



**Qualitative Impact Monitoring  
of Poverty Alleviation Policies and Programmes  
in Malawi  
Volume 1 : Research Findings**

**National Economic Council**

PO Box 30136  
Lilongwe 3  
Malawi

Tel : (265) 782300  
Fax : (265) 782004  
e-mail:nec@malawi.net

## Foreword

According to the PMS concept, both quantitative and qualitative research methods are required to gain a clear picture of the poverty situation in the country, and thereafter an understanding of how this poverty may be tackled. The Qualitative Impact Monitoring exercise is based on a Rapid Rural Appraisal approach, with the express intention of capturing people's attitudes and perceptions towards the poverty situation.

This report involved an analysis of current government policies and programmes with regard to their objectives and intended impact. The second stage involved the field work, where four teams visited twelve villages in various locations across the country as part of the Rapid Rural Appraisal exercise. These findings are presented along the lines of the four research areas which were investigated. The final part of this volume then tries to link the policy analysis and the village findings, in an attempt to make recommendations for future policy actions. There is a second volume to this report which involves a detailed analysis of the process with recommendations on how the management and running of such an exercise can be improved.

It is hoped that this information will help government agencies, non-governmental organisations and other users of poverty based information in their designing and focussing of programmes, projects and policies, to ensure that the issue of poverty is tackled.

Special thanks should be made to GTZ, the German Technical Co-operation Agency, who provided the financial support for this exercise, to Dr Ulrike Mueller-Glodde who wrote the actual report in close collaboration with the Poverty and Social Policy Division of the National Economic Council, the eighteen members of the QUIM team, who were drawn from various line ministries and non-governmental organisations who visited the village sites in late 1997, a full list of all those involved in the work has been included in the appendices of this study. Most importantly, it is necessary to thank the villagers without whose cooperation it would have been impossible to produce such a comprehensive study and report.



Mr L M Kachikopa  
Head, Poverty and Social Policy Division  
National Economic Council

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We appreciate the valuable feedback we received on our QUIM-design by the participants of the preparatory workshops at Lilongwe.

Finally, we thank the National Economic Council (NEC), Malawi, and the German Technical Co-operation (GTZ) for making it possible to take this step towards the establishment of a Qualitative Impact Monitoring system of Poverty Alleviation Policies and Programmes in Malawi.

While this study was carried out under the auspices of the Technical Working Committee of the Poverty Monitoring System at the National Economic Council, the views expressed however are those of the authors and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Malawi Government.

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## Recurrent Abbreviations

|        |  |
|--------|--|
| ADC    | Area Development Committee   |
| ADMARC | Agricultural Development and Marketing Co-operation                    |
| CDA    | Community Development Assistant  |
| DC     | District Commissioner  |
| DDC    | District Development Committee   |
| DEC    | District Executive Committee   |
| DEVPOL | Statement of Development Policy  |
| EPA    | Extension Planning Area  |
| FA     | Field Assistant (at Ministry of Agriculture)                           |
| FHA    | Farm Home Assistant  |
| GABLE  | Girls Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education                       |
| GDP    | Gross Domestic Product   |
| GO     | Government Organisation  |
| GoM    | Government of Malawi   |
| GTZ    | German Technical Co-operation  |
| GVH    | Group Village Headman  |
| HSA    | Health Surveillance Assistant  |
| IEC    | Information and Education Campaign                                     |
| MASAF  | Malawi Social Action Fund  |
| MP     | Member of Parliament   |
| MRFC   | Malawi Rural Finance Company   |
| MSSE   | Medium and Small Scale Enterprises                                     |
| NEC    | National Economic Council, OPC   |
| NGO    | Non-Governmental Organisation  |
| OPC    | Office of the President and Cabinet, GoM                               |
| PAP    | Poverty Alleviation Programme  |
| PFPAP  | Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation Programme                     |
| PMS    | Poverty Monitoring System  |
| PMU    | Poverty Monitoring Unit of the Poverty and Social Policy Division, NEC |
| PRA    | Participatory Rural Appraisal  |
| QUIM   | Qualitative Impact Monitoring  |
| RRA    | Rapid Rural Appraisal  |
| SACA   | Smallholder Agriculture Credit Administration                          |
| SAP    | Structural Adjustment Programme  |
| SEDOM  | Small Enterprise Development Organisation of Malawi                    |
| SMEF   | Small and Medium Enterprise Fund                                       |
| SPAS   | Social Policy Advisory Services, GTZ                                   |
| TA     | Traditional Authority  |
| UNDP   | United Nations Development Programme                                   |
| UNICEF | United Nations International Childrens Fund                            |
| VARBAU | Village Access Roads and Bridges Assistance Unit                       |
| VDC    | Village Development Committee  |
| VH     | Village Headman  |

## Executive Summary

### Qualitative Impact Monitoring (QUIM) 1997

In 1996, the Government of Malawi launched a **Poverty Monitoring System (PMS)** in order to establish a nation wide information system dealing with poverty-related issues, policies and their impact. Policies, programmes and projects are to be monitored in order to trace the implementation process of the Poverty Alleviation Programme (1994); the actual state of affairs with regard to poverty alleviation; positive effects of poverty-oriented policies and programmes; negative side effects of such efforts, so as to counteract them by devising corrective measures. According to the PMS concept, both quantitative as well as qualitative research methods are required in order to gain a clear picture of the poverty situation in the country and an understanding of how poverty might be reduced.

The **Qualitative Impact Monitoring (QUIM)**, based on a Rapid Rural Appraisal in twelve villages in November / December 1997, aimed at capturing people's attitudes and perceptions on poverty issues with the intention of factoring them into the policy debate at higher levels. Thus, it was to contribute to an information base, which allows policy makers and planners of development programmes to better address poor and vulnerable groups in Malawi.

#### The Policy Analyses

A number of national development strategies have been introduced since 1994 - namely the *Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation Programme (PFPAP, 1994)* and the *Vision 2020 National Long Term Perspective Study (Vision 2020, 1998)*. Within this **Poverty alleviation** is the national, central development policy objective of the Malawi Government.

This chapter examines various sectors against the background of these **development strategies**: Agriculture and Food Security, Education, Health, Water and Sanitation, Population, Financial Services, Micro and Small-Scale Enterprises, Labour Policies and Programmes, Housing, Community Development and Social Welfare, Transport and Infrastructure, Natural Resources and Environment, Irrigation.

In addition **Structural Adjustment Programmes**, (first introduced by the Malawian Government in 1981), have been included in the analysis because they cut across so many sectors, highlighting the environment against which other policies have to be implemented. Generally speaking, all Malawians have been adversely affected by the recession and curtailment of consumption as well as by measures undertaken under the stabilisation and adjustment packages. The prices of basic commodities, especially food, have increased, and government expenditure on basic services such as health and education have fallen in real terms. Furthermore, real wages and employment have been reduced, especially amongst low income households.

To mitigate detrimental effects on the poor, programmes such as the **PFPAP** were introduced. While the **sector policies** examined often reflect the priorities of the *PFPAP*, many of them are still at a draft stage. Thus, they have clear and commendable objectives but as yet lack implementation. Considering the often rather recent dates of the design of the majority of policies and, consequently, scarce implementation of programmes, many of the policies considered can hardly be expected yet to have made themselves felt at village level.



## Findings from Twelve Villages

The QUIM team focused on the poorest EPAs in Malawi and, within these, on "**poor**" villages, particularly in terms of people's access to land (excepting the Northern Region), food insecurity and child malnutrition. The villages are "poor" also in terms of the inhabitants depending mainly on farming for subsistence and income generation, in terms of lacking access to safe drinking water and to natural resources (forest, lake).

Most of the villages are "**remote**" in a geographical sense, i.e. a long way from main roads and central places, markets and ADMARC, or health facilities, but they are "remote" also in terms of being neglected by (extension) service institutions, of having little or no communication with political or governmental institutions beyond village level, and generally of being cut off from development support provided by governmental or non-governmental organisations.

## Research Area 1: The Poverty Situation, as perceived by the Villagers

The people interviewed talked about "resources" in terms of

1. natural resources, listing the basics required for any settlement: cultivable land (field, garden), rivers, trees or forests, and livestock. The villages do not differ markedly across the Northern, Central and Southern Region. The QUIM team did not obtain an in-depth assessment of the quality or quantity of the natural resources referred to.
2. physical infrastructure, mostly meaning boreholes or bridges, and social institutions, such as schools, health posts or clinics, mosques or churches. In general, the villagers perceive physical infrastructure and social institutions to be lacking, insufficient or inaccessible due to long distances.
3. economic infrastructure like groceries, maize mills, ADMARC and small markets, which was generally regarded to be weak at all QUIM sites.

**Poverty** in Malawi hits people at two levels. **At household level**, people at the QUIM sites live in poverty in the sense that their basic needs are not fulfilled. They describe their poverty almost exclusively in basic material terms: lack of food, drinking water, shelter, and clothes. **At community level**, people describe their poverty in terms of lacking infrastructure, such as boreholes, clinics, schools, roads, and in terms of lacking institutions delivering social and economic services, particularly health institutions and ADMARC.

The **perception of poverty** is rather **homogeneous** among men and women as well as across all QUIM sites.

The villagers attribute their **poverty** to four kinds of **causes**:

1. natural factors, almost exclusively related to water, such as a drought, flood or generally unfavourable rainfall pattern, although infertile soils were also mentioned;
2. (side-)effects of policies, resulting in: a lack of credit facilities for farm inputs and business; low produce prices and high input prices; a lack of infrastructure, including limited access to markets, and lack of transport; limited employment opportunities;
3. individual factors, such as laziness and men's drinking; illness; too many dependants to look after and a lack of children to assist; low levels of education, doing *ganyu* at the expense of cultivating own fields;
4. community factors, such as weak leadership, resulting in poor communication and lack of initiative for community development.

The **lack of fertiliser** was brought up time and again as the most burning issue in the villages which reflects people's high dependency on hybrid maize as a staple crop and the increasing problems they face since the government cut the fertiliser subsidies in 1994. These problems in some cases are aggravated by the closing down of near-by ADMARC branches which used to guarantee the supply of fertiliser at controlled prices.

People do not have much hope for change as long as they cannot afford basic agricultural inputs. The **lack of money, capital, credit, credit facilities, and access to credit facilities** was thought to be another main cause for poverty.

The villagers perceive their poverty to have **two major effects**: It leads to a decrease in their economic productivity - which again enhances their poverty; and it brings about social disruption, particularly in the form of premature deaths breaking up families and increasing the number of orphans, i.e. mouths to be fed by other - equally poor - families.

At most QUIM-communities, the villagers stratified their households into **three groups of well-being**: the very poor, the poor or slightly well-to-do, and the better-off or rich. Across all QUIM sites they had a very clear and homogenous idea of what it means to be "poor" or "rich" in their village. They see the vast majority, i.e. between 70 and 85 %, of their people as belonging to the poor; some 10 to 20 % are regarded as slightly better-off; and between none and a maximum of 10 % are counted as being rich.

### **Research Area 2: Changes in the Villagers' Situation over the Past Years and People's Reactions**

The overall trend is for the villagers to perceive **poverty** as having **increased** over the past years. They attribute this development mainly to unfavourable climatic factors; low produce and high commodity prices due to market reforms and inflation; lack of access to farm inputs (fertiliser, seeds); declining yields (decreasing soil fertility, soils conditioned to fertiliser); lack of access to (agricultural) credit; and declining employment opportunities.

**Improvements** were seen by some sub-groups at four villages only; they refer mainly to market liberalisation improving the supply of clothes and to free primary education.

The villagers mostly held that **men and women were equally affected**. Obviously, the respondents took the entire household as a reference point - poverty affects women and men equally where survival is a family concern, leaving aside possible differences within the household.

The villagers suffering from poverty do not have any "strategic" approach, involving a long-term or even a medium-term perspective, to fight this situation. Instead, they rely on isolated, short-term **coping mechanisms** to ease an immediate predicament. These are purely reactive measures and as such seasonal, i.e. based on resources available and opportunities given at the time when food shortage hits the people.

Doing ***ganyu***, i.e. working occasionally as a day-labourer, doing piece work, is the most common way of trying to cope with poverty, meaning here straightforward hunger. Apparently, ***ganyu*** is perceived to be the most reliable coping mechanism although the villagers are aware of the problems it entails. Other coping mechanism comprise **intra-household activities** which depend on the natural resources available and refer mostly to the food people eat (wild tubers, unripe fruit), and **extra-household activities**, such as the vending of products or petty trading.

Since the men can leave the villages more easily than women they are thought to have access to a wider range of coping mechanisms and, therefore, sources of income.

### **Research Area 3: The Villagers' Awareness of Government Policies and their Access to Outside Support**

Regarding the villagers' **awareness of "policies"** influencing their lives, three issues emerged very clearly at practically all QUIM sites.

At all sites, the villagers know about the policy of **free primary education**, which is clearly appreciated, despite some shortcomings.

They severely feel the effects of the **cut of fertiliser subsidies**, effective since 1994/95. In their opinion, the lack of fertiliser, caused by high prices attributed to the cut of subsidies, combined

with the lack of credit facilities for farm inputs, is a major factor contributing to their food insecurity.

A negative effect of **market liberalisation** and the accompanying restructuring of parastatal companies mentioned at many QUIM sites concerns the closing down of ADMARC branches which used to guarantee the supply of fertiliser at controlled prices. With private traders taking over former ADMARC functions, supplies are more irregular and prices increased beyond the means of poor small holder farmers. The liberalisation of the burley tobacco market in principle is viewed positively but hitched to the problem of the growers' depending on private traders for marketing their produce: at most sites the villagers complained of private traders having cheated and exploited them.

The only positive effects of the market liberalisation felt at a few villages are improved access to second hand clothing items and to mini-bus transport.

**Governmental services** generally are known to exist but more often than not are not available within the villages. This renders access to the services in question difficult especially for the poor because distance in the view of the villagers is clearly a limiting factor for access, insofar as it involves transport costs.

The service spread most widely across the QUIM sites is the Health Service, followed by Agriculture.

A qualitative analysis of the extension services would have surpassed the limits of the QUIM survey; however, the villagers did remark on the services' inefficiency – mostly with regard to the person of the respective extension worker, his or her commitment to supporting them and the frequency or rather infrequency of visits.

At all QUIM sites, some **programmes or projects** were implemented, mostly in the sectors of health, water and sanitation, and public works. Thus, they are focused on social services and infrastructure for the communities rather than on poverty alleviation at household level.

All in all, the villagers at the QUIM sites clearly are very **short of outside support**.

Asked **who benefits** from the programmes and projects implemented the villagers gave fairly differentiated answers, linking the programmes in the various sectors to the respective target groups. Regarding, **for example, credit programmes**, credit for income generating activities were thought to benefit mostly women while agricultural loans from MRFC are thought to benefit men, especially tobacco growers. However, access to MRFC loans is impeded by terms of lending, such as high interest rates, high deposit rates and other regulatory issues. Regarding, **for example, public works** carried out mostly with support from MASAF, the villagers appreciated the benefits of the constructions for the community (feeder road, school block, multipurpose hall). The short term employment opportunities and income generated were regarded to benefit the men directly, and – possibly – the family indirectly. – Problems associated with the programmes concerned low wages, delays in payment, and delays in implementation.

People at the QUIM sites clearly **lack an overview of potential support possibilities**. Information about outside support is scattered and fragmentary to the extent of it seeming rather incidental. They acquired their fragmentary knowledge mostly through the radio, through politicians during their rallies, and through hearsay from neighbouring villages.

Their knowledge about support possibilities is not only very limited but also too vague for them to become active, that is ask for assistance. This clearly points at the importance of efficient communication structures. Regarding again **the example of credit facilities**, the villagers at some sites were aware of the existence of a wide variety of credit institutions and programmes but could not cover the distance to offices at the *Bomas* easily, thus lacking detailed information about and access to these institutions.

Regarding the **example of MASAF**, this is the one organisation known almost everywhere. However, although MASAF ran a strong Information and Education Campaign (IEC) to bring awareness amongst the public on how people might improve their living conditions, there are

obvious misunderstandings and a lack of information among the villagers on how to avail themselves of MASAF support.

Occasionally it was noted that the men had a wider knowledge of programmes being implemented in the village than the women. Basically, a clear **understanding of programmes was limited to the direct beneficiaries.**

While one has to keep in mind that people cannot really assess the **importance of services and programmes** not available to them, the villagers clearly delineated three sectors which are of supreme importance to them, that is, education, health and agriculture.

**Access to services and service delivering institutions** varies, depending on the nature and targeting of services provided. The villagers at the QUIM sites defined accessibility in terms of distance, financial resources, cultural aspects, and gender. Health services are often thought to benefit women more than men; business credit mostly targets women, agricultural credit is directed at men.

**Expectations regarding external support** are high. The villagers expressed their need for essential infrastructure (boreholes, health centres, bridges, roads, hospital); credit facilities and programmes with affordable interest rates; MASAF community projects and similar support available to other villages, including food for work programmes; school blocks, learning materials, and well-trained teachers in sufficient numbers. Regarding extension services, they suggested that they generally should be expanded or intensified. Generally speaking, they wish for more security, less cheating, and fair treatment. With expectation being high, so are the villagers' frustrations when supporting institutions do not conform with their expectations.

All in all, people at the QUIM sites definitely see themselves as strongly **dependent on outside support.** Lack of outside support was said to result in resignation and the discouragement of **people's self-help spirit.** Even when talking about their self-help potential, the villagers' need and expectation for guidance as well as for financial and material support figured strongly. A major problem is their access to support structures, which clearly has to do with a lack of information and efficient communication structures linking the villagers to the outside world.

#### **Research Area 4: Communication Structures Linking the Villagers and Decision Makers at Various Levels**

The **communication structures** both within the communities and between the communities and the outside world, are **extremely homogenous** over all QUIM sites, allowing absolutely for no regional differentiation. They are regarded to be **pivotal for** disseminating information; settling socio-cultural and economic disputes; mobilising communities for both internal and external socio-cultural and economic development; lobbying external support for projects in the villages; initiating and co-ordinating development works.

There are **four communication structures** linking the villagers among themselves and to the outside.

- 1. The traditional structure**, comprising the community, the village headmen (VH), the group village headman (GVH), and the Traditional Authorities (TA), is central to all communication within communities and also to all communication between the communities and the outside world.
- 2. The local government structure**, involving Village Development Committees (VDC), Area Development Committees (ADC), District Executive Committees (DEC), District Development Committees (DDC), District Commissioners (DC) and finally, Members of Parliament (MP), ideally links the villages to District Headquarters but there was very little evidence of their functioning at village level. A special role is attributed by the villagers to MPs who are regarded as being in a position to directly exert an influence in favour of a

particular village. The direct communication channel from the VH to an MP is viewed as rarely given but definitely the most effective one.

3. The importance of the **structure involving the communities and extension workers** from different line agencies, such as Agricultural Field Assistants (FA), Farm Home Assistants (FHA), Community Development Assistants (CDA), or Health Surveillance Assistants (HSA), largely depends on the villagers' assessment of the effectiveness of the individual extension worker.
4. Some **NGOs** apparently tried to set up their own communication structures within the villages but these were not regarded as "belonging" by the villagers which probably impedes their effectiveness.

There are **no horizontal linkages** between the various communication structures. Linkages run straight along vertical lines, mostly between the traditional and the political structure, i.e. from the community via VH - GVH - TA to the district authorities DEC - DDC - DC.

The **rules and procedures of communication** within the traditional structure strictly follow the established chain of command based on respect for the powers bestowed on traditional leaders. Thus, all messages to and from the villages must pass through the VH or GVH. Oral communication is preferred to other forms because it allows for greater clarity and detail regarding issues in question. While access to communication structures at village level was considered to be easy, access to the other structures, for instance, an MP, were regarded as problematic.

The **effectiveness of communication structures** depends on various variables, including personalities involved, the community's distance from the headquarters of institutions and organisations, or the level of literacy within a community. With regard to the traditional structure, the villagers mostly maintained that it worked reasonably well. The political structure in various places were associated with "bureaucratic red tape", "lack of commitment"; and "inadequate feedback" to the traditional structure.

**Recommendations for improving communication structures** comprised a strengthening of the traditional structure without politicising it; capacity building measures for VDCs and ADCs; local government elections; and, most important, improving the link between the traditional and other structures.

## Linking Village Findings with Policy Analyses

### Policies with an Impact felt by the Villagers

Policies with an impact felt by the villagers comprise the structural adjustment policy regarding market liberalisation; the structural adjustment policy regarding the cut of fertiliser subsidies; the reorientation of public expenditure to pro-poor areas since 1992, in particular the educational policy of *Free Primary Education*.

The **liberalisation of the tobacco market** benefits the rich who have enough land to allot some part of it to growing tobacco and who can buy labour to work on this cash crop. The slightly better-off may profit a little, depending on their access to land and labour. The poor, however, do not benefit because they lack bargaining power vis-à-vis private traders and lose out on land for subsistence. Besides, while others' growing tobacco may provide them with extra opportunities for doing *ganyu* this forces them deeper into the vicious circle of poverty.

Another problem to do with **market liberalisation** concerns the closing down of the more unprofitable branches of **ADMARC**. The marketing of their produce has become much more difficult in that the farmers now depend on private traders which "go uncontrolled", with the villagers feeling the weight of produce and prices being manipulated to their disadvantage.

Thus, market liberalisation has actually contributed to increasing poverty at village level. The only positive aspects perceived by some villagers are that second hand clothing and, in one case, more transport are available.

As to the **cut of fertiliser subsidies**, the problem continues to be that people consider maize to be the one staple food; that they continue growing hybrid maize which requires a strong fertiliser input; that the price for this input has increased considerably (while the price for produce has not); that the smallholders' access to fertiliser is impeded by the effects of market liberalisation; and that loans for fertiliser mostly are beyond the reach of the smallholders since the Smallholder Agricultural Credit Administration (SACA), which gave credit to smallholders at concessional terms, has been transformed into the commercial Malawi Rural Finance Company (MRFC).

Thus, the smallholders are losing out on access to indispensable agricultural inputs; and the question emerges once again whether it is socially and politically acceptable to deprive the majority of farmers from reaching at least some form of subsistence.

**Free Primary Education** is widely known and greatly appreciated among the villagers at the QUIM sites. While enrolment figures definitely have increased and the villagers are relieved of the financial burden of school fees, the villagers at some QUIM sites maintained that class attendance is still low and drop out rates are high – phenomena to be attributed to people's poverty.

### Other Policies and Programmes

Other policies and programmes seem to have impacted less on the villagers; and not all institutions and organisations have translated the PAP into activities of their own. To take some examples:

The policy objectives in the **agricultural sector** relevant for the villagers comprise improving food security and the nutritional status of the population as well as raising farm incomes and promoting economic growth while conserving natural resources. While *"There appears to be broad agreement across the policies on how this is to be achieved"* (Policy Analysis), at village level there is hardly a sign of these policies being implemented with a positive impact.

