village. So at this meeting with the secretary this arrangement was modified. The modified procedure for recruiting participants was negotiated and is outlined below. This was in line with the tenets of Participative Action Research which promote and allow for such negotiations with all

the research stakeholders and participants (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005; Thomas, 2008; Humphries, 2008).

The other issue was regarding the recruitment of government, non-government workers and traditional leaders which form the local leadership in villages. Initially, these local leaders were to be recruited alongside the other participants. During the discussions with the Secretary to the Area Development Committee it became apparent that trying to recruit local leaders by myself would be logistically a nightmare. Two things were a challenge: Firstly, I did not know some of the local leaders and secondly, they are scattered all over the villages and so finding them would be a challenge. With no media available to advertise through, recruitment of local leaders depended on knowing them and where to find them. I have described the process that we ended up using to recruit the leaders below.

After the meeting with the Secretary to the Area Development Committee in Kabwazi Extension Planning Area, I went to see the Traditional Authority Chilikumwendo. He was very happy to see me again having worked in his area before with the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project 2000–2003. After explaining the aims of my research project and the ethics standards, he gave me his seal of approval. He pointed out that this research was crucial as it aimed to build on the lessons that were learnt from the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project.

3.11.4 Selection of Villages to be involved in the Current Research Project

The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project was implemented in fifty-four villages. Twenty-seven of these are in Kabwazi Extension Planning Area which is in Traditional Authority Chilikumwendo's area while the remaining twenty-seven are in Linthipe Extension Planning Area which is in Traditional Authority Kaphuka's area. It was not the intention of the current study to recruit participants from all these villages. We therefore used controlled random sampling (Neuman, 2006) to select the villages to be contacted, considering the distance these participants would have to travel from their villages to the focus group discussion meetings. Controlled random sampling involves sampling elements to be included in a study from a carefully selected group based on certain characteristics (Neuman, 2006). In this study, those characteristics include

distance to the focus group discussion meetings and participation in the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project.

The Secretary suggested that we write letters to the randomly selected villages that participated in the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project asking the village heads to call for a meeting for ex-Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project beneficiaries and their carers. At this meeting these beneficiaries and their carers were asked to democratically nominate three representatives to participate in the research. If the nominated individual did not want to participate in the research they had the freedom to decline the nomination. The letters also specified the number for each gender in each village as we decided to have a minimum of 33% female representation in each focus group discussion meeting. If the villages were left to decide on their own who would participate in the research, the likelihood of some villages nominating only men was high. All the participants especially those from Linthipe Extension Planning Area who came by public transport had their transport costs reimbursed.

Diagram 3: Map of Africa, Malawi and part of Dedza District.

Inset: The two Traditional Authorities (Chilikumwendo and Kaphuka) in whose areas are the two EPAs that were involved in the project – Kabwazi and Linthipe respectively**.**

Source: Malawi – An Atlas of Social Statistics, 2003:8

Sohng (1998) cautioned that those utilizing the Participatory Action Research paradigm should be engaged in a "continuous process of reflection and activity". This helps to facilitate "personal growth for all those involved in the research", including the researcher himself (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005:2). Reflecting on the suggestions made by the Secretary to the Kabwazi Area Development Committee, I began to appreciate the relevance of granting greater power to the participants and the people one is working with in a research process. Ife & Tesoriero (2006:122) have noted that "[a]fter all, it is the members of the community who have the experience of that community, of its needs and problems, its strengths and positives, and its unique characteristics". I therefore decided to adopt the recruitment process suggested by the Secretary to the Area Development Committee as he has intimate knowledge of this community. Similar discussions were held with the Secretary to the Area Development Committee in Linthipe. He was happy with the recruitment process devised in Kabwazi Extension Planning Area and therefore it was adopted. I could not see the Traditional Authority in Linthipe because he had passed away two years before the current research and his replacement procedures had just commenced. The Secretary to the Area Development Committees handles most of the development issues under such circumstances. Random visits to a few of the selected villages showed that the village heads were carrying out the instructions fully.

3.11.5 The Recruitment of the Leaders

As I was discussing with the Secretary to the Area Development Committee in Kabwazi Extension Planning Area about the need to have a representative sample, we carefully determined how many leaders of each gender would be contacted. The target was to have at least 33% of all the participants female. The other criteria were to have a representation of all the categories of leadership. For instance, we needed representation from government workers, non-government organisation's workers, the religious fraternity and traditional leaders. So we purposely sampled thirty-two leaders from Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas who received letters asking if they were interested in voluntarily participating in the focus group discussion meetings. These letters contained all the information that the leaders needed to know about the research and its aims. The leaders had to confirm their interest with the Secretary. Thirty of the thirty-two leaders that received the letters confirmed their desire to take

part in the focus group discussion meetings. The leaders were also given all the information about the research project including the consent forms. The information that was provided to the participants to these focus group discussion meetings has been included in **Appendix 3**.

To ensure voluntary participation and that the participants understood what the research was all about, at the beginning of each focus group discussion meeting I introduced myself, went through the aims of the research again thoroughly and gave the participants an opportunity to ask questions or leave if they chose to, without fear that any punitive action would be taken against them. After this, every participant signed a consent form. Personal information was not collected because it was not part of the study. However, for purposes of generating a participant profile, information pertaining to age, gender, education, and employment was collected. The participants were clearly informed that they could decide not to complete this information if they chose, and it was reiterated that they were free to withdraw from the process at any time without negative consequences. Apart from a few participants that did not complete their profile forms, or parts of their profile, no one withdrew from the focus group discussion meetings. At the end of each focus group discussion meeting, the participants indicated that they were grateful for participating in the discussions with fellow disadvantaged individuals. This was indicated both verbally and in writing on their feedback forms.

3.11.6 Meeting Venues and Facilities Used

All of the three focus group discussion meetings in Kabwazi Extension Planning Area took place in the Extension Planning Area resource hall while those in Linthipe Extension Planning Area took place at Linthipe Community Day Secondary School community hall. Chalk boards, flip charts, white chalk and permanent markers were used for writing. Those that volunteered for semi-structured interviews were interviewed after the focus group discussion meetings in seclusion.

3.11.7 Distance to the Focus Group Discussion Meeting Venues

Due to lack of public transport especially in Kabwazi Extension Planning Area, the participants had to walk or cycle to the venues. This meant that the distance from the

farthest village to the meeting venue had to be reasonable. This issue was handled by controlled random sampling. As stated above, controlled random sampling is when you sample participants to be included in a study from a carefully selected group based on certain characteristics (Neuman, 2006). In the case of the current study, these characteristics were the distance to the focus group discussion venues and whether a village participated in the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project or not. Only villages that fell within a seven kilometre radius were included in the sample where the participants did not have the option of using public transport. For the villages that were along the main road, controlled random sampling was not applied. This was especially true for Linthipe Extension Planning Area. All the participants from such villages had their transport costs reimbursed.

3.11.8 The Conduct of the Focus Group Discussion Meetings and the Interaction of Genders

Throughout the study, principles of Participatory Action Research were used to conduct the focus group discussion meetings. One of the key principles of the Participatory Action Research paradigm is creating a relaxed informal atmosphere where the participants would analyse issues affecting their communities and come up with strategies to deal with those issues (Save the Children, 1995; Mayoux, 2001). The principles of Participatory Action Research were crucial because Malawian societies, particularly those in rural areas, are highly structured with women occupying the bottom quintiles. It was therefore imperative to have a model that overcomes these cultural barriers to encourage equal participation from both genders (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005). Under normal circumstances, rural Malawian women would opt to sit on the floor while their male counterparts sit on chairs. The women mostly listen to the men as they talk and discuss issues. Women are normally quiet and would often say “What ever the men agree is what we will do”.

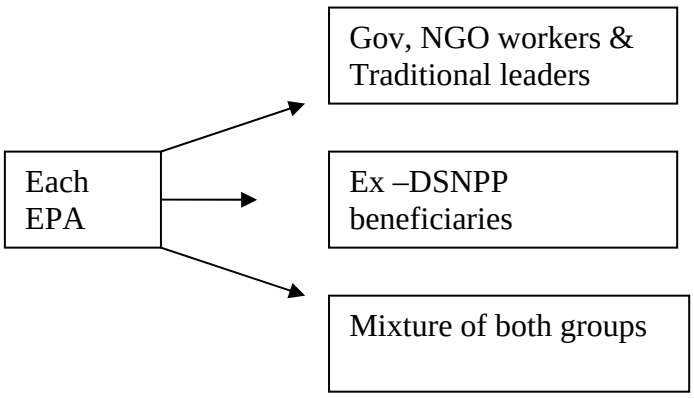
So the focus group discussion venues had to be arranged in a way that encouraged a sense of equality among the participants and between the researcher and the participants. As mentioned above, each focus group discussion meeting started with a rundown of all the information the participants needed to know. As part of this process, the need for full participation from all the participants regardless of gender was also

discussed. Then the participants would come up with the best room arrangement. In all the meetings, the participants came up with a circular seating plan. So the chairs were arranged in a circle. In all the meetings, the seating was mixed with the participants freely mingling. This freedom continued even when the participants had been split into smaller subgroups to discuss an issue.

The participants used a range of participative tools which included pair-wise ranking, seasonal calendar, small group discussions, oral history and historical profiles to analyse the community's livelihoods (Mayoux, 2001, Save the Children, 1995). The participants were already familiar with these tools having previously used them in various participatory rural appraisals (PRA) with various non-government organisations. The most popular of the tools that were used was subdividing into smaller groups with one person volunteering to coordinate the subgroup. The subgroup also chose a rapporteur to report back to the entire group after the discussions.

Six focus group discussion meetings were conducted, three in each of the two Extension Planning Areas. As already mentioned above, each focus group discussion meeting had an average of ten participants. The participants were allocated into groups as follows:

Diagram 4: Composition of Different Focus Groups



In each of these meetings, the participants created their own informal guidelines for the day at the beginning of the day. These guidelines included specific rights like freedom of participation, privacy, confidentiality and freedom to walk out of the meeting at any time without explanation etc. These guidelines were hung on a wall to act as a constant reminder for all the participants of what they had committed themselves to. When an issue arose during the discussions that required thorough analysis, the groups were subdivided into smaller focus groups which are referred to as subgroups throughout this thesis. To facilitate equal participation from female participants, some groups were headed by female volunteers and had more females in the group than males. Save the Children (1995) talks of gender based sub-groupings to encourage active participation from the quieter gender. This approach worked very well since culturally, Malawian women are shy to talk in male dominated forums. Volunteers were sought to facilitate the subgroup sessions and feedback to the entire group. During the subgroup discussions, one of the participants volunteered to write the points on a flipchart or chalkboard.

During the plenary sessions and the general discussions, some issues arose that required further follow-up. Volunteers and their consent were therefore sought from among the participants who were then interviewed (semi-structured interviews). The questions were open-ended and therefore non-intrusive.

The sequence of questions discussed in the focus group discussion meetings was as follows: Firstly the participants in each meeting were asked the question what is poverty? This was the first question to be discussed because it acted as a baseline to determine their knowledge base before I introduced them to the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles. Secondly, I asked them to discuss the meanings of the eight human rights principles. After discussing the eight human rights principles, I asked the participants to define poverty again. Then I asked them to discuss which rights, if any, they felt were violated in relation to poverty. They then were asked to suggest human rights initiatives which they felt could be used to eradicate poverty. Finally, I asked them to discuss how the suggested rights-based poverty eradication initiatives could be designed and implemented. In the course of these discussions, the participants mentioned some specific steps that have been used to design a rights-based

poverty eradication model which has been presented in Chapter Nine. These discussions will be reported later in the second part of this thesis.

The average duration for the focus group discussion meetings was four hours. This time was less than the six hours that were originally envisioned and approved. The participants in each focus group discussion meeting decided how to structure their day. The four hours were divided into several sections interspaced with breaks. During all the time of the discussions, snacks and drinks were provided. And at the end of the meeting, all participants were given an honorarium which was an equivalent to what government field officers get as a lunch allowance.

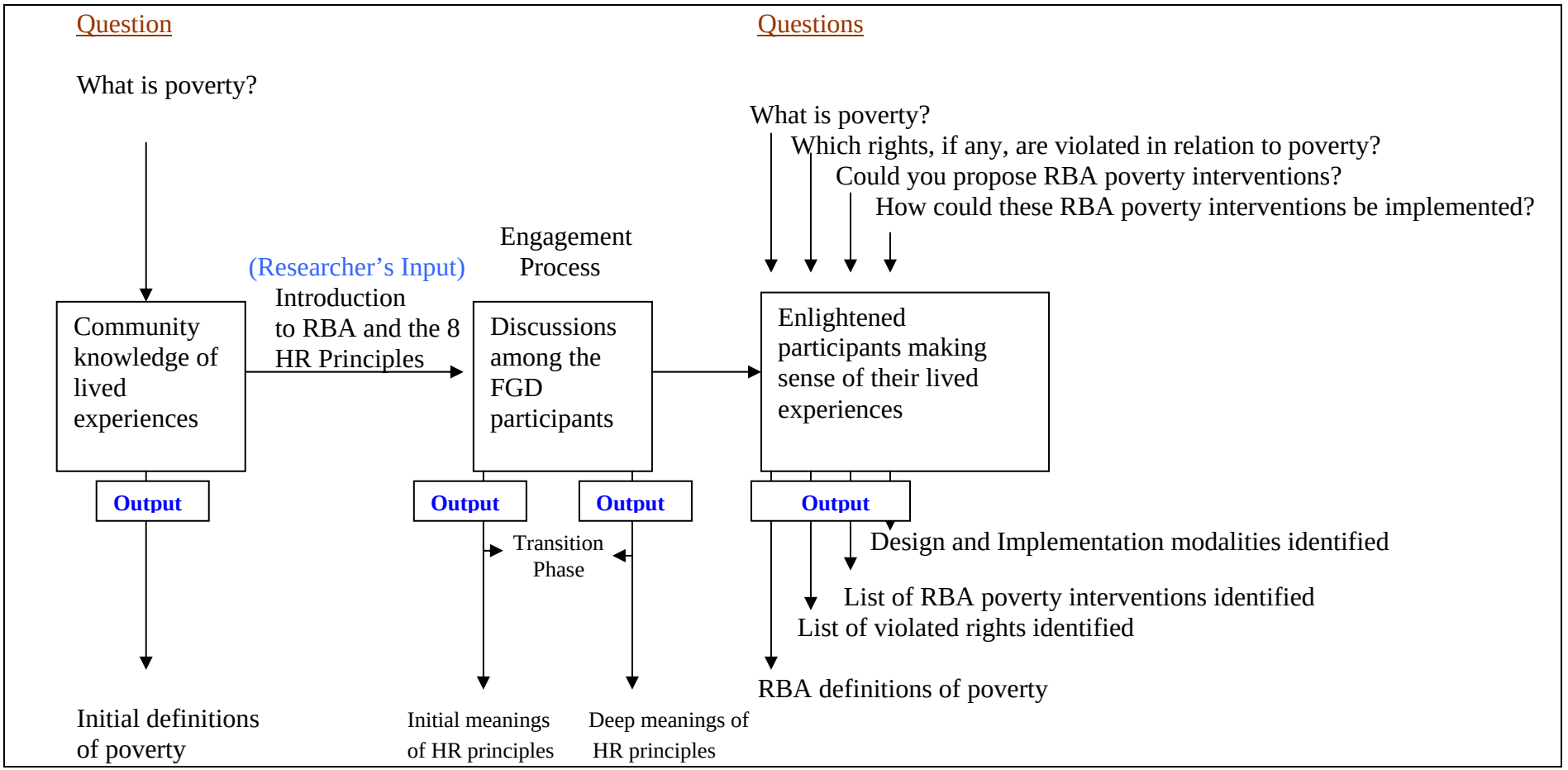
3.12 My Role

My role was to recruit participants; co-facilitate the focus group discussion meetings in line with the principles of Participatory Action Research with local volunteers; record data; ensure that the research was conducted according to the James Cook University Human Ethics guidelines and conduct individual semi-structured interviews. I was also responsible for explaining to the participants the origins of the eight human rights principles and the general rights to development discourse. This was in keeping with the underpinning philosophy of Participatory Action Research, where a researcher brings to the community a wealth of knowledge (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005).

The actual process for the conduct of the focus group discussion meetings was as follows: After introducing myself and the aims of the research, we would go through housekeeping issues. The housekeeping issues included the participants enacting the rules which they would observe for the day. These rules included the rule that any participant was free to walk out of the discussion meeting at any time he or she chose to without any fear of repercussions. Without any further discussions, the participants were asked to discuss the question: What is poverty? In some focus group discussion meetings, I divided the participants into subgroups while in others they discussed this question as a group. In those meetings where they were divided into subgroups, a plenary session followed where the various subgroup leaders fedback their group's discussions to the entire group.

After the participants had discussed this first question, I then introduced information about the human rights-based approach providing them with its definition, its historical context and giving them the list of the eight human rights principles without defining them. The participants were then divided into subgroups to discuss what they thought were the meanings of the eight human rights principles. During this time, I was visiting the various subgroups to see how their discussions were progressing. Then the groups came together for a plenary session where the subgroup leaders were feeding back to the entire group their group's discussions. Further discussions often spontaneously erupted among members from various groups, which I have referred to as 'the engagement process'. During these plenary sessions a phenomenon was observed which I have called 'the transition phase' which is discussed and illustrated in greater detail in Chapter Six. After the participants had discussed the eight human rights principles, they then discussed what poverty is again and the subsequent questions. **Diagram 5** below summarises and illustrates this process which has been described above.

Diagram 5: The Focus Group Discussion Process



My role also involved meetings with the Secretaries of the Area Development Committees in Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas prior to the commencement of the focus group discussion meetings; booking meeting venues and making arrangements for traditional support mechanisms in case a participant against all the odds became distressed. I was also responsible for securely keeping all the information collected and making it available for scrutiny by the participants. A flip chart containing participants' rights and rules for the day that were made by the participants themselves was hung on the wall as a constant reminder of rights and to ensure their general wellbeing. At every opportunity I made sure that I reminded the participants of their rights.

3.12.1 Data Capture in the Focus Groups and Semi-Structured Interviews

Audio and video recorders were used to capture the discussions. All participants were informed about this when they first expressed their interest in taking part in the project. Consent was further sought on the day of the discussions to ensure informed decisions. The participants signed or thumb printed to consent on the consent form. In all the meetings there was no participant that refused the use of an audio or video recorder. Flip charts were also used to write discussion points and sub-groups' feedback. One assistant was employed to manage the video and audio recorders.

Care was taken to ensure that the research process did not cause stress to any of the participants. In fact, by the time we were finishing each discussion session there was a sense of joy and empowerment among the participants. Seventy-seven percent (*n=44*) of the participants commented on their feedback form that this type of discussions should continue in all the villages so that people could be empowered. None of the participants regretted having participated in the research project. On the contrary, all the participants indicated that they had learnt a lot from discussing with colleagues. This was in agreement with what Mayoux (2001), Chinsinga (2003a) and others have said that when rural and marginalised people are meaningfully engaged, it promotes a sense of wellbeing. Therefore none of the participants used the services of the traditional counsellors that had been arranged prior to the commencement of the focus group discussions.

3.12.2 Data Translation and Transcription

All the meetings were conducted in Chichewa which is the national language of Malawi. The video and audio recordings therefore needed to be translated into English followed by transcription. I translated all the data from Chichewa into English. The translation was done in such a way that, as far as possible, the exact words of the participants were translated. Of course, this process had its own inherent challenges. Chichewa is a rich and much broader language. Therefore where an exact English word was not found, or would convey a different meaning, a longer explanation was used rather than making an approximation which may lose part of the meaning. This allowed for greater clarity and better stewardship of the information which was provided by the participants, as this is their lived experiences (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005; Mitlin, 2000). The inherent challenge with this process of translating qualitative data is that some times the 'translator's language' may be reflected in the translations. I was mindful of this pitfall. However, I decided to endeavour, as far as it was possible, to maintain the originality and integrity of the ideas without shying away or compromising on choice of the most suitable English words. The implication of this is that some technical words may appear in the statements made by the participants and therefore it is imperative to be aware that those words have been translated directly from their Chichewa equivalents.

After translation from Chichewa into English, all the discussions were transcribed. The transcribed information was then fed into Nvivo 7, which is a qualitative research data analysis programme. The use of Nvivo 7 allowed for greater analysis and flexibility in tracing and grouping themes. Nvivo 7 was also helpful in organizing all the information in such a way that it was easy to compare and group the responses for the same questions that were discussed by the six different focus groups. I have described the data analysis process in detail below.

3.12.3 Data Analysis

Data analysis is the process in which the researcher goes through the data with an aim of making sense of his or her data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998; Neuman, 2006). Data analysis takes different forms and operates at different levels. This process is aided by a

set of tools depending on what sort of information the researcher wants to get out of his or her data (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). In the case of the fieldwork component of this research project, I conducted a thematic analysis (Neuman, 2006; Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Themes were identified from the data and all ideas from the six focus group discussion meetings which fell under that theme were grouped together. Nvivo 7 was great for this sort of exercise for it allowed greater flexibility and allows tracing back exactly which meeting each idea or statement is taken from. The data emerged in a tree-like formation with sub-themes and their properties – in this case, statements from various participants from various focus group discussion meetings. Participants' particulars were also imputed into Nvivo 7 and it was easy to tease out any kind of statistical information that I required, for example, to compare level of education between the genders or compare level of education against occupations.

3.13 Ethics

The project received its ethics clearance from the Human Ethics Committee of James Cook University in November 2006. The clearance grant number is H 2470. The main ethical issues that had been envisaged for this project were the duration of each focus group discussion meeting; the distance the participants would have to walk to the focus group discussion meeting venues; the interaction of genders during the focus group discussion meetings; and issues surrounding confidentiality. Most of these issues were handled within the research design and have been reported above. I will discuss confidentiality in greater detail here as this has not been thoroughly covered above and it required special attention due to different cultural orientations between the Western world and the communities in which this research took place.

3.13.1 Confidentiality

When using focus group discussions as a research process, it is not possible to guarantee individual anonymity (Neuman, 2006; Save the Children, 1995). However, when we started discussing the need for confidentiality the participants in all the meetings laughed and argued that there was nothing to hide or that was confidential that would be discussed. "We will be discussing things that are happening and not backbiting" said one female participant in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries meeting in Kabwazi Extension

Planning Area. For the sake of the integrity of the research, the participants agreed to sign an informed consent form which contained a confidentiality statement (**Appendix 4**) and took traditional oaths to pledge that no identifying information would be shared in their villages.

By the time each focus group discussion was coming to an end, the participants asked if they could share with colleagues the information that they had gained through the discussions but that they would not link statements to names. They argued that if everyone in the villages could understand the eight human rights principles and stand to defend their rights, poverty would be eradicated. Indeed as a result of the participants' determination to disseminate this knowledge and mobilise themselves, a powerful and well-organised Rights-Based Approach movement was born in Linthipe Extension Planning Area just days after the focus group discussion meetings. The movement, in collaboration with the village headmen is currently holding meetings to inform their colleagues about the eight human rights principles and discussing the need for designing development programmes informed by these human rights principles.

This researcher however is committed to upholding the highest level of confidentiality in line with the James Cook University Human Research Ethics guidelines. To this end, any identifying information of the participants in the focus group discussions and those who took part in semi-structured interviews will be protected in all disseminations.

3.14 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have discussed the methodology for this research project. This research project used a qualitative, rights-based approach to Participatory Action Research. I have also discussed the central tenets of a Participatory Action Research, its advantages, limitations and challenges. I have also discussed how I was able to deal with these challenges. Further I have presented an overview of the methods used in this research and the processes that were involved in the field study component. I have discussed my role in this research process, the data management process and its inherent limitations. Lastly, this chapter has discussed confidentiality as an ethical issue. In the next chapter, I present the results from the document review of the thirty-six social welfare programmes.

PART II

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS, SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Some of participants in a beneficiary / carer FGD meeting in Linthipe EPA

Women's subgroup in a mixed FGD meeting in Kabwazi EPA

CHAPTER FOUR: COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF THIRTY-SIX POVERTY ALLEVIATION PROGRAMMES

As explained in the Introduction and Methodology chapters, this project started as a masters degree project. The masters project intended to be qualitative and literature-based. One of the key tasks under that project was reviewing some safety nets projects which have been implemented in the developing world. The expected outcome was the identification of best practices and processes at three programmes/project levels, namely, design, implementation and outcome level. While differences exist among individual countries in these regions, the majority of the population is classified as poor. It was also mentioned in the Introduction and Methodology chapters that the field study became the primary source of data as the project developed. However, the results from the document analysis were retained so that they could be compared to data from the field study. Results from the cross-regional comparative analysis of the thirty-six programmes have shown a number of general trends, as discussed below.

4.1 Role of Government and Donor / Non-Government Organisations Community in Implementation of the Programmes

Governments were responsible for the implementation of the programmes reviewed in the South Asian region. This is different from the Latin American region where the programmes reviewed were implemented in partnership between governments and donor organisations or non-government organisations. The Sub-Saharan Africa region review showed a mixture of both these approaches and also includes programmes solely implemented by donor agencies or non-government organisations. Of all the programmes reviewed, 38.9% (*n=14*) were solely implemented by donor or non-government organisations, 47.2% (*n=17*) were solely implemented by the government while only 13.9% (*n=5*) were implemented in partnership between the government and the donor or non-government organisations community.

4.2 Leakage to Non Eligible Recipients

Regional variations were observed in terms of leakage. Leakage is the receipt of transfers by people that do not qualify under the programme's targeting criteria (Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002; Mkandawire, 2005). The review of these thirty-six programmes revealed that registration of non-eligible beneficiaries was the main cause of leakage. This was often as a result of corruption, faulty targeting mechanisms, lack of involvement by grassroots stakeholders and political influence (Mkandawire, 2005; Coady, Grosh & Hoddinott, 2004). The programmes implemented in the Latin American region that were reviewed had no indication of leakage. But reviewed programmes implemented in the Sub-Saharan Africa region showed a leakage level of between 0 - 78%, while those from South Asia showed a leakage level of between 15 - 84%. While differences exist on how different development commentators explain what causes leakage, as discussed below, conditions attached to a programme influence its targeting mechanism. It is the targeting mechanisms themselves that dictate who is involved in the targeting and implementation processes. This has a direct implication on leakage rates.

4.3 Conditions Attached to the Different Safety Net Programmes

Reviewed programmes implemented in the Latin American region were conditioned on human capital development. Human capital development programmes emphasise spending on activities that will develop local human capacity which normally target young people (World Bank, 2006b). In the programmes reviewed from the Latin American programmes, families with school age children were receiving a monthly cash transfer on condition of enrolling and keeping their children in school. This was different from the South Asian region where only one reviewed programme was conditioned on human capital development. The rest of the reviewed programmes were work for food or assets programmes. The Sub-Saharan Africa region had none conditioned on human capital development among the reviewed programmes. All the reviewed programmes were either unconditional social pension schemes or conditioned on work.

It could be argued that these conditions had direct implications on targeting mechanisms. For instance, it is easier to determine whether a family has a school age child than whether a family qualifies for a work for assets programme (Mkandawire, 2005; Coady, Grosh & Hoddinott, 2004). Local schools played a crucial role in maintaining registers to monitor attendance. Of the reviewed programmes, most work for food and assets programmes used self-targeting mechanisms because of the complexity of means testing methods (Mkandawire, 2005). However, in practice this meant that even fewer disadvantaged poor were taking part in the programme thereby increasing the leakage rates, while at the same time it could be argued that it excluded many weak and vulnerable people, such as those suffering from HIV/AIDS and orphans.

4.4 Involvement of Local Communities and Institutions in Design and Implementation of the Programmes

All the programmes reviewed were designed and implemented by the governments and donors or non-government organisations. There was limited involvement from other institutions like local governments and local committees. Whilst at the moment, there is no known literature that give an indication of the extent of their involvement, it should be noted that only three out of the thirty-six programmes reviewed showed any involvement of other institutions such as local school committees and local governments. This means that the reviewed programmes were designed and implemented by governments, Donors and non-government organisations.

4.5 Conclusion

The above brief summary presents selected results from the document analysis of the thirty-six poverty alleviation programmes. It is clear that these programmes lacked participation from the primary stakeholders as discussed in the Literature Review Chapter. Lack of participation is a plausible reason explaining a high level of leakage in some of the above reviewed programmes. This issue will be discussed further in the subsequent chapters. The implications of lack of participation by the primary stakeholders will also be examined in detail and recommendations will be drawn.

The above findings from the document analysis will be compared with what the participants said in relation to how poverty eradication programmes should be designed and implemented. I will now proceed to introduce the participants to the focus group discussion meetings, followed by their initial definitions of poverty.

CHAPTER FIVE: MEETING THE PARTICIPANTS AND DEFINITIONS OF POVERTY

In this chapter, I will begin to present results from the field component of the project. It will be imperative therefore that I introduce the participants to the six focus group discussion meetings. What will be presented in this section are their stories and their lived experiences. So it will be necessary to know their demographics, education and occupation.

5.1 Meeting the Participants of the Focus Group Discussion Meetings

In this section I introduce the reader to the people who participated in the focus group discussions.

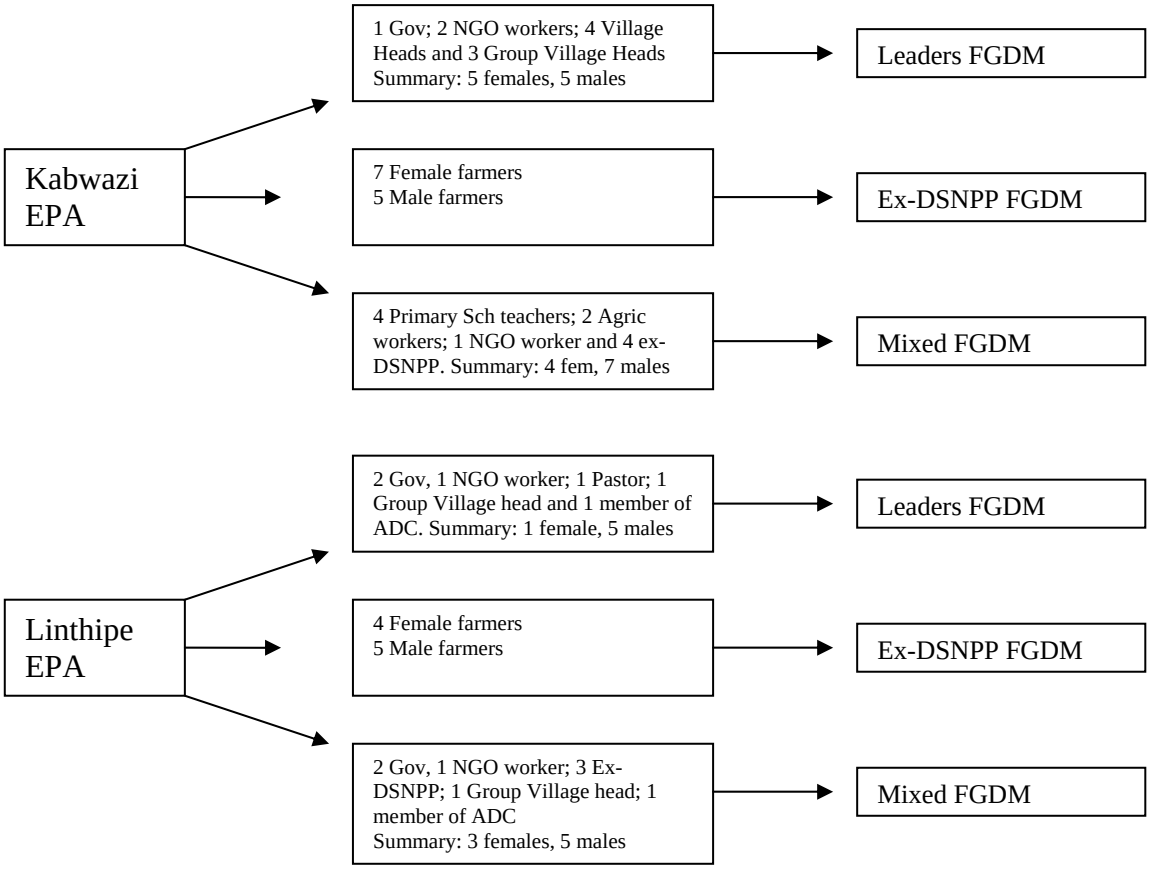
5.1.1 The Participants Profile

As already mentioned above, the target group for this research was people living in rural Malawi. In accordance with this criterion, two rural Extension Planning Areas were chosen namely Kabwazi and Linthipe which are in Dedza District in the Central Region of Malawi (Refer to map of Malawi on page 91). The research targeted disadvantaged and marginalised people. The research sought to learn lessons from people from diverse backgrounds and therefore applied a controlled random selection of the villages. As already mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, controlled random sampling is when you sample elements to be included in a study from a carefully selected group based on certain characteristics (Neuman, 2006). In my case, the pool of villages from which my sample was randomly selected was carefully chosen based on proximity to the focus group discussion meeting centres and previous experience with the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project.

Therefore, some villages were targeted for random sampling because they had participated in the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project in 2000 – 2003. This was to build on experiences gained and draw from their perspectives five years later. The other category that was chosen to participate in the study was local leaders. These included traditional leaders and the rural working class. It should be pointed out that these workers under

any classification are not considered well-off because their education levels are low and as such their pay is equally very low. Most of them depend on farming to make ends meet. They form part of local leadership because these people are normally chosen to represent the villages in which they work in different development programmes. The distribution of these participants in each focus group discussion meeting was as follows:

Diagram 6: Distribution of Participants in the Focus Group Discussion Meetings



Having described the general profile, I now present some specific categories of the participants in the research. As already mentioned in the Methodology Chapter, participation was purely on voluntary basis. Each group had a fairly balanced representation of the genders originally intended in the research proposal which was at least 33% females.

5.1.2 Age

The age distribution for the participants that returned their feedback forms and had completed their profile (including age) is between 18 and 76 years. The average age is 39.9 years while the median age is 37 years. These statistics are for fifty-six participants.

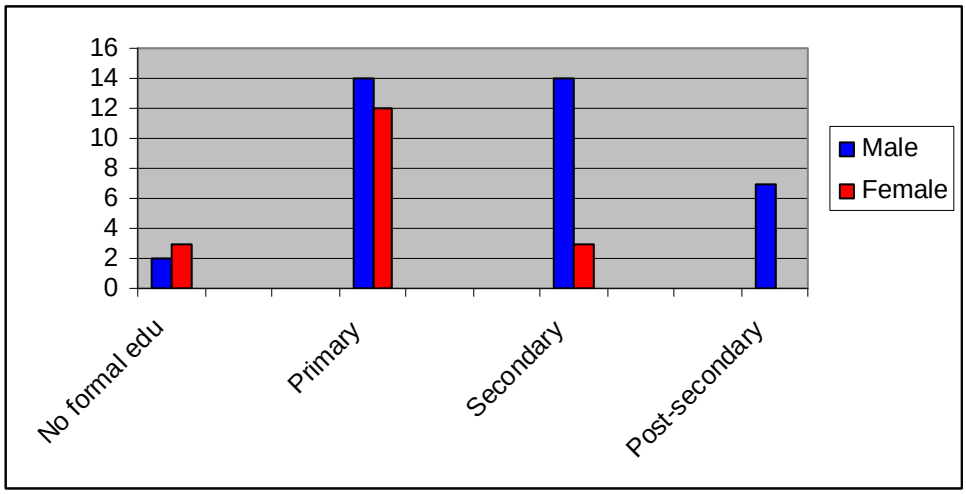
5.1.3 Gender Distribution

Of the Fifty-six participants that returned their feedback forms and had completed their profile, 31.6% (*n=18*) are female while 66.7% (*n=38*) are male.

5.1.4 Education

8.8% (*n=5*) of the participants did not have any formal education. Of these, 60% (*n=3*) were female. 45.6% (*n=26*) of the participants at least had some primary education. Of these, 46.2% (*n=12*) were female. 29.8% (*n=17*) of the participants had some secondary education and of these only 17.6% (*n=3*) were female. Lastly, 12.3% (*n=7*) of the participants had some form of post secondary education in a form of a certificate course or primary school teacher training. Of these none was female. This trend is not unique only to this sample and rural Malawi. Other researchers have also found this disparity in education levels between females and males in other parts of Africa (Hartnett & Heneveld, 1993; Rena, 2005**).** Diagram 7 below provides a graphic presentation of the differences in education between the genders.

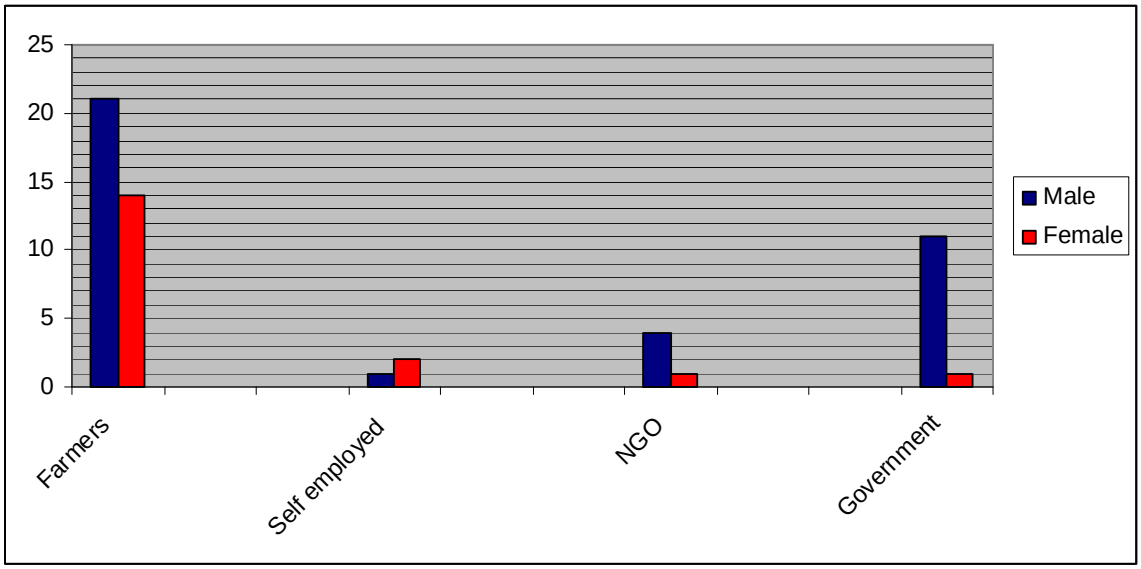
Diagram 7: Comparison of Genders by Education



5.1.5 Occupation of Participants

61.4% (*n=35*) of the participants that returned their feedback and profile forms were subsistence farmers. Of these 40% (*n=14*) were females (refer to diagram 8 below). Subsistence farming in Malawi involves planting food crops on a small piece of land which provides food for the household for nine out of the twelve months of the year (Concern Universal, 2001). This small piece of land is subdivided into sections to accommodate several types of crops. Some households also plant a cash crop on one or more of the sections. The average household land for these subsistence farmers in Malawi is 0.4 ha (King, 2008). This predisposes the subsistence farmers to hunger and financial hardships each year. Other factors that affect the subsistence farmers will be discussed later under human rights being violated in relation to poverty. 5.3% (*n=3)* of the participants reported to being self-employed. Of these, 66.7% (*n=2*) were female. 8.8% (*n=5*) of the participants reported of working for non-government organizations. Of these only 20% (*n=1*) were female. 21.1% (*n=12*) of the participants were employed by the government and only 8.3% (*n=1*) were female. As argued else where, these disparities demonstrate a continued disadvantage throughout the entire spectrum in which women suffer for the rights that are violated as a girl-child. Indeed a violation of the girl-child's education rights sets her up for a position of disadvantage as compared to her male counterpart. This point will be discussed in detail later.

Diagram 8: Gender Differences by Occupation



Now that we have met our participants to the six focus group discussion meetings, I will proceed to report their responses to various questions which they discussed during the focus group discussions. As already mentioned in the introduction and elsewhere, the first question which the participants discussed in all the focus group discussion meetings was what is poverty? After defining poverty, they were then introduced to the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles and they engaged in discussions of the same. After they had discussed the eight human rights principles they discussed again - what is poverty. What I report here below are their responses.

5.2 Definitions of Poverty

As already explained in the Methodology Chapter, the participants in all the meetings discussed the same questions in the same order. For instance, as explained in the Methodology Chapter, starting with asking the participants the meaning of poverty acted as a baseline to determine their knowledge base before being introduced to the eight human rights principles. It was noted that the themes that were raised by these participants were similar and in some instances these themes were repeated in several meetings. This being the case, instead of repeating each response with a similar theme from the different focus group discussion meetings, I will present one which exemplifies or captures most of the ideas in the other responses.

Further, the participants were asked to define poverty again after they had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the meanings of the eight human rights principles. It is interesting to note the change in their understanding of what poverty means. In this section, we will examine the initial meanings of poverty as reported by the participants. We will then briefly compare these definitions with how some notable development practitioners and researchers have defined poverty over the last four decades, as discussed in the Literature Review Chapter. After that, we will then examine the definitions of poverty that were put across after the participants had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles.

5.2.1 Initial Definitions of Poverty

All the initial definitions of poverty provided by the participants could be summarised as lack of material and financial resources. These resources could be classified into several categories. As explained above, these quotations exemplify what was said by several participants from different focus group discussion meetings. In some instances, the issues raised by the participants are embedded in a story. Some stories were corroborated by several participants in the same meeting. In that case, the story will be followed through so that the participants' views are not taken out of context.

To begin with, a male ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Linthipe EPA defined poverty as

Lack of clothing…

A rapporteur for a subgroup in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA said

Poverty is …a lack of good food.

A subgroup in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries' focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA defined poverty as

…lack of good housing.

A male leader in Linthipe EPA said poverty means

Lack of money….

Some participants in various focus group discussion meetings defined poverty in a more general terms. For example a group village headman (GVH) taking part in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA defined poverty as

Lack of resources needed in our daily lives.

A local leader in Kabwazi EPA defined poverty from a comparative point of view. He looked at the concept of poverty as

Lack of what your colleagues have.

An ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Linthipe EPA looked at poverty from a different but important angle. She said

Whilst it is true that all of us want to come out of poverty there are a few isolated cases of people that are not interested in coming out of poverty. We regard this as a mental disability.

This view was shared by a primary school teacher who is also a part of the local leadership in the same EPA. He defined poverty as

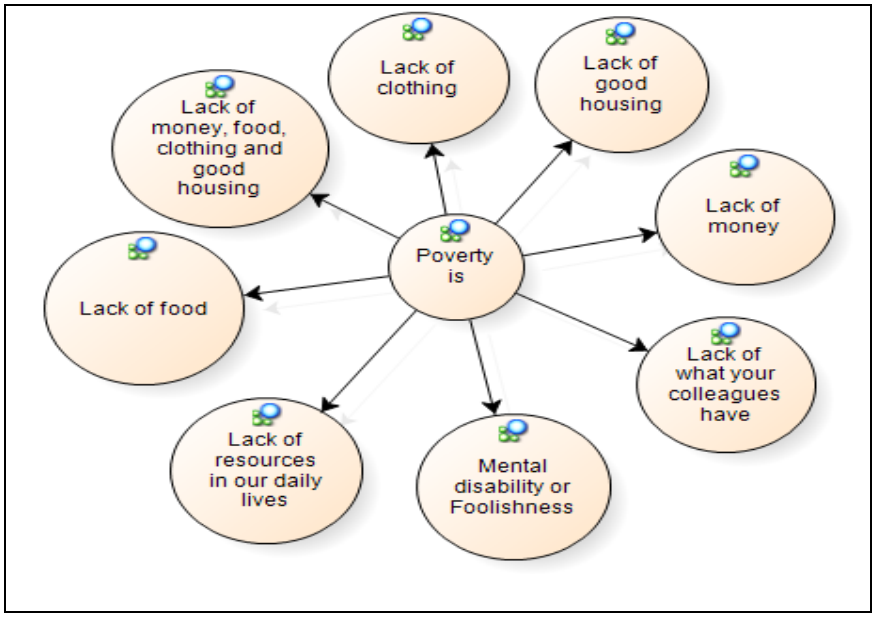
Mental retardedness or foolishness.

The word 'foolishness' as used in this statement is the closest in meaning to the Chichewa word that was used - '*uchitsiru*'. It does not denote blame but rather describes a state of mind. This leader's focus group discussion meeting went further to describe some characteristics of such individuals.

When they receive any government or NGO aid, they sell it so that they can get money to spend it on alcohol said a village headman.

The above definitions have been summarised in diagram 9 below.

Diagram 9: Thematic Summary of the Initial Definitions of Poverty



All the above definitions provided by the participants at the initial stage of the process, regard poverty as a lack of financial or material resources. This will be contrasted to how the same participants defined poverty after they had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles. Firstly, we will briefly compare the above definitions with how development practitioners and researchers have defined poverty over the last four decades.

A comparison of the above initial definitions given by the participants in the various focus group discussion meetings and the definitions coined by development practitioners and researchers reveal an interesting common thread. The same could also be said of the definitions that incorporated the views of the ordinary people as discussed in the Literature Review Chapter. Although definitions of poverty have been examined from different angles as proposed by both experts and those that took into account perceptions of ordinary people, it is clear that this common thread lies at the heart of them all. They all define poverty from an economic point of view. They define poverty as a lack of some amenities perceived to be essential for a day to day life (Saunders, 2003; Ratcliffe, 2007; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004; Townsend, 1979). Though some definitions on the face value appear to include other dimensions such as services and how the poor people themselves feel about poverty, they all define poverty from an economic perspective (Ratcliffe, 2007).

Effectively, poverty is viewed as lack of resources and services which the individual, and the community in which the individual dwells, consider essential. This means that the meaning of poverty changes from one society to another (Townsend, 1990). It also means that the meaning of poverty changes from one context to another. Therefore the individuals who would consider themselves poor in one society are the multimillionaires of another and vice versa. We will now proceed to look at how the participants in Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas defined poverty after discussing the eight human rights principles, namely Participation and Inclusion, Universality and Indivisibility of Human Rights, Equality and Non-discrimination, and Accountability and Rule of Law. As it was discussed in the Methodology Chapter, this discussion process has been called ‘the engagement process’.

5.2.2 Definitions of Poverty after the Rights-Based Approach Discussions

To begin with, let me mention the joy you could see on the faces of the participants during 'the engagement process' as they discussed these eight human rights principles. It was interesting to see this phenomena repeated over and over in all the meetings. It was like a 'light bulb was coming on' in the minds of the participants. Indeed this is evidenced by how they now defined poverty.

These definitions of poverty could be classified into several themes. A leader in Linthipe EPA leader's focus group discussion meeting said poverty is

> *Denial of human rights…for example poor people being oppressed by the rich, the government and NGOs*

A closely related thought is that poverty was viewed by an ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA as

> *Violation of human rights*

The two thoughts, denial and violation of human rights, have a subtle difference. I will now briefly comment on this difference. Denial of human rights is more to do with a purposeful act of withholding someone's rights when it is within their power to provide the rights. This could be temporarily or permanently, always with an excuse of a greater good (Dedic, Jalusic & Zorn, 2003). Violation of human rights is more to do with a malicious and contemptuous disregard of someone's rights (Dedic, Jalusic & Zorn, 2003). While these technical differences appear to have not been obvious for the participants, their responses exemplified both themes. The participants in various meetings talked about parents denying and violating the rights of a girl-child. The following quotations exemplify both ideas.

A rapporteur for a subgroup in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA said

Because of limited resources some times we allow the boy-child to be in school but the girl-child is told to abandon schooling

A participant in the subgroup added

The girl-child is forced to get married when there are limited resources but the truth is that her rights have been suppressed

She added,

When this girl-child's poverty shall begin to manifest later in life it's not because of lack of some things but because she was not given the chance to be in school …she was forced out of school in favour of the boy-child

A male participant explained why this is done:

The girl-child is forced out of school because when she gets married her husband is the one that will be taking care of her while we prefer the boy-child to be educated because he will be responsible for taking care of his family

A local leader participating in a leaders focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA defined poverty as a

Disadvantaged condition that arises because one's human rights have been violated…. Lack of food, clothing and all amenities of life are just manifestations of violated rights which might have occurred many years down the track…..for instance, the girl-child might have had her rights violated by being pulled out of school in preference to the boy-child and later on a condition of disadvantage arises

Another leader in the group chipped in

> *If her rights will continue to be violated at that point, like being denied access to loans, lack of participation, no rule of law in the country, the leaders are unaccountable and the citizens disempowered, all these will foster a conducive environment in which this condition of lack gets a grip on the girl… who by this time is a grown up woman and perhaps she even has a family*

Poverty was also defined as disempowerment. An elderly group village headman participating in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA defined poverty using profound Malawian words which do not have direct English translations. He defined poverty as

> *'Kakasi'* which means 'woe is me for I am undone*' or 'kusowa pogwira'* which means 'no where to turn to'

> *While there has been a lot of work to end poverty, it is shocking to note that poverty is on the increase* observed another male participant in the group.

This has mainly resulted from governments and non-government organisations concentrating their efforts on unsustainable ways of dealing with poverty.

The next statement by a female village head requires an explanation because she uses a Malawian byword to express her views. The term that she uses in her statement is 'fruits of poverty' which may mean the 'results of poverty' or 'manifestations of poverty'. The idea is derived from the fact that, if for example, one wants to deal away with a mango tree forever, it does not help to remove the fruits each mango flowering season. One should simply cut the tree on the roots. In this statement she referred to the tendency of aid organisations which provide food each hunger season instead of dealing away with the root causes of poverty once and for all.

> *Consequently, even if you deal away with the fruits of poverty for five years and that aid programme phases out, we get back to square one...we find ourselves in a condition of poverty again* said a female village head in the meeting.

> *We need sustainable means for poverty eradication and this will be achieved by focusing all the efforts of poverty eradication at empowering us and by promoting our human rights* concluded a group village headman.

A local primary school teacher in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *Poverty is a condition which results from an infringement of human rights…if one had the chance of going to banks to get a loan to buy an electric maize mill and set up a grain milling business, he or she would have not been lacking and thus many people would not have been in poverty*

A female ex-DSNPP beneficiary in the same meeting concurred with him. She said

> *People have no access to necessary resources and this lack of access manifests as lack of food, clothing and good shelter*

An ex-DSNPP beneficiary in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *Some people did not have a chance to be in school because their parents could not afford to pay for their school fees…but had it been that they were educated they would have been rich or at least doing well*

A sub group in a mixed group meeting in Linthipe EPA defined poverty as

> *Lack of participation in different programmes that would otherwise help you develop and become self reliant* said their rapporteur.

A local primary school teacher, taking part in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA defined poverty as

> *Lack of peace or rights in the life of an individual*

Lastly, poverty was defined by an ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Linthipe EPA as a

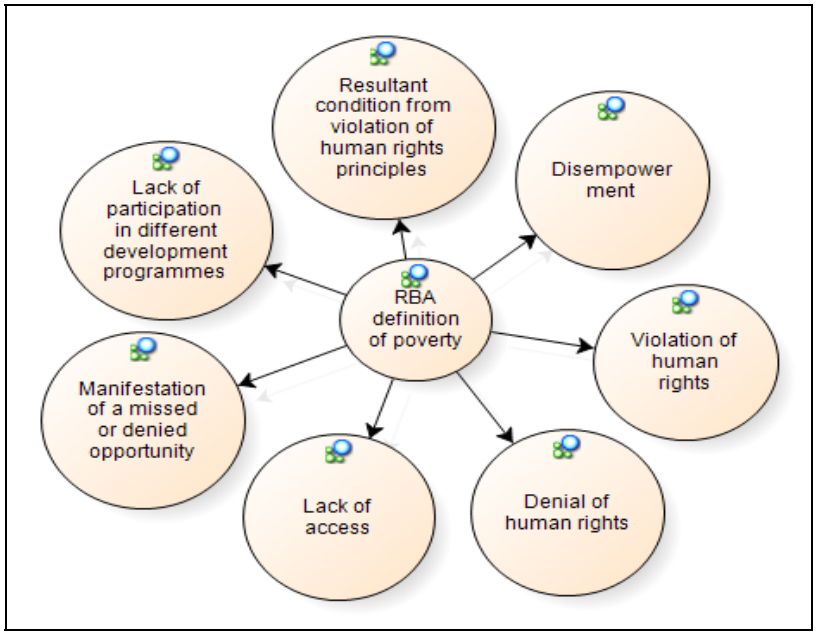
> *Negative or undesirable condition that arises when the eight human rights principles have been violated thereby putting some sections of the society into a place of disadvantage or lack*

A rapporteur for a subgroup in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA concluded their discussions very nicely by saying

> *After discussing the eight human rights principles we have come to a deep realization that poverty is actually a condition that arises because some rights have been violated. This could be denied access to school as a little child or access to loans and other opportunities when you are grown up. The results which will be manifested are the needs…but the needs themselves are not the poverty….they are just a manifestation of poverty*

The above definitions have been summarised in diagram 10 below.

Diagram 10: Thematic Summary of Rights-Based Definitions of Poverty



5.3 Conclusion

As clearly seen in this figure above, there was a difference in the way the participants in the focus group discussions defined poverty. This difference came about after the participants had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles. They now clearly defined poverty as a denial and violation of different human rights. The cause for this shift and its implications will be discussed later. Having looked at the definitions of poverty we will now examine specific relevant rights which the participants in all the focus group discussion meetings said are violated in relation to poverty.

CHAPTER SIX: MEANINGS OF THE EIGHT HUMAN RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH PRINCIPLES

As already mentioned above, all the six focus groups discussed the six research questions in the same order. They started by defining poverty. After that, they discussed what the eight human rights principles mean to an ordinary rural citizen. These principles, as reported in the literature review chapter and elsewhere, are participation and inclusion, universality and indivisibility, equality and non-discrimination, and accountability and the rule of law. The process which the participants went through discussing these principles has been called the engagement process. As it was discussed in the literature review and methodology chapters, if people are informed and empowered they begin to make sense of their circumstances. Therefore, the participants were asked to define poverty again. This was done to find out if being introduced to the rights-based approach and their discussions of the eight human rights principles would influence their perception of poverty. The participants were then asked to identify rights which they felt are violated in relation to what they had redefined as poverty. Then the participants were asked to identify rights-based interventions aimed at dealing with the identified poverty concept. Finally, the groups discussed what should comprise poverty eradication programmes and how they should be implemented.

In this chapter I will report and discuss what the participants said about each human right principle. Special attempts will be made to show how the groups progressed in their thinking and discussions from looking at the concepts in the light of their day-to-day experiences to what I have described as a deeper and broader understanding of what the concepts mean. Special mention should also be made that their day-to-day experiences are a product of their living circumstances and poverty conditions. It can therefore be argued that these deep meanings of the human rights principles came as an enlightening and energizing realization that their initial understanding was, in fact, a function of their lived experiences. This could mean that the consciousness and awareness of the participants were raised in the ‘engagement process’ as they discussed the eight human rights principles with fellow participants. As seen below and in subsequent chapters, there was renewed hope in the meetings such that the participants began making bold declarations that if they would be united, make a stand, demand and

defend what is already constitutionally theirs, their lives would be completely transformed.

Bearing in mind that what will be presented in these sections are peoples' experiences as they see life on a daily basis, special respect and care will be taken in order to do justice to these experiences. "Writing about another person's life is an awesome task, so one must proceed with a gentleness born from knowing that the subject and the author share the frailties of human mortality" (Niagel, cited in Harris, 2005:88). I have endeavoured to maintain the integrity of the ideas and arguments by carefully translating them as they were presented. Keeping in line with this commitment, I will further endeavour, where possible, to present this information in such a way that it portrays the continuum of thoughts as they emerged during the debates. The views ranged from what I have classified as shallow to deep. Shallow meanings in this context will refer to their initial understanding of the concept while deep meanings will refer to their realized understanding that

There is more to the concept than what we have been getting (Kabwazi EPA participant).

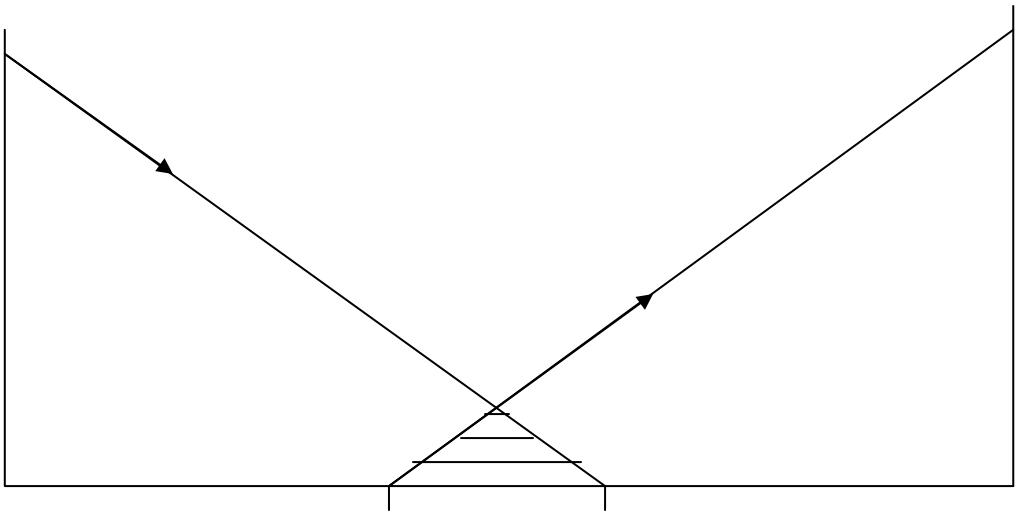
6.1 Participation

Participation was the first of the eight human rights principles to be discussed in all the focus group discussion meetings. As mentioned above, the meanings of each human right principle could be presented as a continuum. On one end are what I have referred to as the initial thoughts of the participants while on the other end are what I have referred to as developed and advanced thoughts that emerged through the course of the debates and discussions. We will therefore begin by looking at the initial thoughts and then follow them through to the deep end.

Diagram 11, below, illustrates the continuum of thoughts from shallow to deep on the meanings of the human rights principles. This process is an enlarged and expanded excerpt of the 'transition phase' which is in 'the engagement process' of the focus group discussions processes diagram on page 99 in the methodology chapter.

Diagram 11: The Transition Phase

Shallow / Initial thoughts Deep/Final thoughts



Dissatisfaction/Questioning

Frustrations

This diagram illustrates the continuum of thoughts on the meanings of the human rights principles. The participants in all the focus group discussion meetings were beginning with shallow meanings based on their every day experiences. As the debate and discussions continued, they would come to a place of dissatisfaction with their living circumstances. The dissatisfaction would lead them to questioning their current circumstances. Unless the masses are dissatisfied with the status quo change can not occur (Bos & Schuurmans, 2002). Indeed this phenomenon of beginning to question their current circumstances was repeated in all the meetings although the length and distinctiveness of the process differed from meeting to meeting. The frustrations would lead the participants to begin to critically examine the concepts. This critical examination of the human rights principles would culminate into what I have classified

as the deep meanings. While this was the trend, it is worth mentioning that as the participants progressed discussing the human rights principles, this continuum was becoming blurred. It could be explained that this occurred because the participants had developed a critical mindset after discussing the first four principles. This means that the participants' perspectives on the later human rights principles were quite advanced from the beginning as will be seen below.

6.1.1 Initial Meanings of Participation

To begin with, participation was viewed as involvement in various development projects regardless of level and extent of involvement. For example a female participant in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *Participation is being able to take part in various development programmes in Malawi.*

This initial view was echoed in almost all the meetings.