Thus, the smallholders' access to inputs remains one of the villagers' gravest problems; market liberalisation has not had the positive effects hoped for – at least not for the poor; diversification of crops, livestock or generally sources of cash income is hardly evident; land reform has not been tackled; and irrigation schemes, technology transfer, or activities in soil conservation remain at the level of isolated projects which sometimes, though rarely are found at the QUIM sites.

Access to water safe for drinking is one of the villagers' gravest problems at most QUIM sites, with people being aware of the implications regarding water-related and water-borne diseases. The main constraints of the **water sector** as described in the *PFPAP* document are reverberated by the villagers at the QUIM sites: too few boreholes, frequent breakdowns of pumps, lack of continuous training and incentive for local people to participate in the monitoring and management of water systems.

The lack of money, capital, credit, credit facilities, and **access to credit** facilities for both, agricultural inputs and business was thought to be a main cause for poverty in 10 out of 12 villages. While quite a number of credit schemes have been launched in order to address this problem, access to credit from the formal sector continues to be extremely difficult for the poor. The reasons listed in the respective policy papers largely match the problems as described by the villagers, regarding for example MRFC loan conditions with high interest rates, high deposit rates and other regulatory barriers. Besides, the villagers' access clearly is impeded by information deficits caused or reinforced by inadequate communication structures and the remote position of the villages combined with the limited reach of the respective institutions.

## Regarding the Reach of Programmes and Projects

Just about for every sector one can say that “more programmes and projects” are required to realise the respective policy objectives and alleviate poverty at village level. The question is whether “more programmes and projects” are the right approach to alleviate poverty with dimensions as immense as it presents itself in Malawi.

***Programmes and projects by their very nature are of limited scope, both in space and time, having an effect only in isolated places and areas of action.***

The QUIM findings show that policies when implemented, such as structural adjustment or *Free Primary Education*, are generally felt at village level while programmes and projects, which generally will be smaller in nature (except perhaps for MASAF), do benefit some people in some places but remain severely limited in their reach.

***Thus, governmental policies directed at poverty alleviation are required.***

The policies in place seem sound and reasonable but they do not yet have a broad impact to be felt at village level where the majority of Malawians live. It seems that the filtering down of information and action is very poor: This leaves policy makers with the question what to do so as to accelerate the implementation of their policies, with regard to the villagers’ most burning problems, that is access to affordable agricultural inputs and productively used credit in order to alleviate household poverty, and access to efficient services of health, including infrastructure for safe drinking water, and education in order to alleviate communal poverty.

Increased food security and, more generally, fostering an environment which allows people to fulfil their very basic needs are and must be the overall objectives. The challenge lies in coming up with “unconventional approaches” in the realisation of these objectives, be it in the form of policies or of programmes and projects.

# Introduction: Qualitative Impact Monitoring

## The Poverty Monitoring System (PMS)<sup>1</sup>

The Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), inaugurated in 1994, can be taken as proof of the Government's commitment to reorient economic and social policies towards developing human and economic resources for poverty alleviation. The PAP Policy Framework Paper stresses that poverty alleviation activities need to be undertaken with a clear understanding of the characteristics of poverty, including its causes and effects. This requires detailed information regarding the so-called "target groups" of development efforts which presently is not available to a satisfactory degree: There is an information gap between policy makers and the poor. In order to bridge this gap, the impact, effectiveness and efficiency of development activities need to be monitored.

Thus, in 1996, the Government of Malawi (GoM) launched a comprehensive Poverty Monitoring System (PMS) with the objective to establish a nation wide information system dealing with poverty-related issues, policies and their impact. The performance of policies, programmes and projects is to be monitored in order to trace

- the implementation process of PAP;
- the actual state of affairs with regard to poverty alleviation;
- positive effects of poverty-oriented policies and programmes ;
- negative side effects of such efforts, so as to counteract them by devising corrective measures.

## The Need for Qualitative Impact Monitoring (QUIM)

According to the PMS concept, the multi-dimensional nature of poverty in Malawi requires an integrated approach of various methods for data collection and impact monitoring: Both quantitative as well as qualitative research methods are required in order to gain a clear picture of the poverty situation in Malawi and an understanding of how poverty might be reduced.

### Clarification of terms in the context of QUIM, Malawi

**Impact** refers to the effect of poverty-oriented policies in terms of economic, social, cultural, political, institutional or environmental changes, including unintended side effects.

**Monitoring** (synonyms: observing, regulating, supervising) provides regular information to policy makers, planners of programmes and project managers regarding progress made and its consistency with objectives and plans.

**Policy Impact Monitoring** is a management instrument for political decision makers to regularly identify, assess and analyse the actual impact of policies, with view to the intended impact.

**Qualitative Impact Monitoring (QUIM) of Poverty Alleviation Policies and Programmes** aims at assessing the effects of policies and programmes on the "target groups", i.e. their short, medium and long-term impact on the poor.

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<sup>1</sup> The Introduction draws on a discussion paper presented by NEC (National Economic Council), SPAS-GTZ (Social Policy Advisory Service - German Technical Cooperation) to the Technical Working Committee of the Poverty Monitoring System: "Qualitative Impact Monitoring of Poverty Oriented Policies & Programmes. An Instrument to the Poverty Monitoring System". Lilongwe, Sept. 1997 (in the following referred to as QUIM-Discussion Paper).



However, surveys and analyses done within the PMS up to now have mostly worked with statistical data<sup>2</sup> which do not yield sufficient information on the perceptions of the poor regarding the policies and measures intended to benefit them. Understanding these people's rationale is, however, essential for an adequate "targeting" of supportive policies, programmes and measures. Hence the need for QUIM which captures attitudes, patterns of decision making and coping mechanisms of the poor and vulnerable groups in Malawi.

The qualitative character of QUIM is reflected in three interrelated ways,

1. the use of qualitative methods - as opposed to quantitative methods - for gathering information (mainly in semi-structured interviews and by applying various RRA-tools);
2. the object of the investigation, which is the villagers' holistic situation in all its complexity;
3. the results, which is a presentation of villagers' subjective assessment of their own situation and of changes they experienced in the past years.

Understanding the villagers' realities is particularly important with regard to PAP policies and programmes focusing on qualitative aspects of development, such as the raising of community self-esteem and self-help spirit, the enhancement of poor people's participation in social, economic and political affairs, or the strengthening of the demand for poverty-oriented policies and programmes.

QUIM contributes to the information base required by policy makers and planners of development programmes wishing to develop policies and measures which better address the potential and needs of poor and vulnerable groups in Malawi.

## Quantitative and Qualitative Data

Some people doubt the value of qualitative data, that it misses statistical "representativeness" and "significance". However, qualitative data collection does not aim at producing information that can be directly extrapolated to a larger population. In the case of QUIM, the intention is to make the people's voice heard by gathering their perceptions on poverty issues, which then are to be factored into the policy debate at higher levels.<sup>3</sup>

An advantage of this procedure is its flexibility: research based on quantitative data collection tends to be a rather lengthy process, whereas researchers like Robert Chambers have, over the past 20 years, come up with methods for a relatively speedy gathering of qualitative data, such as Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) or Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)<sup>4</sup>. The time aspect is important in the case of socio-economic changes such as the ones brought about by the recent market liberalisation in Malawi or the devaluation of the Kwacha, which can impoverish people within a very short period of time. In such cases, a

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<sup>2</sup> Vulnerability Assessment Mapping (VAM), Integrated Household Survey (IHS), Monitoring for Empowerment (M4E), and Vital Registration System (VRS). M4E and IHS include qualitative methods in their survey design. However, the qualitative aspect has not yet been followed up in M4E, and with regard to IHS, qualitative panel studies are considered but not yet implemented.

<sup>3</sup> Karen Schoonmaker Freudenberger, "The use of RRA to inform policy. Some personal Observations". Draft Discussion Paper for the IDS Workshop, May 13-14, 1996, p.9.

<sup>4</sup> For further explanation see below, Methodology.

quick grasp and analysis of the situation is required for policy makers to come up with adequate responses.

However, this is not a question of which is "better" - qualitative or quantitative methods to gather information. The two approaches simply generate different types of information which complement each other and only together provide an adequate information basis for policy makers and managers of development programmes to form their decisions on. Thus, both quantitative and qualitative data are required.

### The Objectives of QUIM

The QUIM undertaken in Malawi between August and December 1997 had the following objectives<sup>5</sup>:

|                        |   |
|------------------------|---|
| <b>OVERALL GOAL</b>    | To contribute to an information base which allows policy makers and planners of development programmes to better address poor and vulnerable groups in Malawi. To identify entry points to make the planning process of policies and programmes more participatory. |
| <b>PROJECT PURPOSE</b> | A suitable procedure for monitoring the impact of poverty-oriented policies <sup>6</sup> and programmes is developed, tested and adjusted.  |
| <b>RESULT 1</b>        | The information gap between decision makers and villagers is reduced by making non-statistical household information available.   |
| <b>RESULT 2</b>        | Communication gaps between stakeholders involved in planning and designing poverty-oriented policies and programmes are identified.   |
| <b>RESULT 3</b>        | The capacity of PMU <sup>7</sup> -staff, the staff of Planning Units in Line Ministries and NGO staff is built to do QUIM.  |
| <b>RESULT 4</b>        | Macro- and sector policies towards poverty-orientation are analysed.  |

### What to Expect from this Report

The report reflects the QUIM approach and results.

Thus, in **Part 1** the methodological approach taken is described, comprising the conceptual basis of QUIM, the formation of the QUIM team, the selection of sites investigated, methods of investigation, and documented outputs used for analysing the information gathered. Some thought is given to both limitations and potentials of the approach.

**Part 2** contains an analysis of current government policies and programmes, with regard to their objectives and intended impact in terms of poverty alleviation (QUIM-Result 4).

**Part 3** continues with the findings of the QUIM team during a Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA) in twelve villages. These findings (QUIM Results 1 and 2) are structured along the lines of four research areas:

1. the present poverty situation, as perceived by the villagers;

<sup>5</sup> QUIM-Discussion Paper, p.7.

<sup>6</sup> Policies to be monitored include macro-level policies, such as DEVPOL, Vision 2020, The Poverty Alleviation Framework, Public Sector Investment Programme, as well as sector policies of line ministries.

<sup>7</sup> PMU is the Poverty Monitoring Unit of the Poverty and Social Policy Division in NEC.

2. changes in their situation over the past years, and their causes;
  3. the villagers' awareness and knowledge of government policies and development programmes; and
  4. communication structures linking the villagers and decision makers at various levels.
- The field phase findings, which were analysed at two workshops<sup>8</sup>, are then linked to the policy analyses and presented in **Part 4**.

Occasionally, the report refers to findings on the various issues as put forward in other studies. However, it surpasses both the task and capacity of the QUIM team to systematically link its findings to information available from other sources, that is to other - quantitative - research studies undertaken within the frame of PMS. This report contributes one specific perspective onto the poverty situation in Malawi, based on the perception of affected villagers.

The report does not contain explicit recommendations for the policy makers and planners at whom it is ultimately directed; such recommendations lie outside the boundaries of a monitoring system. Instead, the report, on the basis of the link between the village findings and the policy analyses, suggests issues to be taken up by the respective line ministries and further action to be taken by the various actors involved; for example the issue of "credit for the poor", regarding the credit conditions of Malawi Rural Finance Company (MRFC), to be taken up by the Ministry of Agriculture and other relevant, governmental or non-governmental organisations and institutions.

**Volume 2** of this report deals with the QUIM process. The in-depth analysis of this process not only reinforced the insights and learning of the QUIM-team, comprising mainly of staff from local Governmental and Non-Governmental Organisations (QUIM-Result 3), but is also meant to serve all those who will be involved in planning and establishing a QUIM-system in Malawi. A lot can be learned from the experiences of the first QUIM team: How did the team reach the results laid out in Volume 1? What went well? Where did it encounter difficulties? And above all: What are the conclusions regarding future efforts at Qualitative Impact Monitoring in Malawi? On the basis of this analysis, a separate QUIM-Manual, with guidelines for future QUIM-studies, will be devised by NEC / GTZ-SPAS.

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<sup>8</sup> The workshops took place at Mzuzu, Dec. 1997, with the entire QUIM team, and at Lilongwe, March 1998, with a smaller team.

# Part One

## Methodological Approach

The QUIM team used a similar venture, which was undertaken in Jordan in 1996, as a starting point. The team made use of its practical guidelines for the development of a qualitative impact monitoring system.<sup>9</sup> However, it adapted that approach to the local context and the requirements of a more general poverty monitoring.

The mere number of policies included in this exercise was much wider than in the case of Jordan, which added to the complexity of the undertaking. This was even further enhanced by the open approach taken, with the team's focus on capturing the villagers' perception of poverty and poverty alleviating policies and programmes. Then again, the complexity of the vast information gathered required a rather comprehensive documentation system.

While in this chapter, the methodological approach is outlined to provide a framework for the subsequent presentation of the QUIM results, Volume 2 of this report gives an in-depth analysis of the actual QUIM process, drawing conclusions with regard to further adjusting and improving the methodology.

### 1.1 The conceptual basis of QUIM

QUIM comprises two aspects forming the two sides of one and the same coin:

- On the one hand, there are the views of the government regarding poverty alleviation, expressed in its policies and its activities in the form of programmes and projects;
- on the other hand, there are the villagers' assessment of their own poverty situation and their views of policies and programmes, both governmental and non-governmental ones.

A small team, comprised of NEC- and GTZ-staff, started QUIM by reviewing policies and programmes related to the issue of poverty alleviation and from this constructed a background against which to set off the findings at village level.

Thus, the preparatory phase was followed by a field phase, during which an enlarged team solicited people's views by means of a Rapid Rural Appraisal (RRA).

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#### Rapid Rural Appraisal<sup>10</sup>

RRA is a social science approach that emerged in the early 1980s for applications in development co-operation. In it, a multidisciplinary team makes use of simple, non-standard methods and the knowledge of

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<sup>9</sup> See Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Qualitative Impact Monitoring of Agricultural Structural Adjustment in Jordan. An Approach based on Rapid Rural Appraisal. Publication Series by the Centre for Advanced Training in Agricultural and Rural Development, Berlin 1996, especially the Manual, pp. 119-233.

<sup>10</sup> Michael Schönhuth, Uwe Kievelitz, Participatory Learning Approaches. Rapid Rural Appraisal, Participatory Appraisal - An Introductory Guide. Ed. by GTZ, Publication Series No. 248, Roßdorf 1994, p. ix.

local people to quickly elicit, analyse and evaluate information and hypotheses about rural life and rural resources that are of relevance for taking action. RRA techniques are an attractive alternative to conventional survey methods when the aim is not to systematically capture precise figures, a typically time-consuming and cost-intensive undertaking, but rather speedy and action-oriented assessment of local knowledge, needs and potentials with an aim to elaborating strategies to resolve conflicts or investigate specific problems. They are also suitable for shifting the focus of conventional surveys onto essential aspects.

Considering the requirements of QUIM with regard to its objectives and to its institutional anchoring in the National Economic Council (NEC), RRA seemed the appropriate approach because

- it is suitable for eliciting people's perceptions;
- it focuses especially on marginalised populations, both in rural and urban areas;
- it may enhance communication processes, such as the dialogue among different social groups within a community or between communities and decision makers at local and district level;<sup>11</sup>
- it is cost- and time-effective;
- it could be managed by the staff of governmental institutions, with support from GTZ.

## 1.2 Formation of the QUIM Team

An organising team, composed of NEC- and GTZ-staff, set about to form a multidisciplinary QUIM team, on the basis of the following selection criteria:

- the key line ministries were to be represented;
- staff from the planning unit of the line ministries was to be included;
- non-governmental organisations (NGOs) were to be represented;
- the team was to be gender balanced;
- the participants nominated by their institutions were to have undergone a RRA-training and have some experience in the application of RRA-tools.

Thus, the actual QUIM team was composed of (agricultural) economists, social and natural scientists, statisticians and planners. Four of them were affiliated with NEC as the organising agency, two with GTZ-SPAS as the financing and supporting agency; seven came from Malawian line ministries; two were working with Malawian NGOs, and two as free-lance consultants.

Although all of them had some theoretical knowledge of RRA, practical experience was scarce; therefore, the organising team offered a further RRA-training to interested QUIM team members. This was the beginning of the team building process and ensured that all participants had the same basic understanding of the venture.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>11</sup> In Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA), this aspect is of prime importance as an element of people's empowerment. QUIM, however, aims primarily at soliciting information from the villagers which is to be fed back to policy makers; thus conducting an RRA seemed more appropriate than a PRA.

<sup>12</sup> This refers not only to the knowledge about RRA tools to be applied but to the team's attitude: "Lecturing or extractive interviewing ... does not enable genuine rapport. Our basic attitude is receptive and collegial: As outsiders we accept the largely intuitive and associative knowledge of villagers as equally important and reliable as our scientific expertise." Swiss Directorate for Development Cooperation and Humanitarian Aid (SDC), "Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)". A working instrument in the Series Working Instruments for Planning, Evaluation, Monitoring and Transference into Action (PEMT). Berne, March 1993, p. 1.

### 1.3 Selection of QUIM Sites

Since poverty is widespread all over Malawi, the original idea was to solicit the views from as wide a variety of poor people as possible, that is the ones living in rural areas, in urban sites as well as on estates. Due to constraints of time, personnel and funds this was not possible so that ultimately, this QUIM venture was limited to rural areas.

The QUIM sites were selected with view to both, methodological theory of a qualitative approach and pragmatic aspects, such as the QUIM team members' knowledge of local languages. Four sub-teams could, within three weeks of field work, visit twelve villages only. They decided on the selection of villages to be visited step by step:

- 1 In order to obtain a regional balance, the number of villages to be visited within a region was decided upon in proportion to its population density, that is three villages in the Northern Region, four in the Central Region and five in the Southern Region.
- 2 The team then prepared a sampling chart comprising all districts, indicating characteristics such as
  - the prevailing livelihood system, that is the farmers' basis of production and income (subsistence, market production) which determines his or her degree of wealth or poverty;
  - access to land - small holder land sizes as a predominant factor of the farmers' livelihood systems;
  - food insecurity as a major dimension of poverty, as registered in the Vulnerability Assessment Mapping (VAM) report;
  - child malnutrition as another major dimension of poverty, as in the Malawi Social Indicators Survey 1995;
  - vicinity to Lake Malawi, which means a wider resource base with impact on the livelihood system and on food security;
  - party to the UNDP 5<sup>th</sup> Country Programme, reinforcing decentralised and bottom-up planning approaches to development;
  - local languages spoken, an aspect taken into account not in order to differentiate between ethnic groups but to ensure that at least some QUIM team members knew the respective language and thus would be able to communicate directly with the villagers.
3. However, even within a district there were wide variations; for example, in Karonga North, Central and South three different livelihood systems are to be found. In order to further narrow down the areas to visit the QUIM team used the information on Extension Planning Areas (EPAs), the smallest unit for which a good data base was available in the form of Vulnerability Assessment Mapping (VAM). The team members decided to focus on the poorest EPAs, with the farmers' access to land, the extent of food insecurity and distance to the Lake as decisive criteria.
4. A QUIM advance team then went ahead to ask the District Executive Committees (DEC) of the districts chosen to endorse the selection of EPAs and to assist in selecting a "poor" village within this EPA which was "remote", that is off central places and the main roads, and reasonably "small", ideally with less than 200 households.

The villages ultimately selected in this way are "poor", in terms of the inhabitants'

- limited access to land (except in the Northern Region), high food insecurity and high child malnutrition;
- depending mainly on farming for subsistence and income generation;
- access to safe drinking water and to natural resources (forest, lake);
- being neglected by (extension) service institutions, of having little or no communication with political or governmental institutions beyond village level;
- being cut off from development support provided by governmental or non-governmental organisations.

## Malawi QUIM Sites<sup>13</sup>

### Northern Region:

Cheghama Village, Karonga  
Mundangu Village, Rumphu  
Khoza, Nkhata Bay

### Central Region

Mteya, Ntchisi  
Chiti, Mchinji  
Chimoga, Salima  
Kainga, Ntcheu  
Mgona, Nsanje

### Southern Region

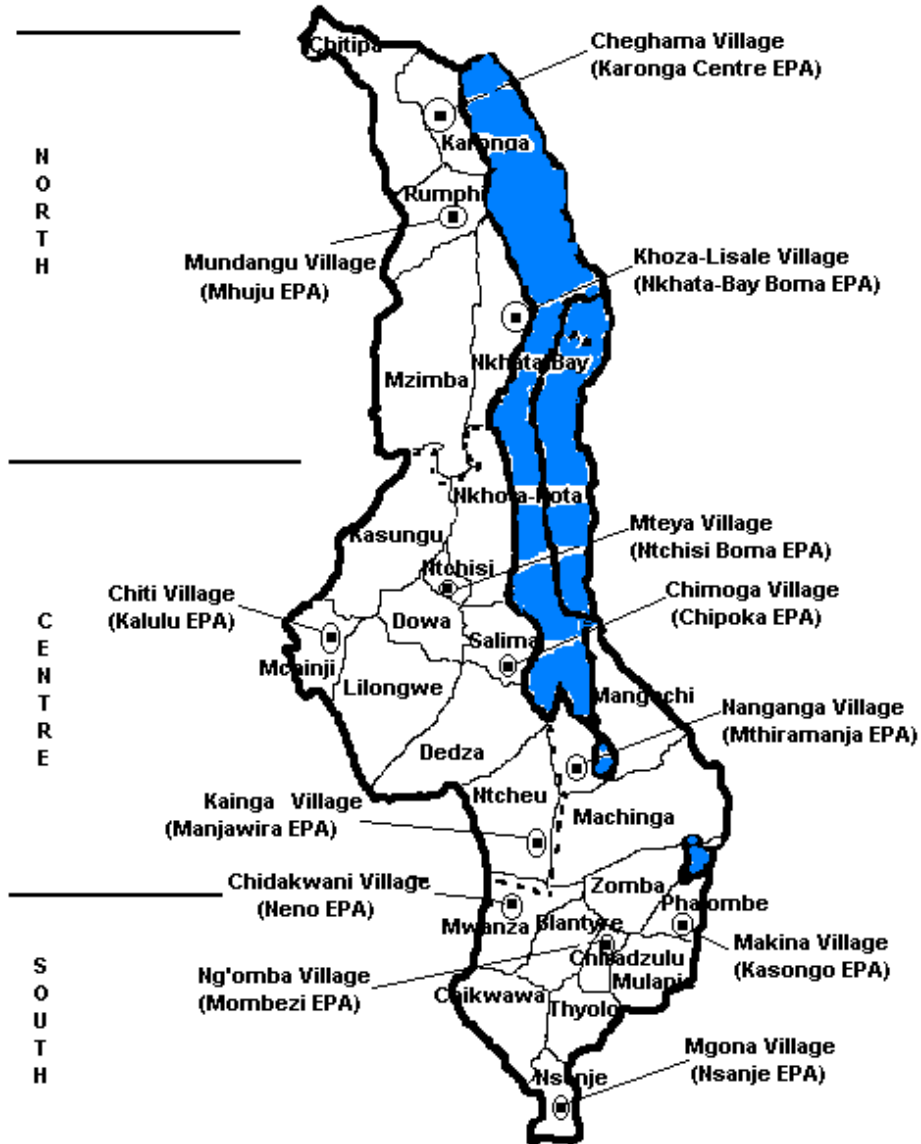
Nanganga, Mangochi  
Chidakwani, Mwanza  
Makina, Phalombe  
Ng'omba, Chiradzulu

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<sup>13</sup> For reasons why a particular village was selected see Appendix 1.

# MALAWI

## Sites Visited During QUIM Survey



Not Drawn to Scale



#### 1.4 The Field Phase: Village Meetings, Interviews and RRA-Tools Applied

In order to further familiarise the QUIM team with both the QUIM-topics and the application of RRA-tools and to test their suitability in terms of the villagers' response, a four days RRA pre-test was undertaken in four villages in the Southern Region.

Meanwhile, an advance team travelled to the *bomas* of the selected districts in order to prepare the DEC members for the arrival of the QUIM sub-teams and to select the villages to be visited with the DEC members.

During the subsequent field phase, the four QUIM sub-teams stayed for four days in each of the twelve research districts. They conducted an open interview with the respective DEC in order to explain the purpose of QUIM; to solicit information on poverty in the chosen area and on the village to be visited; and to discuss aspects of the four Research Areas. After the village stay, they briefed the DEC on the findings.

In the twelve villages, each comprising between 50 to 200 households, the teams conducted village meetings and focused sessions with groups of women, men and youths as well as interviews with key informants, mostly teachers and extension workers (agriculture, health, community development).<sup>14</sup> All in all, the four QUIM sub-teams conducted 93 sessions (Northern Region: 20; Central Region: 30; Southern Region: 43).

Some topics were discussed in semi-structured interviews along the lines of a checklist<sup>15</sup>, others were tackled by applying various RRA tools<sup>16</sup> together with the villagers, such as transect walks for direct observation and discussion in the field, mapping of village resources and institutions, problem and wealth ranking, drawing of social and institutional relation diagrams as well as time lines.

At the end of a village stay, the team presented the results to the villagers, using the opportunity to cross-check the findings.

#### 1.5 Documentation and Analysis

The information from the individual sessions was written down by members of the QUIM sub-teams on Documentation Sheets running along the lines of the Checklist for the Collection of Information (see Appendix 3). The findings from the villages were documented by the QUIM sub-teams in the form of Village Kenda Matrices<sup>17</sup>, filled in during the four days field stays or

<sup>14</sup> For a statistical overview of the sessions conducted in the villages see Appendix 2.

<sup>15</sup> See Appendix 3, Checklist for the Collection of Information.

<sup>16</sup> For a description of RRA tools used in QUIM see Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Qualitative Impact Monitoring of Agricultural Structural Adjustment in Jordan, Annex 3, pp. 199-223. It should be kept in mind, however, that in RRA and PRA, "the choice of tools varies according to the particular issues and the local communication culture. New tools are continuously being created and added. There is no concluding list of tools available due to their situative value." SDC, "Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA)", p.2.

<sup>17</sup> The "Kenda Matrix" is named after Andrew Kenda Mwenja, a Farm Management Officer from Kenya, who devised it as a means of summarising, structuring and visualising information gathered during village meetings during a Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA). See Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Facilitating the Introduction of a Participatory and Integrated Development Approach (PIDA) in Kilifi District, Kenya. Vol. 11: From Concept to Action. A Manual for Trainers and Users of PIDA. Publication Series by the Centre for Advanced Training in Agricultural Development, Berlin 1994, pp. 125 f.

immediately afterwards. At the end of every week in the field, the entire QUIM team, in one day plenary sessions, reflected upon the information gathered as well as on the process of information gathering.

At a first Analysis Workshop (Mzuzu, December 1997) the QUIM team processed the individual Village Kenda Matrices into Regional Kenda Matrices in order to better compare the information from the different sites. Thus, the information was summarised into a Kenda matrix each for the Southern Region, Central Region and Northern Region.<sup>18</sup>

This information base was later supplemented by Field Site Reports<sup>19</sup>, written retrospectively by the QUIM sub-teams.

Both, the three Regional Kenda Matrices and the twelve Field Site Reports formed the information base of a second Analysis Workshop (Lilongwe, March 1998).

The following report was written on the basis of all the documentation, discussions and analyses.

## 1.6 Some Reflections on the Approach

The approach taken is to some extent limited by an aspect inherent to all qualitative data collection: It is not easy to generalise the information gathered. This is not necessarily a question of "How representative are the findings?" in a statistical sense - as mentioned before qualitative data collection does not aim at producing information to be directly extrapolated to a larger population. However, the question remains: "What does the information from a specific village tell us? How to make use of it?" There are two answers to this.

One is that although this qualitative research is not representative in a statistical sense, the information nevertheless can be extrapolated to villages resembling the ones in which the information was gathered. Thus, on the basis of the QUIM findings one cannot say, for example, "Poverty during the past years has increased in Malawi" but one can say with some probability that "of the poor villages visited, people's perception is that poverty amongst the poorest has increased", with "poor villages" being defined along the lines of the sampling criteria (access to land, food insecurity, child malnutrition and so on).

The second answer was already mentioned above: the intention underlying this QUIM is to understand people's perception of their own situation and, by gathering and publishing their assessment of poverty issues, to make their voices heard. The issues thus raised are to be fed back to policy makers and development planners, to be introduced into the policy debate at higher levels.

This QUIM venture refers to rural sites only. Although it is true that the majority of the poor live in the country, the numbers of the urban poor with their own specific problems are rising, and the casual labourers working on estates would certainly have their own views of the poverty situation, too. Originally, urban sites and estates were to be included in this QUIM venture; due to logistical and financial constraints this was not possible. As it is, most of the QUIM team members were released for some six weeks from their regular office work which already put a heavy burden on their respective organisations and institutions. Including urban sites and estates would have meant spending another two weeks time, which was just not to be had then. Thus, exploring the situation in these sites had to be left to a future QUIM venture.

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For an example of a Village Kenda Matrix see Appendix 4.

<sup>18</sup> For an example of a Regional Kenda Matrix see Appendix 5.

<sup>19</sup> For an example of a Field Site Report see Appendix 6: Mundangu Village, Rumphi. Respective documents for other villages are available from the Secretary to the NEC, Poverty and Social Policy Division, Capital Hill, Lilongwe.

Another point for consideration is the timing of the QUIM which for various reasons had to be postponed a couple of times. The field phase was finally started right at the beginning of the rainy season. This was unfortunate in that the villagers tended to be very busy with their fieldwork and perhaps did not spend as much time with the QUIM teams as might be possible at another season.

During the analysis sessions it also became clear that there is a seasonal bias to be considered in the villagers' assessment of their situation: November and December is a time in which people often go hungry so that "lack of food" stands out more markedly as the major aspect of their poverty than it might be the case, say, after the maize harvest in April or May.

However, this sort of bias occurs in every season. The time span villagers refer to during discussions is very much predetermined by their present situation. One has to take this into consideration for further QUIMs. In order to achieve a holistic picture of the situation throughout the year, QUIM rounds should be done at different times of the year.

The teams worked mostly in group sessions with men, women and youth<sup>20</sup> which were open to whoever was free and willing to join. This approach had a pragmatic advantage in that there were always some villagers to work with; the disadvantage was that the groups' composition changed all the time. In the end the teams were sure that they had worked with rather a wide selection of villagers but a sound stratification was not possible. However, since the participants everywhere classified the vast majority of the villagers as being "poor" or only "slightly better off" it can safely be assumed that the teams did get the views of the target group they had been aiming for.

The QUIM team was aware of the gender aspect in the RRA and consequently always organised group discussions separately with women and men. However, during the analysis sessions, the team found it occasionally difficult to interpret differences in the answers of men and women. Ultimately, the gender perspective was not really followed through in terms of thematic penetration of the various research questions. Regarding natural resources, for example, there is a lack of information on how far the nearest forest is and how much time the women spend on fetching firewood. And even where sometimes women's and men's differing perception of a specific issue was captured, for instance, regarding the question whether poverty has increased or decreased over the past years, this was not done consistently enough for the analysis team to arrive at significant conclusions.

Aspects such as these show that this one QUIM venture does not suffice to render a comprehensive picture of how people assess their poverty situation, their need for outside support and the impact of poverty alleviating policies and programmes. The QUIM recorded here should be considered as one step taken towards a regular qualitative monitoring system - a pilot QUIM from which a lot may be learnt for future QUIM ventures.

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<sup>20</sup> Interviews with the youth took place during the first field stay, in the Southern Region, but were then dropped because the youth lacked information regarding the past and had "unrealistic" aspirations regarding the future.

## Part Two

### Analyses of Poverty Alleviation Policies and Programmes

If QUIM and this report deal primarily with poverty issues as viewed by the villagers, why start with an analysis of GoM policies? There are three reasons:

First, it is the impact of poverty alleviating policies that is to be monitored which means that we first have to gain an understanding of GoM policies, their objectives and strategies, and of how these policies were implemented, for instance in the form of programmes and projects.

Second, this analysis was done basically before the field phase and then further deepened during the report writing phase. It gave the QUIM team an idea of what to expect at village level and now sets the frame for the subsequent report of the village findings.

Third, such a frame is needed in order to relate the findings in the villages to the GoM policies and to draw conclusions and point out implications for policy makers and development planners.

#### 2.1 Introduction and Background to the Policies in Place

The Malawi Government has been implementing development programmes with the aim of reducing the level and incidence of poverty for a number of years; indeed poverty alleviation is the national, central development policy objective. A number of national development strategies have been introduced since 1994 - namely the *Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation Programme (PFAP, 1994)* and the *Vision 2020 National Long Term Perspective Study (Vision 2020, 1998)*. These documents respectively outline how the country is to lift itself out of the poverty situation it is in and what the Malawian people aspire to in the future. Their name is also well known amongst people everywhere in the country.

This chapter examines the various sectors with reference to these policies. While many of the policies examined are still only at a draft stage, they often reflect the priorities of the *PFAP*. The appendix to this chapter<sup>21</sup> shows how the sector analyses were done, that is how the broad and sometimes simplistic terminology used to reflect the primary areas for action in a sector is arrived at. It then investigates which activities have been put in place specifically to attain the objectives of the respective policy.

The perhaps unusual step of including Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) as an independent area for examination in what is otherwise a sector review of policies reflects the importance of these programmes and the fact that they cut across so many sectors: they highlight the environment against which other policies have to be implemented.

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<sup>21</sup> Appendix 7 Example for a Policy Analysis: Sector "Agriculture and Food Security"

## 2.2 Structural Adjustment Programmes

World Bank sponsored Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) were introduced by the Malawian Government in June 1981<sup>22</sup>. The SAPs were adopted because of the deterioration in the balance of payments. They sought to achieve both a long-term macro-economic stabilisation and a structural transformation of the economy by addressing the fundamental concerns of the country's economic crisis.

The Malawian economy had registered strong growth in the first 15 years after independence in 1964. During this period the annual growth rate of real Gross Domestic Product (GDP) averaged over 6%. However, economic difficulties experienced by Malawi during the 1970s and early 1980s resulted in zero growth of the GDP in 1980 and a decline of 5.2% in 1981<sup>23</sup>. The early success was interrupted by problems from three sources - exogenous shocks, the policy response to these shocks, and internal structural imbalances.

The two major external difficulties were the oil price increases of 1973-74 and 1979, and the falling commodity prices in international markets of major crops like tobacco, tea and sugar. Other difficulties included natural hazards and problems emerging from regional geo-political factors, such as

- pressure on available land resources caused by an influx of Mozambican refugees;
- external transport problems brought about as a result of the Mozambican civil war;
- the drought of 1979-80 which led to a poor harvest of maize.

Further, the agricultural policies, promoting the tobacco sub-sector and estate based agriculture through active state support, by-passed a large section of the rural community. In addition, Malawi's industrial policy contained no export incentives until 1989.

Malawi introduced the SAPs after the first macro-economic stabilisation programme based on the International Monetary Funds (IMF) stand-by arrangement (SBA) in October 1979. The implementation of the SAPs was done in phases - Structural Adjustment Lending (SAL) I, II and III and a SAL III supplement, implemented in the years 1981, 1984, 1986 and 1987.

Other loans included the Industrial and Trade Policy Adjustment Credit in 1988, the Agricultural Sector Adjustment Credit in 1990, the Entrepreneurship Development and Drought Recovery Programme in 1992 and its supplement in 1995. The most recently has been the Fiscal Restructuring and Deregulation Program of 1996.

Kaluwa generally observes that all Malawians have been adversely affected by the recession and curtailment of consumption as well as by measures undertaken under the stabilisation and adjustment packages<sup>24</sup>. The prices of basic commodities, especially food, have increased, and government expenditure on basic services such as health and education have fallen in real terms. Furthermore, real wages and employment have been reduced, especially amongst low income households.

The SAPs are treated here as a separate entity because of their importance to the country. The main areas affected are as follows

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<sup>22</sup> Among the documents reviewed were: Corbo, V., Fischer, S., Webb, S.B., Adjustment Lending Revisited. Washington: World Bank, 1992; World Bank, Report on Fiscal Restructuring and Deregulation Programme. Washington 1996; Chilowa, C., Liberalisation of Agriculture Produce Marketing and Household Food Security in Malawi (preliminary results). Bergen 1991; and Kaluwa, B. (ed.), The Structural Adjustment Programme in Malawi, Harare: Sapes Books, 1992.

<sup>23</sup> Kaluwa, B., The Structural Adjustment Programme in Malawi, p. 3.

<sup>24</sup> Kaluwa, B., The Structural Adjustment Programme in Malawi, p. 49.

- Agriculture - particularly smallholder access to burley tobacco production and liberalisation of the trade in seed and fertiliser;
- Exchange rates - devaluation;
- Shifts in budgetary allocation to pro-poor areas;
- Finance sector - changes in interest rates and other activities under monetary management, such as freeing the access to markets for banks;
- Parastatals - restructuring of parastatal companies, including ADMARC (Agricultural Development and Marketing Co-operation);
- Resource mobilisation and governmental resource management - to be improved;
- Controls on entry into the industrial sector - to be relaxed;
- Export promotion and import liberalisation.

Activities undertaken under such a broad range of headings are bound to have an effect on people at all levels, especially those who are most vulnerable - the poorest. To mitigate these detrimental effects, programmes such as the Social Dimensions of Adjustment were introduced.

What does all this mean for QUIM? On the basis of the above analysis, the QUIM team members formulated hypotheses as to what impact they expected to find at village level. Thus, one could reasonably expect to find the elimination of fertiliser subsidies leading to lower production amongst the poorest members of a community as they can no longer afford fertiliser, or that closing ADMARC's more uneconomical and isolated branches would leave those in the more remote villages even more cut off than before. One could also expect that not all is negative (though much is), for instance the reorientation of public expenditure to pro-poor areas since 1992, if changes of this nature have filtered down this would be a major positive effect.

### 2.3 Agriculture and Food Security

The agricultural and livestock sector is the backbone of Malawi's economy. It employs over 80% of the economically active population and accounts for slightly more than 35% of GDP. The sector contributes significantly to foreign exchange earnings, generating 62% of domestic export earnings in 1997<sup>25</sup>. Through supply and demand linkages with the non-agricultural sector, the growth of this sector stimulates that of the country's overall economy.

Malawi's agricultural economy is characterised by a somewhat oversimplified dual structure, consisting of the smallholder sub-sector, which accounts for almost three quarters of marketed output, and the estate sub-sector. The system is oversimplified insofar as an intermediary group of small-scale estates have emerged during the 1980s. However, the smallholder and estate sub-sectors have been historically distinguished on the basis of legal and institutional rules regulating land tenure, crop production and marketing arrangements. The estate sub-sector is based on leasehold tenure, while the smallholder sub-sector is based on customary land tenure.

The smallholder sub-sector is primarily subsistence orientated and provides the bulk of food production although it also comprises some commercial farming. However, small landholdings, low productivity, high costs of inputs relative to price received for outputs, erratic rainfall and low levels of income in farm employment are among the factors that affect the sector's ability to feed the population and meet human needs. This is compounded by a situation that sees most of the

<sup>25</sup> National Economic Council, *Macroeconomic Performance in 1997 and Prospects for 1998*. Government Printer, Zomba, 1998.

smallholder farmers dependant on maize production - 75% of smallholder land has been allocated to maize, yet the returns remain very low. Poverty in the rural areas pervades amongst the smallholders, while the gains made have primarily benefited larger farmers<sup>26</sup>.

Many of the changes initiated under the Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs) have affected directly the agricultural sector, for example the removal of subsidies, the reform of ADMARC, and the liberalisation of markets.

The overall objective of agricultural policies is to improve the well-being of Malawians, especially of rural people, through poverty alleviation - by promoting broad based and rapid agricultural and livestock development. Under the overall objective of rural poverty alleviation agricultural and livestock development aims at

- improving food security and the nutritional status of the population;
- expanding and diversifying agricultural and livestock product exports;
- raising farm incomes and promoting economic growth while conserving natural resources.

There appears to be broad agreement across the policies on how this is to be achieved, that is, by

- increasing smallholder farmers' access to inputs;
- liberalising the policies of growing crops, pricing and marketing of produce;
- developing the irrigation potential of the country;
- improving technology transfer;
- undertaking new activities on soil conservation;
- diversifying crops and livestock, and diversifying into other sources of cash income;
- reforming the land policy.

A number of programmes and activities have been undertaken to attain these goals, such as

- the Agricultural Productivity Investment Project (APIP) for fertiliser and seed supply;
- removal of all barriers to maize trade and to price controls on all other agricultural products;
- programmes assisting in soil conservation, such as Malawi Agro Forestry and Extension Project (MAFE) or Promotion of Soil Conservation and Rural Production (PROSCARP);
- small stock project and smallholder food security programme, sponsored by the International Fund for Agricultural Development (IFAD), as well as the Rural Income Enhancement Project which encourage diversification.

However, most of these are recent developments and realistically could not be expected to have filtered to all QUIM sites as of yet.

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<sup>26</sup> Government of Malawi/UNICEF, Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi. Limbe: Montfort Press, 1993, p. xv.

## 2.4 Education

The challenge presented to the education sector is evidenced nowhere more clearly than in the literacy figures - only 39% of the adult population were able to read and write in 1987.<sup>27</sup>

The formal education system in the country is based on an 8-4-4 Primary, Secondary, Tertiary system. There are also adult literacy classes and pre-school education. Non-formal education is administered by various sectors to meet particular needs - such as Agricultural Extension, Health Education and Associations for Women.

The most significant development in the education sector over the past number of years has been the introduction of *Universal Free Primary Education*. This strategy has resulted in a boom in enrolment of 3.2 million, which is expected to reach a peak of 3.6 million by 2005. This has signalled a move away from the more conventional emphasis on training for middle and higher level managers with its focus on secondary education.

The focus on "education for all" stems from the realisation, highlighted in the policy framework for poverty alleviation, that an educated population understands and appreciates better the need and means for reducing infant mortality and population growth, for adopting better technologies to improve agricultural production and preventing disease. Yet even bearing this in mind, there is a problem with internal efficiency - on average only 23% of a cohort complete eight years of primary school. The girls' dropout rate is 10% and the boys' is 8%. Due to high repetition rates, on average it takes about 12 years to come up with one primary school graduate.

Besides, the country faces a huge number of problems related to the quality of education - the most pressing of which are the high ratio of national qualified teacher to pupil (1:85), lack of in-service training for qualified teachers, generally overcrowded classrooms, oversubscribed schools, insufficient furniture (1 desk for 6 children) and textbooks (1 book for 4 children), a critical shortage of teachers houses (35,575), and poor delivery systems of teaching and learning materials.<sup>28</sup>

A comparison of the main policies which focus on education - the *PPFAP*, *Vision 2020*, and the *Policy and Investment Framework for Education in Malawi (1995-2005)* - shows that they differ very little in their focus which can be summarised into

- improving the quality of education by providing the necessary resources both in human and physical terms. Programmes, such as the Malawi Integrated In-Service Training Education Programme and MASAF, including people's self-help efforts, should contribute significantly in certain areas to improving the capital stock;
- improving the access of all children of school going age to primary education, through the continuation of free primary education;
- improving access to secondary schools by ensuring that selection processes are fair;
- improving the access of girls to schooling through programmes such as Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education (GABLE);
- reviewing the curricula to introduce a wider range of subjects.

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<sup>27</sup> Government of Malawi /UNICEF, "Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi", p. 135. - This section does not deal with adult literacy, though, which is included under community development and social welfare, primarily due to the fact that it is the responsibility of the Ministry of Women Youth and Community Services (MoWYCS).

<sup>28</sup> Government of Malawi, "A Policy and Investment Framework for Education in Malawi". The Educational Materials Development and Resource Centre, Domasi 1995, p. 3.



Thus, one might expect that at village level, enrolment numbers generally and especially for girls to have increased while the quality of education should have improved.

## 2.5 Health

In addition to the usual *PFPAP*, *Vision 2020* and outdated *Statement of Development Policy (DEVPOL, 1987)*, the sectoral *National Health Policy* was reviewed here.

Health services are provided by the Ministry of Health and Population (MoHP: 60%), Christian Health Association of Malawi (CHAM: 30%), Local Authorities (7%) and other smaller independent organisations.

The focus here is on conventional methods of health care. In addition to these, there were 1,000 Traditional Birth Attendants active in 1990, and an estimated 18,000 traditional practitioners without links to the MoHP. The *PFPAP* urges for the establishment of links.

The *PFPAP* describes the health status of the entire population as generally low. It observes, however, that the following groups in poverty are the most adversely affected: smallholder farmers, women in poverty, estate workers, tenant farmers in estate agriculture, seasonal or casual labourers (*ganyu*), children in poverty and the urban poor.

Further, the document highlights the importance of the sector, stating that the productivity of the labour force is dependent on the health status of the population<sup>29</sup>. This is the case anywhere but particularly so in Malawi where a large majority of the people depend on low-technology agricultural production for subsistence and income. The overall objective of the sector policies, according to the *PFPAP*, is to raise the level of the health status of all Malawians, especially the severely affected groups. The commitment of the *Health Policy Framework* to poverty alleviation is evinced in its close links and similarity to the *PFPAP*.

In *Vision 2020*, the most serious problems faced by the health sector in Malawi are outlined:

- many people (no figures given) have no access to health services;
- the quality of health services at all levels of the health delivery system is poor;
- the management at all levels of the health delivery system is weak;
- infant mortality and maternal mortality rates are high;
- malnutrition is widespread among children.

Strategies to improve people's health, according to the document, need to include above all the provision of adequate social services and health services, that is making them available and accessible as well as raising their quality.