Participation was also viewed as

> *Taking part in anything that is happening with your free will without coercion.*

Other participants viewed participation in terms of making contributions to discussions taking place at local levels. One such example is what was said by a local leader in Kabwazi EPA. He said

> *Participation is involvement in a group that is discussing issues that affect our lives.*

This view was echoed by several participants in different focus group discussion meetings. However, what was said by a local leader in Linthipe EPA exemplifies these thoughts:

Where there is something happening, one should have the freedom of participating and being able to make a contribution towards what is being discussed.

An ex-DSNPP beneficiary focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA came up with a more inclusive view. They agreed that participation means involvement in discussions by all groups in society. A rapporteur of a sub group concluded when reporting her groups' discussions that participation means:

All concerned individuals including young people taking part in discussions.

It is worthy noting that the emphasis was on participation in a local context. These are a representative sample of a range of initial ideas on the meaning of participation which emerged in all the focus group discussion meetings. Different government and non-government organisation programmes have been implemented in their villages and the primary stakeholders themselves have at best been spectators. In the few instances where they have been consulted or sensitised about a new project, it has been after the project proposal has already been developed. Ife & Tesoriero (2006) call this type of consultation tokenism. In an attempt to satisfy some donor requirement, the primary stakeholders have been asked to participate after project proposals have already been developed.

6.1.2 The Transition

However, as discussions in the focus groups continued some participants voiced the view that despite their participation poverty remained. These views prompted these participants to begin to look at participation in a critical way. Indeed in each meeting what I would call 'opinion leaders' emerged with a more critical examination of their current level of participation and its implications. These individuals were crucial for moving the groups thinking beyond their current experiences. For instance, a group village headman in Linthipe EPA said

*Many times we are just invited to take part in something that they [*government and NGOs*] have already decided upon.*

A female ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA bemoaned the non-government organisations and government tendency to hide information and act in shrewdness. She said

> *Our participation is limited because the government and NGOs are not transparent.*

These comments became crucial for opening up a vent and a platform for the participants to start examining the concepts in a deeper and critical way. It was indeed a consistent pattern in the meetings to see 'the light coming on' among the participants as they realized that they could have been more involved in the development process.

From this point on, the discussions in the groups took a different tone as the participants begun to be assertive and critically examining their role as primary stakeholders in the development discourse. Several participants from different focus group discussion meetings talked about the tendency of non-government organisations not to involve the primary stakeholders in the planning and designing stages of their programmes and projects. An example of such comments was made by a leader in Linthipe EPA who said

> *Most times when organizations are coming with development projects they do not involve the people from the beginning. They decide and then after developing a project proposal that's when they come and ask people to be involved.*

One participant echoed this argument in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA and said

> *At a deeper level it [*participation*] involves taking part in what is being discussed from the beginning…like originating an idea from within the village other than government or NGOs deciding on behalf of the people what their development needs are…* .

One female ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA out of frustration said

> *We are taken advantage of in villages because most of the development activities are designed by the government or NGOs and we are just consulted at the end of the process.*

As the discussion became more critical some participants adjusted their original views on participation. For instance, a male ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Linthipe EPA said

> *Participation entails honest consultations with the person being assisted being the key player.*

A leader for a subgroup in Kabwazi EPA argued that despite being poor,

> *Poor people themselves have got aspirations and plans on how to get out of poverty.*

However,

> *For meaningful participation to take place, the (poor) people must be involved from the beginning* said a village headman in the same meeting.

He concluded by arguing that

> *If [*poor*] people were truly participating poverty would have already been eradicated.*

Originality and ownership of development programmes is another aspiration of the participants that came out strongly from the various focus group discussion meetings. I will present a quote which exemplifies the discussion around originality and ownership of programmes.

A local leader in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *To ensure maximum participation the development programmes should originate from the villages and the government and NGOs should just be contacted to provide technical or financial assistance.*

This idea of originating programmes from the village will be discussed later in detail.

A rapporteur for a subgroup in Kabwazi EPA ex-DSNPP beneficiaries' focus group discussion meeting argued that involvement in designing and implementing a programme

> *Helps that when the programme or project phases out, the villagers who articulated the programme in the first place will be able to continue with the initiative which will lead to sustainable development.*

These participants linked participation, ownership and sustainable development, a view that will be discussed in detail later in this thesis.

6.1.3 Conclusion

In conclusion therefore, the focus group participants believed that participation means involvement from the beginning. This thought was echoed throughout all the focus group discussion meetings that one should be involved from the time when a development programme is being articulated. Some participants and groups took this thought further by arguing that meaningful participation entails originating a development idea from the villages. This is in line with the argument that

> *The only person that knows poverty is the one living in poverty* which was voiced by a leader in Kabwazi EPA.

Such a view makes the poor person him/herself as the primary stakeholder and indeed a key player in the entire development discourse.

If the poor person is to become a major primary stakeholder and indeed a key player in the development discourse then there is need for a major shift in the development

paradigm. A female participant in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *No one should think on behalf of the poor person*

One group village headman in the same EPA put this same idea slightly different when he said

> *No government or NGO should write a project proposal regarding your village and then later after everything has been finished they should come to consult you.*

This is in line with what some influential development writers have been arguing for. For instance, Slim (1995; 2002) has argued for self reliance for the most disadvantaged groups. These arguments by these focus group discussion participants define a new role for government and non-government organisations. Instead of being programme articulators, designers and implementers they should become development facilitators. This will allow the primary stakeholders to develop relevant and strategic development programmes that will address local needs. As the participants argued, this will also lead to sustainable development because the primary stakeholders will own the programme and learn all managerial aspects of the programme. In this way when the project phases out, the primary stakeholders will continue managing the programme. This thought will be further discussed in detail later.

6.2 Inclusion

The second human rights principle that the groups discussed is inclusion. Again, the groups' ideas formed a continuum from shallow to deep thoughts. We will now explore these meanings starting from the shallow end. As it was with participation, most of the themes in these ideas were repeated by several participants from different meetings. I will give quotes which exemplify several of these ideas.

6.2.1 Initial Meanings of Inclusion

The groups initially viewed inclusion as belongingness. A male participant in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA said inclusion means

> *Being a part of what is happening.*

Other participants viewed inclusion as 'allowed access' into groups. The key thought was on 'being allowed' because this is what they were familiar with. The participants in the groups talked of experiences where they were not allowed to join some groups because of some prohibitive criteria or their poverty status. For instance, a participant in Kabwazi EPA said

> *There are some groups which have lots of benefits and the members of the group are normally protective and always want to keep others out.*

One issue that I observed when the participants were discussing the meaning of inclusion was their apparent acceptance of their circumstances. If they have been denied access to a group, they accepted it. If they have been allowed access they considered themselves lucky. For instance in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA, a local leader said

> *There are some groups where you are not allowed [*to join*] but others there is no problem.*

6.2.2 The Transition

As mentioned earlier, some participants began to express critical views of what inclusion means. These participants were arguing that inclusion is not a privilege but a right. For instance, a village headman participating in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said that regardless of their circumstances, inclusion is

> *Freedom of getting into a group and participate in what is happening.*

In all the meetings such sentiments were opening up a new focus and debate in the groups' discussions. There was a shift in focus from what is happening on the ground to what the word really means and ultimately what should be happening. This lead the groups towards what would be classified as deep meanings of inclusion.

6.2.3 Inclusion for All

In line with their new found voice, one female ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA described inclusion as

> *Having the right to join a group without being restricted by prohibitive conditions such as possession of assets or livestock.*

A female leader in the same meeting added

> *On a deeper level, a person should have the right to join a group without facing restrictions based on gender, tribe or education.*

A subgroup in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in the same EPA argued that

> *If development programmes would be articulated at village level, there would be a chance to have everyone involved and examine the [*inclusion*] conditions so that the most disadvantaged people are not left out. The reality is that most organisations that claim to be ending poverty are actually the ones that are increasing poverty in the villages*

Another dominant thought that gained popularity with most leaders in Kabwazi EPA was inclusion on a global stage. They defined inclusion as starting at a family level, then village, then Traditional Authority, district, national and finally international level. They argued that globalization should not just favour the rich and the powerful states. A local leader who works for a non-government organisation concluded by arguing that

> *As citizens of this nation, we deserve all available assistance from the government and the international community so that we can come out of*

poverty. We do not require handouts but what we need is access to resources so that we can work on our own and come out of poverty.

6.2.4 Conclusion

In all the focus group discussion meetings the participants went beyond defining inclusion and discussed strategies for doing away with prohibitive rules that impede inclusion. These ideas will be presented later in this thesis. However, it suffices to mention here as a way of summarizing this human right principle that in all the meetings, the organisations which provide development assistance to poor people were singled out with claims that they some times foster exclusion. The participants argued that these development agents enact regulations which are restrictive to some disadvantaged groups. The participants argued that if development programmes were articulated at village level, they would have the chance to have everyone involved examine the conditions and rules so that the most disadvantaged people are not left out.

Research conducted in Dedza by Concern Universal (Malawi) a development aid agency in 2001 found that the poor and most disadvantaged households are difficult to identify because most of the times they tend to be “invisible” (Concern universal, 2001:8). The research further found that the most disadvantaged are often not a “part of what is happening” and that they are “shy”. However at village level they are an integral part of the society. When development aid organisations hold meetings, the most disadvantaged are obscured by the fact that they have no voice unless someone speaks for them at the big meetings. However, things are different at the village meetings where they tend to participate and are well known. Therefore development programmes articulated at village level have a better chance to capture the most disadvantaged and have them included into the different programmes. This is normally not the case when a development programme is articulated outside the village setting.

6.3 Universality

The initial ideas of the meaning of universality could be categorized into three major themes: freedom to do whatsoever one likes, not being oppressive when pursuing one's rights and that no one should be discriminated against on any basis. We will discuss them in this particular order and then discuss the deep meanings later. As mentioned earlier, the participants' ideas formed a continuum ranging from shallow to deep in all the meetings.

To begin with, a subgroup in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA concluded that universality means

> *Everyone can do anything that they may want without someone stopping him.*

A female participant in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in the same EPA said universality means that

> *Everyone has rights and no one should be oppressed….they should be able to do what they want freely.*

One of the subgroups in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA concluded that universality means

> *"Development programmes should be open to everyone such that a person must be able to choose what to be involved in without any restrictions"*.

A leader in Kabwazi EPA lamented that

> *It is true that everyone has got rights but there are some closed doors somewhere which keep others from accessing their rights and some of the people that do that are actually here.* (This participant meant that some leaders in this focus group discussion meeting were involved in keeping some doors of opportunity closed for others. There was no immediate reaction from any one in the group when this statement was said).

In an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting, one female participant said universality means

> *Doing things freely without being oppressive to others.*

In this regard recognition was given to the fact that universality also entails that one should respect other's rights in the quest to satisfy their needs. This is a very important principle as it is in agreement with a key legal limit to personal freedoms; the right to swing one's arm ends where your colleague's nostril begins (Davis, 1974; UNDP, 2004).

The third theme that emerged was that no one should be discriminated against on any basis. This theme constituted a turning point in the debate. From this point on, the participants began examining the principle of universality of human rights more critically and with an inclination towards human rights.

6.3.1 Universality for all

A village leader in Kabwazi EPA leader's focus group discussion meeting said universality means

> *No one should be discriminated against on the basis of gender or age or marital status or education level.*

Several other leaders in the group concurred with this view.

The debates that followed were more enriched and affirmative. For instance, there were thoughts and ideas from the different focus group discussion meetings that began looking at universality of rights as an entitlement. As observed above, as the discussions progressed the transition was becoming shorter and blurred as the participants in all the meetings were becoming more critical in their definitions to the remaining human rights principles. It could be said that their awareness and consciousness levels were becoming

heightened. This becomes more apparent as we discuss the remaining five human rights principles.

A subgroup in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA argued that

> *Everyone has rights…whether poor or rich, young or old, living in town or in a rural area as long as he or she is a person.*

An old female participant in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting in the same EPA said

> *Any one that is born has freedom to do things without being segregated against on any basis whether gender, economic status, height, education or any thing.*

Another participant in the same meeting added

> *It means, for instance, when there are people conducting a development meeting and they are discussing in English, there should be some one that could be translating for you so that you can effectively take part in the discussions.*

A village headman in Linthipe EPA leaders' focus group discussion meeting said

> *Regardless of age and gender, all people have all rights… It is greedy people who are causing all these problems because by creation we are all the same.*

Another interesting thought which emerged in several focus group discussion meetings is that communities and individuals themselves are to blame for not standing up for their rights. An ex-DSNPP beneficiary in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA said

> *Sometimes we the people are to blame because we focus on what we do not have and think that those who have more than us also possess more rights than us when in actual sense rights have nothing to do with what one has or does not have.*

Another participant in the meeting added

> *Most times it is the people themselves that choose to abrogate their rights because they feel unworthy to participate in some programmes because of their socio-economic status or education or gender.*

Finally, on universality of human rights, we discuss the concept of universal assistance to the disadvantaged and marginalised groups in order to eradicate poverty. Universal assistance to the disadvantaged and marginalised groups featured very highly in all the focus group discussion meetings. Here is what a village headman said in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA which encapsulates the thoughts of many participants;

> *Problems of poverty are getting worse because when assistance is coming they tend to discriminate against some sections of the society. For instance there are some things like clothes, food and farm inputs that come specifically for HIV positive people only or only orphans and the rest are actually left out. But we think that if there was a universal approach to development, we could have seen poverty come to an end.*

Having talked about the need for a universal approach to dealing with disadvantage, he went further to say that after all most of the assistance does not even get to the people in need.

> *Mostly it is the leaders that get well off and not the targeted people. We have got lots of disadvantaged people in the villages and they are not being assisted at all.*

6.3.2 Conclusion

This village headman argued that if there was a universal approach to accessing assistance, then the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups could stand a chance to receive some assistance. As already stated else where, $ 2.3 trillion has been spent so

far on poverty eradication programmes world wide (Easterly, 2006) but poverty is on the increase. This leader demonstrated that the disadvantaged people themselves are aware that development aid is provided by different organisations to the government of Malawi although the disadvantaged people do not benefit.

> *We hear on the radio of all the assistance that comes to Malawi but we do not see it come down to the most disadvantaged* said the village headman in concluding his observations.

Development practitioners and researchers have debated for decades the pros and cons of targeted and universal assistance. However, it can be argued that when there are so many disadvantaged people it is important to adopt a universal approach to assistance. There are lots of targeted assistance for instance that goes to people who are HIV positive when all other equally disadvantaged people are not given any access to an alternative kind of assistance. This approach leads to two problems: stigma and isolation. During the final evaluation survey for the Dedza Safety Net Pilot Project, it was found that exclusively targeting only the orphan lead to the orphan being isolated from the entire household because this meant that the carer has to prepare separate meals for the orphan and something different for her own children (Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002). The orphans were viewed as distinct and separate from the entire household.

In practical terms, this approach is divisive and fails to take into consideration the fact that this assistance does not cover everything that the orphan or disadvantaged person requires (Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002). Experiences with the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project demonstrated that the assistance was not enough to last for the whole month and ultimately the orphan depended on the household for all his/her survival (Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002; Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002). Therefore the targeting mechanism should be carefully developed realising that support to the household needs to be sustainable and more realistic. The participants in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries meeting expressed the community's desire to take care of orphans and the most disadvantaged. But what they were requesting was access to resources. They argued that

What we need as caregivers for the disadvantaged and most vulnerable is access to loans and fertilizer…We want to take care of the orphans and the most disadvantaged right in our villages the rapporteur summarised the group's discussions.

Another issue that may require examination is the question of monitoring. It is this researchers submission that monitoring could best be carried out by the entire community in which the orphan lives to ensure that the orphan is benefiting from the assistance. If the programme is community owned, that is, if designing, targeting, implementation and monitoring is done by the community themselves, they will be able to pick up all forms of abuses of the programme i.e. if the orphan or the disadvantaged person is not being assisted. Equally, just supporting HIV positive people leads to isolation. This would be very dangerous as when the HIV positive person develops AIDS s/he needs the support of the entire community for care and transportation to the hospital should need arise. This means that universal targeting would be more appropriate as both the orphan and the AIDS patients are part of the disadvantaged community. Therefore support to the household will be effective in building strong social networks that are the best support mechanism for chronic illnesses and supporting orphans. This will help prevent the orphans from leaving their villages and relatives and ending up on the streets. With a wide range of assistance programmes available that have been designed by the rural poor themselves, all disadvantaged groups would have something to choose from that serves them well or better meets their needs. This would really stand to its meaning – universal approach to poverty eradication.

6.4 Indivisibility of Human Rights

Indivisibility of human rights was one of the most difficult concepts for the participants in all the meetings. The main reason why indivisibility was problematic is because it does not have a direct Chichewa translation. However, as they discussed and debated, they became quite comfortable with this concept as it will be seen below. As was the trend, the initial thoughts were in light of their experiences as compared to what they were coming up with later in the discussions although by this time the transition was quite blurred.

6.4.1 Initial Meanings of Indivisibility

To most participants, indivisibility of human rights meant that

> *When one receives something they do not have to share with anyone because it will be like sharing their rights*

This definition was the conclusion from a subgroup in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA.

A related thought was that

> *Rights are like peace of the heart which can not be shared. People can share property but can not share peace which is the same as rights* said a participant.

6.4.2 Deep Meanings of Indivisibility

As the discussions continued the participants in all the meetings began to critically examine the concept of indivisibility and looked at it from a totally different angle. For instance, they argued that indivisibility of rights means that

> *Rights are a gift from God and no one has the power to take it away from you* said a male ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA.

A local leader participating in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA said indivisibility means that

> *Every person has rights regardless of education levels and therefore should be allowed to have all the rights.*

Leaders in Kabwazi EPA took the concept further by asserting that

> *God is the one who gives us rights and therefore He is the one who is better placed to monitor these issues of human rights* said a local group village headman.

The underlying thread in all these arguments is that human rights are divinely given to all human beings and as such no human being has power to change that.

Another thought that came out strongly is that indivisibility means that

> *No one has any power to reduce or increase one's rights because they are indivisible. This means that its either one has all the rights or they do not have any rights. …there is nothing like get half and I will keep the other half for you.*

A participant in a mixed group in Kabwazi EPA said indivisibility means that

> *A person is born with rights and as such no one can take away or reduce your rights.*

A village headman in leaders focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA argued in the same line of thought and said

> *No one has the power to arbitrate how much rights one can enjoy because rights are not given by man since one is born with all rights.*

6.4.3 Conclusion

The transition was very blurred in this principle. Most participants in the meetings had a critical mindset from quite an early stage when they were discussing this principle. The central themes presented range from comparing rights with an abstract concept like peace to an understanding that all human beings are born with all rights and therefore no one has any power to arbitrate how many rights one can enjoy at any particular time. There was also an understanding from many participants that rights are God-given and therefore He is better placed to monitor issues of human rights.

6.5 Equality

The human right principle of equality was looked at from different angles. The ideas which the participants raised could be grouped into several themes. The first few themes are a bit different from the last four because the last four are more assertive and include what the participants suggested they should be doing to change the current situation. There is no transition at all in this human rights principle. I will begin with the first five and then proceed to present the last four. The first theme is equality by birth. The argument was that

> *Every human being is equal because we are all born in the world through the same way* said a female Ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Linthipe EPA.

Leaders in Kabwazi EPA took the argument further by examining the source of inequality. A local village headman argued that inequality is not of their own making.

> *The problem is not here [*meaning at village level]*…but the leaders and those that run organisations are the ones which are responsible for all the problems that we face. It is more of kleptocracy which has been built into the system. It is difficult to change things from here because we are on the receiving end and not initiating end.*

A primary school teacher participating in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA argued that equality means that

> *The laws of natural justice should apply equally.*

Another thought that came out strongly was that

> *The group laws should be able to apply equally to all group members.*

Another local primary school teacher in the same meeting added

While we accept that there are differences among people because of the position someone holds in society, the rules that govern them should be applied equally.

All the above thoughts could hardly be classed as shallow. However as I mentioned above, the only difference with the ideas which will follow is that those coming were assertive and action-oriented. I will now present examples of these action-oriented meanings of equality as they came from the participants in all the six focus group discussion meetings.

Firstly, a rapporteur for a subgroup in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA concluded his group's discussions by saying that equality means that

When the family is facing financial hardships the girl-child should not be forced out of school while the boy-child continues to go to school…they have equal rights.

It could be argued that this culturally accepted financial coping strategy locks the girl-child into an unstoppable downward poverty spiral taking unborn generations with her.

Participants in this mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA continued identifying cultural practices which work to the disadvantage of the girl-child. A male participant in the meeting identified parenting practices which also lead to inequality between the boy and girl-child and ultimately violation of the rights of the girl-child.

The other problem is the way parents bring up a boy-child and a girl-child…They advise the girl-child to keep to the kitchen and learn the female roles while the boy-child is encouraged to keep away from the kitchen.

Some participants in the group disagreed with their colleague and argued that if the girl-child is raised up and taught male roles, this

Would be problematic because when a girl-child is raised up like a boy-child she would not get married because the males would be afraid of her. They would be saying she is noisy and aggressive.

These differing views demonstrate that there is more to equality than just levelling the playing field. They also demonstrate the dilemma in the minds of the parents when they are weighing different options when it comes to what is good for the girl-child. Further, this view also shows the long standing cultural perceptions that girl-children should be trained and prepared for marriage. This means that at times when the boy-child is going to school or doing his home work, the girl-child is forced to do house chores or attend cultural initiation ceremonies which are intended to prepare her for family life (Kanjaye, 2001). Statistics show that more girls drop out of school as compared to boys in later years of primary school and one of the contributing factors is being constantly bombarded by these messages about marriage (UNstats, 2007; Malawi SDNP, 2001). The girl-child is instilled with a sense that it does not matter how she performs in school because she will be taken care of by her husband. In some cultures, like the Yao culture in Southern Malawi, the impression is that the girl-child is in school waiting to reach puberty so that she could be married.

Another view of equality that resonated with lots of participants is equal access to resources and development without being discriminated against on the basis of political affiliations. This view came in the light of a long standing campaign strategy in Malawian politics where if your region has voted for an opposition member of parliament, you have little or no access at all to government-sponsored development projects. The participants quoted some members of parliament and government ministers who allegedly threaten people not to vote for opposition members of parliament or face consequences. An ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA said equality means

> *We should not discriminate on the basis of where people live, or race, or whether the President comes from your locality or not. All Malawians are equal and no one should be discriminated against on the basis of gender, age or anything.*

An elderly female participant in an ex-DSNPP beneficiary's focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA defined equality by using a Malawian proverb. She said

> *Equality means 'liwiro la panchenga nkuyambira limodzi'.*

The literal translation for this proverb is that when you are racing against one another on the beach or sand, you should not give someone a head-start because if one is a few metres ahead, those behind may never catch up owing to the challenge of racing on the sand.

A primary school teacher in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA argued that

> *When we go deeper, we find that the major problem with equality is that there are some people in life that are already ahead of others and if you use equality without using affirmative action to support the disadvantaged groups, equality looses its meaning and its impact becomes negative.*

A male participant in the group chipped in and added

> *Sometimes it's important to understand that men and women are faced with different challenges in life and equality would mean mitigating negative impact on the most vulnerable groups like women who are negatively affected by some biological responsibilities like child bearing and rearing.*

The second example given concerns the events that followed a change in the Malawian political system in 1994 from a single party state to multiparty democracy. In line with the principles of democracy, there was liberalization of the economy and markets soon after the change. This was a participant's narration of the aftermath of the change in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA:

> *When Malawi changed to multiparty democracy in 1994 nothing was done to level the playing field…Even though the government said people had economic rights, 13 years now…the results are disheartening. The rich have become richer while the poor have become poorer because the playing field was never levelled.*

One female participant in the meeting concluded this argument and said

> *So equality calls for the field to be levelled first and then the people can be told to compete.*

6.5.1 Conclusion

In this section we have looked at what the participants in the various focus group discussion meetings said was the meaning of equality for them. These meanings have been classed into several themes. Other than what has been the general trend with the first four principles, there was no transition from shallow to deep meanings of equality. This is due to the fact that the participants by this time had begun thinking critically from the word go. It could be said that their awareness and consciousness had risen by this time. A slight variation was observed though in these meanings of equality. The first five defined equality from more of a theoretical perspective while the last four were more assertive and action-oriented intended at changing either cultural practices or the way things are done currently.

One of the key issues in this section is the need to level the playing field to ensure equality. The point on levelling the playing field was in reference to the fact that when Malawi changed to multiparty democracy, the markets were liberalised. Those which were well-off at that time took advantage of the liberalised markets and have increased in their wealth while those who were poor had no means of competing in the open market. This has seen the poor becoming poorer. The participants in the focus group discussion meetings identified the reason that it was because the government did not help those who were poor at that time or enact deliberate policies to support the poor so that they could equally compete along side those who were well to do. We will now proceed to discussing the meanings of non-discrimination.

6.6 Non-discrimination

In this section I will discuss the meanings of non-discrimination as described by the participants. As in the previous human right principle of equality, participants had developed a critical way of looking at the principles by this time. Their awareness and

consciousness were heightened. This means that there was no transition from shallow to deep meanings. From the start, the participants were critical in the way they defined non-discrimination. These meanings have been classed into six themes.

Firstly, a female ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA viewed non-discrimination as

> *Being able to be given information on what is going on.*

A subgroup in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA concluded that non-discrimination means

> *All human beings must have equal chances to receive development aid without being discriminated against on any basis.*

A closely related idea came from another subgroup in the same meeting and a mixed focus group meeting in Kabwazi EPA where they viewed non-discrimination as

> *Every human being should be allowed to participate in everything that is happening in the village without being discriminated against.*

A local non-government organisation worker in Kabwazi EPA said non-discrimination means that

> *There should be no favouritism.*

A local church pastor in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA looked at non-discrimination from a different but important angle. He argued that

> *When organisations are coming with development programmes they should not use targeting criteria that discriminates against some sections of society.*

An elderly group village headman in Kabwazi EPA used a local proverb to define non-discrimination.

Padzenje pakalowa mbewa ndikumba ndekha koma pakalowa njoka ndiye anzanga thandizeni he said.

Before I give the literal English translation for this Malawian proverb here is some background information: Among some tribes in Malawi mice (not rats!) are a delicacy. So after harvesting crops, people go out into the fields to dig for mice. If there are more people involved in digging one mice burrow, it means each person will get fewer mice after they share. So the tendency is to dig alone or with a family relative so that you do not have to share the catch. However, when it is a snake that has gone into a burrow close to one's house, the tendency is to call for more people to help dig so that you can help each other to kill the snake. So this proverb literally means

When mice have gone into a burrow you say I will dig alone but when it's a snake you need assistance from other people.

This proverb encapsulates the meaning of non-discrimination. This elderly group village headman concluded by saying

Where there are good things involved, people do the things in secrecy…but when there are bad things involved like a funeral…everyone is invited to take part or contribute.

A rapporteur for a subgroup in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA argued that non-discrimination means

No one should be disadvantaged because of their gender…or there should be nothing like this is a male only career or task…If a female wants to join into anything that traditionally has been viewed as a male only task like digging graves or driving heavy duty vehicles she should be allowed.

Another member of the subgroup added

In the same way no one should be stopped on the basis of their financial status…if one wants to get a loan, they should not be discriminated against on

the basis of economic disadvantage. If a woman wants to go to school she should be allowed without being stopped.

The rapporteur for the subgroup in Linthipe EPA concluded her group's discussions by saying

Everyone has the desire to come out of poverty regardless of how they look or what others think about that person....if people were walking around with their thoughts written on their foreheads, we should be able to see that they also desire to come out of poverty she concluded.

A female participant in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in the same EPA expressed her disappointment with the tendency of some people in the villages who are only concerned with their personal betterment.

"The problem is that when the organisations come with discriminative criteria in a village, those who qualify will not fight for those who have been discriminated against. In fact, those who qualify will be happy to monopolise the benefits of the programme" she said.

Another participant in this same meeting who is also a group village headman, in response to the above concern said

We just have to agree in all the villages that we stand up and defend our rights. We need to be strong and have an equal approach to dealing with NGOs and government programmes that have some discriminatory clauses in their regulations. They should not be allowed in our villages. If these discriminatory NGO or government programmes meet resistance every where they go, then they will be forced to rethink their approaches the leader argued.

In this regard non-discrimination was viewed as entailing a collective and united stand to dealing away with discriminatory regulations to development programmes. An example of the discrimination referred to here by the participants included the

requirement for collateral assets or livestock before one could join and access the benefits of a group or programme.

Finally, some participants however argued that while the focus in the discussions was on *Not being discriminated against*, they felt that some times the poor people themselves are to blame.

These participants argued that another form of discrimination existed among the poorest themselves. One male participant in Linthipe ex-DSNPP beneficiaries' focus group discussion meeting argued that

> *A sense of worthlessness limits our participation in different development programmes and therefore we discriminate against ourselves.*

Another participant concurred with him in the same meeting and said

> *Many poor people shun development meetings because they are not educated.*

A cross section of social problems and development literature supports this position (Lewis, 1959). This tendency was also noted by Concern Universal (2001). This image is what society accords them and after some time they begin to accept and see themselves through that image. When this occurs, the poor people form a subculture of poverty within the mainstream culture (Lewis, 1959). It can be argued that they begin to see themselves as 'worthy of poverty' and therefore they resign from all attempts to come out of poverty. While this could be true in some instances, my research did not find wide spread evidence among the participants to substantiate this position. As reported under the various themes and principles, the participants expressed a strong desire to come out of poverty regardless of their present circumstances. In all the focus group discussion meetings, participants strongly expressed optimism that if given access to opportunities they will come out of poverty.