In *DEVPOL*, the overall policy objective for the health sector is emphasised which is to raise the population's level of health by reducing incidences of illness and death. Further, the document states that the Ministry of Health carries responsibility for developing policies and planning programmes, to ensure that both, public and non-governmental organisations, provide services of acceptable quality.

All the documents focus on the same main areas for action:

- encouraging and empowering the community and individuals to take more responsibility for their own health. The main activity here is the training of 3,000 Health Surveillance

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<sup>29</sup> Government of Malawi, Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation Programme, Limbe: Montfort Press, 1995, p. 25.

Assistants (HSAs) under the Population Health and Nutrition (PHN) projects, who in turn help the community to establish Village Health Committees (VHCs);

- making basic medical supplies available and training an adequate number of personnel, through the PHN, the expansion of training institutions and the Malawi Essential Drugs Project;
- decentralising the health sector and encouraging private sector involvement, through initiatives such as the construction of district hospitals under the Rural Health Care project.
- focusing on Primary / Preventive Health Care, for instance through vaccination programmes and information on preventive medical care, while providing curative facilities for common illnesses;
- giving special attention to HIV/AIDS in form of Information and Education Campaigns (IEC) and peripheral care;
- introducing drug revolving funds and the principle of cost sharing;
- strengthening nutrition surveillance and enhancing activities related to malnutrition. A national plan of action on nutrition has been put in place, with women being educated at under-five clinics on nutrition-related issues.

## 2.6 Water and Sanitation

The *Water Resource Management Policy and Strategy* document states that the water sector in Malawi is characterised by rapidly growing demand and difficulties in ensuring the financial and physical sustainability of existing schemes. Further, it observes that the existing water supply and sanitation services are fragmented among several ministries and institutions with inadequate co-ordination between them.

The 1995 Malawi Social Indicators Survey shows that only 37% of the population has access to safe water for drinking within half a kilometre of their residence, and that there is almost a one in three chance that this water provider does not work.<sup>30</sup>

The *PFAP* document states that about a quarter of Malawi's surface is covered by water. However, only 52 % of the rural population have access to safe water. It adds that water-related and water-borne diseases are the major cause of high morbidity and mortality among children. The main constraints in the water sector, as observed by the authors of *PFAP*, include inadequate funding, frequent breakdowns and lack of continuous training and incentive for local people to participate in the monitoring and management of water systems.

The *Vision 2020* document states that problems related to sanitation services include lack of investment, inadequate institutional arrangements, and lack of policy in the sector.

With respect to the water sector, a number of areas emerge as being important:

- increasing investment in water supply to expand a safe supply to urban and rural areas; this has seen 9,700 boreholes, 5,600 wells and 56 rural piped gravity schemes being implemented in the 1990s;
- involving non-governmental organisations in water provision;
- training people at community and national level to maintain and operate systems, and ensuring a supply of spare parts;

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<sup>30</sup> Government of Malawi, Malawi Social Indicators Survey 1995. Lilongwe 1996, p. 81.

- involve communities in the operation and maintenance of systems to ensure sustainability.

In the sanitation sector the main areas highlighted for action are

- Information and Education Campaigns (IEC) have seen the establishment of 400 health and water committees in villages;
- construction and use of San-Plats; training has been given and since 1990, 2,300 improved pits have been installed in rural areas;
- develop and enforce sanitation laws.

Initially the government had set the year 2000 as the year to provide universal access to safe water and sanitation - this has subsequently been pushed out to the year 2005, and amended slightly to read 100% coverage in urban areas and 74% coverage in rural areas.

## 2.7 Population

Malawi continues to experience rapid population growth, increasing at 3.2% per annum. The population is currently estimated to be 11 million. The high population growth rate can be attributed to high fertility, combined with declining mortality.

The government started to give due recognition to the issues of population and poverty in the 1980s when it was realised that rapid population growth was exerting a lot of pressure on the country's development efforts.

*PFPAP*, *Vision 2020* and the *National Population Policy* have quite similar areas of focus, primarily -

- enhancing reproductive health services and family planning by making services available to all, through opening more family planning clinics and increasing the number of Community Based Distribution Agents (CBDA) of contraceptives and family planning information;
- enhancing access to family planning for both, men and women;
- adoption of a national IEC strategy on population formulation by the National Family Planning Council;
- improving women's status, thus helping them control their fertility and reproductive health.

## 2.8 Financial Services

According to the *PFPAP* document, the financial sector is made up basically of institutions in the financial market that allocate credit mainly to most productive investments in the formal sector. Small-scale credit, especially agricultural credit, has been organised as a donor-assisted subsidised scheme that is not self-sustaining.

The authors of *Vision 2020* however observe that direct contribution of the financial sector to the GDP is very small, with financial and professional services contributing less than 7 %. They go further to say that for Malawi to grow fast, the financial resource requirements of strategic industries need to be addressed.

The authors of the *DEVPOL* state that since independence in 1964, there have been a number of changes in the structure of the financial sector and an increase in financial intermediation.

The network of formal banking and financial services in Malawi consists of a central bank, commercial banks, leasing and finance companies, a building society, development finance institutions, savings and credit institutions, insurance organisations and a pension fund.

In the formal financial institutions mentioned above, the credit uptake by the poor has been very low or non-existent<sup>31</sup>. Reasons attributed to this include

- conventional collateral requirements against credits,
- rigid and formal lending policies and procedures, resulting in
- high transaction costs and a lack of proximity and familiarity with the requirements on the part of small borrowers,
- a lack of business know-how and financial skills of the poor in providing feasible and viable business plans for bank financing.

As a result of the inadequate access to formal financial markets, the poor often resort to the informal credit market. Chipeta and Mkandawire<sup>32</sup> observe that the informal market sector is larger than the formal financial sector. Informal financial savings and lending practices involve *Katapilas* (money lenders), employers, estate owners, neighbours, relatives and community groups.

A number of attempts have been made to change the problems. The UNDP 5th Country Programme established a credit guarantee scheme, Malawi Savings and Credit Co-operative (MUSCCO), Small Enterprise Development of Malawi (SEDOM) and the Investment Development Fund (INDEFUND) have all been established during the 1980s. The Promotion of Micro Enterprises for Rural Women (PMERW) have targeted women's credit. The Small and Medium Enterprise Fund (SMEF, 1995) and the Youth Credit Scheme (1996), along with the Malawi Mudzi Fund (MMF, 1987/1995) and Malawi Rural Finance Company (MRFC, 1994) have all been launched in an attempt to target specified groups in the community.

## **2.9 Micro and Small-Scale Enterprises**

The two main development policies for the country, *PPFAP* and *Vision 2020*, place emphasis on the importance of Micro- and Small-Scale Enterprises (MSSEs). MSSEs are a significant factor in poverty alleviation in that they focus on indigenous resources, and more important, on the most abundant of all natural resources in Malawi - labour. In response to this, the Ministry of Commerce and Industry has drafted a *Micro and Small Enterprises Policy Statement* which has yet to be approved by the government.

There is agreement in the various policy documents and drafts on the main areas to be tackled: provision of credit, provision of training, construction of suitable premises, improving market access, promotion of appropriate technologies, and creating links to the formal sector.

Against these a number of initiatives have been implemented, such as the Small and Medium Enterprise Fund (SMEF), Small Enterprise Development Organisation of Malawi (SEDOM), and Development of Malawian Trader Trust (DEMATT). Lack of a coherent policy is recognised as being a limiting factor in the development of the sector up to now

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<sup>31</sup> UNDP, Small Enterprise Development Programme. n.p., 1992.

<sup>32</sup> Chipeta, C., Mkandawire, M., The Informal Financial Sector and Macro Economic Adjustments in Malawi. n.p., 1991

With regard to improving access to credit, SMEF has since 1995 provided MK 100m, while MRFC offers agricultural loans and other business loans. Management, entrepreneurial and technical skills training have been provided by DEMAT. However, action on developing markets and the provision of suitable premises and infrastructure have not been tackled. Little has been done in terms of encouraging links to the formal sector through sub-contracting and of promoting institutional development through strengthening clubs, associations and support mechanisms.

## 2.10 Labour Policies and Programmes

Issues of labour (employment) policies are tackled under the Human Resources Development sector in the *PFAP*. This includes activities such as education and training, primary health care and nutrition, population, gender and youth. The *Vision 2020* document also examines Human Resources Development, with its recommendations for action differing somewhat from the *PFAP*. The various activities are designed to be carried out by the respective ministries, such as Education, Health, Women Youth and Children Affairs. The issue of labour is the responsibility of the Ministry of Labour and Vocational Training.

Malawi is party to several International Labour Standards that guide labour administration and labour laws through

- The Regulations of Minimum Wages and Conditions of Employment Act;
- The Employment Act;
- The Worker Compensation Act;
- The Factories Act;
- The recent Labour Relations Act.

The country has, however, no comprehensive labour and employment policy. Instead, there are a number of policies, which fall under this broad heading. These policies again are quite different from the areas for action outlined in *PFAP* and *Vision 2020*.

The *National Wages and Salaries Policy*, adopted in 1969, aims at maximising wage employment, minimising cost-push inflation, checking rural-urban migration and maintaining competitiveness of Malawi's economy as well as raising rural living standards. This policy - at odds with other policies - limits salary increases to 5% unless approved by the minister responsible for labour.

The *Manpower Development and Localisation Policy* tries to promote self-sufficiency in skilled manpower through embarking on massive formal training of people within and outside the country. Posts held by expatriate staff for a specified period of time wherever possible are to be localised - a policy implemented primarily through issuing Temporary Employment Permits (TEPs).

The *Labour Relation Act* deals with the voluntary system of determining wages and other conditions of employment through a collective bargaining process. The statutory system for determining wages and conditions of employment is through the statutory Wages Advisory Board and six Wages Advisory Councils.

Vocational training programmes have been introduced through a *National Apprenticeship Scheme for Craftsmen and Technicians*, mainly in technical trades. The Malawi Entrepreneurs Development Institute (MEDI) mainly operates business and management training programmes.

In essence, Malawian labour policies and programmes are based on formal sector employment (in 1987 estimated at 430,000 persons), with little or no attempt to legislate for the vast majority outside the formal sector.

## 2.11 Housing

Housing is not just an issue for urban dwellers: the large rural population makes rural housing an important area of concern. - The 1987 census<sup>33</sup> shows that 84% of all dwelling units in Malawi were grass thatched while only 15% had iron sheets. In rural areas the percentage of grass thatched houses is even higher (89%), while in urban areas 34% of all dwellings had thatched roofs. - About 47% of all dwelling units in Malawi had walls made of mud / wattle, 31% of sun dried bricks and only 11% of burnt bricks. In rural areas the majority of houses are constructed from temporary and semi-permanent materials. Needless to say that the temporary materials require frequent replacement, imposing substantial maintenance costs on rural families.

Population projections show that the country is experiencing rapid urbanisation. This suggests a problem for formal sector housing, insofar as it cannot cope with the demands being placed upon it. Thus, the informal sector offers the greatest hope to most urban households. The urban situation is exacerbated by the fact that half the population in these areas reside in squatter settlements, with over one third of households having no sanitation facilities.

The *PFPAP* document points out that "good housing plays an essential role in realisation of society, human dignity and self fulfilment and contributes directly to individual's health and productivity"<sup>34</sup>. The country up to now does not have a National Housing Policy, and housing programmes and policies have been implemented in a rather haphazard manner. The *Draft Housing Policy* of March 1997 highlights the close relationship between poverty and housing: "Although poor housing is a reflection of poverty, housing in turn offers an invaluable opportunity to alleviate poverty".<sup>35</sup>

Lack of an explicit policy does not mean that there has been complete inactivity in the sector - a number of programmes have been implemented, such as The First Urban Project which has supplied mortgage finance since 1987, and the Rural Housing Programme which was intended to motivate, encourage and assist rural families to improve their housing standards (since 1981). Besides, some NGOs have been active in this sector, such as Habitat for Humanity, which run projects designed to build simple but decent houses and latrines.

In the past housing policy has focused on direct provision by government and Malawi Housing Corporation (MHC) - a strategy that has been severely constrained by inadequate financial resources, an inefficient land market, high planning and construction standards and a poor capacity for programme implementation. The new focus, which the Draft Housing Policy intended to introduce, is on the creation of an enabling environment, with three main areas of attention:

- access to housing by all income groups;
- a decentralised approach; and
- improving urban land markets.

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<sup>33</sup> National Statistical Office, Census Results. Zomba 1987.

<sup>34</sup> Government of Malawi, Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation, 1995, p. 33.

<sup>35</sup> Government of Malawi, Draft Housing Policy. Lilongwe: Ministry of Housing, 1997, p. 22.

## 2.12 Community Development and Social Welfare

Community development can be seen as a process by which the efforts of the people themselves are combined with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic and social conditions of communities. Due to the predominantly rural nature of the country, the development of skills, institutions, services and infrastructure appropriate to the rural environment are a priority.

Social welfare means looking after the well-being of the socially and economically deprived. Among these groups are the disabled, orphans, the aged and the sick.

Both, community development and social welfare fall under the responsibility of the Ministry of Women, Youth, and Community Services (MoWYCS). Contact to people in the communities is maintained through Community Development Assistants (CDAs), Social Welfare Assistants, and instructors working under the Adult Literacy Programme. The ministry has an extensive grass roots network, comprising approximately 500 CDAs who are to train people and facilitate development work within the local communities; optimally, however, there should be 2,000 CDAs.

The issue of decentralisation arises here, particularly with regard to the District Executive Committee (DEC) and the District Development Committee (DDC); thus, the ministry of Local Government is introduced into the area of Community Development.

Initiatives which involve the communities in the planning and implementation of projects, such as Social Funds (MASAF or the EU Micro-Project Fund) and a number of NGOs, are important for community development and the fostering of a self-help spirit.

The main objectives for community development and social welfare which emerge from the *PFPAP* and *Vision 2020* can be loosely categorised as

- strengthening community participation in development issues through, for example, training courses for local leaders and the introduction of Community Development Assistants (CDAs);
- encouraging decentralisation, with the CDAs facilitating the local communities' contact to project-offering agencies;
- ensuring that all members of society are integrated into the mainstream economy; this involves the introduction of programmes for orphans' care and community based rehabilitation of the disabled;
- protection of children;
- increase adult literacy, through a programme which by September 1997 had 2,500 literacy instructors teaching classes at community level.

## 2.13 Transport and Infrastructure

The *National Transport Policy* document notes that transport is a service sector that not only has to meet consumer demand but also stimulate economic growth within the country. It observes that it is crucial for the Malawian economy, which depends heavily on international trade, to have dependable and less costly external links. Similarly at domestic level, transport is crucial in the distribution chain.

The *Vision 2020* authors observe a number of problems and challenges in each mode of transport. Roads are inadequate, poorly designed, managed and maintained - a result of the lack of a national policy. The rural transport system suffers from inefficient management and

inoperative trucks. Water transport is constrained by a limited number of operators. Similarly, air transport has a limited and poorly maintained number of airports and operators.

The *PPFAP* simply observes that transport is a service sector whose role is to link producers and consumers of goods and services. As a result, the document adds, transport plays a crucial role in facilitating and promoting growth.

The *DEVPOL* document, however, puts emphasis on the government being responsible for building and maintaining an efficient network of infrastructure and services appropriate to the current requirement and the future development of the economy.

The transport and infrastructure sector has five sub-themes:

- Roads and Road Transport;
- Water Transport;
- Rail Transport;
- Air Transport;
- Meteorological Surveillance.

As of 1997, only four out of 23 identified projects have been funded by donors in the transport and infrastructure sector - it remains to be established why donors have been so slow to fund projects in this sector.

There has been a noticeable shift away from the priorities of the 1980s which centred on international freight difficulties brought about by the war in Mozambique. The *PPFAP* identifies different target groups in the transport sector.

Main actions undertaken in this sector have involved the Village Access Roads and Bridges Assistance Unit (VARBAU, since the 1980s), and the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF) with its Public Works Programmes, which funded approximately twenty roads. MASAF also used Food for Work campaigns to construct some roads.

While other schemes, such as the Rural Motorised Transport Project which involved leasing buses to various individuals, are still at a pilot phase, MASAF and VARBAU may be expected to have had some impact on the QUIM communities.

## **2.14 Natural Resources and Environment**

A number of policies make mention of the environment and natural resources sector. At the macro level there are general policies such as *Vision 2020* and *PPFAP*. While the *National Environment Policy*, the *Environment Management Act* and the *National Environment Action Plan* focus on environmental matters, the *National Forestry Policy* and the *Draft Fisheries Policy* are the main sector policy documents.

Actors involved in the realisation of these policies are numerous and include the Ministry of Fisheries, Forestry and Environmental Affairs, the Ministry of Agriculture and Livestock Development, the Ministry of Local Government and the Department of Lands.

The *PPFAP* document observes that Malawi is endowed with a lot of natural resources, such as land, water, fish, wildlife and forests, which provide a basis for sustainable socio-economic development. However, over-exploitation of the natural resource base has accelerated over the past two decades, resulting in serious environmental degradation.



The authors of *Vision 2020* envisage reduced land degradation by promoting sustainable land use and management practices, zero deforestation, adequate water resources free from pollutants, and a balanced ecosystem. This requires the promotion of changes in lifestyle.

The *National Environment Policy* (1996) derives its mandate from the constitution. The main objectives of the policy are to prevent environmental degradation, to provide a healthy working and living environment for the people of Malawi, to accord full recognition to the rights of future generations by means of environmental protection, and to conserve and enhance the biological diversity of Malawi.

The *Environmental Management Act* (1996) deals with cross-sectoral issues, including the formulation of regulations for Environmental Impact Assessments, Integrated Pollution Control and Control of Pesticides. It is intended to support the decentralisation of environmental management to the district level. Besides, the author's concern is with ownership of the environment being in the hands of the local population.

The *National Environment Action Plan* (1994) describes the environmental situation of the country and recommends a set of actions to be taken in order to redress the aggravated environmental degradation, so as to facilitate a sustainable utilisation of natural resources.

The *National Forestry Policy* (1996) aims at providing an enabling framework for promoting the participation of local communities and the private sector in forest conservation and management, eliminating restrictions on sustainable harvesting of essential forest products by local communities, and promoting planned harvesting and regeneration of the forest resources.

The main focus of the *Draft Fisheries Policy* is to sustain the contribution of the national fish resources to uplift the quality of life in Malawi by conserving the resources for the benefit of present and future generations. The policy aims at fostering effective conservation through involving the local communities, the private sector and NGOs. The government recognises local people as the best custodians of the ecosystem and its bio-diversity.

To obtain all the goals highlighted from the various sector policies, quite a number of activities have been instituted. To improve the local communities' participation and empowerment Beach Village Committees and Village Natural Resource Committees have been established. A national environmental education and communication strategy is in place since 1995 to educate and train people. Soil conservation is being promoted through Promotion of Soil Conservation and Rural Production (PROSCARP), while the Agricultural Services Project focuses on soil and water conservation and improving soil fertility. Fishery projects, such as the Malawi-German Fisheries and Aqua-Culture Development Project (MAGFAD), contribute to the promotion of aqua-culture in some areas and also provide an additional source of income at household level. Forestry projects, such as the Malawi Agro-Forestry and Extension Project (MAFE), promote agro-forestry, while the *National Environment Bill* (1997) has strengthened the regulatory framework for pesticide use and industrial pollution.

## 2.15 Irrigation

Malawi is endowed with water resources that could be used for irrigation - such as the two big lakes, *Malombe* and *Malawi*, fourteen rivers with perennial water, and groundwater with aquifers yielding up to twenty litres per second. Nevertheless, agriculture is almost entirely rainfed, with only a few irrigation schemes in place. Small-scale schemes are virtually unknown<sup>36</sup>.

The overriding concern of the sector is to increase agricultural productivity, food security and nutritional status at household level for the target group, the poor. Irrigation interventions can

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<sup>36</sup> Government of Malawi/UNICEF, *Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi*, p. 73.

assist to produce food and generate income during dry seasons or when there is insufficient rainfall, and it allows diversification into the production of high value crops such as paprika.

In the context of the poverty alleviation programme, small-scale irrigation in particular has the potential for improving the productivity of agricultural land and providing opportunities for income generation and food security<sup>37</sup>.

While it is estimated that about 200,000 hectares of Malawi's cultivable land could be irrigated, less than one fifth of the total potential actually is under irrigation, and most of that is under the estates. In general, large-scale developments have been pursued - the Sugar Corporation of Malawi (SUCOMA) irrigates 9,700 hectares of sugarcane; and DWANGWA, another sugar company, irrigates 6,700 hectares. Only about 3,000 hectares of land is irrigated by smallholders in self-help schemes.

For irrigation to make an impact on poverty alleviation there must be a focus on small-scale irrigation that targets smallholder farmers, empowering them to take ownership and manage irrigation schemes. This is to be tackled under the *Draft Irrigation Policy*, which states the importance of "cognisance of resource poor rural families and gender constraints in order to institute uniform participation of the whole rural community for effective poverty alleviation"<sup>38</sup>.

Like in many other areas important to poverty alleviation, there are a large number of potential actors. Irrigation is affected particularly by the action of a number of government agencies, such as Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Ministry of Water Development, Ministry of Forestry, Fisheries and Environmental Affairs, Ministry of Lands and Valuation, Ministry of Tourism, Parks and Wildlife.

The main activities undertaken in recent times involve small-scale irrigation projects; while only 185 are in place at present, the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation plans to greatly increase the number. With respect to developing appropriate irrigation technology, artisans from various districts are being trained in the manufacture of treadle pumps. Again only a small number of treadle pumps have been produced at this stage, but the intention is to have 4,270 pumps in place before the end of 1999.

The current draft policy for irrigation has a strong poverty focus, with emphasis on small scale schemes based on self-help and participation of the beneficiaries who are to own and manage them. The problem is that it is still only in its infancy in terms of implementation and very much constrained both by the haphazard nature of developments around the country and by the shortage of trained capacity in the private as well as public sub-sectors<sup>39</sup>.

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<sup>37</sup> Government of Malawi, Policy Framework for Poverty Alleviation. Limbe: Montford Press, 1995, p. 23.

<sup>38</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, National Irrigation and Development Strategy. Lilongwe 1998, p. 2.

<sup>39</sup> Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation, Progress and Proposed Future Programmes in the Irrigation Sub-Sector. Paper presented at the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation Planning Workshop held at the Natural Resources College, Lilongwe 1998, p.2.

## Part 3

### Findings from Twelve Villages

The QUIM team focused on the poorest EPAs in Malawi and, within these, on "poor" villages, particularly in terms of people's access to land (excepting the Northern Region), food insecurity and child malnutrition. - There is one exception: Mteya, situated in Ntchisi District, Central Region, is food secure and generally fairly well endowed with natural resources. While selected unintentionally, this "moderately well-off" village was used to set off the "poverty" of the other communities visited.