6.6.1 Conclusion

In this section I have presented what the participants in the focus group discussion meetings said were the meanings of non-discrimination. These meanings have been classed into six themes. At the end I have briefly commented on the final theme that dealt with the issue of a subculture of poverty. That while some participants talked about the issue of self discrimination, overall, this research did not find evidence of widespread poor self image. On the contrary the participants demonstrated a genuine desire to come out of poverty in all the focus group discussion meetings. I will now discuss the human right principle of accountability.

6.7 Accountability

The participants in the focus group discussion meetings defined accountability from different perspectives. As has been the trend in the last two principles, there was no transition for this principle as well because the participants were critical in their perspectives. Therefore there are no shallow and deep meanings for this principle. To begin with,

> *Accountability means being faithful* said a female participant in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA.

A rapporteur for a subgroup in Linthipe EPA reported that accountability means

> *When you have an opportunity to lead a group, it is important that all the people should know what is happening in the group and not just a small part of the group.*

An ex-DSNPP beneficiary participating in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting in the same EPA said that accountability

> *Means that our local leaders should share all benefits of development projects evenly among their subjects.*

An ex-DSNPP beneficiary participating in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA defined accountability as

> *Doing things without deceit.*

After a lengthy debate between members of different subgroups in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries meeting in Kabwazi EPA, one male participant summarised this debate in the following way…

> *In a deeper way, people should be able to go to any organisation which is implementing a programme in your village and request any information regarding a development work that is taking place. You should be able to request documentation for any work happening because that would help you to hold the implementing agencies accountable. Anyone that is accountable will show you the documentation including the budgets and the accounts. You will be able to see the targets and how much has been spent so far and the remaining funds. These principles of human rights are very important because they empower the local men so that they can stand up and defend their rights. These principles do not empower the government but the disadvantaged and marginalised people to be active citizens in a democracy.*

This view was strongly shared by other participants in different groups as well.

Another participant in the same group added

> *The villagers themselves should not look down upon themselves but should be able to follow what is happening in different development programmes.*

The idea of having access to project documentation attracted a lot of debate in all the meetings.

Another leader in the group added

We need to hold our leaders and organisations accountable by having project documents and checking what is happening in the project. We need to track the progress in terms of targets and outputs.

While accessing project or programme documentation was viewed as a prerequisite to accountability, some leaders warned that most organisations would not accept a requirement to show the documents. A village headman said that apart from the fact that some organisations would resist producing the documents, he also warned that there would be resistance from higher local authorities like group village headmen and Traditional Authorities who are both above the village headman (see **Diagram 12** which shows the power structure at the local level). This leader shared a sad experience of what transpired when he had a suggestion to make to an organisation that had gone to drill a borehole in his village.

There is a problem when a village headman tries to go to the office of an organisation and check for project documentation…it becomes difficult because one has to follow the protocols. This means that a village headman has to start seeking permission from the Group Village Headman and then the Traditional Authority and after that that's when one can visit the project's office. So if any of these higher authorities are not willing to assist in monitoring the progress of the project, they would be stumbling blocks. In the process some things go unchecked.

For instance, he continued, *"There was a time when an NGO wanted to drill a borehole in our village during a rainy season. I told them that they could not do it then because the water table was very high and the water would easily be found. I requested them to come and drill the borehole after the rainy season so that we could get water at a deeper level which would be available throughout the year. When I had suggested that they said 'You do not want any development in your village…we are going to other villages that will accept to have a borehole drilled even in the rainy season'. So they left our village. I went to the office of the NGO and talked to the manager who told me that I was being silly by trying to look clever and making demands! He told me that this confirmed that I did not want development in my village. He finally told me that they were*

> *going to consider whether they should come back to drill the borehole in my village or not. After a few weeks they came back and drilled the borehole but it was still in the middle of the rainy season. So we only use that borehole during the rainy season and as I am speaking now there is no water because its no longer rainy season…Is that sustainable development?*

Therefore according to this participant, accountability entails development primary stakeholders taking responsibility of their own future and be proactive in monitoring progress in development activities.

Several leaders in this same meeting shared several more views. One leader shared his optimism that one day Malawi will get out of poverty.

> *I don't think that Malawi can never get there* he said while attracting laughter from the whole group.

> *I think as Malawians we are too docile and we do not want to take the challenge of being vigilant in initiating and monitoring development activities… One day we will get there. The thing is that little by little as people get enlightened they will begin to take up the responsibility…If our leaders and the politicians were interested in developing this nation they should have done that already.*

Another local leader who is also a primary school teacher added

> *Another problem is that you* (meaning me the researcher) *have come here and we are discussing all these things but it will be the same you that will turn against us. When you get employed and start earning a lot of money you will forget about us and all the information that we have discussed today.*

The principle of accountability prompted the participants to examine some of the development approaches that the government of Malawi has been using for the past four decades. One of these approaches has been providing funding to Members of Parliament (MP) on a monthly basis to hold development meetings in their constituencies. Expected outcomes from such meetings are identification of priority local development

projects which are submitted for funding from government. These projects sometimes can also be funded by these funds provided to the Members of Parliament by government or by non-government organisations. A male participant raised this issue in a mixed group focus discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA and expressed the need for Members of Parliament to be accountable to the electorate and not government any longer. He said

> *Members of Parliament receive money on a monthly basis for development programmes in their constituencies but they are never accountable…they are given money to hold development meetings and not their political party meetings. But they never come to hold development meetings and one wonders if at all we are making any progress. Malawi is very small and surely it can't take 43 years to end poverty in Malawi. Malawi has been independent since 1964 but there is still a lot of poverty because the government and the leaders are not accountable to the populace.*

This same view was expressed by a village headman in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in the same EPA. Although the point of emphasis is slightly different, he also proposed accountability of development players to the rural disadvantaged and marginalised groups. He said

> *There is a lot of money that has been coming to Malawi since 1964 but poverty is on the increase. When the donors come to Malawi to inspect development programmes that they are funding, they make the mistake of staying in the capital city and think that that is how the whole country is. They should be coming to meet the rural people and talk to us so that they should understand the problems that we are facing. It is the only way to truly see what is happening on the ground and perhaps decide of changing their funding strategy…we hope you (meaning me the researcher) will help us and bring about some changes in the lives of many people.*

6.7.1 Conclusion

As demonstrated by the foregoing discussions and examples provided by these participants, accountability holds the key to development of many poor communities. It could be said that accountability requires close attention if the doom of millions of poor people is going to be averted. There is no doubt that there is need for governments and non-government organisations to be more accountable. While the emphasis over the last three decades has been on making the government and non-government organisations more accountable to their donors and other development partners, the above discussions call for a more sober examination of this position. Continued funding and goodwill by the donor community and other development partners is an indication that they are satisfied with the current levels of accountability. Indeed the developing governments and non-government organisations are more concerned with meeting the funding and reporting requirements regardless of the outcomes of their interventions. When this requirement has been satisfied they are provided with more funding.

The so called evaluation and stakeholder meetings take place in large hotels and big cities far removed from where the project was being implemented such that the primary stakeholders have no input at all, let alone a chance to explain what has been happening on the ground. In this way good reports continue to be written and the donors continue to fund government and nongovernment organisations while the poor are getting poorer in the face of increased donor aid and multilateral organisations funding. It is my submission that the time has come to re-examine the entire development process and what has been considered traditionally as accountability. To who should programme implementing agencies, local and national governments, and non-government organisations be accountable? Who should have the primary responsibility of holding them accountable?

There are many classic examples from Malawi of misappropriated accountability responsibilities that I can draw data from. There are so many primary schools in rural Malawi that are in inoperable conditions while the final reports indicate that these schools were well built and the contractors duly paid. These final reports also indicate that these schools have been supplied with furniture and fitted with top class facilities. All that these contractors did was to connive with some unscrupulous government

officials to issue a fake completion certificate and get paid for a job they didn't even finish. In a classic case, this type of corruption even involved the then head of state Dr. Bakili Muluzi and some government ministers between 1994 and 2004 (Madise, 2007; Malawi News Online, 1996). To date all the MK187 million (2.2 million US $) that was lost in this way has never been recovered and the big fish have never been brought to justice. One of the then ministers Mr. Sam Mpasu has just been convicted in the last few days for his involvement in another corruption case involving a British firm, 14 years after the crime was committed (Africa News Online, 2008). The pathetic thing is that it is not the children of the government officials that have no classrooms. It is the children of the most disadvantaged and marginalised rural Malawians that pay the blunt price for such high level corruption. The participants to the focus group discussion meetings emphasized and demanded that power should be given to the primary stakeholders. They argued that this is where it belongs and it is going to be used for the intended purpose for the betterment of their lives and their children's future.

6.8 Rule of Law

Rule of law was the last of the eight human rights principles to be discussed in all the focus group discussion meetings. As mentioned above, at this point the participants' awareness and consciousness levels were high and therefore they looked critically at the concept of rule of law as well. To begin with, a leader in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *The rule of law means that no one is above the law* he said.

A male participant in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries meeting in Linthipe EPA said that rule of law means

> *Doing things following the agreed upon rules. Anything including a family has rules and people should follow the set rules.*

The above view was shared by a cross section of participants in different meetings.

A female participant during a plenary session said

> *Even at household level, both men and women should do things following the agreed upon guidelines.*

She gave an example of a trend which affects most households every year. She said during the rainy season when they are cultivating in their fields

> *The men make sure that when he wakes up very early in the morning, he wakes you up and says lets go to the farm. We work together the whole day until late in the afternoon…when you come home you are both tired but he sits down and waits for dinner to be prepared by you. All this time we discuss and agree that when we sell our produce we will use the money for such and such purpose. But when that time comes and the money is now in his pockets…he changes his language…he starts speaking English to confuse you and he spends all the money on things that you never discussed and agreed upon.*

A female ex-DSNPP participant in the group concluded the group's discussions by asserting that rule of law means that

> *The government should do things following the constitution without flouting its own rules.*

Another view that resonated strongly with most participants in many meetings was that

> *If Malawi was being governed based on these eight human rights principles there should have been development across the whole country and not just in the home village of the President* said a group village headman in Kabwazi EPA.

A rapporteur for a subgroup in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in the same EPA summarised their discussions by saying

> *Because things are not being done following the eight human rights principles poverty is on the increase instead of decreasing.*

As already reported above, some participants viewed the rule of law as meaning that no one is above the law. However, this view was discussed further and in greater detail in some meetings with a slight change in emphasis. The participants in some meetings emphasized that no one is above the law "at all levels". This was in reference to the tendency of politicians in high ranking positions who consider themselves as untouchables and therefore violate the constitution and pervert the law to satisfy their selfish ambitions. A male ex-DSNPP beneficiary said

> *All people should strictly follow the rules and observe all set regulations. There should be no one above the law. There should be no favouritism in applying the rules. When the government does something not in accordance with the rules, the local citizens should take it to court. Even an NGO should be taken to court if they can not account for project funds. There is a lot of development aid that comes to Malawi but because we are not diligent in holding our leaders accountable, the money just disappears in thin air.*

A local leader in Linthipe EPA cautioned that

> *The rule of law should not just be restricted to government…even at village level and when implementing development programmes in particular, there should be adherence to the agreed upon rules.*

6.8.1 Conclusion

From the preceding discussions on the rule of law, it could be argued that the participants viewed the rule of law to have three dimensions. The first dimension deals with following the set rules and regulations whether it is government, nongovernment organisations, the local leadership and at family level. The second dimension deals with defining who the people in higher positions and government accountable to. And the third dimension deals with a set mechanism for holding accountable those in positions of authority when they flout the rules. It was in the framework of these three dimensions that the participants in all the focus group discussion meetings demanded that primary stakeholders should be empowered to hold leaders accountable at all government levels and all village committee levels. The participants felt that with the primary stakeholders

empowered to play a major role in monitoring development programmes, cheating and failure to complete development programmes would be eliminated. The participants in the focus group discussion meetings demanded a greater involvement and control of the development process. These ideas and demands were repeated under various topics throughout all the focus group discussion meetings. I will discuss these and the other issues in detail later.

After the participants in all the focus group discussion meetings had discussed the eight human rights principles, they were asked to discuss the meaning of poverty again. The results of that discussion have already been presented in the Definitions of Poverty Chapter. I will now proceed to present human rights which the participants argued that are violated in the context of poverty.

CHAPTER SEVEN: RIGHTS THE PARTICIPANTS IDENTIFIED AS VIOLATED

In this chapter we will discuss a number of rights which the participants identified that are crucial when it comes to poverty eradication. These rights were specifically singled out because the participants felt that if these rights were honoured then poverty would be eradicated. So after redefining poverty from a rights-based perspective, the next question which these participants in all the focus group discussion meetings discussed was which rights they thought were currently violated in relation to poverty. The following are rights and human rights principles which the participants in the different focus group discussion meetings identified. I will also present some quotes which exemplify the views of these participants.

7.1 Access to Information

The participants identified access to information as one of rights that is violated in relation to poverty. This was not restricted to government and non-government organisations transactions only but also at local village levels. The participants bemoaned the current prevalent tendency by the government and non-government organisations where as one participant said:

> *We are just told what is happening and we are not consulted* said a female ex-DSNPP beneficiary taking part in a beneficiaries' only focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA.

A local leader participating in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA had this to say

> *The government is also secretive and does not tell the citizens the truth.*

At the local level, the participants identified the conduct of some village headmen which as a female ex-DSNPP beneficiary said

> *When there are loans coming to the villages, the village headmen do not announce but they just share the loans without letting others know about it.*

Another ex-DSNPP beneficiary in the same meeting corroborated this tendency by sharing his own experience which had occurred just a few months before this focus group discussion meeting. As a brief background to this experience, every year the Government of Malawi distributes coupons which are used to redeem a 'farmers' starter pack'. The packs contained 2 kg of fertilizer and 1 kg of maize seed. These packs were intended to support those who could not afford to purchase seed and fertilizer. The Starter Pack as it is commonly known around the villages in rural Malawi was part of a wider poverty alleviation initiative by the government and its donor community. This is what he said,

> *When they were distributing coupons for free fertilizer and seed, we just heard that they had been distributed without even the most deserving poor knowing what was happening… They were even distributing the coupons secretly at night.*

An ex-DSNPP beneficiary participating in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA talked about the tendency of some village headmen who

> *When there is a development programme that is not offering financial or other incentives, the village headman wants everyone to take part, but if there is a bit of cash being paid out, many poor disadvantaged people are discriminated against.*

Such experiences were echoed through out all the meetings. When asked to defend themselves, the local leadership argued that it's not their fault because they only received very few coupons from government and they thought it would have caused havoc in the villages if everyone was invited at the distribution centre. They argued that this forced them to distribute the coupons only to the neediest secretly. After heated debates among the participants, they resolved that even if the village heads were only given very few coupons it was important to call for an open village meeting as this would help them to be transparent and accountable.

7.2 Access to Opportunities and Resources

The second right participants identified as being violated was access to opportunities and resources like loans. The participants in particular bemoaned the tendency of many non-government organisations and financial institutions that segregate against poor people. An ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA said,

> *We are not allowed access to loans even if it's for purchasing fertilizer because they say we do not have collateral assets.*

Another ex-DSNPP beneficiary in the same meeting concurred with her. He added that

> *They only give loans to people that are already rich and anyone who is poor is left out.*

A rapporteur of a sub group in the meeting narrated his groups predicament which he said is a scenario that is repeated every growing season. He said,

> *We work hard in our fields year by year but our harvest is always poor because we do not have access to farm inputs…and this locks us up in a generational poverty. Like last growing season, the village headmen were only choosing two people in a village to receive coupons for free farm inputs.*

This statement was made after accusations that the government and the local leadership were involved in corruption because the rest of the coupons were allegedly sold to private traders who were travelling through the villages purchasing the coupons.

A quick investigation of such trends revealed wide spread abuse of the scheme by the rich and powerful. One such case that caught my attention involved the First Lady (the late wife to the current President of Malawi). It was reported in the local press and substantiated by Police reports that she was found with thousands of coupons already signed for. She used these coupons to collect the free farm inputs and dropped them at her farm. When asked to explain where she got the coupons from, she said that she got them from poor people themselves who could not afford to cultivate and had given them

to her charitable organisation. She argued that her organisation takes care of orphans and as such it was necessary to access the farm inputs which will be used to produce maize to support orphans and other vulnerable people. In spite of repeated calls by the general public to have her prosecuted for abuse of office, no one was bold enough to bring her to justice (Nyasa Times, June 04, 2008).

7.3 Accountability

The participants bemoaned the tendency of government officials, local leaders and non-government organisations to violate the principle of accountability. The participants gave different examples of cases where this principle has been violated.

> *They all lack accountability…* said an ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Linthipe EPA.

A rapporteur for a subgroup in the meeting appealed to leaders that

> *Those selected to leadership positions should ensure that they are accountable and do not enact by laws that will discriminate some sections of the society when laying the rules for their committee or organisation.*

A local leader in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA said government does

> *Not give power to beneficiaries of development programmes.*

A female ex-DSNPP beneficiary in the meeting also pointed out that the other problem associated with accountability is the power structure and complaint procedures at local level. She said

> *We are not given a chance to complain to higher authorities like those above our village headmen* she said.

The structure is laid in such a way that the local people can not access higher authorities above their village headmen. Even if some one was to amass courage to approach a

group village head who is the next level higher than the village head, there have been numerous cases of undesirable backlash that follow. Families that have launched a complaint have been ostracised and in some cases have been expelled from villages. Out of fear, the local people put up with much corruption and lack of accountability.

Diagram 12: Local Leadership Structure and Complaint Procedure

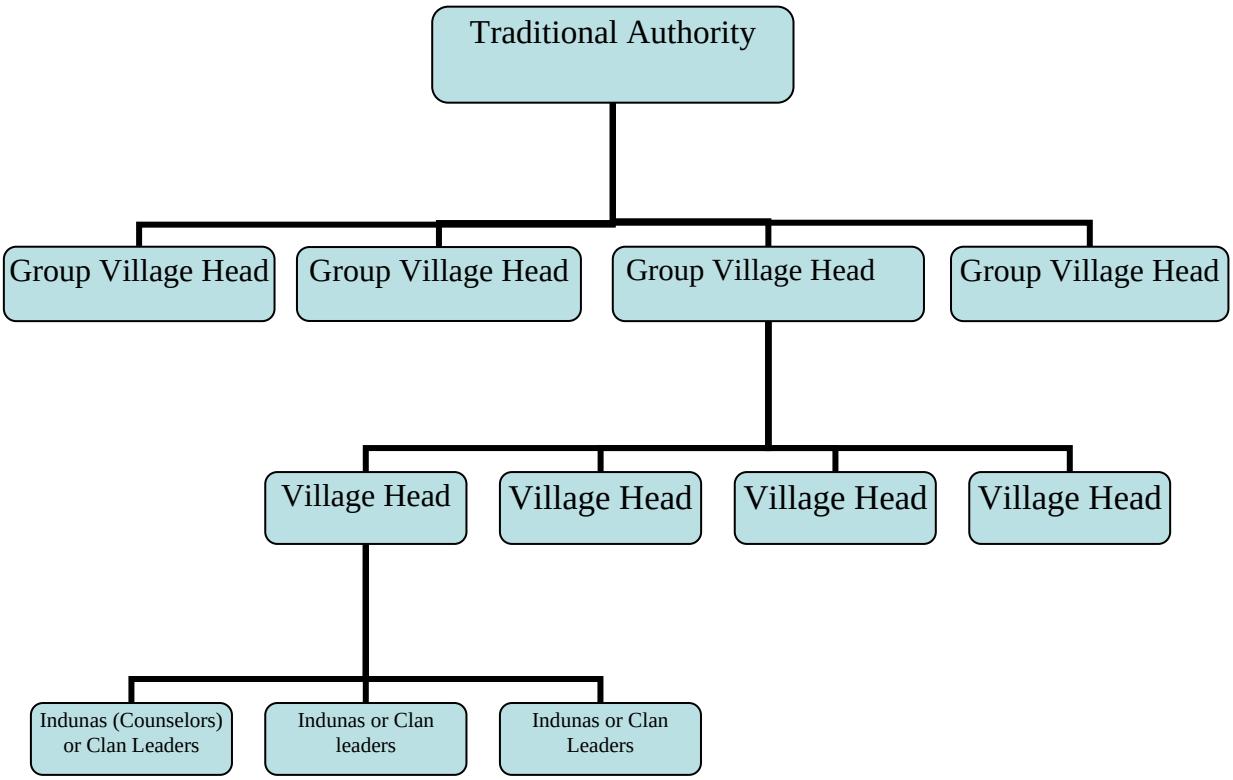


Diagram 12 above shows the leadership structure at the local level. Each village is headed by a village head. The village head has *indunas (Counselors)* and clan leaders under him/her. The *indunas* and the clan leaders act as advisors and also discharge delegated authority from the village head. The village head reports to the group village head who has several village heads under him/her. And the group village head reports to the Traditional Authority who also has several group village heads under him/her. So if a person has got a complaint, he or she must first approach the village head. If the village head is not able to deal with the problem or complaint, he takes or authorizes

that the complaint should proceed to the group village head. If the group village head can not deal with the problem, he takes or authorizes the complainant to see the Traditional Authority. The village head and the group village head have all the powers to stop a complaint from reaching the higher authority if they deem the complaint to be inappropriate or sensitive or if one of these leadership levels has been corrupted.

On the other hand reaching the Traditional Authority does not guarantee that the complaint will be dealt with. Some times the Traditional Authority will deal with the issue if it is within his/her powers. However, if the issue requires the attention of government or a non-government organisation management, the Traditional Authority may indicate that they will handle the issue when they go for the District Development Committee (DDC) meetings. These meetings comprise Traditional Authorities, government bureaucrats and representatives from the non-government organisations sector. We will discuss more about the District Development Committee, its formation and mandate later. So if the Traditional Authority is not development minded or corrupt, the complaint is not dealt with. Since the Traditional Authority is the highest level of local authority, failure to act at this level closes the chapter.

An ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA gave an example of an international non-government organisation which came to one of the villages in the vicinity to distribute food to orphans. This is what he said

> *There is an organisation that claimed to have come to distribute food to orphans and the disadvantaged…but what surprised us is that the children that we know that are really orphans and are destitute are not given anything… This organisation also breaks its own rules. They have a rule that when a beneficiary who is being taken care of by a household dies, the household should continue to receive the maize flour for three months before they deregister the deceased beneficiary…but what is happening on the ground is that as soon as the beneficiary is dead, they rush and take away the coupon… We do not know why they choose to go against their own rules and what they do with the repossessed coupon.*

7.4 Right to be heard and Express one's Opinion

The right to be heard and express one's opinion was also singled out as violated in relation to poverty. A male participant in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA gave a list of rights that he said are violated in relation to poverty and among them was the right of expression. He said

> *…so the following rights are violated: speaking our opinions, participating…..*

7.5 Right of Association

Right of association was also mentioned as violated in relation to poverty. Participants criticized the tendency in Malawi where development programmes are allocated on the basis of regions and districts which are highly represented in the political system. This system they argued has been going on for the last decade. Normally, government and non-government organisations implement most development programmes in areas where the president and his government ministers come from. As already mentioned earlier, some government ministers are on record for warning people not to vote for the opposition because if they do they will miss out on development programmes. A male ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA complained that

> *There are some development programmes that we are missing out because we do not come from the same area with the President* he said.

A local leader in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA pointed out that

> *Being segregated against because of party affiliations* was a violation of a fundamental human right of association which is causing poverty to increase in some areas of Malawi.

7.6 Right to Clean Drinking Water

Ex-DSNPP beneficiaries in Kabwazi EPA said that

> *We should not be segregated on the basis of where we live….like here the rural areas… As citizens of this country we have equal rights to clean drinking water like any other* a rapporteur for a subgroup reported.

This was a reaction to the current trend where people in towns and trading centres have access to clean drinking water but not those in most rural areas.

7.7 Right to be Informed

The participants noted the failure of government to disclose what it was doing with the money following the debt cancellation by the monetary institutions like the World Bank, the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and other donor organizations in 2006 (Debt Tribunal, 2006; Norwegian Embassy News, 2008). A local village headman in Kabwazi EPA noted

> *The government has got a lot of money at the moment because all debts have been cancelled…but where is it going?*

A group village headman in the same EPA also said

> *"The government is happy to keep people in ignorance so that they could be taken advantage of…".*

Thus the participants felt that their right to be informed was violated.

7.8 The Bottom-Up Approach

The participants in various meetings argued that as primary stakeholders of development, they have a right to articulate and manage their own development programmes. This, they argued, meant that the current Top–Down Approach which is

used by both government and the non-government sector is a violation of their rights. A village headman participating in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA noted that currently

> *"Development is not beginning from the villages and the government and NGOs discuss about us without us".*

A female local primary school teacher taking part in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA noted that

> *We are just being on the receiving end of development projects where we are never involved in articulating the projects…this is a violation of human rights.*

A village headman taking part in the same meeting added that under the current development paradigm,

> *We are just asked to rubber stamp development programmes which are articulated by the government and NGOs without our input.*

7.9 Right to Education and Civic Education

The right to education and civic education was also singled out as being violated under the present development system. This violation, they argued, was not only limited to government and non-government organisations but also by parents. A female ex-DSNPP beneficiary noted that

> *Parents violate the rights of a girl-child by choosing to take her out of school because of financial hardships while keep her male siblings in school.*

A group village headman in Linthipe EPA, as noted earlier, talked about government's tendency of keeping people in ignorance for fear of resistance and questions. He said that

> *The government and NGOs are happy to keep people in ignorance so that they could be taken advantage of.*

Another leader in the same meeting also pointed out that sometimes the only thing disadvantaged people need is

> *Advice from well-meaning people.*

A rapporteur in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA concluded his group's discussions by saying that there is

> *Lack of education and proper civic education in the villages* which has a direct implication on poverty.

These participants felt that government and non-government organisations are not doing enough to civic educate the masses for fear of being taken to stake. These participants saw government and non-government organisations as perpetrators of their ignorance.

7.10 Equality

The human right principle of equality was recognized as crucial when it comes to issues of poverty. The participants in the various meetings argued that because there was rampant inequality, many sections of the society were vulnerable and disadvantaged. An ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Linthipe EPA talked about

> *…bad regulations which lead to some sections of the society being neglected or not being included.…* into development programmes.

Another participant in the same meeting said

> *There is rampant segregation and discrimination among the villagers themselves.*

Another participant in the same meeting concluded by saying

*Those elected to leadership positions should ensure that they are accountable and when laying down the rules for their committee or organisation they should not enact regulations which will discriminate against some sections [*of society*].*

7.11 Formation of Alliances and Belongingness

A female village head in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said that the right to form alliances and the right to belong were violated by

…not being allowed to join some farmers groups or farming clubs because one is female or poor for fear that the female or poor person may be a loan defaulter.

Violation of this right locks female-headed and poor households into a downward poverty spiral. This issue of farmers clubs will be discussed in detail in the next chapter.

7.12 Meaningful Participation

Lack of meaningful participation was also raised as a right that is violated in relation to poverty. An ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Linthipe EPA said

There is segregation and discrimination among the villagers themselves.

This, the group felt, is hampering meaningful participation by all sections of the society. Participants in an ex-DSNPP beneficiary focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA gave a list of rights that they argued are violated in relation to poverty. They wrote in conclusion of their groups' discussions

So the following rights are violated: speaking our opinion, meaningfully participating, right to development ….

Another leader participating in a leaders' focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA said

Local people are not given a chance to meaningfully participate in articulating, designing, and implementing development programmes.

So lack of participation was viewed as a factor in the poverty discourse.

7.13 Non-discrimination

The participants in different meetings indicated that this was also one of the rights that were violated in relation to poverty. Below are some of the views which exemplify what was said by various participants in different meetings:

We are being discriminated against because of poverty said a male participant in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in the same EPA.

There is a lot of discrimination when giving out loans said a rapporteur for a subgroup in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA.

7.14 Right to Setting Meaningful Selling Prices for their Farm Produce

Although most of the participants identified themselves as subsistence farmers, they indicated that they do sell a part of their farm produce or livestock in order to purchase other items like soap, salt and sugar. So the usage of the term ‘subsistence farmers’ in this context means farming households who produce crops for consumption with an average land holding of .8 ha. However, as need arise, they sell part of their crops or livestock to buy other necessities. A male participant in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting said

Our right to set a meaningful selling price is violated…the buyers which normally are agents of cooperatives come and dictate the price at which they will be purchasing our products. Normally, they choose a very low price below what we spent to produce the commodity and we end up making a loss on that product…This brings us into deeper poverty…

7.15 Transparency

Transparency was one of the principles of good governance and the participants indicated that it was being violated. Lack of transparency they argued was observed both on the part of government and non-government organisations. They said lack of transparency also occurs with their local leadership. They recited several examples to substantiate their claims. One of the examples an ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA reminded the group of, was the one that has already been discussed under the meaning of accountability. The example involves a popular international non-government organisation which the participants accused of lack of accountability and transparency. This organisation as it was reported above breaks its own rules by taking away the coupon from a deceased family before the three months grace period which is provided for in their rules. These participants expressed their dismay about the way this organisation is not transparent.

A village headman in Kabwazi EPA reminded the group of the issue of debt cancellation by International Financial Institutions. This leader said the fact that the government is not indicating what it is doing with all the money saved from cancelled debt is a sign of lack of transparency. Another leader in the same meeting added

> *Projects are not transparent and they do not disclose vital information like budgets and targets.*

7.16 Self Reliance and Self Management

The issue of self reliance and self management featured prominently in all the meetings. Some of the points that the participants shared have been captured above under different headings. However, in this section we will touch upon a few issues as a way of highlighting the key points. Rural and disadvantaged people have proved that they can manage development projects very efficiently and with minimal overhead costs (Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002; Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002). This means that all or most of the project funds will go to the primary stakeholders and would be spent on the actual project other than paying lucrative salaries to non-government organisations or government bureaucrats. Different projects and research have shown that all that the

rural and disadvantaged groups require in order to manage their own development programmes is training and minimal support (Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002; Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002).