The villages are "poor" also in terms of the inhabitants depending mainly on farming for subsistence and income generation, in terms of lacking access to safe drinking water and to natural resources (forest, lake). - Khoza in Nkhata Bay, Northern Region, stands out in that the villagers grow cassava instead of maize as the staple crop and have access to Lake Malawi. Most of the villages are "remote" in a geographical sense, that is a long way from main roads and central places (3 to 14 km), markets and ADMARC (10 to 16 km), or health facilities (5 to 25 km).

Besides, many of them are "remote" in terms of being neglected by (extension) service institutions, of having little or no communication with political or governmental institutions beyond village level, and generally in terms of being cut off from development support provided by governmental or non-governmental organisations.<sup>40</sup>

#### 3.1 Research Area 1: The Poverty Situation, as perceived by the Villagers

##### 3.1.1 People's Resource Base

The people interviewed talked about "resources" in terms of

- 1 natural resources, such as forests, rivers, cultivable land, ant-hills, and livestock;
- 2 physical infrastructure, mostly meaning boreholes or bridges, and social institutions, such as schools, health posts or clinics, mosques or churches;
- 3 economic infrastructure like groceries, maize mills and small markets.

Of course, every single village is a little different from the others in its particular resource endowment but all in all, they do not vary too much.

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<sup>40</sup> For a characterisation of the different villages visited see Appendix 8, Field Sites Overview.

## 1. *Natural Resources*

Asked about their natural resources, the communities all listed the basics required for any settlement: cultivable land (field, garden), rivers<sup>41</sup>, trees or forests<sup>42</sup>, and livestock - but hardly anything else (only hills<sup>43</sup>, ant-hills, grass for reeds). In this way, the villages do not differ markedly across the Northern, Central and Southern Region. Even Mteya, Central Region, which is food secure and considered to be fairly well endowed with natural resources, boasts merely the same "hills, good soils, natural forest and rivers"<sup>44</sup>. The one village standing out from among the others is Khoza, Northern Region, whose inhabitants have access to the lake. However, the QUIM team did not obtain an in-depth assessment of the quality or quantity of the natural resources referred to, excepting rather general remarks such as "fertile soils" or district-wide average land holding sizes. Besides, in all villages people do have access, for example, to trees or even forests; but there is no information on how plentiful this resource is or on how far the women have to walk in order to make use of it.

The assumption that in the Northern Region people might be less "poor" and "food insecure" because of a better resource endowment (more arable land, cattle) than in the South does not hold true for the QUIM sites.<sup>45</sup> This, however, may be due to the sampling criteria "food insecure".

Another assumption was that where more natural resources are available, the communities have a wider range of possibilities to cope with poverty: There might be trees used for medicine, clay used for moulding bricks, stones suitable for building bridges etc. As a matter of fact, the coping mechanisms mentioned by the villagers varied to some extent, though not due to differing resource bases only (cf. Research Area 2.3). And the communities in the North, presumably favoured by a more intact environment than the ones in the more densely populated Central and Southern Region, do not seem to dispose of a wider range of coping mechanisms.<sup>46</sup>

## 2. *Physical Infrastructure and Social Institutions*

In general, the villagers perceive infrastructure and social institutions to be lacking, insufficient or inaccessible due to long distances; they generally lament this deficit (see Research Findings 3.3, especially 3.3.5), stating that their communities are "poor".

Regarding access to "safe water", for example, at three villages the inhabitants said that there was no borehole at all; at five they said that they had boreholes which were not functioning or "inadequate", at three sites they just said that there were boreholes without qualifying them, and at one site only people stated definitely that they had access to "safe water" from the tap (Appendix 11 Access to Infrastructure).

Since infrastructure and services sometimes are assigned according to a catchment area concept which goes by population numbers and thus favours more densely populated areas, the QUIM team assumed that they might be more densely spread in the Southern than in the

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<sup>41</sup> Rivers provide water for human consumption, for livestock, for small scale vegetable production and for tobacco nurseries.

<sup>42</sup> Forests and trees provide firewood, poles for the construction of roofs and tobacco barns, and grazing grounds. Occasionally forests are used for small scale bee-keeping.

<sup>43</sup> Hills provide stones for construction, mushrooms during the rainy season, and sweeping brushes (*dzeyo*).

<sup>44</sup> All references to a particular village are taken from the respective Field Site Report, individual site reports are available upon request from the Secretary to the National Economic Council.

<sup>45</sup> See Appendix 9 The Villages' Natural Resource Endowment, as described by the Inhabitants: An Overview.

<sup>46</sup> See Appendix 10 Coping Mechanisms: An Overview.

Northern Region. As far as the QUIM sites are concerned, however, there is no evidence for a significant difference over the three regions.<sup>47</sup>

Social infrastructure includes religious institutions which are found just about everywhere (see Appendix 11) and play an important role in people's lives: they are communication channels regarding social and religious issues, such as weddings or funerals; they promote unity among the community members; and they have a direct impact on socio-economic development where they permit or prohibit activities such as beer brewing, the raising of pigs or the growing of tobacco.

### 3. *Economic Infrastructure*

Economic infrastructure referred to by the villagers (see Appendix 11) in the first place is markets, including ADMARC, and roads - leading to central places, such as markets. These, of course, provide opportunities for buying and selling produce, products and services. There is a regional variation as to the distances that people have to cover to reach the nearest market: North: 10-45 km; Central Region: 5-35 km; South: 1.5-16 km). This is not surprising in view of population densities in the respective regions; nevertheless, it puts people in the Northern villages at a clear disadvantage.

However, even where the economic infrastructure is good the question remains whether the poor have access; actually, limited access to markets was mentioned as a problem at five villages, predominantly at the sites in the Southern Region.

Other economic infrastructure mentioned were groceries (in 7 villages) where the villagers get basic supplies; and maize mills (within or close by to 4 villages). Thus, all in all, the economic infrastructure at all QUIM sites seems rather weak.

#### 3.1.2 **People's Definition of Poverty**

Poverty in Malawi hits people at two levels, that of the individual household and that of the community.

##### *At household level,*

people at the QUIM sites live in poverty in the sense that their basic needs are not fulfilled, or, to put it more bluntly: The people do not have enough to eat during certain times of the year. At least they do so from November to March, when the supplies from the previous harvests and other resources are depleted.

They describe their poverty almost exclusively in basic material terms: lack of food, drinking water, shelter, and clothes. They then add the lack of economic means, which might allow them to work towards changing their situation: farming land, credit, agricultural inputs, livestock. Where they do include social aspects (Cheghama, Karonga; and Mteya, Ntchisi), such as a lack of children, these again are interpreted in economic terms, that is lack of children means lack of manpower for farming activities. This focus on purely economic aspects may be read as a sign for the extent of poverty faced by the villagers.

At two villages (Nanganga, Mangochi; and Chiti, Mchinji), the respondents mentioned their depending on *ganyu* as an integral aspect of their poverty (see Research Area 3.2.3).

##### *At community level,*

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<sup>47</sup> See Appendix 11 Access to Infrastructure: An Overview; and Appendix 12 Access to Governmental Services: An Overview.

people describe their poverty in terms of lacking infrastructure, such as boreholes, clinics, schools, roads, and in terms of lacking institutions delivering social and economic services, particularly health institutions and ADMARC.

#### *Homogenous Perception of Poverty*

The perception of household and community poverty is rather homogeneous among men and women which is not surprising because their poverty is so basic, the phenomenon so obvious: Somebody poor - say the women, for example, at Nanganga Village, Mangochi - lacks food, bedding, and cooking utensils; is frail and weak; has to go begging and owns only rags to cover his or her feet. The men listed the same lack of food, bedding, and decent clothes, adding that the poor did not own livestock and always had to do *ganyu*.

The perception of household and community poverty is rather homogeneous also over all QUIM sites. The assumption that in the Southern Region, there might be slightly more emphasis on household poverty (food insecurity, lack of income generating opportunities) while in the North, there might be more on community poverty (lack of infrastructure and services) was not substantiated by the findings at the QUIM sites (see Appendices 11 Access to Infrastructure; 12 Access to Governmental Services; and 13 Programmes and Projects implemented in the QUIM Communities).

### **3.1.3 A Vicious Circle: Causes and Effects of Poverty**

*The villagers attribute their poverty to four kinds of causes<sup>48</sup>:*

1. natural factors, almost exclusively related to water, such as a drought, flood or generally unfavourable rainfall pattern (9), although infertile soils were also mentioned (3);
2. (side-)effects of policies, resulting in: a lack of credit facilities for farm inputs, particularly fertiliser (10), and for business (9); low produce prices (5) and high input prices (8); a lack of infrastructure, including limited access to markets (5), and lack of transport (4); limited employment opportunities (8);
3. individual factors, such as laziness (4) and men's drinking (1); illness - especially AIDS, malaria and dysentery (3); too many dependants to look after (1) and a lack of children to assist (1); low levels of education (2), doing *ganyu* at the expense of cultivating own fields (2);
4. community factors, such as weak leadership (3), resulting in poor communication and lack of initiative for community development.

#### *Natural Factors*

The natural factors are, of course, very important albeit mostly out of man's control. They might, however, be counteracted to some extent by diversifying crops (to, for instance, drought resistant crops) and introducing irrigation schemes.

The infertility of soils mentioned should be regarded not only as a natural factor but as a policy-related one: the continued growing of crops end especially maize, without allowing for fallow times, increasingly depletes the soils - which then require more and more fertiliser.

Interesting enough, poverty generally was not associated with a lack of natural resources, excepting Ng'omba, Chiradzulu, where "inadequate land for cultivation" was mentioned.

#### *Dependency on Hybrid Maize and, thus, on Access to Fertiliser*

The lack of fertiliser was brought up time and again as the most burning issue in 10 out of 12 villages which reflects people's high dependency on hybrid maize as a staple crop and the

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<sup>48</sup> The numbers in brackets indicate in how many villages a factor was mentioned as a cause of poverty.

increasing problems they face since the government cut the fertiliser subsidies in 1994.<sup>49</sup> These in some cases are aggravated by the closing down of near-by ADMARC branches which used to guarantee the supply of fertiliser at controlled prices. Now, so people said, with private traders taking over former ADMARC functions, supplies are more irregular and prices increased. Only at Khoza, Nkhata Bay, and Mgoni, Nsanje, fertiliser did not seem to pose a problem. As to Khoza, people's main economic activity is fishing, not agriculture; besides, they grow cassava instead of maize. At Mgoni, the villagers fish to some extent, too; at least they mentioned "overfishing" as a cause for poverty.

#### *Lack of Access to Credit*

People do not have much hope for change as long as they cannot afford basic agricultural inputs - or, in the case of Khoza, basic fishing equipment. This explains the high value the villagers in the QUIM sites place on credit facilities. The lack of money, capital, credit, credit facilities, and access to credit facilities was thought to be a main cause for poverty in 10 out of 12 villages. At one village, the men specifically deplored the current loan policies of Malawi Rural Finance Company (MRFC) which barred them, being poor, from access to agricultural loans. They maintained that

- MRFC gives loans to individual smallholder farmers only who form a club - this in itself was seen as a problem, for instance, at Ng'omba where "*men expressed a strong feeling that the access to fertiliser is very limited these days because there are no credit clubs*". It became clear neither why the farmers, who are given loans individually, still are required by MRFC to form a credit club, nor why the farmers could not just go ahead and form it.
- the individual smallholders have to deposit 20% of the amount they want to borrow. The farmers explained that they needed the loans for agricultural inputs, at the beginning of the agricultural season when their supplies are already depleted. If they did have money they would have to spend it on food; being poor, they often go hungry at this time. In no way, they said, were they in a position to come up with 20% of the money they wanted to borrow from MRFC at this time of the year.

#### *The vicious circle of poverty: What is cause, what is effect?*

At times, the villagers mentioned effects of poverty which may as well be considered as causes, for example, illness (mentioned as an effect in 7 villages, as a cause in 2 villages), especially due to having to drink unsafe water (2). Thus, somebody may be ill and, being poor, cannot afford to pay for an adequate medical treatment; or, being poor and consequently malnourished, people have a low level of resistance which makes them vulnerable to diseases. This is one of the factors of the vicious circle of poverty at household level.

*Ganyu* is another factor constituting both a cause and an effect of poverty: since people are poor and do not have enough to eat, they go to do *ganyu*, doing *ganyu* they neglect work in their own gardens and fields which leads to a lower harvest, that is to people having less food (see Research Findings 3.2.3).

Other effects or causes of poverty listed by the villagers include:

- malnutrition / hunger leading to poor health status (4);
- maternal death and death due to AIDS (4);
- deaths leading to increasing numbers of orphans, i.e. dependants (5);
- low productivity / low yields (4);

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<sup>49</sup> In 1987/88, all fertiliser subsidies were removed. The subsequent dramatic decline in smallholders' access to fertiliser and consequently, in food security led to the re-introduction of subsidies. In 1990, under Agriculture Sector Adjustment Credit, fertiliser subsidies were reduced and in 1994/95 completely removed.

- social insecurity / increasing theft (2); at Ng'omba, Chiradzulu, the men explained that armed robbery and general theft have increased to the extent of villagers no longer keeping cattle because this has been stolen and would be stolen again. This they regard as a critical factor in the decline of resources.
- personal disruption, such as divorce, separation (2);
- low level of literacy (1).

A closer look at the individual statements reveals that the villagers perceive their poverty to have two major effects: It leads to a decrease in their economic productivity - which again enhances their poverty; and it brings about social disruption, particularly in the form of premature deaths breaking up families and increasing the number of orphans, that is, mouths to be fed by other - equally poor - families.

### 3.1.4 "Poor" or "Rich"? : People's Stratification of their Communities at Household Level

At most QUIM-communities, the villagers categorised their households into three groups of well-being:

1. the very poor / the poorest / the destitute (*wosauko / wosapeza bwino*);
2. the poor / slightly well-to-do / moderately rich / the middle people (*wopezako bwino / wapakati / apakati*); and
3. the better-off / well-to-do / rich (*wopeza bwino*).

At two sites (Chimoga, Salima, and Ng'omba, Chiradzulu), the villagers definitely claimed that there were only two well-being groups, poor and rich (Chimoga), and poor and slightly better-off (Ng'omba). In some other villages, the villagers had discussions regarding the number of well-being groups which, however, they concluded by agreeing on the existence of three social groups.<sup>50</sup>

#### *The poor*

A poor family suffers severe food shortage (12 villages), lives in a poor, that is a dilapidated, house, with a grass-thatched, more often than not leaking roof (12). A poor person has only one clothing item, often is torn or even ragged and dirty (8). His or her health is poor (2). The poor family lacks livestock (6), farm inputs (2) and land for cultivation (1). Their money does not suffice to pay for basic supplies and services (3), they have to go begging for food and other things (6), and they have to do *ganyu* (9). They lack access to credit facilities (1).

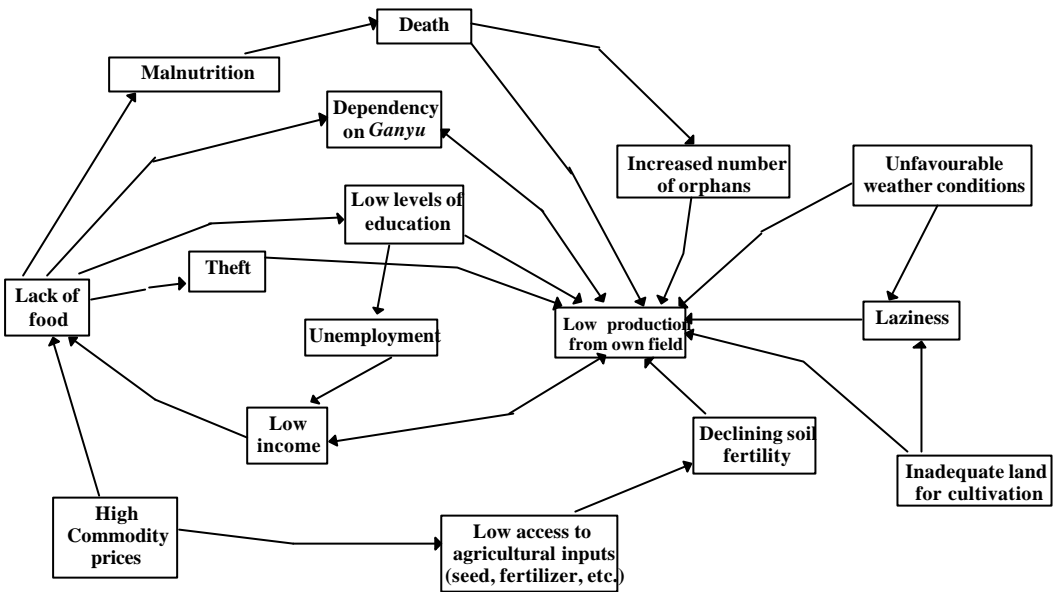
In summary, hunger, poor housing, lack of clothes, and having to do *ganyu* are perceived to be the four most elementary aspects of poverty at household level.

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<sup>50</sup> See Annex 14 "Poor" or "Rich"? The Villagers' Stratification of their Communities.

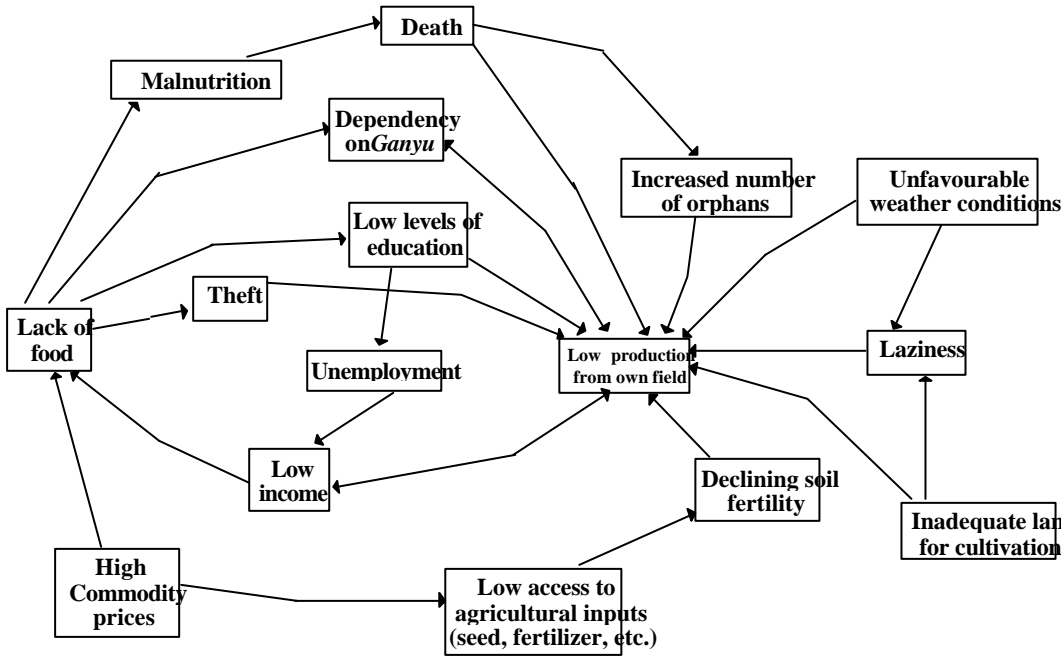


The Vicious Circle - Causes and Effects of Poverty



*The Vicious Circle of Poverty*

*Causes and effects as Perceived by villagers*



### *The slightly well-to-do*

The slightly well-to-do have food, meaning here *nsima*, to last them "a reasonable period", meaning approximately until December (9). Whether they then have to go hungry depends on their alternative sources of income - according to the villagers, they dispose of some money to cover their basic needs (4) or fairly reliable means of making money, such as in the form of a small business (1). They live in a "good" house with a well thatched roof (8), own several items of clothing, meaning that they can get changed (7), and a small number of livestock, such as goats and poultry (8). They possess at least one granary, household utensils such as cups and plates, or even a bicycle. In one village (Mgona, Nsanje), the villagers said that even a slightly well-to-do may have to do *ganyu* though only occasionally - meaning that they are not always secure in their food supply.

### *The rich*

By contrast, the rich definitely do not do *ganyu* - they can employ others to do *ganyu* for them (6). They live in a good house with a roof made of iron sheets and cemented floors (11), they have enough food to last them throughout the year, they are self-sufficient in food (11), they have "adequate" money (6) to cover their basic needs and to get farm inputs, they possess "adequate" clothes (6) and livestock, often including cattle (9). They own farm implements, like a vehicle like an ox-cart (5), and inputs, such as fertiliser (3), and maybe a large business (5), such as a maize mill or a grocery, a boat and fishing nets, or a licence to grow tobacco (*chitupa*).

The villagers across all QUIM sites had a very clear and homogenous idea of what it means to be "poor" or "rich" in their village. Differences between men's and women's views refer to the ranking of individual indicators rather than the indicators themselves; this may be attributed to their different spheres of action, with, for example, the women being responsible for supplying food and the men for earning cash income.

The criteria they used for distinguishing between social groups refer above all to their immediate living conditions: food, housing, clothing or, more generally, the lack of money to fulfil their basic needs. Their categorisation shows that the difference between "poor", "slightly better-off" and "rich" is measured in terms of quantity regarding how much a person owns so as to be able to cover his or her basic needs, rather than in qualitative terms. Thus, they mentioned only two qualitative differences between the poor and the rich: The rich may run a business, and they may employ others to do *ganyu* for them. Both these actions are far beyond the reach of the poor - but they still take place within the village and thus, the perception of the villagers.

Of course, the terms "poor", "slightly better-off" and "rich" are relative - that is relative to the villagers' environment which provides them with their local frame of reference. How narrow this frame is becomes clear in view of remarks such as "A slightly better-off person drinks tea every day" (women at Ng'omba, Chiradzulu) or "A rich person is somebody who can drink a coke along with his meal" (women at Fikila, Chiradzulu - one of the pre-test sites). If a mere bottle of coke signifies a difference between poor and rich worth mentioning there are two conclusions to be drawn:

- First, that there is an abyss of poverty in these places where such a small thing is seen to make such a big difference.
- Second, that at least from an outsider's point of view, the rich in the villages perhaps are not all that rich indeed. There does not seem to be a significant gap between the poor and the slightly better-off; as a matter of fact, the three groupings may be regarded as moving on a continuum of poverty. The gulf between a poor and a rich person is perceived only regarding the extremities: there is, after all, a big gap between somebody going hungry for lack of food and somebody running a profitable business like a maize mill. Otherwise, poverty seems to encompass village life.

Actually, the villagers at all QUIM sites see the vast majority, between 70 and 85 %, of their people as belonging to the poor; some 10 to 20 % are regarded as slightly better-off (excepting Chimoga, Salima, where people came up with only two categories of well-being, - poor and rich); and between none (Ng'omba, Chiradzulu) and a maximum of 10 % are counted as being rich (see Appendix 14).

### **3.2 Research Area 2: Changes in the Villagers' Situation over the Past Years, and People's Reactions**

#### **3.2.1 Poverty on the Increase: Changes in the Poverty Situation over the Past Year, and Causes of these Changes**

##### *Poverty on the Increase*

In 8 out of 12 villages the respondents unanimously agreed that poverty over the past years<sup>51</sup> had increased. This was attributed to

- climatic changes, bringing about droughts, heavy rains and floods (9);
- low produce prices as opposed to high commodity prices (8), both due to privatisation of trade, with villagers feeling that they cannot effectively bargain and that private traders go uncontrolled, swindling them;
- lack of access to farm inputs (fertiliser, seeds), due to the removal of subsidies for fertiliser and the abolition of farmers' clubs (8);
- declining soil fertility, with soils conditioned to fertiliser (6);
- lack of access to credit for agricultural inputs, including high interest rates (5);
- declining employment opportunities for men, due among other to the closing down of TEBA offices (Temporary Employment Bureau, Africa) (4);
- lack of access to markets / ADMARC (3);
- increasing population going hand in hand with shortage of land (3);
- lack of outside support: free maize distribution (1), MP support (1)
- breakdown of law and order, here: cattle theft (1);
- declining fish produce along lake-shore (1);
- high incidence of diseases and death (1).

##### *Differing Perceptions*

At four villages, the respondents had differing perceptions.

1. At *Chidakwani, Mwanza*, some villagers said that their situation has improved slightly since the early 90s, with a number of people moving from the poorest to the rank of slightly better-off. The reasons given were

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<sup>51</sup> The time frame was kept rather vague, covering roughly ten years, for two reasons: 1. The villagers can hardly be expected to give exact dates for changes except for years characterised by outstanding events, such as a draught or a flood; 2. The actual period to be monitored was from 1994, i.e. the inauguration of the Poverty Alleviation Programme (PAP), to the present; asking about these 4 years only, however, would have carried political implications which were avoided by loosely doubling the time span.

- the influx of refugees from neighbouring Mozambique which had led to assistance organisations coming to the village. These had provided employment opportunities leading to an increase in income. Besides, the Mozambicans had given trade a slight boost.<sup>52</sup>
- the introduction of free primary education, meaning that the parents have extra money at their disposal formerly spent on school fees;
- market liberalisation which has made second hand clothing available in the village and boosted the trade with these items.

However, the poor, the village headman and the Community Development Assistant at Chidakwani indicated that despite some improvements since the middle 90s, poverty all in all nevertheless has increased, due to drought and laziness especially on the men's side.

2. *At Khoza, Nkhata Bay*, key informants and the members of the Village Development Committee (VDC), all men pointed out that poverty had decreased, with some people moving from the poor to the better-off category, some from the better-off to the rich. The reasons they gave for this development:

- income generated from fishing; however, the villagers also stated that poverty now was increasing again because the fish resources along the lake shore were rather depleted;
- market liberalisation, with regard to second hand clothes being available (as with Chidakwani);
- free primary education (as with Chidakwani);
- three big MASAF projects already approved in the pipeline (mentioned by VDC), going back to close relations with an MP.

By contrast, the women at Khoza maintained that poverty has increased, without giving specific reasons. They may have held a different view from the men's because they do not go fishing and therefore do not profit directly from this activity; and possibly they were not informed about the MASAF projects.

3. *At Ng'omba, Chiradzulu*, men felt that poverty is on the increase - despite the liberalisation regarding the growing and trading of burley tobacco. Women, however, maintained that lack of fertiliser and declining soil fertility, general price increase of goods, and polygamy - with men taking on more dependants than they can feed - has led to an increase in poverty.

4. *At Mgoni, Nsanje*, women thought that poverty was slightly decreasing in terms of education (free primary education), business opportunities and availability of clothes (market liberalisation), while men perceived poverty to be increasing in terms of decreasing food security and employment opportunities (closing down of TEBA).

However, with the given QUIM information base it is not possible to come up with significant conclusions regarding differing perceptions of men and women.

Neither can a regional differentiation be sustained; it is rather the particular set-up of a village, which determines the inhabitants' view of whether poverty has increased or decreased. Thus, at Khoza, Nkhata Bay, poverty is associated with fish resources, at Chidakwani, Mwanza, with Mozambican refugees.

*Still, there clearly are trends.*

Improvements are seen by some sub-groups at four villages only; they refer mainly to market liberalisation improving the supply of clothes and to free primary education.

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<sup>52</sup> The improvements associated with the refugees and organisations assisting them were temporal, i.e. not sustainable. It seems that not even an improved infrastructure, e.g. additional boreholes were left behind (see Appendix 11 Access to Infrastructure).

The overall trend is for the villagers to perceive poverty as having increased over the past years. They attribute this development mainly to

- 1 unfavourable climatic factors;
- 2 low produce and high commodity prices due to market reforms and inflation;
- 3 lack of access to farm inputs (fertiliser, seeds);
- 4 declining yields (decreasing soil fertility, soils conditioned to fertiliser);
- 5 lack of access to (agricultural) credit; and
- 6 declining employment opportunities.

Thus, the extent of poverty amongst the poorest has increased. As the comparison shows, the reasons given tie in well with what the villagers describe as the main causes of their poverty, they being climatic factors, the fertiliser issue, and lack of access to credit (see Research Findings 3.1.3). They think of poverty mainly in terms of agriculture that determines their food security (see the above ranking according to number of nominations: rank 1 to 5). Only then are alternative opportunities of income generation considered (rank 6).

### **3.2.2 Who is most affected?**

Asked which groups in the villages were most affected by poverty, with multiple nominations possible, the villagers most often held that men and women were equally affected (at 7 villages), for example by poverty deriving from low produce and high input prices. Obviously, the respondents here took the entire household as reference point - poverty affects women and men equally where survival is a family concern, leaving aside possible differences within the household.

Where such differentiation was undertaken - which was done about equally often by men's and women's groups, the women were seen to carry more of a burden (5) because they are responsible for the immediate survival and welfare of the family members - while men could always go out and away to seek employment. The division of labour between men and women seemed to be a decisive criteria here. Employment opportunities and thus, opportunities for generating cash income for women were said to be very scarce. - Only in one instance, female headed households were mentioned to be suffering more than others.

The elderly (4) and children (3) were considered to be affected strongly by increasing poverty due to their being vulnerable and dependant on others.

### **3.2.3 What Can They Do? People's Mechanisms for Coping with Poverty**

#### *No "Strategic" Approach*

The villagers suffering from poverty do not have any "strategic" approach, involving a long-term or even a medium-term perspective, to fight this situation. Instead, they rely on isolated, short-term mechanisms to ease an immediate predicament. To give an example: anticipating a lack of fertiliser for hybrid maize and therefore a food shortage, the villagers might decide to grow cassava - a decision to be taken at the beginning of the planting season. This, however, is not done. Instead, people go as far as they can on maize and only react to the food shortage the moment they encounter it.

Thus, coping mechanisms are purely reactive measures and as such seasonal, based on resources available and opportunities given at the time when food shortage hits the people. The "hungry season" may last as long as from November to the end of March, when the first maize is harvested, but for most villagers it definitely starts in January. From January onwards it is hard for them to get food even from family members because the supplies generally are exhausted.

People have been told for years to grow hybrid maize and completely rely on this staple crop. Eating habits apparently are deeply ingrained; even knowing that they cannot sustain their families on their maize crop through the year, they do not revert to growing cassava or other food crops requiring less inputs.

### *Ganyu*

Instead, in all QUIM sites, doing *ganyu*, that is working occasionally as a day-labourer, doing piece work, is the most common way of trying to cope with poverty, meaning here straightforward hunger. Apparently, *ganyu* is perceived to be the most reliable coping mechanism although the villagers are aware of the problem it entails: Just at the time when people should be working in their fields and gardens they leave these tasks to earn some money elsewhere. Neglecting their fields and gardens, however, means less produce to be harvested in the coming season - which again drives people to do more *ganyu* in the following year, thus perpetuating the vicious circle of poverty. - *Ganyu* may be widespread also because it is in-line with a social structure in which people are obliged to assist each other. Anyway, according to the villagers, *ganyu* is their most important coping mechanism. There are others, however, which to some extent depend on the natural resources in the area.

### *Intra-Household Resources and Activities*

Intra-household activities depend on the natural resources available and an "inventiveness" born out of sheer need.

They refer mostly to the food people eat. In almost all QUIM sites the villagers turn to eating wild tubers, including the leaves of cassava and of pumpkins or maize bran, and in many sites they cook and eat unripe fruit, such as green mangoes and bananas.

Other coping mechanisms, mentioned in one village each only, show how desperate people are during the hungry season: they go begging, women tie a cloth around the stomach to reduce the feeling of hunger ("to tighten one's belt") - and some revert to relying on God.

### *Extra-Household Resources and Activities*

Extra-household activities comprise the vending of products and petty trading. Small income generating activities mentioned included beer brewing (in 4 villages), selling firewood or grass (4), woven baskets or mats (4), clay pots (3) and even livestock, such as chicken and goats (4; done only by the better-off). In two villages, the women grew beans and sweet potatoes for sale. Keeping cattle to be sold in dire times used to be a coping mechanism of the better-off in previously strong cattle areas. Due to decreasing security and increasing theft, however, this is no longer regarded a viable option.

Other coping mechanisms, again mentioned in one village each only, comprise people's engagement in *katapila* (informal credit business with usurious interest rates between 75-100 %) and men's gambling.

### *A Gender Concern, a Taboo, and Things Left Unsaid*

Since the men can leave the villages more easily than women they are thought to have access to a wider range of coping mechanisms and, therefore, sources of income. While the women are responsible for looking after the family and especially preparing the food, men may go out and upon their return simply ask the woman, *Mwaphikanji*, meaning "What have you prepared?" Although it was indicated by some key-informants that prostitution is a coping mechanism employed by some women, this was not taken up by the QUIM team, arguing that their task was to capture the villagers' perspective: If people did not mention this coping mechanism it either was not that important to them or, more likely, it was a taboo subject. In either case, so it was argued during the analysis sessions, it was not up to the RRA teams to impose the subject onto the villagers, thus causing embarrassment.

Again, the villagers' mentioning of some coping mechanisms, leaving out others, may be related to the season during which the RRA was done. On the one hand, the QUIM team was surprised that the premature harvesting and drying of green maize - which is turned into a rather non-nutritious maize flour (*chitibu*) - was not once mentioned as a coping mechanism although it is widely employed in March, before the ripe - and more nutritious - maize can be harvested. On the other hand, the villagers might not have mentioned their eating green mangoes so often had the RRA not taken place just around the mango season.

### **3.3 Research Area 3: The Villagers' Awareness of Government Policies and their Access to Outside Support**

This research area deals with the communities' awareness of government policies, of support brought to them in form of programmes or projects, and services.

The distinction between these three forms of "outside support", introduced by the QUIM team, proved to be difficult to follow through with the communities - a pile of questions arose. How to ask villagers about "policies"? Even the translation of the term from English into the respective local languages turned into a challenge for the QUIM team. And how to ask about "programmes and projects"? Could the villagers be asked to differentiate between support given by governmental and by non-governmental organisations? The QUIM team wanted to get the villagers' assessment of programmes and projects in their communities without, however, starting an evaluation of individual projects - how to go about this?

In the end, the information gathered at the various QUIM sites differed not in focus but in depth and detail which occasionally made a comparison and analysis difficult. The following is a synopsis of some views and ideas given by villagers at the QUIM sites.

#### **3.3.1 Awareness and Assessment of Governmental Policies**

Questions regarding the villagers' awareness of "policies" influencing their lives could be asked only in a circumstantial way; nevertheless, three issues emerged very clearly at practically all QUIM sites.

##### *Universal Free Primary Education*

At all sites, the villagers know about the policy of free primary education, which they clearly appreciate. They pointed out that not only children profit with more pupils, especially girls, attaining a basic education but also the parents who are relieved of the financial burden of school fees. This latter thinking ties in with groups of villagers at three QUIM sites associating a decrease in poverty with free primary education (see Research Findings 3.2.1). Thus, both children and parents, especially men where they are in charge of gaining and deciding on the expenditure of cash income, are seen to benefit from this policy.

However, at three villages, the respondents explained that despite primary education being free, class attendance was still low and drop out rates were high. This they attributed to the "parents' attitude" rather than "poverty"; actually, they said that the children were needed for work, such as farming during peak season<sup>53</sup>, selling firewood, chasing monkeys out of the fields or feeding animals.<sup>54</sup>

At some sites, the villagers had complaints regarding the policy of free primary education; they referred to a lack of teaching materials for the increased number of pupils (at 4 villages), of

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<sup>53</sup> At one site, the village leaders complained about school holidays not matching the farming rhythm.

<sup>54</sup> At one of the DEC meetings, high drop out rates in primary school were attributed to the children being sent fishing and to prostitution.

teachers (2), of facilities such as school blocks and teachers' houses (3), or generally deplored the inadequate quality of teaching and of teachers lacking commitment (4).

Accordingly, they expressed their expectations that the government provide at least the basics, that is, infrastructure – in one instance including a bridge for their children to cross in order to reach the school -, well-trained teachers in sufficient numbers, teaching and learning materials.

#### *Cut of fertiliser subsidies*

Another policy, which the villagers at the QUIM sites know about very well and feel the impact of, is the cut of fertiliser subsidies, effective since 1994/95. In their opinion, the lack of fertiliser, caused by high prices attributed to the cut of subsidies (as well as increasing external transport costs and the devaluation of the Malawi Kwacha) combined with the lack of credit facilities for farm inputs, is a major factor contributing to their food insecurity (see Research Findings 3.1.3 : The vicious circle of poverty).

This problem is aggravated to some extent by side-effects of the market liberalisation gradually introduced in the course of structural adjustment.

#### *Market liberalisation*

A negative effect of market liberalisation and the accompanying restructuring of parastatal companies mentioned at many QUIM sites concerns the closing down of ADMARC branches which used to guarantee the supply of fertiliser at controlled prices. Now, so people said, with private traders taking over former ADMARC functions, supplies are more irregular and prices increased. The villagers noted that while producer prices have not increased over time, the prices of farm inputs have increased beyond the means of poor small holder farmers. A typical statement runs as follows:

*“Both men and women said that they grow different crops and are free to sell their produce at any price either to ADMARC depots or private traders. However, farmers sell their produce only to a few private traders who come to buy their produce in the village because ADMARC is far away and the road is bad. Worse still, the farmers do not make a profit because they always sell their produce to private traders at too low a price compared to the price of inputs, e.g. fertiliser.”<sup>55</sup>*

Along the same lines, the liberalisation of the burley tobacco market in principle is viewed positively but hitched to the problem of the growers' depending on private traders for marketing their produce.

Thus, while at 11 QUIM sites there were villagers growing burley tobacco, at most sites they complained of private traders having cheated and exploited them by

- taking their crop to the Lilongwe auction floor with the promise of paying them upon their return which, however, never occurred;
- tampering with the scales which then indicated lower weight figures of produce; or generally, as the villagers said,
- “going uncontrolled” in their pricing.

These problems are aggravated by the tobacco growers' strong dependency on the private traders. Since the smallholders require fertiliser for growing tobacco and lack access to credit for its purchase, they take fertiliser from private traders on condition that later in return they will sell their tobacco crop to the same traders. This arrangement robs the farmers of their potential bargaining power. Thus, although the number of smallholder tobacco growers has increased with farmers hoping for an increased cash income, the villagers at many QUIM sites<sup>56</sup> did not perceive the liberalisation policy and their efforts to have a positive effect.

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<sup>55</sup> See for example Field Site Report Makina, Phalombe.

<sup>56</sup> For example at Cheghama, Nanganga, Chidakwani, Makina, Ng'omba, Mgona.



The only positive effects of the market liberalisation felt by the villagers are improved access to second hand clothing items (at three sites) and to mini-bus transport (at one site).

### **3.3.2 Regarding Governmental Services**

While governmental services should be generally available, in reality this is not always the case.<sup>57</sup> Since social infrastructure and services sometimes are assigned according to a catchment area concept which goes by population numbers and thus favours more densely populated areas, the QUIM team assumed that social infrastructure and services might be more easily accessible in the Southern than in the Northern Region. As far as the QUIM sites are concerned, however, there is no evidence for a significant difference over the three regions.<sup>58</sup> Thus, services generally are known to exist but more often than not are not available within the villages. This renders access to the services in question difficult especially for the poor because distance, in the view of the villagers, is clearly a limiting factor for access, insofar as it involves transport costs (see Research Findings 3.3.5). Thus, the villagers want services directly within their village.

There is another good reason for this besides avoiding transport costs. At Khoza, Nkhata Bay, for example, an FA and an HSA are resident within the village, and the community perceive agriculture and health services to be both accessible to all community members and effective. Statements such as these give rise to the hypothesis that the more distant a village is from the residence of an extension worker, the less service it receives – especially when the extension worker's mobility is impeded by lack of transport.<sup>59</sup>

The QUIM results show once again that extension services generally do not reach into the remote areas; and remote areas, presumably being poor because they are remote, are captured in another vicious circle of poverty. The service spread most widely across the QUIM sites is the Health Service (6 sites), followed by Agriculture (5 sites; see Appendix 12).

A qualitative analysis of the extension services would have surpassed the limits of the QUIM survey; however, the villagers did remark on the services' inefficiency – mostly with regard to the person of the respective extension worker, his or her commitment to supporting them and the frequency or rather infrequency of visits.

#### *Health Services*

At eight QUIM sites, clinical services for children under 5 years were available; at six sites, Health Surveillance Assistants (HSAs) worked with the villagers, mainly on sanitary issues and on family planning.

Family planning is considered important because people realise that their villages are getting to be too densely populated. However, at three QUIM sites respondents said that people are reluctant to apply techniques involving the use of pills, injections, loops and condoms because they think them to have side effects such as continuous bleeding, barrenness or even death. At one site, they explained that with family planning programmes being directed mainly at women, the men feel sidelined and therefore are reluctant to allow the use of family planning techniques. While the villagers within reach of clinical services appreciate these, just about everywhere they also lament a lack of drugs. They said that wherever and whenever possible they preferred to go

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<sup>57</sup> See Appendix 12 Access to Governmental Services: An Overview.

<sup>58</sup> See Appendix 11 Access to Infrastructure: An Overview; and Appendix 12 Access to Governmental Services: An Overview.

<sup>59</sup> Lack of transport is only part of the problem, though. At one site, a FHA explained that due to lack of transport she could cover only five villages within the vicinity of her residence and office; if she had transport, she would have to provide service to some 40 communities. While now she visits the QUIM site in question once a week – and her services are highly appreciated there, she would then be able to visit there only once in 8 weeks.

to private clinics; while having to pay for services these were “better”, and the clinics usually were better equipped with drugs. This, of course, is no option for the poor without financial resources.

#### *Water and Sanitation*

The HSA at some sites advised the villagers on sanitary issues and helped them to form a Village Health Committee (VHC). Some families have built toilets, bath rooms, or rubbish pits in order to avoid diseases such as diarrhoea.

However, since many people are without access to safe drinking water, they still are subject to water-related and water-borne diseases. Lack of access to safe drinking water was mentioned as one of the communities' gravest problems at most QUIM sites.

At one site, the villagers had received training in maintenance of the water system but found this to be insufficient.

#### *Adult literacy*

At four QUIM sites, the villagers had access to adult literacy classes, which, although open to both men and women, were taken advantage of mostly by women who consequently were seen to benefit more than men did. At one of these sites, the villagers complained about a lack of teaching materials.

### **3.3.3 Programmes and Projects Implemented in the Communities**

At all QUIM sites, some programmes or projects were implemented (see Appendix 13 Programmes and Projects implemented in the QUIM Communities: A Tentative Overview), mostly in the health sector (at 7 sites; mostly family planning), in the related sector of water and sanitation (7), and in the sector of public works (6; roads, schools, clinics). Thus, they are focused on social services and infrastructure for the communities rather than on poverty alleviation at household level, such as by increasing food security or fostering income generating activities.

There seem to be slightly more programmes and projects implemented at the sites in the Southern Region than in the Central Region and again more in the Central Region than in the Northern Region – but it would be stretching things to say that consequently people at the Southern QUIM sites are better off than, say, people at sites in the Northern Region. A difference is apparent not on a regional scale but rather on a political one: Khoza, for example, is the home village of an MP - and boasts three public work projects (see Appendix 13 Programmes and Projects implemented in the QUIM communities).

All in all, the villagers at the QUIM sites clearly are very short of outside support.<sup>60</sup>

#### *Benefits and Constraints Perceived by the Villagers*

Asked who benefits from the programmes and projects implemented the villagers gave fairly differentiated answers, linking the programmes to target groups - and added their complaints. To give some examples,

*regarding the health sector,*

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<sup>60</sup> At the meetings of the QUIM sub-teams with various DECs, the district officials often mentioned many more programmes and projects being implemented in the district than mentioned by the inhabitants of the QUIM sites, adding occasionally, however, that “*the impact of some of these programmes has been negative and their coverage low*” (Field Site Report Cheghama, Karonga).

- water and sanitation projects are seen to benefit all (at 7 sites), by reducing water-borne diseases, and sometimes especially the women whose workload in fetching water may be reduced with boreholes being closer by than other water sources.
- family planning was mostly seen to benefit all (4); only at one site, women were thought to benefit more than men because the programmes are directed more at women than at men and because child spacing gives the women a chance to attend to other domestic needs.
- mobile clinics benefit mainly the children.

*regarding food security programmes,*

at the three sites in question, all social groups involved were seen to benefit in various ways. All benefit from the improvement of men's, women's and children's nutritional status, and, in the case of Makina, Phalombe, from the road constructed and tree seedlings planted. - There were complaints, however, at one site each regarding

- food not being given to all, that is, orphans and the disabled being excluded despite prior promises to include them;
- fixed quantities of food distributed which were insufficient with view to varying household sizes;
- inadequate payment; and, worst of all,
- a subsequent food shortage because people had neglected their own gardens.

In this last case, the villagers concluded that they had actually wasted their time doing a job with low benefits.

*regarding credit programmes,*

- credit for income generating activities, such as a PHN loan for establishing a maize mill, were thought to benefit first the women running the mill, second the community accessing another service. – Thus, at Cheghama, Karonga, the villagers used to have to cover 18 km to reach the nearest maize mill at Karonga Boma. *“However, only few people utilise the maize mill because many people do not have maize in stock for future consumption. Most people buy maize from ADMARC at Karonga Boma and turn it into flour right there.”* Consequently, the ten women running the mill do not make sufficient profit to repay the loan and now fear that the mill may be closed by the government or given to other beneficiaries.
- agricultural loans from MRFC are thought to benefit men, especially tobacco growers. However, at three QUIM sites the villagers explained in detail that access to these loans is impeded by MRFC terms of lending, such as high interest rates, high deposit rates and other regulatory issues. At one site, they went on to say that even when they managed to access the loans the majority of the farmers who purchased fertiliser to grow tobacco ultimately did not make a profit because of the high interest rates to be paid for the loan.