Empowering rural and disadvantaged groups to implement and manage development projects would be expensive at the start of the project but once they have been trained, it is a lifetime investment. Some development researchers and commentators however have argued that local people would require some form of payment for their involvement in implementing the projects (Walker & Wohlers, 2001). The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project also documented that while democratically elected committees were the most efficient in handling the safety net transfers, they were demanding payment for their work because most, if not all, of this type of committee members were not beneficiaries (Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002). The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project final report also noted that with minimal outside support, the Beneficiary/Carer committees would perform just as well as Democratic and Village head committees. The Beneficiary/Carer committees were advantageous as there were no problems with theft of transfers, which was observed with the other two types of committees (Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002). However, even if payment is given to project committee members, their pay would be small compared to what would have been paid to professionals. Implementing projects using this model would also help reduce project transport running costs because the local committee members would not require the expensive 4 x 4 vehicles popular with non-government organisations in the developing world (Bano, 2007). This issue of self reliance and self management will be discussed in detail later.

7.17 Conclusion

Having looked at rights and human rights principles which the participants said are violated in relation to poverty, we will now discuss what the participants in all the meetings considered should be rights-based poverty eradication interventions. A brief recap of what has been covered so far would be useful at this point: Part II started with the results from a cross-regional analysis of poverty alleviation programmes. Then we looked at what the participants defined as poverty before and after they were introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles. After

these definitions of poverty, we looked at the participants' views on what human rights principles mean to them as ordinary citizens. Central to this chapter was the transition the participants went through from defining the principles narrowly, in light of their every day experiences, to deep meanings. In this chapter we have looked at various human rights and human right principles which the participants considered were being violated in relation to poverty. In the next chapter, we will look at what the participants proposed to constitute rights-based poverty eradication interventions.

CHAPTER EIGHT: RIGHTS-BASED APPROACH POVERTY ERADICATION INTERVENTIONS SUGGESTED BY THE PARTICIPANTS

In this chapter we will discuss rights-based poverty eradication interventions as proposed by the participants. These rights-based interventions came as a response to how the participants thought the identified concept of poverty would be eradicated. Where the proposed intervention is embedded in the political and development history of Malawi, its contextual issues are explained by using both local and international literature and local informants. Consequently, the structure of this chapter differs significantly from the previous two, in that it does not only present what the participants in the focus group discussion meetings said, but it also draws substantially on literature.

To begin with, the participants in the meetings suggested that poverty eradication programmes should comprise a set of integrated interventions. These interventions, they argued, should be a part of the wider government development strategy rather than stand alone programmes. The participants expressed their frustration with government and non-government organisations because of what they viewed as complacency to end poverty over the past forty years of independence in Malawi. They attributed this tendency to a lack of vision and political will. These issues and others will be discussed in this and the next chapter. The following are the interventions that the participants proposed.

8.1 Civic Education

Civic education was one of the poverty eradication interventions that was identified in several of the focus group discussion meetings. These participants felt that the majority of the people in rural areas needed civic education on various issues in order to be enlightened and empowered. The United Nations Development Programme (2004) has also identified civic education as a tool for awareness and consciousness raising. An ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Linthipe EPA said

> *We need an aggressive civic education programme to enlighten the populace on their rights and the rights-based approach.*

The emphasis by this participant was on 'aggressive' because the Government of Malawi and its donor partner Gessellschaft Technische Zusammenabeit (GTZ), which is a German Agency for Development Co-operation, have been running a civic education programme since 1996. This programme is called The National Initiative for Civic Education (NICE). The participants noted that while the National Initiative for Civic Education is conducting civic education programmes in the villages, their programmes do not include the eight human rights principles. They also noted that their approach favours the government and the ruling party in a way that means that their programmes and message are greatly compromised. This, they argued, has made their messages ineffective and has failed to enlighten and empower these local and disadvantaged groups. In this regard, an 'aggressive' civic education was considered as one which would uncompromisingly educate them on their rights and responsibilities and empower them to participate effectively in democratic processes.

A subgroup in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA had on their list of possible poverty eradication interventions

> *Programmes aimed at ending ignorance and empowering local people with different project development and management skills.*

When the rapporteur of the group was reading through this list, a male participant from the group added

> *We are talking about programmes that open up peoples' eyes.*

A local leader in Linthipe EPA emphasised that they need a

> *Civic education programme to empower all the villagers in Rights-Based Approach.*

So these participants suggested that as a part of the wider rights-based approach poverty eradication programme, civic education should aim at opening their eyes so that they may understand their rights and responsibilities, and be empowered with various project management skills.

An exploration of what civic education is all about may be of relevance so that the above issues raised by these participants can be put into perspective. Civic Education or citizenship education according to the United Nations Development Programme is "learning for effective participation in democratic and development processes both at local and national levels" (UNDP, 2004:5). The Australian Education Council defined citizenship education as developing "knowledge, skills and values which will enable students to participate as active and informed citizens in our democratic society within an international context" (cited in Pascoe & Ferguson, 1999). Civic education according to the Civic Experts Group (CEG) established in 1994 under the Keating Labour Government in Australia is education, adult or school-based, which educates or raises awareness among the students or general population of their rights, duties and responsibilities within a particular culture or political system (McAllister, 1996).

Civic education has been documented extensively to play a major role in every political system especially where there is a change of systems. Of particular interest perhaps are governments which are undergoing a transition from one party regimes or authoritarian governance to multiparty or democratic systems. The United States of America International Development (USAID) identifies three major goals which civic education aims to achieve:

a. To introduce citizens to the basic rules and institutional features of democratic political systems and to provide them with knowledge about democratic rights and practices

b. To convey a specific set of values thought to be essential to democratic citizenship such as political tolerance, trust in the democratic process, respect for the rule of law, and compromise

c. To encourage responsible and informed political participation—defined as a cluster of activities including voting, working in campaigns, contacting officials, lodging complaints, attending meetings, and contributing money (USAID, 2002:7).

The United Nations Development Programme (2004) identifies three core elements of civic education namely civic disposition, civic knowledge and civic skills. Civic Disposition deals with four key issues: firstly, a set of activities and programmes aimed at developing the confidence of the populace so that they can effectively participate in civic life; secondly, the actual participation in civic life by the general populace; thirdly, the willingness of the populace to assume responsibilities, roles and duties associated with their rights as a citizen of a particular democratic system, and fourthly, the 'Be-attitudes' necessary for a proper functioning of a democratic system so that it is sustainable. These attitudes include but are not limited to openness, tolerance, and an understanding that somebody's right to swing their arm ends where someone's nostril begins (Davis, 1974; UNDP, 2004).

Civic knowledge deals with the understanding and knowledge of the citizens. To begin with the general populace must understand their political and civic contexts; they must have knowledge of the full range of their human rights i.e. civic, socio-economic and political; and finally must understand their obligations when it comes to responsibilities, roles, duties and all other rights. Civic Skills involves the populace obtaining the necessary skills and know-how that they need to engage in civic life. These skills would include negotiation, participation and policy analysis skills. The key issue under civic skills is to equip the citizens with the abilities they need in order to be effective and efficient participants in a particular system. Therefore, for them to participate in the democratic systems, they need to be able to analyse, defend, communicate and effectively engage others using the knowledge that they have acquired (UNDP, 2004).

The United Nations Development Programme has also discussed the importance of civic education. Among others, it states that "Civic Education is a critical and effective empowerment tool for promoting citizen participation in democratic and development processes" (UNDP, 2004:5). The United Nations Development Programme also found that civic education is effective in empowering both individuals and entire societies (UNDP, 2004). In this regard, the United Nations Development Programme (2004:6) noted that "Civic education can also play a significant role in reducing poverty and achieving the MDGs". Having briefly explored the place and importance of civic education in the development and poverty eradication discourses, I will now discuss civic education in the light of the Malawian scenario. This will be relevant in order to

appreciate why these participants identified civic education as a poverty eradication initiative.

Aggressive civic education, as suggested by these participants, would serve the Malawi scenario well. Malawi became independent in 1964 and a republic in 1966. It did not take long before the then President of Malawi outlawed all other political parties. Indeed in 1971 Malawi became a one party state with all political dissidence punishable by death. Malawi remained a one party state until 1992 when, in a referendum, 63% of the voters chose multiparty democracy (Lodge, Kadima & Pottie, 2002). Until this time however, Malawians were under the authoritarian regime of the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) to which everyone belonged by default. Malawians were never allowed to speak up against any evils of the government. The government and the President decided the allocation of development programmes around the country. There was no participation in the political system of any sort. The few prominent individuals who tried to speak up against the regime were brutally murdered during the thirty years. An example of such murders is the infamous Mwanza Accident in 1983. Three cabinet ministers and one Member of Parliament were abducted by state agents and murdered in cold blood. They were then packed into a vehicle that was thrown off a cliff (Ross, 1998).

Such incidences engraved strong fear in the minds of Malawians. I remember growing up as children our parents told us not even to mention the name of the President because "he hears everything anyone speaks about him even what you speak in your bed chamber". It is therefore understandable that with the advent of multiparty democracy these participants identified civic education as essential in order for them to learn about how to participate in such a system. They argued that

> *Sometimes our rights are violated but we do not even realize it…so it would help us a lot if we knew our rights and where to seek redress when a violation occurs* said an old female participant in Kabwazi EPA.

8.2 Empowerment Programmes

Empowerment Programmes are another rights-based poverty eradication intervention which the participants in the focus group discussion meetings identified. This intervention they argued would constitute several components with the purpose of empowering the rural disadvantaged and marginalised groups to take a leading role in the fight against poverty. The participants mentioned several initiatives as examples of empowerment programmes. I will present their views in general before examining one such initiative in detail. As mentioned earlier, the participants indicated that they are not interested in hand outs but rather that bottle-necks should be removed from the development process for them to be active participants and development determinants.

For instance, a rapporteur for a subgroup in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *The villagers should be empowered to articulate and originate development projects.*

A female ex-DSNPP beneficiary in the meeting added

> *There should be committees in each village where the villagers themselves can participate in discussions on how to deal with poverty in their villages.*

One local leader participating in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA took the issue of empowerment a bit further. He proposed that

> *Research should be done by the villagers themselves into why poverty has not been eradicated in their communities…they should just get technical assistance on how to conduct such a research from NGOs or government.*

This theme of empowerment to articulate, develop and implement development programmes has run throughout the earlier chapters. The participants argued that poverty has not been eradicated because of lack of participation by the poor people themselves. This position is supported in literature (AWID, 2002; 2003; Ultvedt, 2004).

As earlier mentioned in the Definitions of Poverty Chapter, the participants argued that only the person living in poverty knows what poverty is all about and is therefore well equipped with the knowledge of how to get out of poverty. As exemplified by the three quotations above, the participants argued that poverty would be eradicated if the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups are empowered with such skills as systematic poverty analysis, programme design and implementation, and monitoring and evaluation. Slim (1995) refers to this process as capacity building.

On the other side, empowerment involves government and non-government organisations 'giving space' to the most disadvantaged and vulnerable to participate in the development process. As noted earlier in the preceding chapters, the participants complained of government and non-government organisations' tendency to design, implement, monitor and evaluate programmes without the involvement of the primary stakeholders themselves. This tendency, they noted, takes various forms. In some instances, the government is secretive and never releases information to the primary stakeholders. In other instances the non-government organisations do not give out copies of the project proposal to the village leadership and their subjects. This affords the government and non-government organisations the opportunity to implement the programmes without being accountable to the primary stakeholders. Examples of lack of accountability have included unfinished or substandard school buildings, project funds being diverted to other unrelated projects and drilling boreholes at an inappropriate time of the year.

Empowerment of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups will involve a complete shift in the development paradigm that is currently in use. As noted earlier, the tenets of the rights-based approach place the most disadvantaged and vulnerable individuals at the centre of the development process (Ultvedt, 2004; AWID, 2002; 2003; UNDP, 2004). All development processes, the means and the ends, are about the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups. Having explored the broader context of empowerment, I will now give an example of the initiatives which the participants mentioned that they would constitute empowerment programmes.

8.2.1 Programmes which Promote Access to Smallholder Farmers' Clubs and Other Beneficial Associations

As a poverty eradication initiative, a participant in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *We need programmes that promote access to groups like farmers clubs and seed banks and the like….without prohibitive conditions.*

In order to contextualise this statement, we will explore some information regarding farmers' clubs and seed banks. Some of the information used to build this context was obtained through a semi-structured interview with a former government employee who I have referred to as the key informant on this issue.

The Smallholder Farmers' Clubs Credit Scheme was started in 1972 by the Government of Malawi. These clubs and associations were formed to provide farmers with access to farm inputs on very affordable loan terms and better farming knowledge in order to boost their farm produce. The farmers clubs were organized in a manner that allowed no more than thirty smallholder farming households to get together and apply for a loan from the government. The philosophy was that the farming households would encourage each other to work hard in their fields and at the same time help each other with loan repayments as a group. The key informant that I interviewed mentioned that there were instances where if a member of a particular farmers' club became ill, his or her compatriots would team up and help cultivate the field of their ill colleague. The support among the farming households included repaying loans for a member who was struggling financially. The informant, who has himself worked with the government for over thirty years in several positions including that of Agricultural Field Advisor (AFA), commended the programme for its great success. Indeed as a credit to this success, there was sufficient food in Malawi in the period of 1973 to 1990 (Earth trends, 2003).

During this period the government of Malawi implemented many programmes aimed at assisting farmers. One such programme was the introduction of the Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC) in 1971. This corporation was a

revolving fund programme which was at the centre of the farmers' clubs success. It was also the main distributor of farm inputs and the central buyer of most farm produce. All loans recovered from the farmers were used to refinance the activities of ADMARC. As ADMARC was well funded from these revolving funds, it had adequate resources to give to the farmers, each according to need. The key informant indicated that each farmer was given inputs according to the size of their field. He said

> *Fertilizer was given in adequate amounts, most of the times the minimum was six (50 kg) bags.*

He also said that each farming household was encouraged to grow a cash crop along side maize which could be used to repay the loan.

The farmers' clubs were organised in such a way that each had a committee of ten members. The village headmen were not allowed to be on the committees. This was because the village headman was a witness and a guarantor for all the loans given in his or her village. The village headmen played a crucial role in loan recovery. However, under intense pressure from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund for political and economic reforms, the then one party regime introduced the Malawi Rural Finance Company which was poised to take over the loan and credit facility from ADMARC. At this time ADMARC was to be privatized. ADMARC was expected to work as a viable business entity and compete with other private buyers as the markets were now being liberalized. From this moment on, this loan and credit facility was no longer favourable to the small holder farmers as it began to charge higher interest rates and reorganized every thing to work like a business. The key informant indicated that the interest rates were as high as 36%. He bemoaned the deterioration of loan conditions and the hardships that farmers faced from that point on.

> *Loans that were meant to improve the livelihoods of small holder farmers ended up making them poorer with the repayments* he said.

The advent of multiparty democracy in Malawi in 1994 and the liberalization of the markets that followed was the straw that broke the camel's back. The campaigners for change persuaded the rural masses not to repay their loans which they had taken that

growing season. These campaigners promised to distribute free farm inputs and that everyone would be given these free farm inputs. When these campaigners took power in 1994 they viewed this loan and credit facility as a legacy of the former regime. Therefore funding smallholder's farmers clubs was no longer a priority of the new government. This saw almost all initial farmers' clubs collapse. Some non-government organisations and interested groups started forming smallholder farming associations whose agenda was no longer to foster access to farming resources but rather market alliances to increase their bargaining power in a now liberalized market economy. At the time when this research was conducted, the participants reported the existence of several farming associations whose agenda is to provide some loans to smallholder farmers. However, many of the poorest farming households have no access to these loan facilities because one of the major conditions for accessing services with the new associations is the potential for repayment. Therefore the members are expected to show collateral assets before they can become members. A female ex-DSNPP beneficiary therefore advocated for

> *Programmes which promote access to farm input and loans without discriminating against some members of society*.

This brief background information provides a framework in which the participants to the focus group discussion meetings bemoaned the lack of loan facilities.

Seed banks are community based initiatives where farmers receive high production seed from some non-government organisations and they are supposed to give say one tenth of their produce to a village seed bank as a form of repayment so that other farmers can take that seed the following growing season. This is aimed at populating the entire village with high productive seed or livestock. A subgroup's rapporteur concluded his group's discussions by saying that rights-based poverty eradication initiatives should comprise programmes that promote access to resources that would allow them to be self reliant. He said

> *We need programmes that would give us a chance to access resources that we would use to develop ourselves and meet our needs in the villages.*

8.3 Establishment and Training of Village Development Committees

Another rights-based poverty eradication intervention which the participants in the focus discussion meetings suggested was the formation and training of development committees. The participants argued that each village should have a village development committee which will have the oversight of development programmes. They also argued that these committees should form a platform where the most vulnerable and disadvantaged groups along side everyone in the villages should be able to share their views on development issues. They envisaged the committees forming a forum for open discussions in the villages. A female participant in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *There should be committees in each village where the villagers themselves can participate in discussions on how to deal with poverty in their villages.*

Another participant took the thought about committees further by explaining some of the attempts by government to establish such committees which have not been successful. He said

> *The government through the Area Development Committee has been trying to establish such development committees in each village…they called these committees Village Coordinating Committees ….but they are not functioning at all. They were never given any training and the way they were formed, was dubious.*

These committees upon further investigation were found to have been a part of the government's decentralisation policy. In order to understand the context around these committees, it is necessary to explore the government's attempts to establish such committees.

In 1997, the Government of Malawi and its donor agencies, The United Nations Development Programme and The United Nations Capital Development Fund (UNCDF) established a multilateral agreement to implement the Local Governance and Development Management Programme (LGDMP). This programme was part of a long

term strategy by the government to implement a decentralisation policy which was established by an act of Parliament in 1995 (Stanley, 2002). The goal of this programme was "Empowerment through governance and development management as a strategy towards poverty alleviation" (Stanley, 2002:1). This goal demonstrates clearly that the Government of Malawi is aware that empowerment of the rural masses is the key to poverty eradication. This programme had two major objectives. The first was

> To contribute towards the alleviation of poverty in Malawi by improving governance through improved broader citizen participation in decision making and the enhanced performance of Central and Local Governments in district development.

And the second one was

> To assist the Government of Malawi in implementing a Decentralisation Policy designed to strengthen the capacity of Central and Local Governments to plan and manage development at the district level with the active and effective participation of local communities (Stanley, 2002:1)

Dedza, the district where the current research took place was one of the six districts that were chosen to pilot the Local Governance and Development Management Programme in 1996. It was envisaged that after the completion of the pilot, the programme would then be implemented in the rest of the remaining twenty districts in Malawi. While this brief account leading to the formation of the unsuccessful village coordinating committees makes sense, it should be noted that the issue of village development committees predates the independence of Malawi. And in order to fully appreciate the views of the participants in these focus group discussion meetings, it is important to take a close look at the historical context of the village development committees.

In the pre-colonial Malawi, traditional leaders were the key authorities around whom all development activities revolved. These Traditional Authorities were organised on tribal lands. Each Traditional Authority had his own jurisdiction and was responsible for the welfare of his/her subjects. The ascendancy to the chieftainship was based on blood lineages. A Traditional Authorities' jurisdiction formed an independent kingdom

although there was much cooperation and trade between and among these kingdoms. Although many traditional structures have been presented as tyrannical, undemocratic and authoritarian, a representative system of governance was prevalent in most, if not all, of the kingdoms. As discussed earlier, each Traditional Authority had a number of group village headmen under him/her. Each Group Village Headman had a number of village headmen under him/her. And each village headman had clan representatives under him/her. This meant that each family was represented through its clan leader. Apart from these structures the Traditional Authority had a group of "Wise men and women" called counsellors whose sole responsibility was to consult and discuss issues of interest and advise the Traditional Authority. These counsellors are the equivalent of the modern day government ministers. This system of having counsellors was replicated at each level of the traditional governance structures. As such Stanley (2001:4) notes that

> During this period a form of democracy by delegation was used: The chief had councillors who were representatives of different interest groups in his/her jurisdiction. When decisions were to be made, these councillors held discussions with the people they represented and took these views to the chief who would make the final decision. People's views and interests were respected and this gave authority, power and respect to the chief's rule. Communities analysed problems, planned and implemented their own development undertakings, usually without external intervention or assistance.

When Malawi, then Nyasaland, became a British Protectorate in 1891, the colonial masters undertook to replace these traditional structures with western systems of governance. This saw the diminishing of the Traditional Authority's power and an introduction of British Overseas Military Administrations (BOMA) which became the centre of administration. The British also demarcated Malawi into what they called districts, with two or more Traditional Authorities falling into one district. While most of the powers of the Traditional Authorities were taken away, they still enjoyed some recognition from the colonial masters. To this effect, a hybrid governance structure was established by an act as early as 1912 (Stanley, 2001). By 1953, all the Traditional Authorities were expected to fully embrace the western system of administration. The colonial government enacted a District Councils Act in 1953 and established the first

district council whose members were expatriate British District Commissioners and some Traditional Authorities. By the end of the 1960s, the Traditional Authorities had completely lost their influence to the emerging new district councils. It is reported that at this time the councils were enjoying popular support from the masses (Stanley, 2001). By the time Malawi became independent in 1964, the councils were fully fledged and operational. However, the one party regime that was established in Malawi shortly thereafter wanted to break ties with all colonial administration structures. This inevitably also meant that the councils, though they were enjoying popular support from the masses at this time, were sidelined in the development process. The Malawi Congress Party which was the sole party in Malawi for 31 years (1963- 1994) established a parallel administration structure to the councils at district level. The new structure by the Malawi Congress Party restored some powers to the Traditional Authorities and co-opted them to be a part of the District Development Committees which enjoyed government funding and some greater influence in the decision making processes at the district level. This lead to the councils becoming very weak though they continued to exist on paper. The key figures in the District Development Committees were central government and the Malawi Congress Party Officials.

At the peak of the Malawi Congress Party's grip on power in the early 1990s, the masses were very disillusioned with the authoritarian regime. The masses became dissatisfied with the party rhetoric of development at the expense of personal freedoms and participative politics. Indeed by 1992, a wind of change had begun to blow across the country which the one party regime tried desperately to extinguish. Backed by strong economic and political sanctions from the World Bank and other traditional donors, the dissenting pressure groups forced the mighty one party regime to accept a referendum in 1992 for multiparty democracy. Indeed, the one party regime lost its grip on the country as Malawians had voted overwhelmingly in favour of a multiparty system. In 1994, The United Democratic Front, which was originally one of the pressure groups, won the Presidential and Parliamentary General Elections and formed the first multiparty government, while the Malawi Congress Party became the main opposition party. The Malawi Congress Party continues to be the main opposition party in Malawi to date, fourteen years after it was ousted from power.

With this change of government came the revival of the desire by the people to be central in the development discourse (Stanley, 2001). Indeed significant changes occurred in the first few years of multiparty democracy in Malawi. By 1995, the United Democratic Front government developed a poverty alleviation strategy which boldly declared that "The people will be assisted to become masters of their own development…" (Stanley, 2001:5). The 1995 Malawi Poverty Alleviation Framework Paper further stated it was the government's commitment to "provide opportunity for communities to build up capacities" (Stanley, 2001:5). At the heart of the 1995 Malawi poverty alleviation program was the idea of communities improving their own welfare. The government was aware that the communities would require technical support in order for them to be effective in becoming masters of their own development. So it stated in this document that "appropriate technical assistance will be provided to them by sectoral agencies, NGOs and the private sector" (Stanley, 2001:6). The same year saw Malawi adopting a new constitution which was in line with the new aspirations of the Malawi population. The new constitution recognized the inseparable nature of good governance and development. And indeed the new constitution went a step further and declared good governance and development as rights (The Malawi Constitution, 1995).

While the intent of the framers of the constitution and the developers of the poverty alleviation program policy was clear – to assist people to become masters of their own development – the reality on the ground has been disillusioning. It did not take long before the new government backed down from most of the commitments it had made in relation to empowering the grassroots masses. By the time the government was calling for local government elections to elect development ward councillors in 2000, the masses had already lost faith in the government (Pottie, 2000). Only 14.2% of the 5.2 million registered voters turned up as the people thought it was a useless exercise with no real impact on empowering the people to become masters of their own development (Pottie, 2000). At this time as well, the government had done little to clarify the confusion that existed regarding the roles of Traditional Authorities and local structures like the Area Development Committees and the Village Development Committees. The Traditional Authorities remained part of the District Development Committees although they did not have any voting powers. At the local level, the Traditional Authorities were told only to be advisers and not leaders of developments. This left them estranged and disillusioned together with their subjects.

By the time this research was conducted, this confusion still remained. It is with this background that the participants in all the focus group discussion meetings demanded that the government should establish and train local development committees which would be instrumental in the decentralisation process. The participants strongly demanded that they should be at the centre of the development process. It is also important to recognize that these participants were aware of the potential benefits of having the local people themselves own and drive the development agenda. Indeed after the change to multi party democracy in 1994, the new government required the local masses to support its changes to the way the country was governed. The masses were industrious and cooperative in the first five years of the multi party era (Pottie, 2000). However this enthusiasm started to die out when the masses realised that the government predominantly was just using them to achieve its own agenda (Eisa, 2004). They also realized that the main problem was lack of wide participation by the masses in the development process. Indeed one participant had noted that

> *We participate by helping the government or NGO achieve its development programmes.*

While success stories of the ability of local people in managing development programmes may still be limited (Rowe & Frewer, 2004), the lessons from the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project and other similar projects are critical. The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project was implemented in the two Extension Planning Areas where this research was conducted. About a third of the participants in the research were themselves direct or indirect beneficiaries of the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project benefits. With the success of the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project local management structures in their minds, the participants expressed no doubt as to the feasibility and viability of local development management structures. Indeed as already alluded to above, as a rights-based poverty eradication initiative the participants demanded the formation and training of local development management structures.

As already discussed in the background information to this study, the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project had three types of committees. These three types of committees were different in the way they were formed and this was reflected by the members of each committee. The key common feature to all the three committees is the training that they

received at the beginning of the project. All the three committees were trained in all the aspects of the project. The training manual was designed and developed by the communities themselves. Designing and developing the training manual was one of the activities that was undertaken as a part of the preparations for the project. In the consultation meetings, the communities discussed what would be relevant for the committees to know. These communities also defined what should go into the operational manual for the committees.

The training and the manual were so thorough that the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project final report did not find major differences in how the committees had performed under the two monitoring regimes. The committees which were never closely monitored or visited by the Project Officers for the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project for nine months had done as well as those which were closely monitored. This is a great lesson. It demonstrates the brilliance of the training in ensuring the independence of the committees in discharging their duties.

It is therefore not surprising that the participants demanded the formation and training of village development committees. With the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project committees setting precedence, the expectation of these participants were quite high that if this could be replicated, the village development committees could perform well.

8.4 Information and Communication Technologies (ICT)

The participants identified Information and Communication Technologies as a key rights-based poverty eradication initiative. The participants bemoaned the lack of communication among the vulnerable and disadvantaged groups themselves and also between them and service providers. One participant in Kabwazi EPA cited the dire consequences of such lack of communication and information.

> *Because we do not have access to information and communication means, buyers trick us. They tell us that our colleagues in other villages are selling the produce at a particular price…which is not true at all.*

Another participant in the same meeting added

> *If we had access to communication means and information, we would have been able to know the prevailing market prices for the produce.*

This sort of tactics from the buyers, they argued, cause them to make a loss on their produce and end up in deeper poverty.

Information and Communication Technologies were also viewed as a vital poverty eradication initiative because the participants felt the current arrangement of channelling funding through the government machinery was not working. These participants complained that while billions of dollars have been donated to the Malawi Government (Nepad, 2001; Shah, 2001) little change has occurred to their poverty status. If anything, statistics show that rural Malawians are poorer now than they were fourteen years ago (UNDP-HDR, 2005). They therefore demanded that there should be a direct link between the local communities and the donor agents. This is exactly what the former Secretary General of the UN, Koffi Annan was advocating for. He called for an inclusive international community which would be founded on the principles of globalisation. Indeed he defined the rights-based approach from a global perspective. He argued that the rights-based approach empowers disadvantaged communities "to demand justice (development) as a right and not a charity" and provides them with "a moral basis from which to claim international assistance when needed" (Annan, 1998, quoted in Foley, 2003:3). This would only occur if the rural communities have access to information and the means of communication.

Further, equipped with proper Information and Communication Technologies, the local communities would be able to access information on services provided by different organisations globally. With increased globalization, it is only proper that no section of society should be left out. There are enormous efforts and programmes being implemented by different organizations and aid agencies targeting the most vulnerable groups. There are concerted efforts to bypass "the middle agencies" that have tended to derail the aid's development goals for their own self preservation. One participant in an ex-DSNPP focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA therefore noted that poverty eradication programmes should be about

> *Empowering the local people to access those resources…for example training for the Area Development Committees on various technical issues like project proposal development, project management and access to technical support like technocrats.*

Information and Communication Technologies holds the key to connecting these aid agencies and service providers to the most vulnerable societies directly without the use of these middlemen. The participants to these focus group discussion meetings identified most would be development aid 'middle agencies' as 'economic and political opportunists' whose agenda is self preservation rather than poverty eradication.

Equipped with proper Information and Communication Technologies, the disadvantaged groups would be able to share experiences globally and foster learning without having to pay enormously for travel, exchange visits and educational tours (Bruns, 2005). Research has shown that one of the best forms of learning and lasting change of attitude comes from disadvantaged groups exchanging and sharing information (Bruns, 2005). Ex-DSNPP beneficiaries in Kabwazi EPA resonated with this point. In particular a male participant argued that

> *Poverty eradication programmes should be about sharing ideas and exchange visits to learn from other initiatives on how our colleagues are dealing with issues in their villages so that we can take advantage of local knowledge and build on our local resources.*

However, most donors have tended to shun funding exchange visits and education tours because of the exorbitant costs associated with such exercises (Mbui, 2005; Katanga et al, 2007). Information and Communication Technologies provide an alternative platform on which learning and exchange of information would occur on a permanent basis without the exorbitant charges associated with travel. Well documented research has highlighted the great potential for Information and Communication Technologies in the area of exchange of information (Burch, 2007; Pun et al, 2006). In a pilot project on Information and Communication Technology for Development in rural Nepal, 78% of the Information and Communication Technologies users surveyed were farmers who

indicated having used the internet for exchange of knowledge and other important functions (Pun et al, 2006).

Where national governments are corrupt, Information and Communication Technologies would provide a means for bypassing the kleptocratic bureaucracies and link communities directly to development aid providers. While the focus has always been on corrupt governments, there are a lot of cases of documented corruption by non-government organisations as well, which are the middle agencies in the development chain (World Bank, 2007). The participants in the focus group discussion meetings gave examples of non-government organisations whose interest, they argued, is self enrichment and preservation rather than to help develop the disadvantaged groups.

> *Poverty is increasing because most of the times the development agents come to make profits out of the poor people* bemoaned a village headman taking part in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA.

As the discussions progressed in this group of local leaders there was a strong call among themselves that they needed to change the way things are going currently. However one group village headman pointed out that change would be impossible under the current development regime because they are dealing with a system rather than just isolated cases. He argued

> *The problem is not here…..but the (political) leaders and those that run organisations are the ones that are responsible for all the problems that we face…it is more of corruption which is built into the system…It is difficult to change things from here because we are on the receiving end and not initiating end.*

Because of the frustrations with the current development framework, a female leader in Kabwazi EPA gave her advice on what the priority should be in order to eradicate poverty. She advised

Perhaps concentrate more on empowering the local people by civic education to ensure that they understand the eight human rights principles and provide them with access to resources that they need.

Therefore Information and Communication Technologies provide a bridge above the corrupt governments and middle development agents.

One of the key tenets of the rights-based approach is participation. As already alluded to above, for meaningful participation to occur the disadvantaged groups should be empowered to assume the role of development articulators, designers and implementers. The participants to these focus group discussion meetings expressed strong sentiments about the local people themselves owning the development process. They argued that rather than the current approach of meeting the needs of the most disadvantaged and vulnerable groups, poverty eradication programmes should aim at empowering the local people to articulate their own development initiatives and implement them. Two subgroups in a leaders meeting in Linthipe EPA brought these two ideas powerfully when they said

Poverty eradication programmes should have a strong capacity building component, and

Poverty eradication should have a strong empowerment component.

The current tendency of hiding information from the development primary stakeholders by both government and non-government organisations is a stumbling block to meaningful participation.

The participants proposed a new development model in which they are the key development players. They demanded that they should have access to Information and Communication Technologies to enable them to make choices among several development agents depending on the conditions the agents attach to their development funding. For this to occur, the disadvantaged groups need to be empowered with Information and Communication Technologies. Knowledge is power. As a classical example, one old woman during the focus group discussion meetings in Kabwazi EPA

bemoaned the government's and non-government organisations' tendency to hide information which she said negatively affected their participation.

> *The non-government organisations and government never show us their project proposal and what they are trying to achieve in our villages. The next thing you hear is that they have finished. This prevents us from participating and holding them accountable.*

The aforementioned Information and Communication Technology for Development project in Nepal also identified Information and Communication Technologies as a key resource that enhances participation among the rural disadvantaged groups (Pun et al, 2006).

8.5 Conclusion

In this chapter we have discussed rights-based poverty eradication initiatives which were identified by the participants in the various focus group discussion meetings. A great effort was devoted to providing the specific context for some issues which might otherwise have not been clear. I utilized key informants and literature to achieve this. In the next chapter I will look at the actual design and implementation of effective poverty eradication programmes. The next chapter will discuss and pull together all the thoughts, ideas and arguments which the participants identified as to constitute effective poverty eradication programmes from a rights-based perspective.

CHAPTER NINE: DEVELOPMENT OF A MODEL

Section I: Discussions

In Part II of this thesis, we have so far looked at results from the cross-regional comparative analysis of thirty-six social welfare programmes from five regions of Sub-Saharan Africa, South America, South Asia, North Africa and the Caribbean. We have also looked at the results from the field study which were reported in the last three chapters: the definitions of poverty before and after the participants had discussed the eight human rights principles; the meanings of the eight human rights principles namely Participation and Inclusion, Universality and Indivisibility, Equality and Non-Discrimination, and Accountability and Rule of Law. Of particular interest was the transition which the participants went through for the first four principles from shallow to deep meanings of the principles. It was explained that this transition process occurred because as the participants discussed the principles they began by looking at them based on their every day experiences. For instance, participation was viewed in the light of their level of participation in different development programmes over the years. For them even if the level of participation was insignificant they still considered it as participating in the development process. However, as the debate proceeded and their awareness and consciousness levels arose, the participants were critically examining their situation and experiences against the possibility of greater involvement and taking control of the development process.

Rights which are violated in relation to poverty were next to be discussed. The participants identified some human rights and human rights principles which they argued are violated by government, non-government organisations and local leadership. After looking at rights violated in relation to poverty, we then looked at rights-based poverty eradication initiatives that the participants proposed. In this chapter I will discuss in detail the themes that emerged from the data. It is worth noting that I made brief comments on some sections of the data in the preceding chapters; what I intend to do in this chapter is to pull everything together - what came out of the field research and the document analysis and compare it to what has been written by development researchers and practitioners. The first of these sections will deal with the definition of poverty.

9.1.1 The Definition of Poverty

The definition of poverty has been a subject for debate for at least the last five decades (Slim, 1995; Saunders, 2004; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004). To date, poverty remains a contested concept. One reason that accounts for this contention, and which was explored in detail in the literature review, is conflicting political agendas and ideologies that inform and guide this debate (Saunders, 2004). It has been argued here that the emergent definitions of poverty were products of the interests championed by the defining groups. In this section I will extend this point and will argue that these conflicting political agendas and ideologies unfortunately form the lens through which poverty is analysed, conceptualised and defined. To this effect, the issue is not really who is defining poverty but rather what lens is being used to analyse, conceptualise and define poverty (Slim, 1995).

As discussed in the literature review, there are a number of categories recognised in literature into which definitions of poverty are classified. These categories include statistical definitions, income-based definitions, living standards definitions, political definitions, the capabilities definitions, expert-derived and ordinary people-derived definitions, and social definitions (Saunders, 2004; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004; Ravalion, 2003; UNDP, 2005). It was noted in the literature review that statistical definitions of poverty are those which tend to use statistics to define poverty (Saunders, 2004; Noble, Ratcliffe, and Wright, 2004; Rowntree, 1910; Gordon, 1989). Expert-derived are those definitions of poverty which are coined by development experts (Ratcliffe, 2007; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004). In contrast, ordinary people-derived definitions of poverty are those definitions which take into consideration the perceptions of ordinary people (Narayan & Petesch , 2002; Ratcliffe, 2007). It was concluded then that whichever way poverty is defined, it has a direct implication for how poverty eradication programmes are designed and implemented. A key observation concerning the above definitions is that no matter who is involved in defining poverty they all share a common thread. They are all economic-based definitions. This is a very important observation because I will now compare these definitions and how the participants in the focus group discussion meetings defined poverty before and after they were introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles.

In Chapter Five, I reported the initial responses of the participants in the six focus group discussion meetings to the question: What is poverty? In summary it could be said that the participants in the six focus group discussion meetings viewed poverty as a lack of material and financial resources. These initial definitions of poverty that came from the field study in rural Malawi with the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups are consistent with how poverty is currently defined by governments and multilateral organisations. It was also noted that expert-derived and ordinary people-derived definitions were also consistent with how these participants in the focus group discussion meetings initially defined poverty. It was discussed in the Literature Review Chapter that the World Bank, for instance, defines poverty in terms of a dollar value required to make ends meet in a day (Ravalion, 2003; UNDP-HDR, 2005; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004). Rowntree (1910), Gordon (1989) and Townsend (1979) also define poverty based on ones income and ability to meet a particular standard of living. This is consistent with how the participants in the focus group discussion meetings initially defined poverty. They viewed poverty as a lack of various resources needed to make ends meet or to live a particular standard of life.

It is interesting to note that whether it is experts or ordinary people that define poverty, they share a common thread – poverty is viewed as lack of resources. We explored both expert-derived and ordinary people-derived definitions of poverty in the Literature Review Chapter. While experts often use sophisticated and complex mathematical and statistical models to define poverty, they arrive at a value of resources required to live a particular standard of life (UNDP, 2005; Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2005). In contrast, ordinary people use their daily experiences, essential needs and ability to make ends meet to define poverty. The Leyden Poverty Line and its variant strands are examples of ordinary people-derived definitions of poverty (Ratcliffe, 2007; Narayan & Petesch, 2002; Goedhart et al, 1977; Van den Bosch, 2001). The ordinary people defined poverty by identifying what are their essential needs and these needs are then used to come up with a list of essential items and services. This list is used as a standard to measure whether one is poor or not. Although some of the items and services on the SASAS (2005) essential items and services list which was discussed in the literature review would be in many ways considered luxurious by the participants in my focus group discussion meetings, it is only a reflection of the different socio-economic statuses of

the two countries in which these participants live. This point of course strengthens an argument I made earlier in the literature review about using different poverty lines for different countries, which is that these different poverty lines imply some racist or discriminatory connotations (Townsend, 1990).

The key argument I would like to make here in light of the SASAS essential items and services approach is that it is also consistent with how the participants in the focus group discussion meetings initially perceived poverty. The participants in the focus group discussion meetings mentioned items which they know are essential for their everyday lives and noted that any one without such items is considered poor. From their initial definitions of poverty it is easy to come up with a list of items which would be comparable to the SASAS list although the SASAS (2005) used a different method. The Kabwazi and Linthipe essentials list would contain such items as food, clothing, good housing, money etc.

The above discussion brings us to the very important conclusion that regardless of who defined poverty, they all arrived at the same conclusion. The multilateral organisations, governments, experts, ordinary people and the participants in the focus group discussion meetings all defined poverty from an economic perspective which is predominantly concerned with achieving a particular standard of living or possessing a particular set of items which are considered essential by the concerned community. This point has to be borne in mind as we move to the next paragraph where I begin to look at how these same participants from the six focus group discussion meetings defined poverty after they were introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles.

As a way of recap, the participants in the six focus group discussion meetings were asked to define poverty at the beginning of each meeting. After that, the participants were introduced to the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles. The word ‘introduced’ here is used carefully because although the Malawi Constitution has a human rights charter embedded in it, it does not mention anything about the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles. This being the case, this was the first time these participants had ever heard of the eight human rights principles. So I introduced the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles, providing a

historical account without mentioning or giving any hint on what the principles mean. After this, the participants in all the six focus group discussion meetings were asked to discuss what the principles meant to them (refer to the Methodology Chapter for a detailed description of the conduct of these focus group discussion meetings). After discussing these eight human rights principles, the participants in all the six focus group discussion meetings were then asked to define poverty again.

The definitions of poverty which came from the participants are also reported in Chapter Five. As a general statement, it could be said that after the participants had discussed the eight human rights principles, they now defined poverty from a human rights perspective. Poverty was defined as a denial and violation of human rights. It is interesting to note that this is consistent with how proponents of the human rights-based approach have defined poverty. For instance, the UNDP (2003) and the OHCHR (2006) having adopted the human rights-based approach as a framework for their development work now define poverty as a violation of human rights. This constitutes a huge shift from the UNDP's earlier conceptions of development and poverty where they were viewed and defined through an economics lens.

The participants also defined poverty as disempowerment. This discourse of viewing poverty as a state of disempowerment also features strongly in literature. Ife & Tesoriero (2006) have argued that not allowing the disadvantaged groups to be self reliant is disempowering. Slim, (1995), Chinsinga (2003a), UNHCR (2005) and Ultvedt (2006) have argued that poverty would be eradicated if the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups have been empowered to take control of their own future and be self reliant.

Poverty was also defined as lack of access to services and opportunities. This definition was coined by several participants in several focus group discussion meetings. This view that poverty is lack of access is also shared by a cross section of rights-based development writers. These writers look at lack of access at different levels. These levels range from the international level to the individual. On the international scene for instance, the Cocoyoc Declaration (1974), Minter (1992), AWID (2002) have called for the rich and powerful nations to open up their markets to the poor nations. They have argued that the international trading policies favour the rich states which practice

protectionism policies for their markets but have uncontrolled access to the markets of the poor states. On the individual level, Slim, (1995; 2002) has argued that the marginalised groups should have access to opportunities that would help them better their lives.

The last definition of poverty that I would like to discuss is lack of meaningful participation. This definition agrees with the first definition I discussed above that poverty was defined as a denial and violation of human rights. I would like to caution here that defining poverty as a denial and violation of human rights encompasses many things. One of the rights that it could be said is violated is meaningful participation. And some development authors view lack of meaningful participation as a cause of poverty and indeed one of the reasons why poverty continues to increase today (Slim, 1995; AWID, 2002; 2003). However the participants in the focus group discussion meetings specifically defined poverty as lack of meaningful participation. For them, lack of meaningful participation constitutes poverty. Both positions are accepted within the rights-based approach discourse (AWID, 2002; UNDP-HDR, 2005; Ultvedt, 2004).

Based on this definition, it could be argued that lack of meaningful participation was viewed both as evidence of poverty as well as a cause of poverty. Both positions, as I indicated above, are accepted and supported by literature. For instance, Ife & Tesoriero (2006) discuss lack of meaningful participation as a cause of poverty as well as a key factor in the continued underdevelopment for most developing nations. They therefore argue that poverty would be eradicated if the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups are engaged and empowered to become masters of their own development. This view is shared by Slim (1995) who also argued that poverty and underdevelopment would be eradicated if marginalised groups took control of the development process. Thus Slim (1995:144) concluded that “true development can be achieved only by the people and can not be done to the people”.

We have so far looked at the initial definitions of poverty which came from the focus group discussion meetings in Kabwazi and Linthipe Extension Planning Areas. We also discussed how these initial definitions of poverty are comparable to economic definitions of poverty propounded by development theorists, governments and aid organisations. The key observation was that regardless of who defined poverty, they all

arrived at the same conclusion. Poverty was defined from an economic perspective. We then went on to look at how the same participants in the focus group discussion meetings defined poverty after they had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles. Both sets of definitions were reported in Chapter Five. However, I have highlighted four of these definitions above and showed how they compare to how rights-based approach proponents have defined poverty. In view of the above discussion I will make two key observations.

Firstly, the perceptions of poverty provided by the participants in the focus group discussion meetings totally changed when they had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles. It could be argued that the change in perception was brought about by the process of engagement in which the participants discussed their views on these principles with each other. This engagement process allowed the participants to examine their lived experiences using their new understanding of the rights-based principles. This change in perception therefore produces an argument that the lens which is used to view poverty is an important factor in the poverty eradication discourse. When the participants in the focus group discussion meetings changed their lens from the economic to the human rights framework, they defined poverty as a violation of human rights.

Secondly, the use of the principles of Participatory Action Research with the participants in the focus group discussion meetings achieved two things: the awareness and the consciousness of these participants were raised and the participants were empowered to find their voice. I will discuss both concepts in succession here. In regards to the raised awareness and consciousness, the participants now had a different perception of who they were and about their circumstances. This led the participants to define poverty in the light of their increased awareness and consciousness. This confirms what was discussed in the Methodology Chapter about the advantages of using Participatory Action Research, which combines the benefits of action as well as the benefits of collaborative research. Humphries (2008:69) has argued that Participatory Action Research has an explicit goal of changing the "life chances of the disadvantaged groups, and an underlying principle of the approach is not merely to understand the world but to change it". Ife & Tesoriero (2006:309) also make a similar statement by saying that Participatory Action Research involves a "program of action, trying both to

understand the world and change the world at the same time". Neuman (2006:28) argued that Participatory Action Research "seeks to raise consciousness or increase awareness; and [the] research is tied directly to political action". In the current research project, this was achieved and was evidenced by how the participants redefined poverty after they were introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles.

Empowerment of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups is a central theme in Participatory Action Research. Thus Humphries (2008:69) noted that Participatory Action Research is concerned with "engagement with the social world and empowerment for relatively powerless people…". Humphries (2008) further noted that in the process there are changes that occur in both the researcher and the researched. However, Participatory Action Research ensures that "the changes that take place in the course of the research are bound to be in the interests of 'the researched'". Neuman (2006:28) observed that Participatory Action Research "focuses on power with a goal of empowerment…" for the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups; "and [that the] research is tied directly to political action". It could therefore be argued that the change in the way the participants defined poverty and the commitment they made to begin to take a stand and demand their rights suggest that participants in these focus group discussion meetings felt empowered.

For instance, I reported that after a lengthy debate between members of different subgroups in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries meeting in Kabwazi EPA, a male participant summarised this debate in the following way:

> *"People should be able to go to any organisation which is implementing a programme in your village and request for any information regarding a development work that is taking place. You should be able to request documentation for any work happening because that would help you to hold the implementing agencies accountable….You will be able to see the targets and how much has been spent so far and the remaining funds. These principles of human rights are very important because they empower the local men so that they can stand up and defend their rights. These principles do not empower the*

> *government but the disadvantaged and marginalised people to be active citizens in a democracy".*

As further evidence of the participants being empowered, they formed rights-based approach groups after their participation in the research that have been going from village to village holding meetings to spread the message on the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles.

9.1.2 The Meanings of the Eight Human Rights Principles

'Meanings of the eight human rights principles' was the second item to be discussed in all the six focus group discussion meetings. This item followed immediately after the participants had initially discussed what poverty is. In the course of the discussions a trend emerged which I have referred to as 'the transition phase'. This 'transition phase' emerged during the 'engagement process' as the participants moved from looking at the human rights principles in the light of their everyday experiences to the deeper and broader meaning of the principles. What I intend to do in the subsequent paragraphs is to link this phenomenon to what development theorists and authors have called 'raising the awareness and consciousness' of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups.

Ife & Tesoriero (2006:176) have discussed at length the necessity of raising the awareness and consciousness of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups as a part of the process of empowering them.

> The simple idea of consciousness-raising is that, because of the legitimacy of oppressive structures and discourses, people have come to accept oppression as some how 'normal' or 'inevitable', and will often not even be able to acknowledge or label their own oppression; the experience of oppression is therefore 'unconscious'. Hence there is need to raise levels of 'consciousness', to allow people the opportunity to explore their own situations and the oppressive structures and discourses that frame their lives, in such a way that they can act to bring about change.

Several authors also support this position (Cassano & Dunlop, 2005; Slim, 1995). Ife & Tesoriero (2006:176-178) have identified four aspects of consciousness-raising: linking the personal to the political, establishment of a dialogical relationship, sharing experiences of oppression, and that the consciousness-raising process should open up possibilities for action. The participants in the current study experienced these aspects to varying degrees. As evidenced from the discussions in the previous chapters, the participants were able to link their personal circumstances to the wider politics and political system. In fact they were able to make poverty a human rights issue and therefore a political issue. The participants were able to engage in the field research and the focus group discussion meetings in particular, as experts of their lived experiences. These focus group discussion forums provided the participants an opportunity where they shared and explored each others experiences and those of their villages. This occurred during the 'engagement process' and helped the groups to develop what Ife & Tesoriero (2006:177) have called collective consciousness. This was evidenced by their shared awareness of the issues that they are facing as they discussed the rest of the questions. Finally, the participants made commitments to begin to take action in order to redress their current circumstances. As I also mentioned earlier, although it was beyond the scope of this research, rights-based approach groups are now operational in the areas where this research was conducted which have been moving from village to village conducting sensitisation meetings on human rights principles .

As discussed in Chapter Eight, Malawians were under a dictatorial regime for over three decades. The change to multiparty politics was a welcome change although many rural people have become poorer in the last decade (UNDP, 2005). Coupled with increasing levels of poverty, these participants expressed that they were still estranged from the political and development structures. This was the reason why some participants asked for civic education programme to open up peoples' eyes. Therefore the lived experiences of these participants have been shaped by the circumstances around them. It could be argued then that the experience of oppression and poverty was their 'unconscious'. It therefore becomes imperative that all work to end poverty should have a component which seeks to raise the awareness and consciousness of those experiencing poverty.

As it was reported in Chapter Six, the participants in the focus group discussion meetings initially viewed the first four principles in the light of their everyday experiences. These experiences formed their reference point. For instance, they showed no sign of awareness of the different dimensions and levels of participation. For them what was offered to them by government and non-government organisations, no matter how insignificant it was, constituted participation.

It was not until their awareness and consciousness levels were raised through the 'engagement process' that their 'eyes were opened'. In the first four principles to be discussed, you could see the 'transition phase' very clearly as the participants were coming into that knowledge that there is more to the principles than what they were used to. Indeed as one participant in Kabwazi EPA put it

"There is more to the concept than what we have been getting".

As the participants discussed the proceeding principles, the 'transition phase' was becoming shorter and shorter until it reached the level where there was no longer any obvious transition. From the beginning of discussions on the subsequent principles the participants were able to demonstrate high levels of awareness and consciousness, not only of their conditions, but also of their worth as citizens of a democratic Malawi. If citizens, then rights holders and if rights holders then individuals capable of making a stand and their stand being respected. It was earlier alleged by the participants that government and most non-government organisations keep people in ignorance so that they could get away with substandard developments. This was viewed as a political strategy employed by the government and non-government organisations in order to manipulate the populace for political gains at the expense of development.

In light of the above discussion, I would like to make an observation that poverty eradication programmes may need to have a strong component that centres on raising the awareness and consciousness of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups. Until the most disadvantaged and marginalised individuals become aware of their circumstances and their consciousness rises to a point where they begin to consider themselves worthy citizens with a voice, powerlessness and resignation would continue. Contentedness with what has been offered to them by government and non-government

organisations fosters a conducive environment in which the status quo prevails. Resignation to the most horrendous conditions of poverty ensures that the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups accept that living in poverty is their necessary fate in life. These trends could only be reversed by strong, systematic and sustained awareness and consciousness raising programmes.

9.1.3 Rights Violated in Relation to Poverty

After the participants had redefined poverty from a human rights perspective, they were asked to identify those rights, if any, which are violated in relation to poverty**. Table 2** below presents the rights which were identified by the participants.

Table 2: Rights Violated in Relation to Poverty

Rights and HR principles violated in relation to poverty identified by the participants
1. Access to information 2. Access to opportunities and resources 3. Right to clean drinking water 4. Right to development 5. Right to education and Civic education 6. Accountability 7. Right to be heard and express one's opinion 8. Right of association 9. Right to the bottom-up approach 10. Equality 11. Formation of alliances and belongingness 12. Meaningful participation 13. Non-discrimination 14. Right to setting meaningful prices for their produce 15. Transparency 16. Self-reliance and self-management

In light of the above list of rights and human rights principles which the participants in the focus group discussion meetings identified as violated in relation to poverty, I would like to make three observations:

Firstly, the participants demonstrated a good understanding of human rights, human rights principles and poverty. As discussed above, the use of the human rights-based approach and the Participatory Action Research processes raised the awareness and consciousness of the participants in the focus group discussion meetings. These processes made it possible for these participants to explore clearly which rights were violated in relation to poverty. It is interesting to note that all the above identified rights and human rights principles are consistent with the rights and human rights principles identified by rights-based approach proponents. I will not comment on all of them here as they have been already discussed in detail elsewhere in this thesis. However, I will touch on a few to illustrate this point.

Slim (1995) has identified self-reliance and self-management as key factors in the poverty eradication discourse. These views were shared by Mapp (2008). The UNHCR (2005); AWID, (2002; 2003) and UNDP –HDR, (2005) have identified access to information, the right to development and the right to clean drinking water as crucial in the eradication of poverty. Civic education has been identified by the UNDP (2004:5) as a "critical and empowerment tool for promoting citizen participation in democratic and development processes". These examples affirm that there was a strong awareness that occurred in the lives of these participants when they had discussed the eight human rights principles during the 'engagement process'. The participants were able to use this new awareness to examine their circumstances and lived experiences which resulted in them identifying rights which are violated by government, non-government organisations and their leadership.

Secondly, a careful observation of the above identified human rights and human rights principles, reveal a sort of hierarchy. This hierarchy highlights that rights and principles on the first level must be fulfilled before those on the second level could be fulfilled. For instance, education and civic education are prerequisites to meaningful participation in a democratic society. Non-discrimination is a prerequisite to the formation of alliances and belongingness, access to information, opportunities and resources. Right

to clean drinking water is a prerequisite to the right to good health. This leads to us to a very important conclusion that rights are indeed interlocked into each other and that violation of one means violation of all (Nango online, 2006). This then produces an argument that rights-based poverty eradication programmes would require strategic and holistic approaches in order to address the different levels of rights for the disadvantaged and marginalised groups (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Slim, 1995; UNDP-HDR, 2005; Ultvedt, 2004; Burkey, 1996). This point will further be discussed later.

Thirdly, this list of rights and human rights principles reveal a good understanding of poverty issues by the participants. Some of the rights and principles which they identified at first glance may seem to have nothing to do with poverty. For example, transparency and right to be self reliant and self manage may seem not to have much to do with poverty. However, these participants identified them as having a direct impact on poverty. This strengthens the observation which I made above about a strategic and holistic approach to rights-based poverty eradication programmes in order to grant all rights, as violation of one means violation of all and violation of one has a direct impact on another right.

9.1.4 Suggested Rights-Based Approach Poverty Eradication Initiatives

After identifying the rights which are violated in relation to poverty, the participants were asked to suggest rights-based poverty eradication initiatives. These have already been reported and discussed in detail in Chapter Eight. What I intend to do here is to present these initiatives in a tabular form as a way of recapping, and then make several observations. The key task will be to compare these initiatives to the findings from the document analysis of the thirty-six social welfare programmes that were reported in Chapter Four. **Table 3** below presents the suggested rights-based poverty eradication initiatives.

Table 3: Suggested Rights-Based Poverty Eradication Initiatives

Suggested Rights-Based Poverty Eradication Initiatives
1. Aggressive civic education 2. Empowerment programmes 3. Programmes that deal away with discrimination at all costs 4. Programmes which promote access to small holder farmer's clubs and other beneficial associations 5. Programmes which promote equal participation 6. Establishment and training of village development committees 7. Access to Information and Communication Technologies

As a general comment, the above list of suggested poverty eradication initiatives shows a huge gap between the current poverty alleviation initiatives exemplified by the thirty-six welfare programmes and what was suggested by these participants. It has long been argued that poverty is increasing because governments and aid organisations impose solutions on the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups by giving them what they do not really need (Ultvedt, 2004; AWID, 2002; UNDP, 2003). Further, some development aid critics have talked of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups being 'addicted' to aid such that they have developed dependency syndrome (Bartle, 2009). It is interesting to note that the above poverty eradication initiatives are far from this assertion as well. None of the initiatives that were suggested by the participants in these focus group discussion meetings mentioned a desire for free benefits from government and non-government organisations. On the contrary, the participants suggested initiatives that would empower them so that they could become independent and masters of their own futures.

A comparison of the above poverty eradication initiatives and the thirty-six social welfare programmes reveal a huge gap on several fronts between what these participants suggested and what the reviewed programmes were offering. I will examine four points here which are most relevant to the current study (refer to **Table 4** below). To begin with, the thirty-six social welfare programmes that were examined were providing food and cash as benefits. Some were conditioned on school attendance, others on work while others were unconditional pension schemes. This is sharply

contrasted to what the participants in the focus group discussion meetings suggested for effective poverty eradication initiatives. The suggested initiatives did not include food or cash but rather immaterial freedoms, empowerment and access to opportunities and resources. These opportunities and resources are loans and group ventures that require collateral assets as surety. Their request was that the government and non-government organisations should act as surety since these most disadvantaged and marginalised groups normally have no such sureties. Their request in essence was that they should have a fair opportunity so that these groups could access the facilities just like any one else in society.

The other sharp contrast is about who designed the social welfare programmes. It was reported that the thirty-six social welfare programmes that were examined were designed by governments, non-government organisations, donors and only a few had a combination of two of the aforementioned. It was reported that the programme beneficiaries were not involved in the designing of the programmes. In contrast, all the poverty eradication initiatives that the participants in these focus group discussion meetings suggested were to be designed by the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups themselves. These participants argued that poverty would be eradicated if they could become the originators and initiators of poverty eradication initiatives and governments and non-government organisations became only facilitators.

The thirty-six social welfare programmes that were reviewed were implemented by governments, non-government organisations and some were even implemented by donor organisations. Indeed as discussed in the Literature Review Chapter and elsewhere, this is what has been the norm for at least the last five decades. This is sharply contrasted with the suggestions made by the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in this project who demanded that they should be the implementers and monitors of the poverty eradication programmes. Several development authors have proposed that the poor themselves should be key players in the implementation of poverty eradication programmes (Slim, 1995; Ultvedt, 2004; UNDP, 2004). For instance, Slim (1995; 2002) talked about the primary stakeholders being initiators and controllers of development programmes.

Lastly, the most disadvantaged were considered to be passive beneficiaries and recipients who were on the receiving end of the benefits in the thirty-six social welfare programmes. It could be said that development was done for them, on them and to them (Slim, 1995). On the contrary, the participants in the focus group discussion meetings did not consider themselves as powerless passive recipients of benefits but rather primary stakeholders and indeed, masters of their own development. The way these participants in the focus group discussion meetings viewed themselves is in line with what Ultvedt (2004), Mapp (2008) and Slim (1995) have argued. Indeed as one participant boldly declared that it is only the poor person who knows what poverty is, it is probably high time that we all accepted that he also knows how to get out of poverty.