*regarding public works, carried out mostly with support from MASAF,*

the villagers at four out of the five QUIM sites in question appreciated the benefits of the constructions, be it a feeder road, a school block, or a multipurpose hall where under-5-clinical services and classes in adult literacy or home economics are provided from. The short-term employment opportunities and income generated were regarded to benefit the men directly and, possibly, the family indirectly. At one site, the villagers mentioned an increased self-help spirit as a positive effect. Problems associated with the programmes concerned low wages (1), delays in payment (2), and delays in completing a school block *“because few people have been trained on the procedures on how to carry out MASAF projects”*<sup>61</sup>.

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<sup>61</sup> Field Site Report Makina, Phalombe.

Besides the aforementioned programmes, *GABLE* is seen to directly benefit girls. As opposed to the case of Free Primary Education, nobody in the two villages taking advantage of this programme mentioned a benefit for the parents saving school fees.

*Afforestation projects* at two QUIM sites and an *irrigation scheme* at another one were regarded to benefit the youth and future generation because the work was considered to be physically very demanding, excluding women and elderly people. At one site, the *protection of the forest* was not seen to be of benefit to anybody.

However, generally speaking, people feel that they do benefit from programmes and projects where they feel that they work, and where they meet people's expectations regarding objectives, promises made by the implementing agency and its commitment in fulfilling them. A general constraint repeatedly observed by the villagers concerns a lack of communication between the villagers and the agencies offering outside support and implementing projects.

### 3.3.4 Awareness of Further Outside Support Opportunities

With little outside support available to the villagers at the QUIM sites what do they know generally about outside support opportunities? A cross check of programmes and projects implemented at the villages (Appendix 13) and of the villagers' awareness of outside support possibilities (Appendix 15) shows that

- while only at five QUIM sites the villagers said they had access to *credit facilities* (women: PHN; men: MRFC), at four further sites the villagers were aware of the existence of a wide variety of credit institutions and programmes. As a matter of fact, at one site the villagers' criticised the existence of too many different organisations offering credit, all with their own rules and regulations which were difficult to understand and, therefore, to access. Besides, offices were said to exist mainly at the *Bomas*, with officers rarely coming out to the villages. Thus, the villagers, especially the poor who are not in a position to cover the distance easily (see Research Findings 3.3.5 Importance of and Access to Services and Outside Support) lack detailed information about and access to credit institutions.
- the one organisation known beyond the sites where it implements projects (3) is *MASAF*, which is known about at all but one QUIM site. *MASAF* ran a strong Information and Education Campaign (IEC) to bring awareness amongst the public on how people might improve their living conditions. Even so there are obvious misunderstandings and a lack of information among the villagers on how to avail themselves of *MASAF* support. At one QUIM site, *MASAF* was thought to be an employment agency. Another report runs as follows: "*Men said they knew MASAF as a money lending institution while the youth and women pointed out that MASAF assists communities with development projects but that for this village there was no link and no support had been received as yet. However, a key informant, i.e. the Traditional Birth Assistant said that in 1996, representatives from MASAF had asked the community members to mould bricks for additional school blocks for the village and to clear the access road so that MASAF could assist them construct a bridge. The communities had done as asked but MASAF had never come back.*"<sup>62</sup>
- all further information about outside support is scattered and fragmentary to the extent of it seeming rather incidental.

Thus, people at the QUIM sites have little knowledge of programmes and projects and they clearly lack an overview of potential support possibilities. They acquired their fragmentary knowledge mostly through the radio, through politicians during their rallies, and through hearsay from neighbouring villages. The case of *MASAF* is slightly different, due to its strong Information

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<sup>62</sup> Field Site Report Chidakwani, Mwanza.

and Education Campaign, on top of that it is also directly known about through the activities of MASAF officers.

It seems that not only is the villagers' knowledge about support possibilities very limited but also too vague for them to become active, that is ask for assistance. They lack knowledge regarding conditions for access to support put down by the agencies, simply wondering why they do not qualify for the support of institutions and organisations they vaguely heard about. This phenomenon, which possibly is reinforced on the one hand by the QUIM sites' remoteness, on the other hand by the institutions' limited coverage of the country, clearly points at the importance of efficient communication structures (see Research Findings 3.4).

### **3.3.5 Importance of and Access to Services and Outside Support**

In order to gain a picture of how people view the role of service delivering institutions the QUIM teams assisted the villagers in doing an institutional analyses, often in the form of Venn diagrams or ranking<sup>63</sup>.

A comparison between men's and women's diagrams and ranking at various QUIM sites shows no significant difference between their views. Slight deviations registered may be attributed to different spheres of action and responsibility; thus, while all consider health services as being very important the women occasionally consider them as even more important than the men do.

In two instances it was noted that the men had a wider knowledge of programmes being implemented in the village than the women, and that basically, a clear understanding of programmes was limited to the direct beneficiaries, with the women, for example, being well informed about a nutritional programme while the men understood MRFC.

The five services most important to the villagers, men and women, refer to

- education (ranked highly at 7 villages): primary school (7), adult literacy classes (2);
- health (7): maternity clinic, health centre, private clinic, drug supply; safe water;
- agriculture (7): agricultural extension (4), markets / ADMARC (3);
- religious institutions (3); thought to be important because they promote unity among the community members;
- maize mill (2).

Besides these, home craft services, security services (police station), grocery shops, and funeral committees supporting families during bereavement were mentioned once each as being important.

While one has to keep in mind that people cannot really assess the importance of services and programmes not available to them, the villagers clearly delineated three sectors which are of supreme importance to them - education, health and agriculture.

#### *Access to Services and Programmes*

Access to services and service-delivering institutions varies, depending on the nature and targeting of services provided. The villagers at the QUIM sites defined accessibility in terms of

- distance. Having to pay for transport to reach distant services means that poorer people have more difficulties in accessing these than the better-off.
- financial resources. The better-off have better access to services that have to be paid for.

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<sup>63</sup> For an example of a Venn diagramme see Appendix 17 Institutional Analysis at Nanganga, Mangochi (Field Site Report), for an example of ranking according to importance Appendix 6 Field Site Report Mundangu, Rumphu.

- cultural aspects. Adult literacy classes, for example, although open to both men and women are taken advantage of more by women; at two out of four QUIM sites the villagers indicated that the men did not care to learn together with the women.
- gender. Especially health services are often thought to benefit women more than men because the services, such as a maternity clinic, the Traditional Birth Attendant, or family planning programmes, are related to the women's sphere of responsibilities. Business credit mostly targets women, agricultural credit is directed at men.

### 3.3.6 The Communities' Perceptions regarding Outside Support and Self-Help Potential

Asked about their expectations regarding external support, in some villages the respondents came up with a "shopping list"<sup>64</sup> while in others they gave down to earth recommendations referring to services and programmes.

*Thus, the villagers expressed their need for*

- essential infrastructure, such as boreholes (at 5 villages), health centres (4), bridges (2), roads (2), hospital (1);
- credit facilities and programmes (8), with affordable interest rates (2);
- MASAF community projects and similar support available to other villages, including food for work programmes (4);
- school blocks, learning materials, and well-trained teachers in sufficient numbers (see Research Findings 3.3.1).

*Regarding extension services,*

they suggested that staff should reside in the village (2), visit regularly (1), work in a co-ordinated way (1) and be given transport, such as motorbikes (1). The services generally should be expanded or intensified (4), with people at one village asking for contraceptive delivery services right into the village and at another one for classes in home economics to be introduced.

*The villagers generally wish for*

- more security, for instance no bail to thieves (1), and better police response (1);
- less cheating, suggesting that the price of agricultural produce should be announced on the radio (1) and that the weighing scales of the private traders ought to be checked (1);
- fair treatment, such as in regard to the disbursement of loans to all (1).

#### *A Cry for Help*

Expectations regarding outside support, especially from the government, are high, and memories of free handouts of maize in 1993 and fertiliser in 1996 are still strong.<sup>65</sup> Thus, at all QUIM sites, the respondents talked about free fertiliser; at one site, they demanded for its delivery to be continued, at another they said they realised that this could not be done but that it should be restarted in a case of emergency.

With expectation for outside support being high, so are the villagers' frustrations when supporting institutions do not conform to their expectations. Thus, at four sites they accused MASAF and the government of having broken promises, substantiating his accusation with

<sup>64</sup> "Unrealistic" demands regarding outside support may have been triggered to some extent by the villagers' perception of the QUIM team members as outsiders who might bring support to the communities if only informed and asked accordingly.

<sup>65</sup> This became clear at most QUIM sites where people, especially women and children, flocked in by great numbers in the hope that the QUIM teams had come to register people for free handouts.

examples of implementation problems touching on inadequate targeting, lack of communication and information, and delays in implementation.

At one site, for example, they said that people had moulded bricks but not received assistance in terms of iron sheets; they had dug wells but not received pumps. While one may wonder whether the agencies expected by the villagers to support them had actually known about this, this community definitely felt let down and consequently built up a distrust which may become both cause and effect of further malfunctioning communication.

All in all, people at the QUIM sites definitely see themselves as depending very strongly on outside support. This may be taken as a reflection on their desperate situation but also on the government until recently having played a very strong role in people's everyday life, pushing the opinion that it will provide always for its people. At three sites, the villagers said they had done what they could but that now there was nothing to do but wait for external – governmental - support.

Lack of outside support, so people said at four sites, resulted in resignation and the discouragement of people's self-help spirit. At Mgona, Nsanje, they actually blamed people's low self-help spirit on a lack of civic education regarding the importance of people's participation in moulding bricks for social infrastructure.

#### *Even self-help initiatives depend on external support*

At other sites, the villagers explained that they did have some *self-help spirit at community level*, demonstrated by giving their labour to self-help projects or by indicating their willingness to do so (6). The example cited most often was their having moulded bricks or wanting to do so for building social infrastructure in their own or nearby villages; others included the construction of village tracks and the contribution to funeral expenses.

These communities feel, however, that their self-help initiative should be honoured by governmental and non-governmental support institutions by giving timely support, and materials like iron sheets and cement (2). At one site, they said that people should be compensated for working on a self-help project. At yet another one, they explained that while they were in need of outside support for self-help projects there had been no initiative to approach outside support institutions, that they lacked the initiative to take up issues but if asked would get organised, such as mould bricks for teachers' houses.

Thus, even when talking about self-help the villagers' need and expectation for guidance as well as for financial and material support figured strongly. This was reflected again at three sites where people suggested the formation of farmers' associations to lobby for better produce prices as well as reduced fertiliser prices and interest rates for fertiliser loans. Representatives were to be drawn from among local farmers, that is from among themselves – but people evidently did not see themselves in a position to form these associations of their own accord.

As to people's *self-help efforts at household level*, people cited working hard, farming, digging toilets and doing *ganyu* amongst relevant activities. However, in view of their living conditions in the villages and the consequences of doing *ganyu* (see Research Findings 3.2.3), these answers seem to reflect rather people's helplessness than their self-help spirit. At Khoza, Nkhata Bay, they said they would engage in small-scale business if start-up capital were available – which again shows that they depend on external support for self-help activities to blossom.

The overall impression is that people are willing to work, to put in labour to improve their poverty situation both at community and at household level but are in need of outside support to start up activities. Here again, a major problem is their access to support structures which clearly has to do with a lack of information and efficient communication structures linking the villagers to the outside world.

### 3.4 Research Area 4: Communication Structures: Linking the Villagers and Decision Makers at Various Levels

#### 3.4.1 Communication Structures within the Communities and between Communities and the Outside World - Functions and Importance

The communication structures both within the communities and between the communities and the outside world, are extremely homogenous over all QUIM sites, allowing absolutely for no regional differentiation.<sup>66</sup>

##### *Functions*

Their functions in general are clear to the villagers; communications structures are regarded to be pivotal for

- disseminating information
- settling socio-cultural and economic disputes;
- mobilising communities for both internal and external socio-cultural and economic development;
- lobbying external support for projects in the villages;
- initiating development works;
- co-ordinating development work.

Basically, there are four communication structures linking the villagers among themselves and to the outside.

##### 1. *The traditional structure*

First and above all, there is a traditional structure, comprising the community, the village headmen (VH), the group village headman (GVH), and the Traditional Authorities (TA).

In all QUIM sites, this structure is central to all communication within communities and also to all communication between the communities and the outside world - central in the sense that it is the villagers' most commonly used communication line in all QUIM sites and central to the extent that any communication passing by the traditional structure is likely to have very little or no impact at all. This structure is rooted in people's culture and, therefore, respected.

The key person or rather key institution are the VH and his or her councillors, with the VH himself or herself acting as the spokesperson of the village head. Thus, the communication line stretches from the communities via the VH on to the GVH and TA.

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<sup>66</sup> A differentiation according to ethnic groups was not undertaken; here we can only state that, of course, the QUIM sites are inhabited by different ethnic groups and that, nonetheless, those aspects of the communication structures looked into by the QUIM teams did not vary.



## 2. *The local government structure*

Then there is what may be termed a political or local government based structure, involving Village Development Committees (VDC), Area Development Committees (ADC), District Executive Committees (DEC), District Development Committees (DDC), District Commissioners (DC) and finally, Members of Parliament (MP). This local government structure ideally links the villages to District Headquarters.

While this structure was referred to in all meetings with the DECs, there was very little evidence of their functioning at village level. In six villages<sup>67</sup>, VDCs had been formed but were virtually non-functional. At two sites, for example, the villagers declared that the committees "work in isolation". Even key-informants such as teachers did not know what these committees were for, making VDCs and ADCs appear rather like empty cartridges. This holds true also for two villages (Khoza, Chiti) coming under the UNDP 5<sup>th</sup> Country Programme, these are villages in districts where the promotion of decentralisation processes might be expected to have fostered stronger communication links between district and village level.

A special role is attributed by the villagers to MPs. In six QUIM sites, they very clearly stated that where the VH or GVH has a close connection or even direct access to the MP of the area, the village definitely profits. The MP is regarded as being in a position to directly present the villagers' concerns at national level in Parliament and at district level to the DC, and to directly exert an influence in favour of a particular village.<sup>68</sup> This was seen to actually be the case at Khoza, Nkhata Bay, and at Nanganga, Mangochi. One QUIM sub-team was told flatly at a DEC meeting that "Where the MP is weak, the area is disadvantaged", a statement reverberated by the villagers at the QUIM sites. Thus, the direct communication channel from the VH to an MP is viewed as rarely given but definitely the most effective one.

At one site, the villagers mentioned the radio as a means of the government to convey messages to the communities.

## 3. *The structure involving extension services*

Third, there is a structure involving the communities and extension workers from different line agencies, such as Agricultural Field Assistants (FA), Farm Home Assistants (FHA), Community Development Assistants (CDA), or Health Surveillance Assistants (HSA). Here, communication passes from the community via the extension worker to the respective line ministry - or rather the other way around, that is messages are taken down by extension workers from the line ministry and carried into the communities.

This structure was mentioned in 10 QUIM sites. The importance attributed to it depends very much on the villagers' assessment of the effectiveness of the individual extension worker. Where he or she is considered to be helpful to the community, he or she plays a prominent role in the communication process between villagers and extension agencies at district level.

## 4. *The structure involving NGOs*

At two QUIM sites only, people included NGOs in talking about their communication structures. Here the communication flow went from the community via the VH, the GVH and the TA to the DC who involved an NGO (Makina, Phalombe), and from the community via the GVH to the ADC which then involved an NGO (Ng'omba, Chiradzulu).

## *Linkages between the structures*

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<sup>67</sup> Khoza, Nkhata Bay; Kainga, Ntcheu; Chimoga, Salima; Nanganga, Mangochi; Chiti, Mchinji; and Mgone, Nsanje.

<sup>68</sup> See for example Field Site Report Chidakwani: "It was indicated by the villagers that the main constraint as regards programmes and policies is lack of leadership like an MP, who can represent them at parliament and also educate them on developmental issues."

There are no horizontal linkages between the various communication structures. Linkages run straight along vertical lines, mostly between the traditional and the political structure, that is from the community via VH - GVH - TA to the district authorities DEC - DDC - DC. This link was mentioned in all QUIM sites, and even extended to a line ministry in one case.

### **3.4.2 How do they work? Rules, Procedures and Effectiveness**

#### *Rules and procedures*

The rules and procedures of communication within the traditional structure strictly follow the established chain of command based on respect for the powers bestowed on traditional leaders. Thus, at all QUIM sites the villagers maintained that all messages to and from the villages must pass through the VH or GVH - there is no other way.

Oral communication is preferred to other forms because it allows for greater clarity and detail regarding issues in question. Actually, communications not given out orally are unlikely to reach the villagers.

According to the villagers at most QUIM sites, the different social groups or individual village members all have equal access to the various communication structures. At one site only they generally stated that access differed for different social groups, and at another one they indicated that "culturally ingrained gender relationships hinder effective communication".

While access to communication structures at village level was considered to be easy, access to the other structures, like an MP, were regarded as problematic. In other words, the villagers did not feel that they were linked well to the outside world, to the contrary.

#### *Effectiveness*

The effectiveness of communication structures depends on various variables, including personalities involved, the community's distance from the headquarters of institutions and organisations, or the level of literacy within a community.

With regard to the traditional structure, the villagers mostly maintained that it worked reasonably well. Its effectiveness was seen to depend very much on the performance of the VH and on his or her contacts to relevant actors and institutions outside the village. If the VH does not perform well, the GVH is called upon, and more rarely, the TA. Only at one village, the inhabitants deplored a "weak leadership at VH and TA level", at another one "hierarchical structures hindering an effective flow of information", at a third one "favouritism" due to which "the traditional structure does not bring results".

At all three sites in the Northern region, the villagers complained about "bureaucratic red tape" regarding the political structure. At two other sites, the villagers stated that the "elected leadership (MP) lacked commitment"; at three sites they said that the feedback from the political structure to the traditional structure was inadequate; at one site they thought that lack of transport hindered effective communication.

Some NGOs apparently tried to set up their own communication structures within the villages. These, however, were not regarded as "belonging" by the villagers which probably impedes their effectiveness.

To summarise, the villagers seemed to be fairly content with the flow of communication within the villages, that is, with the traditional structure. They did, however, state two major problems regarding their communication with the outside world: first, that individual key players in the various communication structures meant to spear-head community development were "dormant"; and second, that there was little or no communication between the governmental administration and the traditional leadership structure.<sup>69</sup>

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<sup>69</sup> For an illustration of how things can go wrong due to lack of communication see Appendix 16, "Where did things go wrong?" The WFP – FAO – MoA Programme at Chiti, Mchinji.

### **3.4.3 The Communities' Recommendations for Improving Communication Structures**

Consequently, the communities came up with a number of recommendations for improving communication structures.

#### *1. The traditional structure*

At four sites, they suggested that the traditional structure should be strengthened without, however, politicising it (1). At one site, they wished for improved direct access to traditional leaders; at another one, for improved gender balance in committees; at yet another one, for increased horizontal communication, that is contact between communities.

#### *2. The local government structure*

At two sites, the villagers suggested capacity building measures for VDCs and ADCs. At one site, they emphasised the importance of local government elections. And at another two sites, they wanted direct access to elected leaders.

#### *3. The link between the traditional structure and other structures*

The majority of recommendations, however, were directed at the link between the traditional and other structures.

Thus, at four sites, the villagers thought that a direct link between the traditional structure and outside support institutions at district level was required without, however, saying what form this link might take. Only at one site, the villagers suggested specifically that project implementing agencies conduct needs assessments with villagers instead of relying on information from district level only.

Again at four sites, the villagers emphasised the importance of improving the feedback between district and village level, for instance by supplying a public address system (1), by improving access to print and other communication media (1), and by improving transport (1).

## Part Four

### Conclusions and Recommendations: Linking Village Findings With Policy Analysis

#### 4.1 The Voice of the People: Poverty in Our Villages

At household level, the majority of the villagers see themselves as being “poor” because they cannot fulfil their basic need for food, drinking water, decent shelter, clothing and because they do not possess the means to change this situation, lacking in particular access to land, agricultural inputs and credit (see Research Findings 3.1.2).

At community level, they describe their poverty in terms of lacking basic infrastructure and service delivering institutions (see Research Findings 3.1.2).

Comparing the situation as described by the villagers with the findings of the Government of Malawi and the United Nations in 1993, as put forward in “Malawi: Situation Analysis of Poverty”, there have not been many changes for the better in the lives of rural people<sup>70</sup>. To the contrary, the villagers at the QUIM sites, having defined what “poor” and “rich” means to them (see Research Findings 3.1.4), mostly held that their poverty has increased (see Research Findings 3.2.1).

While trying to cope with this situation, particularly by seeking opportunities to do *ganyu* (see Research Findings 3.2.3), they depend and rely heavily on outside support to improve their living conditions (see Research Findings 3.3.6).

The authors of the “Situation Analysis” in 1993 had concluded that *“There is no simple solution to reducing poverty. The findings of the analysis point towards unconventional approaches. Human development strategies will need to go beyond price-oriented reforms and focus more on existing structural constraints and institutional weaknesses in implementing anti-poverty programmes.”*<sup>71</sup>

Have they now? The following is an attempt to see what actually happened, by linking the policies devised by the Malawian Government to the QUIM findings at village level.<sup>72</sup>

The Government has introduced a number of policies and projects to alleviate poverty. Most policies have clear and commendable objectives but as yet lack implementation so that relatively little impact is felt at village level. Considering the often rather recent dates of the design of the majority of policies and consequently scarce implementation of programmes, many of the policies considered can hardly be expected yet to have made themselves felt at village level.

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<sup>70</sup> Cf. Government of Malawi / UNICEF, “Executive Summary”, Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi. Limbe: Montfort Press, 1993, pp. xi-xxii.

<sup>71</sup> Government of Malawi / UNICEF, “Executive Summary”, Situation Analysis of Poverty in Malawi, pp. xxii.

<sup>72</sup> A monitoring system – and as an element of such QUIM was undertaken – is an endeavour to look into the past; in order to learn from the insights gained, an evaluation of the findings is to be done. While such evaluation, surpassing both the task and the capacity of the QUIM team, is to be done by the responsible actors having a much deeper understanding of the specific sectors concerned, the QUIM team still reflected on implications of the findings. Having taken note of the villagers’ views concerning the past it seemed impossible not to draw some conclusions regarding the future.

## 4.2 Policies with an Impact felt by the Villagers

There are, however, three exceptions to this,

1. the structural adjustment policy regarding market liberalisation;
2. the structural adjustment policy regarding the cut of fertiliser subsidies;
3. the reorientation of public expenditure to pro-poor areas since 1992, in particular the educational policy of *Free Primary Education*.

These definitely had an impact actually felt by the villagers - though not all positive.

### 4.2.1 Structural Adjustment Policy: Market Liberalisation

From people's stratification of their communities (see Research Findings 3.1.3) it becomes clear that the liberalisation of the tobacco market benefits the rich who have enough land to allot some part of it to growing tobacco and who can buy labour to work on this cash crop. The slightly better-off may profit a little, depending on their access to land and labour. The poor, however, do not benefit for a number of reasons;

- they do not make a profit because they have no bargaining power vis-à-vis private traders (see Research Findings 3.3.1);
- in order to grow tobacco they have to allot land previously used for subsistence crops, that is, maize; thus, if they do not make a profit growing tobacco they and their families actually lose out on subsistence;
- while others' growing tobacco may provide them with extra opportunities for doing *ganyu* this forces them deeper into the vicious circle of poverty (see Research Findings 3.2.3).