Table 4: Differences between the Reviewed Social Safety Net Programmes and Poverty Eradication Initiatives Suggested by Focus Groups Participants

The thirty-six welfare programmes	**Initiatives suggested by participants**
1. Provision of food, cash and assets	1. Demand freedoms, empowerment and access to opportunities
2. Programme designed by government, NGOs or donors	2. Programmes to be designed by the primary stakeholders themselves
3. Programmes implemented by government, NGOs and donors	3. Programmes to be implemented by the primary stakeholders themselves
4. Most disadvantaged considered beneficiaries and recipients	4. Most disadvantaged consider themselves as primary stakeholders and masters of their own development

In this chapter so far, I have discussed four issues – definitions of poverty; meanings of the eight human rights principles; rights violated in relation to poverty; and rights-based poverty eradication interventions. The main purpose of the above discussion was to tie together three pieces of data: data from the field study, information from the document analysis of the thirty-six social welfare programmes and the information that came from literature. Definitions of poverty before and after the participants had discussed the eight human rights principles were compared to how development authors and researchers have defined poverty over the decades. This was to demonstrate the

assertion made by several authors that poverty would continue to be defined from an economic perspective until there is a change in the lens used to conceptualise and define poverty. The participants in the focus group discussion meetings defined poverty from an economic perspective before they went through the 'engagement process' in which they discussed the eight human rights principles. After this process, they defined poverty from a human rights perspective.

The meanings of the eight human rights principles were also examined before and after the participants had raised their awareness and consciousness. During this process, which I have called the 'engagement process', a phenomenon appeared in which the participants' views on the meanings of the human rights principles progressed from initial thoughts to what I have referred to as deep thoughts. This phenomenon has been called the transition. The initial thoughts were in light of their current lived experiences and the deep thoughts were what the participants desired to see happen. This progression demonstrated that as the participants were engaged in debate with each other, their consciousness and awareness levels were raised.

Rights violated in relation to poverty that the participants in the focus group discussion meetings identified were compared to those identified by professionals. This section found that the list of violated rights identified by the participants in the focus group discussion meetings matched that identified by development practitioners. This point further demonstrated that the participants were able to articulate and critically examine their circumstances and identify those rights which are violated under the current development paradigm.

Finally, the poverty eradication initiatives that were suggested by the participants were compared to the thirty-six social welfare programmes from five developing regions of the world. The outcome of this comparison was that the initiatives suggested by the participants in the focus group discussion meetings centred on immaterial freedoms and rights while the reviewed programmes were providing cash and food. This demonstrated that a human rights-based approach will of necessity define poverty from a human rights perspective and therefore the subsequent poverty eradication initiatives would be rights-based.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will be pulling together the ideas of the participants from the different focus group discussion meetings which they argued should constitute rights-based poverty eradication programmes. The participants from different focus group discussion meetings discussed different ideas which have been classed into themes. This is in line with principles of qualitative research which allow for a thematic analysis and presentation of results (Norman, 2006:13). Some of the ideas I will present in this section have already been discussed in different sections in this thesis while others have not yet been reported elsewhere. My main task in this section is to draw on the findings to develop a possible programme model for poverty eradication initiatives. This programme model will comprise seven phases and in each of the phases there will be three tasks that will have to be performed in order to complete that phase.

Some participants in a mixed group meeting in Kabwazi EPA

9.2 Rights-Based Approach Poverty Eradication Programme Model

A Leader for a subgroup presenting in Linthipe EPA

9.2.1 Rights-Based Approach Poverty Eradication Strategy and Policy Framework

A viable policy framework is crucial for the successful design and implementation of effective poverty eradication programmes (MPRSP, 1998; van Weeret, 2001). All government work is guided by policy. Further to a good policy is the actual poverty eradication strategy - how does the government intend to deal with poverty. The participants in the six focus group discussion meetings seemed to be aware of the importance of both the government poverty eradication strategy and the policy framework. The participants were able to define the various roles that they wanted government, both local and central, to play. They also went further to define the roles of the international community and the non-government organisations. However, it is important to note that how all these different players fit in the development process is a matter of government policy and its poverty eradication strategy.

As presented in Chapter Five and elsewhere, the participants bemoaned the tendency by government to introduce stand alone poverty eradication initiatives which they said have not been sustainable. They argued that once the donor funding has phased out the programmes also come to an end. They therefore indicated that poverty eradication programmes should be a part of the established government's development agenda. The evidence from the focus group discussion meetings point to the need for the national government and its development partners to embrace the rights-based approach in all its dealings with its populace. As discussed in the Methodology Chapter and elsewhere, the rights-based approach is both a methodological guide and development framework (Ultvedt, 2004; Mapp, 2008) which government and its donor partners could embrace for their every day business.

The evidence from the focus group discussion meetings presented in this thesis also support the assertion that the human rights framework, and the rights-based approach in particular, bring about a major change of perception. As discussed above and also below, the adoption of a human rights framework would therefore make development and, poverty in particular, a human rights issue. To this end, the adoption of the rights-based approach into government business would necessitate that government policies and programmes are built on the eight human rights principles. This being the case,

government structures and policies would support and promote the human rights agenda rather than opposing it.

Apart from proposing that poverty eradication programmes should be part of the government's long term development strategy, the participants also made several recommendations which could be classed under the strategy and policy framework theme. These recommendations have already been presented in various chapters. I will now highlight those recommendations which they argued would form a platform for the effective participation of the most disadvantaged as well as stipulate the roles to be played by different players in the development process. To begin with, they argued that the overall policy framework should be about creating a conducive environment for the disadvantaged and marginalised groups. A female ex-DSNPP beneficiary in Kabwazi EPA said

> *"Poverty eradication programmes should be about supporting the local people with the resources and an environment in which they can think for themselves on how to end their poverty"*

As discussed in the Literature Review Chapter and the first part of this chapter, Mapp (2008), Clark (1991) and Slim (1995) support this position. A local leader in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in the same EPA put forward a proposal that would see a major policy shift on poverty eradication programmes and approaches.

> *"Poverty eradication programmes should shift away from hand outs and concentrate on promoting access to resources so that the people can develop themselves"*.

This statement made by this local leader provides further evidence that these participants envisioned a need for policy shift. Other policy positions concerned active defence of human rights and the eight human rights principles. These participants mentioned human rights and the eight human rights principles in the same breathe because although the Malawi Constitution has human rights provisions enshrined in it, the eight human rights principles do not appear anywhere in government, donor or non-government organisations documents. As Ife & Fiske (2006) argued regarding human

rights and responsibilities, human rights will remain just an aspiration and not realised until the necessary institutions begin to take responsibility to ensure that those rights are realised and enjoyed by the most disadvantaged. Human rights principles help complete the puzzle. Human rights principles help translate the human rights on paper into everyday practice and conduct of business (Ultvedt, 2004; Mapp, 2008). So the participants in various focus group discussion meetings demanded a shift in government policy to ensure that poverty eradication programmes are now about actively safeguarding and promoting human rights.

> *"Poverty eradication programmes should be about promoting access to resources and empowering the local people to access those resources e.g. training the Village Development Committees and the Area Development Committee on various technical issues like project proposal development, project management and access to technical support like technocrats"* said a male ex-DSNPP beneficiary in an ex-DSNPP beneficiaries focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA.

This position was echoed by several participants in different meetings. For instance, a rapporteur for a subgroup in a leader's focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA reported his groups' suggestion that

> *"Poverty eradication programmes should be about promoting the rights of poor people and perhaps concentrate more on empowering the local people by civic education to ensure that they understand the eight human rights principles and provide them with access to resources that they need.…this would also entail promoting the eight human rights principles which form the foundation for all human rights"*

A variant thought to promoting, defending and safeguarding human rights concerned a shift in government and non-government organisation's roles. Unlike the current development practice where the government and non-government organisations articulate, design, implement and monitor development programmes, a local leader in Kabwazi EPA leaders focus group discussion meeting demanded that

> *"There should be a change of roles for both government and non-government organisations…Instead of being implementers they should become facilitators and allow the local people to run the show…Government and non-government organisations should just provide technical support to the local people as they design and implement development programmes"*.

As already noted elsewhere, the above demand would only be possible if the government and non-government organisations embrace the rights-based approach in their programming (van Weerelt, 2001). This demand for a shift in government policy could also be seen in the following statements by participants from various focus group discussion meetings:

> *"Poverty eradication programmes should aim at empowering the local people to articulate their own development initiatives and implement them"* said a male ex-DSNPP beneficiary in an ex-DSNPP focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA.

A similar thought came from another male ex-DSNPP participant in the same meeting who said

> *"Poverty eradication programmes should be run by local committees that are well-trained and support provided by the local government"*.

This is in sharp contrast with what the document analysis found. As already discussed above, the thirty-six poverty alleviation programmes that were reviewed were designed, implemented and monitored by government, non-government organisations, donor organisations or a combination of these. Chinsinga (2003a) and Conning and Kevane (2000) have argued in favour of decentralisation which they said would foster participation by the programme's primary stakeholders. This is what the above male ex-DSNPP beneficiary was referring to. A male leader in a mixed focus group discussion meeting in Linthipe EPA concluded the group's discussions by asserting that

> *"The local people themselves should be the ones designing the programmes with technical assistance provided by the government and non-government organisations".*

For such a change to take effect, it has to begin with change in the development and poverty eradication policy in particular. As these participants asserted, government has to enact policies that will be in line with their aspirations. Government has to provide leadership in setting a conducive environment which would support the most disadvantaged groups to self-determine their future (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006). While critics of the Bottom-Up approach point to the fact that this would be very expensive to set up and may not be accomplished because of lack of capacity among the most disadvantaged (Mkandawire, 2005), the results from the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project refutes these arguments. Once the community management structures have been set up and trained, they are capable of delivering the programme targets. This training occurs once at the beginning of the programme and the form of monitoring required thereafter from external institutions is minimal (Levy, Nyasulu & Kuyeli, 2002). Perhaps the most important issue that we need to focus on is the cost of implementing ineffective poverty alleviation programmes for the last five decades the same way with no tangible results. Perhaps it is time that we put a price tag on the worsening poverty conditions of the most disadvantaged groups (UNDP, 2005) as things continue to be done the same way.

The other area that requires government policy intervention is that of defining poverty. In some ways this may also require some constitutional reforms. I will begin by discussing how the definition of poverty affects government policy and how it purports to deal with that poverty. Later on I will then discuss the issue of constitutional reforms. The definition of poverty is crucial for development work. How the government defines poverty determines how it will deal with it. The "what" explains the "why" which then informs the "how". The definition holds the key to understanding the causes of the problem which then informs the strategies to be used for dealing with the problem. Therefore the way government defines poverty will help it explain the causes of the poverty. The way the government decides to deal with poverty will be a direct reaction to the causes.

There are different viewpoints from which poverty is understood and defined. These have been discussed in the Literature Review Chapter. I will here highlight a few of these viewpoints and then build a case based on the field research findings that poverty will continue to be defined as it has been over the past half a century until there is a change in the framework from which poverty is viewed. The continued traditional way of defining poverty will inevitably mean that poverty alleviation attempts would continue to be designed and implemented as they have always been. This would mean that there remains no hope that one day poverty would ever be eradicated. Going back to the literature review, different ideologies view poverty differently. The challenges with defining poverty as earlier argued, are exacerbated by the different and sometimes conflicting political agendas that each ideology or political system champions. However, the uniting factor among all these ideologies and political agendas is that they define poverty from a predominantly economic view point. They all view poverty as a lack of some resources to make ends meet.

While there may appear on the surface some differences in how these definitions are expressed (e.g. dollars per day or standard of living), the underlying basis for these definitions still remains economic based. Further, the literature review explored another dimension on how poverty has been defined: expert versus ordinary people-derived definitions. As presented in the literature review and above, expert-derived definitions are those coined by development experts like development researchers, commentators, economists and social scientists (Noble, Ratcliffe & Wright, 2004; Ratcliffe, 2007). In principle, these expert-derived definitions of poverty use the latest available expertise, statistical models and knowledge to define poverty. In contrast, ordinary people-derived definitions are those coined by ordinary citizens. These definitions take into consideration the views of ordinary people (Narayan & Petesch , 2002; Ratcliffe, 2007). An example of ordinary people-derived definitions is the democratic definition of poverty. While the name may in some ways be misleading, it is important that we understand this definition in the light of “participation in what society calls acceptable”. As it was argued in the Literature Review Chapter, the major focus in democratic definitions of poverty is not on the process of defining poverty itself being democratic or the definition itself being democratic, let alone participation in a democratic process like elections; but rather whether a household or individual is able to participate in what the society defines as “socially essential”. This led to Gordon and Potantiz (1997)

arguing that the democratic definition of poverty merely comprises a "definition of poverty in relation to the minimum living standards that the majority of the people believe to be essential…" (Gordon & Potantiz, 1997 quoted in Ratcliffe, 2007).

A critical examination of these definitions of poverty, whether expert or ordinary people-derived, show all the traits of being economic based. This underscores the argument I presented above that poverty will continue to be defined as it has always been over the past half a century unless there is a change in the framework from which poverty is viewed. The congruence of these definitions of poverty whether proposed by experts or take into consideration the views of ordinary people, unequivocally demonstrate that the issue is not who is involved in defining poverty. The findings of the field research in rural Malawi underscore this point even further. As reported in the initial definitions of poverty in Chapter Five, the participants defined poverty from an economic point of view. They all talked about a lack of food, clothing, shelter, and resources they need for their every day lives. However, this changed drastically after the participants had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles during the 'engagement process'. The participants now defined poverty as a violation of human rights. They reported that poverty is disempowerment. The only thing that had changed was their understanding after they had gone through the 'engagement process' in which they discussed the eight human rights principles. Based on the evidence presented in this thesis, it is therefore my submission that unless there is a change in the framework used to define poverty there will be no change at all.

The constitution of any country is the supreme law of that land (CCSA, 2008). It forms the foundation on which the government and all its instruments are based (CCSA, 2008). The constitution stipulates what is legal and legally binding and it therefore sets a framework for government programmes. The constitution sets out the commitments of the government to its citizens and at the same time the commitments of the citizenry to the government. It would therefore be argued that the constitution sometimes clears out any ambiguity in terms of rights and responsibilities for both the government and its citizens. Ife & Fiske (2006) have discussed the issue of rights and responsibilities at length and have underscored its importance in the development discourse. Any meaningful and sustainable major changes in the poverty discourse should therefore

have a legal backing. Other than making provision by by-laws and guidelines, the governments may need to enact into their constitutions, thereby making constitutional commitments, how they intend to deal with the issue of poverty. In particular, it is not enough to enshrine the human rights charter in the constitution. The governments may need to take a step further by talking about the human rights-based approach as a framework guiding its development efforts. While this proposition may be a contentious one, it is important to note that many governments including the government of Malawi has the human rights charter in its constitution. It already has the right to development stipulated in the constitution (The Constitution of Malawi, 1995). However, it does not say anything about poverty as a violation of human rights, let alone the use the rights-based approach for dealing with disadvantage and marginalisation.

There is a fundamental difference between the discourse on human rights and the rights-based approach. The human rights discourse centres on the broader provisions of rights and freedoms of the individual. Of course some authors have argued that these rights or freedoms may also apply to groups or entire societies (Mapp, 2008). The rights-based approach centres on the human rights principles which direct the conduct of government business. It is therefore in the light of this fundamental difference that it is common to find a country with human rights enshrined in its constitution but human rights principles never reflected in its day to day conduct of business. These governments have a reputation of having human rights provisions in their constitutions while their dealings with their populace, especially the minority, indigenous peoples and those trapped in poverty, do not reflect the application of human rights. Having human rights on paper does not benefit the populace until they are translated into action (Ultvedt, 2004). The rights-based approach provides the principles which, if applied in everyday government and non-government organisations' business, would translate human rights on paper into human rights in action.

We have so far discussed poverty eradication strategies and policy frameworks from a predominantly national government standpoint. However, in this era of globalisation and multinational corporations, the national government's poverty eradication strategy and policy framework are directly or indirectly influenced by global forces. What happens on the international scene influences how the national government will respond to challenges keeping in line with international trends and policies. In light of the

current increased international cooperation, increasing role of multinational corporations and international aid organisations, and globalisation in general, one can not discuss government's poverty eradication strategies and policy frameworks from the national government's standpoint only. This is because no government or country any longer exists in isolation. I will now quickly summarise some of the relevant international issues that we have already discussed in the Literature Review Chapter. This will set the stage for a brief discussion of what the participants saw as a possible role of the international community in supporting them to eradicate their poverty.

From the beginning of the first development decade (1961-1970), development theorists from the West were providing developing countries with theories and models on how to achieve development (Burkey, 1996; Slim, 1995; Trujillo, 2001). This led to these developing countries looking up to the West as a model. Instead of independently determining their own course of development, the developing countries opened up their markets and economy to the Western countries which were ironically their former colonial masters (Burkey, 1996). This led to economic re-colonisation and the pursuit of economic and trade policies which were only in favour of the imperialists (Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974; Burkey, 1996). It was in the best interests of these imperialists to keep developing countries in poverty (Cocoyoc Declaration, 1974; Burkey, 1996). This was achieved by the unfair trading policies and in some instances hypocritical advice like Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) (Burkey, 1996; Slim, 1995). This led to continued underdevelopment and increasing poverty in the developing countries. These worrisome trends precipitated calls for alternative development which values local knowledge and promotes meaningful participation by the development primary stakeholders (Ife & Tesoriero, 2006; Mapp, 2008; Thomas, 2008; Burkey, 1996; Slim, 1995). At the heart of the alternative development framework is promotion of human rights (Mapp, 2008; Slim, 1995). With this brief summary in mind, we will now discuss what the participants in the focus group discussion meetings said in relation to the role of the international community in poverty eradication.

The Role of the International Community

Apart from identifying the role for the national government and non-government organisations, the participants also identified the role of the international community in

supporting the human rights-based development discourse. This issue has been discussed extensively under the rights-based poverty eradication initiative of Information and Communication Technologies. What I intend to do here is to make a brief comment highlighting the role of policies and strategies which support the human rights-based approach on the international scene.

It was argued in Chapter Eight that this learning and sharing of ideas transcends national boundaries. This is in keeping with the trends of globalisation. This thought was linked to how the former secretary general of the United Nations defined the rights-based approach. Kofi Annan (1998) defined the rights-based approach from a global perspective. He argued that the rights-based approach provides a "…moral basis from which [disadvantaged groups could] claim international assistance when needed" (Foley, 2003:3).

With increasing globalisation, the national government has found itself failing to control some factors which are beyond its influence. It would therefore be imperative that the international community enact policies and develop strategies based on the human rights agenda which would foster learning, exchange of ideas and facilitate access to resources. AWID (2002) and UNDP (2005) have argued that valuing local knowledge is crucial in the eradication of poverty. Therefore the disadvantaged groups should spearhead learning and sharing of ideas which can add to their local knowledge in dealing with poverty. Thus the international community and donor aid organisations may need to embrace the human rights principles in their dealings with national governments and where the national government is corrupt, seek to engage with the communities directly. The policies and strategies on the international scene which support the human rights-based principles would go a long way in changing how national governments conduct their business. Human rights-based approach policies and strategies on the international scene which support learning and exchange of ideas would facilitate the formation of international alliances of the disadvantaged groups. These alliances would be crucial in driving the rights-based approach to poverty eradication agenda onto national government's and multinational organisation's own development agendas. Having looked at the policy level ideas, we will now look at the next phase in the rights-based approach poverty eradication programme model which is capacity building.

9.2.2 Capacity Building

The participants in the focus group discussion meetings identified capacity building as a crucial component of rights-based poverty eradication programmes. The participants raised this issue in light of the understanding that the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups do not currently have the capacity to design and implement development programmes. So while the rights-based approach empowers disadvantaged groups to become primary stakeholders and masters of their own development, it is imperative that their capacity should be developed to fulfil such roles. Several authors have also acknowledged that the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups lack the capacity to design and implement poverty eradication programmes (UNDP, 2005; AWID, 2002; Mkandawire, 2005).

There are two major ideas that could be linked to capacity building. These are empowerment and the development of infrastructure. Both of these ideas have already been discussed in various parts of this thesis. I have however highlighted them again here because they play a key role in the success of building the capacity of most disadvantaged groups. I will begin by discussing empowerment and then move on to talk about infrastructure development.

Empowerment of the disadvantaged and marginalised groups is a theme that is strongly emphasised in literature (Slim, 1995; Ultvedt, 2004; Mapp, 2008; AWID, 2002; UNDP, 2005). Empowerment of the most disadvantaged groups could take several dimensions: for example, empowering them to participate in a democratic process; empowering them to make choices and decisions; empowering them to voice their concerns and become their own advocates (UNDP, 2004). It is not the intention of this thesis to explore all these dimensions. However, I will deal with the underlying issues of capacity building which could be generalised and could be applicable to most of these dimensions.

The participants in the focus group discussion meetings identified two themes which are at the heart of capacity building. These themes are space to participate and the capacity or ability to participate. Unless these two themes have been addressed, capacity building exercises would be futile. I will discuss these two themes now in succession starting

with space to participate. Space to participate deals with providing the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups with the opportunity they need to participate whether in a political process or decision making process. The participants in the focus group discussion meetings said that they are not given a chance to participate. For instance, a participant in a mixed group focus group discussion meeting in Kabwazi EPA said

> *"No government department or NGO should write a project proposal regarding your village and then later after everything has been finished they should come and consult you".*

This is just one of the many examples of the statements which the participants made demanding that they should be given space to be in control of their development process. Based on these demands, it would be concluded that unless the government and non-government organisations are willing to relinquish control over the development process, capacity building would remain an aspiration for these marginalised groups.

The above discussion leads us to the second theme of capability within the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups to take on the relinquished responsibilities. The most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in most cases lack education and the necessary skills to stand up for themselves and defend their rights. However, capacity building is not limited to formal education. This is important to recognise because by this time these groups are no longer at an age where they can go back to formal schools. Therefore, their needs would entail developing skills which are relevant for participating in democratic and decision making processes and supporting them to develop the hands-on skills for articulating, priotising, designing, implementing, monitoring and evaluating programmes. The participants in the focus group discussion meetings were very clear in terms of the areas they needed their skills developed.

Table 5: Summary of Skills Development as Suggested by Focus Group Participants

Summary of Skills Development as Suggested by Focus Group Participants
1. Writing project proposals
2. Monitoring and evaluation of projects
3. Holding government and NGOs accountable
4. Development project design
5. Implementation
6. Budgeting
7. Targeting
8. Usage of ICT for development
9. Contracts and Partnerships formation
10. Reading and understanding the project logic framework

Table 5 above presents the areas in which the participants mentioned that they need skills development in order to be effective participants in the development process. As can be seen, the skills to achieve the above tasks may not be taught in a conventional school. As such this further cements the argument which I made above that these participants may not need to go back to formal educational schools. The above skills could be learnt as the participants go through the different stages of project proposal development and implementation. This could be achieved through a skills training and transfer programme which would allow these disadvantaged and marginalised groups to work side by side with local government and non-government organisation technocrats who would be there to provide technical support. The DSNPP is a case in point. The village committees which were responsible for the logistics and implementation of the project were trained by the project. Their success demonstrated that it is possible to transfer project management skills to the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups. I do not intend to repeat the results of how the local management structures performed here as these have already been presented in several parts of this thesis. It suffices here to say that capacity building for the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups is possible with verifiable positive results.

The second issue associated with capacity building is infrastructure development. This in many ways could be linked to creation of space for the most disadvantaged and

marginalised groups to participate in the democratic and decision making process. However, infrastructure development centres on providing the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups with the necessary technology, tools and networks to allow them participate. For instance the participants in these focus group discussion meetings specifically mentioned Information and Communication Technologies as an essential empowerment tool. The way these participants intended to use Information and Communication Technologies has already been discussed in detail. For the current purposes, I will however highlight some of the uses that were discussed in order to build the context for the points I would like to make.

Table 6 below summarises uses of Information and Communication Technologies as discussed under Information and Communication Technologies as a rights-based poverty eradication initiative.

Table 6: Uses of Information and Communication Technologies

Uses of Information and Communication Technologies
1. Check and compare prevailing market prices for their farm produce
2. Connect directly with national and international donors
3. Access to services both nationally and internationally
4. Exchange of knowledge and experiences both nationally and internationally
5. Bypass corrupt governments and non-government organisations
6. Communication
7. Formation of alliances

Creation of space and developing the capabilities of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups go hand in hand with provision of the necessary tools and technology that would allow these groups to participate and take control of their destiny. It is in this light that capacity building becomes empty talk if the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups are trained but not equipped with the necessary technology. In the light of the participants' proposals and the above discussion, I would like to make two observations: Every poverty eradication initiative may need to have a capacity building component in it which includes providing the most disadvantaged and

marginalised groups with the necessary technology to participate, communicate, and form the alliances and relationships necessary for their socio-economic advancement.

The second observation relates to the cost of providing such infrastructure to the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups. While in the last decades the debate has centred on the cost of providing and maintaining such infrastructure, I would like to point out that it is probably high time that this debate shifted and talked about the cost of not providing such infrastructure. As previously discussed, recent economic data shows that poverty is on the increase and entire regions are being submerged into extreme poverty. The wisdom of the capitalist economic models has failed. Poverty conditions today are so deep that they require desperate measures. This is just one side of the argument. On the other hand, advancement in Information and Communication Technologies has opened up new possibilities at reasonable and affordable costs.

There is considerable debate within the Information, Communication and Technology Industry about community-based telecommunication centres. This debate is about what would be the most cost effective model for establishing the tele-centres, as they are called. Research has shown that Information and Communication Technologies would play a critical role in poverty eradication (Drago, 2006). What remains inconclusive is whether to establish stand-alone or integrated Information and Communication Technologies centres. Stand-alone Information and Communication Technologies centres are those which have been established for the sole purpose of housing the Information and Communication Technologies equipment and it is used solely for that purpose (Hudson, 2001). Integrated Information and Communication Technologies centres are those that are established at an already existing and functioning infrastructure like community school, Extension Planning Area offices, community library, community HIV/AIDS resource centre, healthy centre or local trading centre (Hudson, 2001). Whilst both models have their own pros and cons, an integrated model fits in well with the social activities of the community. In this regard an integrated model is user friendly and cheaper to establish as you do not need to build and maintain a building for this sore purpose. The community is able to access the tele-centre as they go about their other daily businesses.

In conclusion, the two themes of capacity building would need to be present in any attempt to empower the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups. The development primary stakeholders would have to be trained and supported, and then given the space they require for them to take over the reigns of power to determine their own futures. It is when these two conditions have been satisfied that capacity building would truly occur.

9.2.3 Community Mobilisation

Community mobilisation is a crucial stage in the rights-based poverty eradication discourse. Three issues need to be clarified before we go any further: What is community mobilisation? Who should do community mobilisation and when should it be done? Community mobilisation as used by the participants refers to the process whereby communities galvanise interest and support for a community issue with an aim of working together towards a solution. There are three possibilities as to who would do community mobilisation - the government or non-government organisations, the community themselves and a combination of the two. Based on the evidence provided in this thesis, I will be arguing that the community themselves are best placed to mobilise each other for several reasons. To begin with, the entire rights-based poverty eradication initiative is based on the concept of community empowerment. To this end, community participation and communities taking control of their own future are the twin pillars on which this initiative rests. Therefore in order to stay true to the concept of empowerment, the communities should mobilise each other.

Ife & Tesoriero (2006) have argued that the communities themselves know best. They further argued that wisdom lies below. Mitlin (2000) has also talked about learning from the experts which is the community itself. These points put the community at the heart of every rights-based poverty eradication initiative. The participants in the focus group discussion meetings substantiated the above stated points as I reported in the preceding chapters. Of particular relevance is the following quote which was presented under the meanings of non-discrimination.

> *"We just have to agree in all the villages that we stand up and defend our rights. We need to be strong and have an equal approach to dealing with NGOs and the*

government programmes, that all programmes that have some discriminatory clauses in their rules should not be allowed in our areas. If the NGO or government programmes meet resistance every where they go they will be forced to rethink their approaches".

Here this participant talked about the community mobilising itself. I also reported that at the end of each focus group discussion meeting the participants were asking if they could inform others about the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles. Indeed, a rights-based approach group is operational now in Linthipe Extension Planning Area which goes around in villages teaching about the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles. The community itself is best placed to mobilise each other.

The government and non-government organisations were accused by the participants in the focus group discussion meetings of being secretive. Several issues were raised by the participants. They alleged that the government hides information from the populace which makes it impossible for them to participate in the political process. Another issue was regarding civic education which is offered by the National Initiative for Civic Education. The participants argued that this initiative had been watered down and some issues like the eight human rights principles were not a part of what this initiative teaches. Both the government and non-government organisations were accused of hiding project proposals in a bid to keep the community in ignorance so that they could not be held accountable. Ife & Tesoriero (2006) have also talked about doing away with repressive government and non-government organisation structures as was already discussed earlier. In this regard, entrusting community mobilisation in the hands of the government or non-government organisations would be counterproductive. However, the government and non-government organisations would have a role to play. For instance, they would print what the community decides to go into leaflets or pamphlets. They would also support these community initiatives with logistics when called upon. As discussed, these participants want the government and non-government organisations to become facilitators of the development process which is initiated and driven by the community.

The timing for community mobilisation is crucial. Key issues I would like to consider are whether it should be done before or after capacity building. Based on the above arguments that the community itself should own and drive the community mobilisation process, then it would make sense that this should be done after the initial capacity building. Here I have said this could be done after the 'initial capacity building' because I am mindful that the process of capacity building is ongoing. It would take ages and generations to develop the skills of everyone in the villages. Therefore the initial capacity building exercises would target a few who would then be responsible for training and supporting others. These could be members of the Village Development Committee who are democratically elected by the entire community. It is imperative that by the time the community is being mobilised they should be able to see that there is enough commitment from the government, which will have already completed or initiated constitutional and policy reforms. It would also be very crucial that the groups which would be spearheading the community mobilisation initiative will have at least been already trained in the rights-based approach and the eight human rights principles. Having said this, I would like to reiterate the fact that this is a rights-based process driven by the community themselves as such it evolves and would be different from community to community.