Another problem faced by the villagers due to market liberalisation and privatisation concerns the closing down of the more unprofitable branches of ADMARC. There was a general complaint of the villagers that ADMARC had closed down in many places. The private traders coming in have taken over only some of the functions which ADMARC held. The marketing of their produce has become much more difficult in that the farmers now depend on private traders which "go uncontrolled", with the villagers feeling the weight of produce and prices being manipulated to their disadvantage (see Research Findings 3.3.1).

In this sense, market liberalisation has actually contributed to increasing poverty at village level.

The only positive aspects perceived by the villagers are that second hand clothing and, in one case, more transport are available (see Research Findings 3.3.1).

### 4.2.2 Structural Adjustment Policy: Cut of Subsidies for Fertiliser

The cut of subsidies for fertiliser has been a hotly disputed subject for many years in Malawi, and there is no need here to repeat the arguments for and against this politically and economically motivated move by the Government finally taken in the 1994/95 season.<sup>73</sup>

In summary, the problem continues to be that people consider maize to be the one staple food; that they continue growing hybrid maize which requires a strong fertiliser input; that the price for this input has increased considerably (while the price for produce has not); that the smallholders' access to fertiliser is impeded by the effects of market liberalisation (see above); and that loans for fertiliser mostly are beyond the reach of the smallholders since the Smallholder Agricultural Credit Administration (SACA), which gave credit to smallholders at concessional terms, has been transformed into the commercial Malawi Rural Finance Company (MRFC) (see Research Findings 3.1.3 and Appendix 16).

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<sup>73</sup> For a concise overview of Malawi's long drawn fertiliser history see for example, "Input Subsidies Revisited" (author, place, date unknown).

Thus, the smallholders are losing out on access to indispensable agricultural inputs; and the question emerges once again whether it is socially and politically acceptable to deprive the majority of farmers from reaching at least some form of subsistence.

#### *Implications*

The fertiliser policy is central to the people's well-being - or rather to their not going hungry for four to five months a year. Thus, a political decision is required on whether to reconsider the issue of fertiliser subsidies and on the offer of alternative crops.

MRFC credit conditions for fertiliser should be reviewed in the light of the villagers' statements. With people over-dependence on maize for their staple, eating habits have to be addressed. This entails not only a diversification of crops but also massive Information and Education Campaigns directed at changing eating habits.

### **4.2.3 Free Primary Education**

Education is one of the three sectors of prime importance to the villagers (see Research Findings 3.3.5). While *Girls' Attainment in Basic Literacy and Education* (GABLE), like many a programme, is appreciated only by villagers directly benefiting from it (see Research Findings 3.3.3), *Free Primary Education* is widely known and greatly appreciated among the villagers at the QUIM sites. While enrolment figures definitely have increased and the villagers are relieved of the financial burden of school fees, the villagers at some QUIM sites maintained that class attendance is still low and drop out rates are high – phenomena to be attributed to people's poverty (see Research Findings 3.3.1).

Quality issues were raised in the villages and considered to be a severe problem also at district level. The villagers do feel the lack of school blocks, teaching and learning materials as well as of qualified teachers (see Research Findings 3.3.1).

Thus, while access to primary school education has definitely improved, the quality of education seems jeopardised by the shortcomings mentioned above.

#### *Implications*

All in all it can be held that the policy of *Free Primary Education* is implemented successfully only once these shortcomings are tackled and overcome. Otherwise, the policy runs a danger of being well-intentioned but remaining basically ineffective at village level.

There is also a need now to prepare for the increased demand for secondary (and tertiary) education which the future larger number of graduates from Free Primary Education will provide.

### **4.3 Other Policies and Programmes**

Other policies and programmes seem to have impacted less on the villagers; not all institutions and organisations have translated the PAP into activities of their own. However, the following should not be read so much as an evaluation of policies and programmes but rather as a glimpse of villagers' views on policies and programmes, captured in order to give the villagers a voice and to raise issues for (re-)consideration.

Some of the implications appear to cut across a number of policy areas, such as

- the need for co-ordination of stakeholders involved in certain activities,
- the consideration of social-anthropological aspects and conditions for programme and project approaches (for instance, Individualism is not a trait which is encouraged),
- bringing issues to the forefront through Public debate and Civic education campaigns, while considering the importance of the manner of delivery of messages.

#### **4.3.1 Agriculture and Food Security**

The policy objectives in this sector relevant for the villagers comprise improving food security and the nutritional status of the population as well as raising farm incomes and promoting economic growth while conserving natural resources.

While “*There appears to be broad agreement across the policies on how this is to be achieved*” (Policy Analysis 2.3), at village level there is hardly a sign of these policies being implemented with a positive impact.

Thus, the smallholders’ access to inputs remains one of the villagers’ gravest problems; market liberalisation has not had the positive effects hoped for – at least not for the poor; diversification of crops, livestock or generally sources of cash income is hardly evident; land reform has not been tackled; and irrigation schemes, technology transfer, or activities in soil conservation remain at the level of isolated projects which sometimes, though rarely are found at the QUIM sites.

The latter corresponds with the QUIM team’s hypothesis that the respective programmes and projects being recent developments could hardly be expected to have filtered down to all QUIM sites as of yet.

Much has been written already in terms of policy, but there has been a lack of implementation. Where programmes have been initiated at pilot phase they have not been replicated to all districts, thus not reaching the poorest sections of the country, and those in the remotest areas.

#### **4.3.2 Health**

Their health being part of the vicious circle of poverty (see Research Findings 3.1.3), the villagers consider this sector to be of prime importance (see Research Findings 3.3.5). Governmental services in the health sector at the QUIM sites are more widely spread than in any other sector. While it is impossible to assess their impact on the basis of the villagers’ few and very general statements (see Research Findings 3.3.2), it is clear that the villagers still perceive them as being insufficient. They particularly complained about health posts or clinics being too far from the village and about their suffering from a lack of drugs.

As to Village Health Committees (VHC) to be initiated by Health Surveillance Assistants (HSA), these were mentioned only at two QUIM sites and even here did not figure prominently. This ties in with the villagers’ relying strongly on outside support (see Research Findings 3.3.6).

##### *Implications*

Health facilities and infrastructure may be covered by other initiatives, such as Social Funds, meaning that there may be a need to re-prioritise money allocations towards provision of drugs and trained staff.

Villagers now perceive HIV/AIDS as a problem, this has implications for the treatment of sufferers of this disease. A more aggressive tackling of this problem is needed with separate and specialised treatment and counselling being provided for sufferers, relieving the pressure which related diseases are placing on the existing health system.

#### **4.3.3 Water and Sanitation**

Access to water safe for drinking is one of the villagers’ gravest problems at most QUIM sites (see Research Findings 3.3.2), with people being aware of the implications regarding water-related and water-borne diseases.

The main constraints of the water sector as described in the *PFPAP* document (see Policy Analysis 2.6) are reverberated by the villagers at the QUIM sites: too few boreholes, frequent

breakdowns of pumps, lack of continuous training and incentive for local people to participate in the monitoring and management of water systems.

*Implications:*

A comprehensive framework to co-ordinate the activities of all donors, NGOs, and government agencies should be implemented to ensure an equitable allocation of boreholes in particular.

Training must be revised, people have received training but they still feel incapable of maintaining the boreholes. There may be a necessity to carry out the training on the job as difficulties arise rather than in a teaching session beforehand.

Spare parts must be made accessible and available to those who require them

#### **4.3.4 Population**

While the villagers and especially women appreciate health services, including those for reproductive health and family planning, and consider them to be important, they nevertheless are reluctant to apply family planning techniques (see Research Findings 3.3.2). Thus, the policy objectives in the health sector (see Policy Analysis 2.7) continue to be very relevant but that their implementation has not yet had the desired effect at village level.

*Implications*

The respective programmes should not only be reinforced but culturally adapted. Thus, people's concerns regarding barrenness and other undesired side-effects of applying family planning techniques must be acknowledged before they can be removed; and the programmes have to come up with ways of involving men more.

#### **4.3.5 Financial Services**

The lack of money, capital, credit, credit facilities, and access to credit facilities for both, agricultural inputs and business was thought to be a main cause for poverty in 10 out of 12 villages (see Research Findings 3.1.3).

While quite a number of credit schemes have been launched in order to address this problem (see Policy Analysis 2.8), only at five QUIM sites the villagers actually had access to credit facilities - women to PHN business loans, men to MRFC agricultural loans (see Appendix 13 and Research Findings 3.3.3). At other sites the villagers were aware of the existence of a wide variety of credit institutions and programmes with credit schemes (see Appendix 15 and Research Findings 3.3.4) without, however, seeing themselves in a position to access them.

Access to credit from the formal sector continues to be extremely difficult for the poor. The reasons listed in the respective policy papers (see Policy Analysis 2.8) largely match the problems as described by the villagers regarding for example MRFC loan conditions with high interest rates, high deposit rates and other regulatory barriers (see Research Findings 3.1.3 and 3.3.3). Besides, the villagers' access clearly is impeded by information deficits caused or reinforced by inadequate communication structures and the remote position of the villages combined with the limited reach of the respective institutions.

*Implications*

The need for credit facilities and programmes with affordable interest rates being of vital importance to the villagers (see Research Findings 3.3.6) existing credit offers should be revised and extended with view to the constraints faced by the poor. A great deal of work has been done and perhaps now it is time to co-ordinate different actors and streamline the regulations, to ensure that the coverage is more evenly spread and that villagers have a better understanding of the regulations and are thus more in control of their access.



Private sector involvement must be increased, whether through the further liberalisation of the market attracting new actors, or through encouraging the expansion of the existing network, by removing perceived constraints, such as insecurity in more remote areas.

#### **4.3.6 Micro and Small-Scale Enterprises**

While policies in this sector have aimed at increasing and improving access to credit, providing basic training for small scale entrepreneurs, constructing suitable premises, improving market access, promoting appropriate technologies, and creating links to the formal sector (see Policy Analysis 2.9), it seems that none of this has had an impact on the QUIM villages. While the villagers at some sites are aware of the existence of the respective programmes and projects (see Appendix 15), at none of the sites they had access to them, probably due to the same constraints as faced in the financial sector: information deficits, remoteness, limited coverage. Besides, the villagers' thinking revolves mainly around agriculture. Only then they consider alternative opportunities for income generation, with the search for employment opportunities coming up first (see Research Findings 3.2.1).

While petty trading and income generation outside the agricultural sector were mentioned as short-term mechanisms of coping with poverty (see Research Findings 3.2.3), the issue of "self-employment" as a long-term strategy was not raised at all.

##### *Implications*

The villagers need to be better informed about programmes and projects directed at income generation outside the agricultural sector, and the programmes' reach needs to be extended. In addition to the programmes and projects, there appears to be some impediments, as a possible solution it may be necessary to re-examine the socio-anthropological conditions which exist as a possible means of overcoming these difficulties. At village level the teams were told of instances where people who had tried innovative ideas, such as establishing groceries, became the target of witchcraft, these strong social forces appear to be in place to reinforce the social *status quo* in the villages.

#### **4.3.7 Labour Policies and Programmes**

With labour policies and programmes based on formal sector employment (see Policy Analysis 2.10), not surprisingly they do not have an impact mentioned by the villagers at the QUIM sites.

##### *Implications*

Since the vast majority of people live and work outside the formal sector and since this sector does not grow fast enough anyway to absorb the increasing manpower, the "informal sector" definitely needs to be focused on. This shall be the main means of stimulating employment and encouraging diversification away from agriculture.

A starting point to stimulate this employment is through the imparting of skills through Vocational Training, an area which has been taken up by the Ministry of Labour and is an area for further expansion.

This is one sector where there is still room for improvement in the implementation of policy under the framework for the Poverty Alleviation Programme.

#### **4.3.8 Housing**

The statement that "poor housing is a reflection of poverty" (see Policy Analysis 2.11) certainly is corroborated by the QUIM findings (see Research Findings 3.1.4). Thus, it is somewhat surprising that while housing is an important criteria of poverty to the villagers, they did not voice expectations for outside support in this regard (see Research Area 3.3.6). While housing

programmes exist and to some extent even for rural areas, it seems that the villagers are completely unaware of this (see Appendix 15).

#### *Implications*

Obviously, more and more far-reaching (into remote areas) programmes and projects to promote basic housing for the rural population are required in order to address people's basic needs. While housing has been identified as one of the major criteria for poverty among people in the villages, this may be perceived as a household attribute of poverty (See Research Findings 3.1.2). Any programme designed to tackle this, must do so on a community level, so as not to create problems with the social *status quo* (as mentioned earlier).

### **4.3.9 Community Development and Social Welfare**

Community development, defined "as a process by which the effort of the people themselves are combined with those of governmental authorities to improve the economic and social conditions of communities" (see Policy Analysis 2.12), seems to be virtually non-existent at the QUIM sites.

This is due to shortcomings on both sides: on the one hand, at only one out of the twelve villages, a Community Development Assistant (CDA) who might take over the role of a "development facilitator" was to be found (see Appendix 12). On the other hand, what could be construed as people's self-help spirit in initiating development activities seems rather low, with people perceiving themselves as heavily dependant on external support for this (see Research Findings 3.3.6). Thus, community development is very weak at the QUIM sites, and in the absence of CDAs the communities lack facilitators who might serve as a link between themselves and project-offering agencies.

The only aspect of community development, known to some extent, are adult literacy classes. At four sites, the villagers – mainly women – attended such classes, at one further site they knew about them.

The growing number of orphans in the villages, regarded as both cause and effect of poverty (see Research Findings 3.1.3), as well as the elderly and children are seen to be affected strongly by increasing poverty due to their depending on others for support (see Research Findings 3.2.2). They require social welfare which, however, is virtually non-existent at the QUIM sites. At one site only, the villagers mentioned an orphan care programme, at two other sites the villagers knew such programmes to exist, no more (see Appendices 13 and 15). Otherwise, social welfare for the disabled, the aged and the sick seems to be unheard of.

#### *Implications*

Government is going to have to take up the issue of Social Welfare at community level due to the increased mortality, brought about primarily as a consequence of the growing number of AIDS cases. It is becoming apparent that the traditional systems are no longer able to cope with the increased strain this is placing on them.

The cross-sectoral knowledge of CDAs makes them an ideal interface between remote communities and possible project offering agencies, as such there may be a need to re-examine the numbers in place.

### **4.3.10 Transport and Infrastructure**

Programmes implemented in this sector which are relevant for rural areas comprise first and foremost the construction of roads and bridges supported by MASAF and VARBAU, the Village Access Roads and Bridges Assistance Unit (see Policy Analysis 2.13).

While at two QUIM villages, MASAF has supported people in road construction, VARBAU is known only by hearsay at two sites. At two further sites, people were aware of outside support in bridge construction, without mentioning a specific agency (see Appendices 13 and 15).

Of course, the villagers are aware of the importance of physical infrastructure allowing for access to markets and other public facilities and emphasised their need for external support in this respect (see Research Findings 3.3.6). Across the QUIM sites, this has been scarce.

#### *Implications*

Access to markets and supplies is often cited as being one of the major impediments to expansion in remote areas, however action has not been given sufficient attention. One possible solution to this may be that Government ensures a conducive environment for people to access vehicles and spare parts. This is particularly important in terms of smaller vehicles that may be able to reach more remote areas, enabling the private sector to service areas more distant from main roads. This will need to be coupled with a programme which ensures sufficient road maintenance, while still extending the road network into new areas.

### **4.3.11 Natural Resources and Environment**

Environmental policies are manifold, and quite a number of activities have been instituted to obtain the different goals (see Policy Analysis 2.14).

While it is difficult to assess changes in people's attitude towards the conservation of natural resources it is clear that while people remain as poor as they are the pressure on natural resources will not diminish, on the contrary. Immediate survival comes before the conservation of resources for the future, and while at two QUIM sites, afforestation projects were seen to benefit future generations, at another one the protection of the forest was not seen to be of benefit to anybody (see Research Findings 3.3.3).

While Beach Village Committees or Village Natural Resource Committees were not encountered at the QUIM sites, the villagers at least in isolated incidences, knew about or even profited from projects such as MAGFAD or PROSCARP (see Appendices 13 and 15). This still is a very long way from the objectives of, for example, the *National Environment Policy* "to prevent environmental degradation, to provide a healthy working and living environment for the people of Malawi, to accord full recognition to the rights of future generations by means of environmental protection, and to conserve and enhance the biological diversity of Malawi" (see Policy Analysis 2.14).

#### *Implications*

As highlighted, while the communities remain as poor as they are it will be hard to encourage a more sustainable use of natural resources, to rectify this and problems associated with the perceived beneficiaries of programmes, the issue of Ownership must be translated to community level.

### **4.3.12 Irrigation**

While small scale irrigation schemes are seen to have a potential for poverty alleviation, such projects are still fairly scarce (see Policy Analysis 2.15). However, at two QUIM sites the villagers profited from such schemes implemented by the Ministry of Agriculture and Irrigation (see Appendix 13).

Reinforcement of such schemes means not only that constraints on the part of the implementing agencies, such as shortage of trained personal, have to be overcome (see Policy Analysis 2.15) but also that the self-help spirit and participation of the beneficiaries who, according to the draft

policy for irrigation are to own and manage these schemes, have to be fostered (see Research Findings 3.6).

#### **4.4 Regarding the Reach of Policies, Programmes and Projects**

##### **4.4.1 Policies or Programmes or Projects?**

All in all, the villagers at the QUIM sites do not receive much outside support in terms of programmes and projects which may have to do with their living in remote places, with people lacking information, and with the lack and inefficiency of communication structures. Just about for every sector one can say that “more programmes and projects” are required to realise the respective policy objectives and alleviate poverty at village level. The question, however, is whether “more programmes and projects” are the right approach to alleviate poverty with dimensions as immense as it presents itself in Malawi.

Programmes and projects by their very nature are of limited scope, both in space and time, having an effect only in isolated places and areas of action - they are the proverbial “drop in the ocean”. The QUIM findings show that policies such as structural adjustment or *Free Primary Education* are generally felt at village level while programmes and projects incidentally do benefit some people in some places but remain severely limited in their reach.

NGOs generally restrict their activities to certain districts and fields of intervention, due to constraints of finances and personnel. Thus, they cannot but pursue the approach of working through programmes and projects in the hope that the successful ones will have a broader impact by being replicable in other regions. Such efforts at poverty alleviation are good at local level in isolated incidences. However, they clearly cannot and do not alleviate poverty on a broader scale.

For this, governmental interventions are required. The focus of the government is wider than that of NGOs in that it has to cover the entire country and in that it has the mandate and power to devise policies. The policies in place seem sound and reasonable but they do not yet have a broad impact to be felt at village level where the majority of Malawians live.

It seems that the filtering down of information and action is very poor: At the national level much is known and planned for; at district level some policies are known, some programmes and projects are implemented; but at local level the impact is felt only incidentally. This leaves policy makers with the question what to do so as to accelerate the implementation of their policies, with regard to the villagers’ most burning problems, that is access to affordable agricultural inputs and productively used credit in order to alleviate household poverty, and access to efficient services of health, including infrastructure for safe drinking water, and education in order to alleviate communal poverty (see Research Findings 3.3.5).

The review of the policy analysis shows that quite a lot has been achieved with regard to the poverty focus of policy, what is lacking is implementation.

##### **4.4.2 Whom to “target”?**

Considering the reach of programmes and projects, the question of “targeting” invariably crops up.<sup>74</sup> With view to the poverty situation at the QUIM sites, however, the question almost answers

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<sup>74</sup> Actually, the question is valid for both, the policy and the programme approach. The policy of structural adjustment, for example, according to the QUIM findings has had some devastating effects on the poor while they benefited people rich enough, for example, to spare land and be able to access credit and inputs for growing tobacco.

itself. Whom to target in the villages, “the poor” who are most needy, or “the slightly better-off” who may have more development potential? With poverty being what it is at the QUIM sites the difference between these two groups appears not large enough for this question to really matter (see Research Findings 3.1.4).

Increased food security and, more generally, fostering an environment which allows people to fulfil their very basic needs are and must be the overall objectives – the challenge is rather, as suggested in the "Malawi: Situation Analysis of Poverty", in coming up with “unconventional approaches” in the realisation of these objectives.

Food for Work Programmes, to give an example, involve a self-selective targeting mechanism – the rich will not work for poor wages. Such mechanisms are required also for support in, for example, basic rural housing.

#### **4.4.3 Who is Reaching out to Whom? The Big Gap**

The villagers at the QUIM sites clearly lack awareness and information regarding prevailing policies and development programmes or projects because communication structures between the communities and the outside world are extremely weak (see Research Findings 3.4). Information deficits must be addressed, possibly through Information Education Campaigns such as MASAF has – obviously with success -had. Besides, politicians have a role to play in bringing information to the villages. They can organise meetings or rallies to inform people of the programmes and projects they might avail of. However, such information is to be backed up by the organisations and institutions offering the respective support in order to clarify ways of access, conditions for support and to establish the communication link required for co-operation with the community.

This co-operation must go through traditional structures (see Research Findings 3.4.1 and 3.4.2). The fact that these still exist and function is a positive potential to be used. Otherwise, the level of organisation in the villages seems very low, with people's attitude, "Tell us and help us" prevailing; there is little initiative for self-help and innovative action at community level. Thus, people's self-help spirit and potential definitely needs to be fostered – in this sense, community empowerment is a field of action to be considered on its own right by policy makers and programme managers driving at poverty alleviation.

Since the villagers hardly have access to communication channels to voice their demands and cannot bridge the institutional gap between the communities and support agencies at district level out of their own resources, more efforts to bridge the gap have to be undertaken by institutions and organisations offering supporting projects and programmes to the villagers. This brings in the question of decentralisation of the supply side – with regard to both, non-governmental organisations and governmental institutions and services.

There is no doubt that to improve the reach of programmes and projects, a better flow of information, communication and better co-ordination between the actors involved in a development effort are required.

#### **4.4.4 As to “Sustainability”**

Another question always arising with regard to the project approach is that of “sustainability”, meaning that a programme's or project's results should be of durable benefit to the so-called target group. However, the villager's poverty situation as encountered by the QUIM teams was so desperate that the concern is more with “immediate action” than with “durable benefit”. With the villagers struggling to survive from one month to the next it seems somewhat superfluous to make a point of long-term impact – at least at the moment. To give an example, governmental subsidies for fertiliser definitely are not economically sustainable – but is that the point in view of the people going hungry for lack of access to fertiliser?

To quote the "Malawi: Situation Analysis of Poverty" once again,

*“Human development strategies will need to go beyond price-oriented reforms and focus more on existing structural constraints and institutional weaknesses in implementing anti-poverty programmes”.*

Actually, there is nothing to add - the challenge remains.

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