9.2.4 Programme Development

After the communities have mobilised themselves, they would now start developing development and poverty eradication programmes. This stage would involve several things: participatory poverty assessment by the communities themselves; project articulation and prioritisation, and designing the programmes with technical support provided by local government and local non-government organisations if necessary. As already reported, the participants showed great determination that they would like to initiate development programmes and that government and non-government organisations should just be contacted to provide them with technical support. It would be important that this stage should come after the communities have mobilised themselves because it is crucial that all the people in the villages should be involved in this process. Technical support would include the designing of a project, project logic framework and budgeting as the participants suggested.

Initiation of programmes by the communities would give them great control of the programme and its resources. There are numerous statements that have been reported in different parts of this thesis where the participants demanded that programmes should be initiated by the communities themselves. Several development authors as well have argued for community initiation of development programmes (Slim, 1995; Burkey, 1996; Ultvedt, 2004; AWID, 2002; UNDP, 2005). Community initiation of development programmes fosters the theme of empowerment which is at the heart of the rights-based approach.

The traditional way of involving the community has been to ask the community to come up with a project proposal in a predetermined area which would then attract government or non-government organisation funding. It is important to note that this approach is akin to not giving the communities any choices at all. The organisation or government department with the finances is the one that decides what sort of projects it is willing to fund and then announces the funding and the community bids regardless of whether it is in the community's priority area or not. If one drives around rural areas in Malawi, there are so many dysfunctional projects which were implemented by non-government organisations and government simply because they had some funding which they wanted to spend. The proposed areas were not really the priority for the communities but rather those which government or a non-government organisation thought the community needed. Shifting away from this sort of approach would allow the communities to truly own the development process and progressively meet their needs in order of priority.

9.2.5 Fund Raising and Partnership Development

The participants in the focus group discussion meetings strongly expressed their desire to be managing their development programmes. One issue that resonated with most participants was regarding control over financial resources. This issue came in the wake of the government being considered corrupt by the participants. These participants also accused most non-government organisations of hiding project proposals such that the primary stakeholders have no information on what the project is trying to achieve and how much was budgeted. Control over the budget is linked to the question of accountability which will be discussed later.

As already discussed above, the participants in the focus group discussion meetings bemoaned corruption by government and some non-government organisations. These participants gave examples of unfinished projects because the contractors get paid before the project is finished. In some instances, project funds just disappear without a trace. The participants said that if school blocks are unfinished it is not the child of the minister who will have no classroom. It is the child of the poor man in the village. This prompted these participants to demand that based on the principles of the rights-based approach, they should initiate development programmes, design the programme and also look for funding. I also mentioned that these participants were calling for a total overhaul of the current development process. They argued that government and non-government organisations should no longer run the development process but rather they should only be facilitators. This means that non-government organisations and donors with funding would have to advertise themselves and the primary stakeholders would be the ones shopping around for a donor with the best terms of funding. This approach would put the primary stakeholders in control of the budgets and the development process.

As I mentioned above, control over the budget would also be linked to the issue of accountability. I explained earlier that the reason contractors get paid even if they do not finish their school block projects is because they are accountable to the Ministry of Education headquarters which is several hundred kilometres away from the project site. The contractors are paid when they present completed paperwork. With so many projects implemented across the country the ministry does not have effective mechanisms for confirming if the project is truly completed. As such the contractor gets paid while many substandard and unfinished schools lay in ruins in the villages. Therefore the participants demanded that the contractors should be hired by the community through the community project committee and managed and monitored by the community. It would have to be the community project committee signing off that the work is completed to the agreed upon standard and then the contractor paid accordingly.

For successful fundraising endeavours, the community needs to be trained and equipped with the necessary technology to conduct searches for funding. As Kofi Anan (1998) said, the poor people should be able to raise funds even on the international scene. If

they had access to Information and Communication Technologies, they would be able to make contacts with donors across the world and form enduring partnerships which are fundamental to development. Information and Communication Technologies would also assist the communities to access support when required in order to develop project contracts and agreements and be able to manage their accounts through online banking.

9.2.6 Implementation

This is the stage when the primary stakeholders would see their project materialise on the ground. There are numerous statements from the participants in which they talked about poverty eradication programmes to be designed and implemented by them. I also mentioned that critics of community based projects question the capacity of the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups to manage poverty eradication and development programmes. However, it was noted that the results from the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project attest to the ability of communities to implement even complicated programmes as long as they are well trained and provided with the space. The Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project community management committees were able to handle various complex responsibilities including handling and distribution of cash, record keeping and replacement of deceased beneficiaries.

The participants also mentioned that where technical support is required, this could be provided by non-government organisations or local government through decentralised structures. The communities themselves would choose the best model for implementing the project which would either be the formation of specialised community committees or the Village Development Committee. However, the fact that there is a committee does not exclude the community from the decision making process. On the contrary, it was argued that the committee would be chosen by the community and be accountable to the community. The community would have access to all the records pertaining to the project and be involved in every way possible.

9.2.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

Monitoring and evaluation is the last stage to be discussed. However, it should be noted that this is not the last stage in the overall programme development model because at every stage there is monitoring and evaluation, and the results are to be feedback into the loop. Burkey (1996) argued that there is no one model of development. The Cocoyoc Declaration (1974) also agreed with Burkey (1996) that there is no one path to development. Slim (1995) said that if the communities are allowed to be masters of their own development process, it means they will come up with novel ways of doing things. Therefore, it is expected that there will be variations on the paths different communities would take to achieve development.

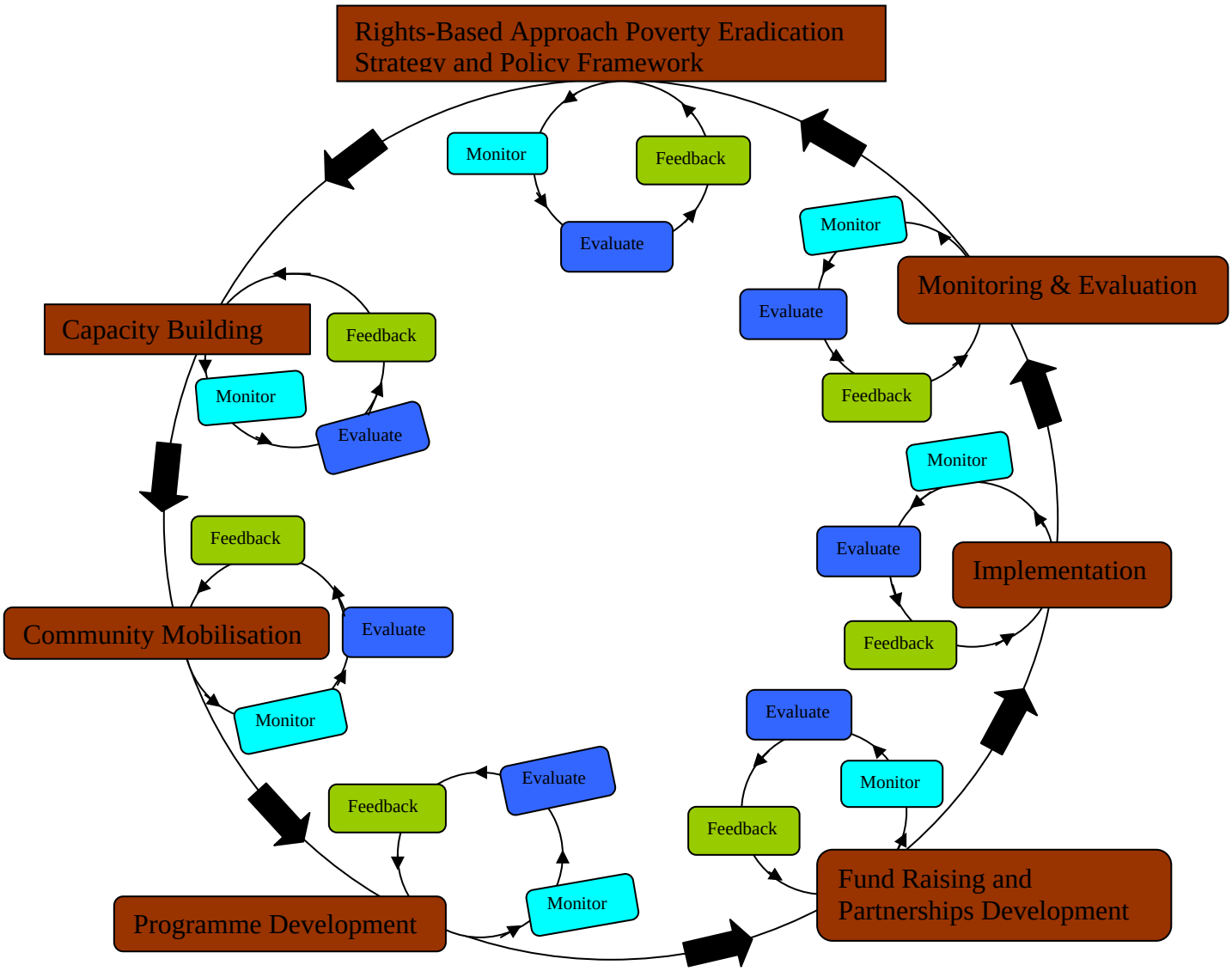
Ife & Tesoriero (2006) and Slim (1995) argued that development should start from within the community and should be compatible with the culture of the people. This means that emerging processes should be allowed to evolve. The communities should be allowed to make mistakes and allowed to learn from them to develop their skills in implementing poverty eradication programmes. After all, the so called experts have been trying to end poverty for the last six decades with dismal results. Therefore, the communities should be allowed to go through the loops of monitoring and evaluation, and then feedback into the cycle. The final monitoring and evaluation results would be fed back into the constitutional and policy debate.

9.2.8 The Rights-Based Poverty Eradication Programme Model

Having looked at these seven stages, I can now present these stages in a programme model diagram. This diagram is based on what the participants said and I have drawn on the experience which I acquired when I worked with the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project to arrange these phases. Please note that at each phase there is a loop showing a process of continued monitoring, evaluation and informing or feeding back into the cycle the knowledge gained in the process. This is crucial because the lessons generated may warrant that the phase be redone or done in a different way. These lessons are the ones that have been referred to as local knowledge in literature (AWID, 2002; 2003; UNDP, 2004). It is important to note that there will be variations in local knowledge from community to community. The more the communities master these processes the

more they will be confident with running these poverty eradication programmes. As discussed above, the communities should be allowed to learn from their mistakes because learning brings growth and maturity. **Diagram 13** below presents a rights-based approach poverty eradication programme model based on the suggestions made by the participants in the focus group discussion meetings.

Diagram 13: Rights-Based Poverty Eradication Programme Model



9.2.3 Conclusion

In this thesis, we have looked at the impact of the human rights principles on the participants' perspective of poverty in the focus group discussion meetings. This was manifested by how they defined poverty before and after they had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles. We have also looked at how the participants progressed from shallow to deep meanings of the human rights principles. This was attributed to the fact that during the 'engagement process' the awareness and the consciousness of these participants rose. We then looked at rights violated in relation to poverty. The participants in the focus group discussion meetings showed a great understanding of the relationship between human rights, human rights principles and poverty. We observed from the list of rights they identified that are violated in relation to poverty that they are hierarchical and that the first level rights must be fulfilled first in order for second level rights to also be fulfilled. We concluded by saying that rights are interlocked and that violation of one means violation of all. Chapter Eight looked at the rights-based approach poverty eradication initiatives which the participants in the focus group discussion meetings suggested. It was observed that there was a huge gap between the features of the thirty-six poverty alleviation programmes that were reviewed and the poverty eradication initiatives suggested by the participants. The thirty-six welfare programmes were focussed on providing financial and material resources to the poor while the initiatives suggested by the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups in this study were about empowerment. They wanted to be empowered so that they could take control of their destiny and be self reliant.

We finished this chapter by looking at a model of a rights-based poverty eradication programme cycle. I highlighted that these phases came from the participants themselves and I only used my expertise and experience working with the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project to put them together into a programme cycle. Seven phases were identified namely rights-based approach poverty eradication strategy and policy framework; capacity building; community mobilisation; programme development; fund raising and partnerships development; implementation; and monitoring and evaluation. It was also mentioned that at each stage there is a process of monitoring the progress, evaluating the phase and feeding back the knowledge and experience learnt into the cycle. This

process is crucial to ensure that lessons are generated and that the local knowledge feeds back into the mainstream programme cycle. Since local knowledge varies from community to community it was observed that there could be slight differences in the processes from community to community and that this was a welcome part of the process.

In the next chapter I present a summary of the entire thesis and make recommendations for future research focus. I will also make some general recommendations.

CHAPTER TEN: SUMMARY AND RECOMMENDATIONS

10.1 Thesis Summary

As stated above, the summary of this thesis is presented in this chapter followed by recommendations. The introduction to the thesis covered the fundamental issues which form the foundation for this project. These issues are the positioning of social welfare programmes in the wider development discourse. I then positioned myself in the discussion of the background to the study. I shared my experiences working with the Dedza Safety Nets Pilot Project in which was born the desire to explore a participatory way for designing and implementing poverty eradication programmes. I then introduced the goal and the aims of the study, and stated that the overarching research question which this study sought to address is 'What design and implementation features should a poverty eradication programme have in order to uphold fundamental human rights and be effective in eradicating poverty?' I concluded Chapter One with a discussion on how the participants changed the focus of the research from focusing on poverty alleviation to poverty eradication.

A review of the relevant literature followed in Chapter Two. The chapter was divided into five major sections namely: introduction; the concept of development; the concept of poverty; social welfare programmes and the human rights-based approach. It was acknowledged that development was a problematic concept because over the years it has been defined based on one's political views and inner motivations. We discussed three major conceptions of development namely: capitalist, socialist and alternative development. In the process of exploring these three development paradigms, we encountered the concept of poverty which required further exploration. It was noted that defining poverty was a challenge because of the elusiveness of poverty as a concept and conflicting political agendas and ideologies which have informed and guided the debate into finding a suitable definition and measurement of poverty.

The chapter ended with a thorough discussion of the human rights-based approach and its comparative advantages when applied to development in general and to poverty eradication programmes in particular. Based on the reviewed literature, the key observation was that adopting the human rights-based approach paradigm would change

the way development and poverty are viewed and defined. It was noted that once the rights-based approach has been applied to development and poverty, they both begin to be viewed and defined from a human rights perspective.

This project used a qualitative, rights-based approach to participative action research which was discussed in Chapter Three. In particular, the project conducted a document analysis of thirty-six poverty alleviation programmes from five regions identified as 'the developing world' and conducted a field study in rural Malawi. Focus group discussion meetings, semi-structured interviews and key informants were used to collect the data in the field study. It was stated that the philosophy behind the methodology used in the field study component is valuing local knowledge, human experiences and the creation of a platform upon which people can meaningfully participate in analysing issues affecting them and allow them to take a leading role in developing initiatives aimed at their general wellbeing.

The rest of the Methodology Chapter discussed Participatory Action Research, covering its historical overview, its principles, limitations and challenges. The key tenet of Participatory Action Research is that it does not just intend to understand the world but that it understands and changes the world at the same time. Of particular interest was the fact that utilising Participatory Action Research tools raises the awareness and consciousness of the disadvantaged and marginalised groups. The chapter ended with a discussion on the conduct of the focus group discussion meetings and ethics.

Chapter Four presented the findings from the document analysis of thirty-six poverty alleviation programmes. The findings were grouped into four themes which were relevant to the current study namely: role of government, donors and non-government organisations in implementing the reviewed poverty alleviation programmes; leakage to non-eligible beneficiaries; conditions attached to the reviewed safety net programmes; and involvement of the local community in the design and implementation of the reviewed programmes. These findings were later contrasted with the suggestions made by the participants in the focus group discussion meetings who argued that primary stakeholders should initiate, design and implement poverty eradication programmes.

Chapter Five began with a profile of the participants in the focus group discussion meetings. These participants had an age distribution between 18 and 76, with an average age of 39.9 years. 31.6 % (*n=18*) of the participants who completed and returned their profile forms were female. A comparison of education between the genders showed that females were trailing their male counterparts at each level. One reason echoed by the participants themselves for this disparity was that the girl-child is normally pulled out of school while his male counterpart continues to get education when a household goes through some financial shock. 61.4% (*n=35*) of the participants who completed and returned their profile forms were farmers and of the twelve participants employed by government only one was female.

After being introduced to the participants, we went on to look at the definitions of poverty. The definitions were divided into two sections. The first section contained the definitions of poverty before the participants had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles and the second section contained those definitions the participants gave after they had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had gone through what was called 'the engagement process'.

These participants initially defined poverty from an economic perspective. They defined poverty as lack of financial and material resources required for their day to day living. These initial definitions of poverty were contrasted with how the same participants defined poverty after they had been introduced to the rights-based approach and had discussed the eight human rights principles. It was noted that the new definitions were informed by the human rights perspective. Consequently, the participants defined poverty as a violation and denial of human rights.

These definitions were then later compared to the ways development practitioners, researchers and authors have defined poverty. It was observed that the initial definitions were consistent with how poverty has been defined traditionally. These traditional definitions of poverty are economic-based and indeed defined poverty as lack of some amenities necessary for daily living. The rights-based definitions of poverty were consistent with how alternative development and rights-based approach proponents in particular define poverty. They define poverty as a violation and denial of human rights. It was therefore concluded that regardless of who is involved in defining poverty, as

long as they are using an economic lens, they will inevitably define poverty from an economic perspective. However, with the adoption of the human rights framework, and the rights-based approach in particular, comes the shift – poverty is defined from a human rights perspective. It was concluded then that the lens used to conceptualise and define poverty is more important than who is involved in defining poverty.

The meanings of the eight human rights principles were presented in Chapter Six. It was noted that the participants in all the focus group discussion meetings began with shallow meanings when discussing the first four principles which were in light of their lived experiences. The participants then went through a 'transition phase' where some participants showed frustrations and began to question the status quo. This led the participants to examine the concept more critically. The new meanings that followed the 'transition phase' were classified as deep and it was said that they represented what the participants would like to see. It was also noted that there was no 'transition phase' for the last four principles. This was attributed to the fact hat the participants had their awareness and consciousness levels increased during 'the engagement process'. This led the participants to examine the remaining principles critically from the beginning.

Chapter Seven looked at rights and human rights principles which the participants identified as being violated in relation to poverty. The participants argued that if these rights could be respected and granted, poverty would be eradicated. After the participants had identified rights and human rights principles which they argued are violated in relation to poverty, they were then asked to suggest rights-based poverty eradication interventions. These interventions were discussed in Chapter Eight. It was observed that none of the initiatives suggested by the participants was about handouts. On the contrary, the rights-based poverty eradication initiatives suggested by the participants were aimed at empowering the most disadvantaged and marginalised groups to become masters of their own development.

Chapter Nine comprised discussions of four major themes from the data and a rights-based approach poverty eradication programme model. Chapter Nine pulled everything together, particularly the data from the field research and the document analysis, and compared that to what has been written by development researchers and practitioners. The last part of Chapter Nine was devoted to crafting the participants' ideas into a

rights-based poverty eradication model. This programme model has seven phases namely: rights-based poverty eradication strategy and policy framework; capacity building; community mobilisation; programme development; fundraising and partnership development; implementation; and monitoring and evaluation. It was also mentioned that at each phase there is a process of monitoring the progress, evaluating the phase, and that the knowledge and experiences learnt are to be fedback into the programme cycle. Having summarised the thesis, I would like now to highlight key recommendations.

10.2 Key Recommendations

The evidence provided in this thesis has shown that the use of a rights-based approach as both a methodological guide and an analytical frame of analysis has a positive impact on the definition of development and poverty in particular. Further, it was shown in the field study component that the use of a human rights framework with its participatory methods effectively engaged disadvantaged and marginalised groups from two rural communities in Malawi. They were empowered to find a voice and articulate issues that affect their livelihoods. Based on these advantages, I would like to recommend the adoption of the rights-based approach as both a methodological guide and an analytical frame of analysis in poverty eradication work. The adoption of the rights-based approach would achieve two things:

1. The rights-based approach takes human rights on paper to human rights in practice
2. The adoption of the human rights framework as a frame of analysis brings about a change in how poverty is viewed and conceptualised which in turn affects how poverty is defined.

Specifically, I would like to recommend that the Government of Malawi which already has human rights enshrined in its 1995 constitution, make an amendment which would pave the way for a rights-based approach to be the guiding principle in all its dealings with its citizenry. The incorporation of the rights-based approach into the constitution would provide a constitutional basis for a human rights-based poverty eradication framework and policy. With such a framework and policy in place, the government

would then be in a position to provide leadership and guidance to non-government organisations in the country and where noncompliance occurs, it would be able to enforce compliance based on the constitutional provisions. Other countries within the developing world may follow similar steps, with the Government of Malawi acting as an example.

The increase in levels of awareness and consciousness achieved by the participants in the focus groups during the 'engagement process' produces an argument that such a process is necessary in order to facilitate meaningful and active participation by programme primary stakeholders. I would therefore recommend that such a process form part and parcel of rights-based poverty eradication programmes.

The evidence provided in this thesis show that the participants in the focus group discussion meetings desire to be at the centre of the development process. It could be said that they viewed the development enterprise and poverty eradication in particular as a programme of the people, for the people and by the people. Factors that would jeopardise their effectiveness and the support they would require as articulated and discussed by the participants have been reported in various parts of this thesis. Based on discussions by these participants, I would like to recommend that the programme primary stakeholders should be given space, be equipped and empowered in order to successfully play a leading role in the development process. To this effect, the participants demanded that there be a shift in the roles of government, non-government organisations and donors. Instead of the traditional roles of being articulators, designers and implementers of development programmes, they should become development facilitators as the participants in the focus groups articulated. These participants wanted to take over the reigns of power to be masters of their own development.

For future research, I recommend that this rights-based approach poverty eradication programme model and its associated processes be implemented preferably in either of the Extension Planning Areas that were involved in the project. This will provide an opportunity for testing this model and generate further lessons important in the rights-based poverty eradication discourse.

10.3 Conclusion

The Rights-Based Approach is a powerful tool both as a methodological guide and conceptual framework of analysis in the development discourse and poverty eradication in particular. It has been demonstrated in this thesis that the adoption of the rights-based approach as a methodological guide and a conceptual framework of analysis bring about a major shift in how poverty is perceived, defined and would be tackled. I have concluded that unless donors, governments and non-government organisations adopt the rights-based approach in their daily conduct, poverty will continue to be perceived, defined and tackled from an economic perspective which has been ineffective for the last five decades.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: ESSENTIAL ITEMS AND SERVICES, SASAS, 2005:

ITEM	**% of all saying essential**
* Someone to look after you if you are very ill	91
* A house that is strong enough to stand up to the weather	91
* Street lighting	90
* Mains electricity in the house	90
* A fridge	89
* Clothing sufficient to keep you warm and dry	85
* Separate bedrooms for adults and children	85
* Tarred roads close to the house	85
* A flush toilet in the house	84
* For parents or other carers to be able to buy complete school uniform for children without hardship	83
* Having an adult from the household at home at all times when children under ten from the household are at home	83
* Ability to pay or contribute to funerals/funeral insurance/burial society	81
* A place of worship (church/mosque/synagogue) in the local area	81
* People who are sick are able to afford all medicines prescribed by their doctor	81
* Somewhere for children to play safely outside of the house	78
* A radio	77
* Having police on the streets in the local area	77
* Regular savings for emergencies	74
* A neighbourhood without rubbish/refuse/garbage in the streets	74

* Being able to visit friends and family in hospital or other institutions	74
* Electric cooker	74
Television/ TV	72
* Someone to transport you in a vehicle if you needed to travel in an emergency	72
* Someone to talk to if you are feeling upset or depressed	72
* A fence or wall around the property	71
* A bath or shower in the house	69
A large supermarket in the local area	67
* A neighbourhood without smoke or smog in the air	65
Burglar bars in the house	64
A landline phone	64
Some new (not second-hand or handed-down) clothes	63
A cell phone	63
Someone who you think could find you paid employment if you were without it	61
Someone to lend you money in an emergency	59
* Meat or fish or vegetarian equivalent every day	59
A garden	56
A car	56
A sofa/lounge suite	52

Source: Ratcliffe, 2007: 41

Note: The starred items were defined as essential by 50% of people from the following subgroups: women, men, people in rural areas, people in urban areas, people aged 16-25 and those aged 65 and over, and people from the following racial backgrounds – African, Afrikaans, Indian/Asian and people from mixed races.

APPENDIX 2: ANALYTICAL TOOL FOR SAFETY NET PROGRAMME REVIEW

		Design Level			**Implementation Level**			**Outcome Level**		
	Projects	How was the programme designed?	What processes were involved in the design?	Who was involved in the design?	How was the programme implemented?	What processes were involved in the implementation?	Who was involved in the implementation?	What were the outcomes?	How were the outcomes measured?	Who was involved in measuring the outcomes?
Region 1	1									
	2									
	3									
Region 2	1									
	2									
	3									
	4									
Region 3	1									
	2									
	etc									

APPENDIX 3: INFORMATION SHEET

Note: This page was translated into our national language Chichewa

Information sheet A

The design and implementation of effective safety net programmes: The rights-based approach

My name is Gerald Nyasulu and I am a Malawian. I am conducting research for a PhD thesis. As part of my studies, I would like to conduct voluntary focus group discussions for people in a rural area of Malawi. Both the process and the outcomes of these discussions will be used as data for my thesis.

As a participant in this study, you will with other participants use a participatory relaxed assessment (PRA) model to (a) share your views on what human rights principles mean to an ordinary citizen; (b) conduct a rights assessment of rights not met or being violated in relation to poverty; (c) brainstorm and discuss possible interventions; and (d) come up with possible design and implementation modalities of a poverty alleviation programme founded on human rights principles. These principles are participation and inclusion, universality and indivisibility of human rights, equality and non-discrimination and accountability and rule of law.

The focus group discussions will run for approximately 6 hours. I intend to video and/ or audio record the discussions, but before I do so, I will ask for your permission. I may also request for some volunteers to be interviewed as a follow-up on some of the issues that may arise during the discussions. All data collected, audio or video taped will be made available for scrutiny, comment and subject to exclusion by the participants. As this study seeks to draw on participant's knowledge and perspectives, I will greatly appreciate your active contribution, experiences and honesty.

As a researcher, I am obliged to conduct my research in accordance with the James Cook University Human Ethics Guidelines, which applies to any human participants in this study. Before you participate in any aspect of this study, I am required to explain to you so that you fully understand the aims of this study and what is fully required of you. I will not use any deception to get information from you. It should be noted that since you will be involved in participatory group discussions with other members of the community, you will all sign a confidentiality statement that you will not share with any one any information that may transpire or be acquired from the group's discussions. Thank you for your consideration to participate in this study.

Yours sincerely,

Gerald Nyasulu (Principal Researcher)

If you require further details concerning this study please contact the principal researcher Gerald Nyasulu, Phone: 61747815641, Email: Gerald.nyasulu@jcu.edu.au or the Supervisor Dr. Debra Miles, School of Social Work and Community Welfare, Phone: 61747815891; Fax: 61747814064 Email: Debra.Miles@jcu.edu.au . If you have any ethical concerns about the way the study is conducted, please contact the Ethics Officer, Human Ethics Committee, James Cook University. The contact details are Tina Langford, Ethics Officer, Research Office, James Cook University, Townsville Qld 4811. Phone: 61747814342, Fax: 61747815521; Email: Tina.Langford@jcu.edu.au

Note: This form will be translated into our national language Chichewa

APPENDIX 4: INFORMED CONSENT FORM

The design and implementation of effective safety net programmes: The rights-based approach

Principal Researcher **: Gerald Nyasulu**
Project Title **: The Design and Implementation of effective safety nets: The rights-based approach**
School **: School of Social Work and Community Welfare**
Institution **: James Cook University, Australia**
Contact details **: Room HA215, Humanities Building 1**
Phone: 61 7 4781 5641

The goal of this study is to develop a poverty alleviation programme concept that could be implemented in developing countries and be effective in alleviating poverty using the rights-based development paradigm. Part of the process for data collection is conducting focus group discussions using the Participatory Relaxed Assessment (PRA) Model, in which participants will be involved in discussions of five broad topics. These topics are;

(a) The meaning of human rights principles to local citizens
(b) Rights assessment (situational analysis of rights not fulfilled or being violated)
(c) Definition of poverty from a human rights perspective
(d) Rights-based initiatives for dealing with the identified poverty concept
(e) Design and implementation of a poverty alleviation programme founded on human rights principles

The discussions will be video-taped or audio-recorded and later transcribed to form data for the study. The information recorded on flipcharts will also form part of the data. Participants will also be asked to complete a profile and feedback form at the end of the workshop. I would like therefore to ask you to tick against any of the following activities that you are consenting to. Remember that as a participant you reserve the right to choose what you would like to consent to without any negative consequence and should you wish, you can discontinue your participation at any point without negative consequences.

Yes, I consent to participate in the focus group discussions ☐
Yes, I consent to a video-recorder being used to capture discussions ☐
Yes, I consent to a tape-recorder being used to record discussions ☐
Yes, I consent to materials recorded in discussions be used as data for the project ☐
Yes, I consent to complete the feedback sheet and the information be used as data for the project ☐
Yes, I consent to comments made in the feedback form being used as data ☐
Yes, I consent to my profile being used as data for the project ☐
Yes, I consent not to divulge any information gained in course of the discussions ☐

The goal of this study has been explained to me and I have fully understood what is expected of me. I make an informed choice to voluntarily take part in this study and that I reserve the right to discontinue at any point of my choice without any negative consequences. I understand that any information I will give will be kept strictly confidential and that no names will be used to identify me with this study without my prior written approval.

Name: *(printed)*	
Signature or symbol:	Date: