

Addressing the Challenges Rural Based NGOs Face in Southern Malawi, Africa in Their
Endeavor to Provide Sustainable and Empowering Development Work

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Master's Thesis

International Care and Community Development

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Abstract

Nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) working in the Phalombe and Mulanje districts of southern Malawi, Africa face many challenges in their endeavor to provide sustainable and empowering development work. These challenges are mainly due to external factors with regard to low literacy levels and a mindset of dependency among the adults with whom the NGOs work with in the field; lack of financial and human resources among NGOs; differing approaches to development work among NGOs; lack of cooperation from duty bearers; unachievable donor expectations; a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS; and unfavorable changes in the climate. This thesis project suggests five recommendations in order to assist NGOs to better address their stated challenges. These recommendations include the creation of new and/or enhancement of existing adult literacy programs, increased advocacy efforts for donor education, increased child participation in development work activities at all levels, the incorporation of social entrepreneurship efforts into the NGOs' overall development strategy, and the formation of collaborative partnerships amongst NGOs as well as with public and private sector entities.

Keywords: sustainability, empowerment, adult literacy, donor education, child participation, social entrepreneurship, collaborative partnerships

NGO Development Work: Challenges and Recommendations

There are approximately 40,000 nongovernmental organizations (NGOs) that operate internationally and hundreds of thousands more that operate on a national level (Anheier, Glasius, & Kaldor, 2001). Many socially minded individuals and groups question the magnitude of poverty that persists in our world given the significant number of NGOs contributing to development work around the globe. Initially, this thesis project further questioned, with the current and well-known development knowledge that exists regarding relationship and asset building within communities, mutual development, and the difference between a detrimental hand-out and an empowering hand-up, why numerous NGOs around the world continued to fail to provide sustainable and empowering development work. The author of this thesis project assumed that NGOs simply did not follow the current development guidelines, but found quite the opposite during a two-month research period in 2011 based in the Phalombe and Mulanje districts located in the eastern half of the southern region of Malawi bordering Mozambique. In general, the NGOs interviewed and observed in southern Malawi during the two-month research period follow the current community development philosophy set forth by development organizations and development experts. The NGOs in southern Malawi build relationships with community members, require community members to participate in identifying their own problems as well as proposed solutions, and strongly oppose a wide range of handouts. So, rather than internal factors such as the actions or inactions of the southern Malawian NGOs themselves creating major challenges, the NGOs primarily face challenges from external factors such as the literacy level and mindset of community members, lack of resources, duty bearers, donor expectations, disease, and climate change. These challenges impede the southern Malawian NGOs' endeavors to provide sustainable and empowering development work. Although the

southern Malawian NGOs recognize and strive to address the challenges faced daily in their development work, this thesis project will recommend further steps to be taken through adult literacy programs, donor education, child participation, social entrepreneurship, and collaborative partnerships.

Methods

Challenges of NGO Development Work Study (Primary Study)

The aim of the primary study was to determine the challenges NGOs in rural southern Malawi, Africa face in their endeavor to provide sustainable and empowering development work. This study is the basis of this thesis project.

Participants and procedure.

The participant group consisted of native Malawian representatives from 15 NGOs focused on community development work operating in and with field offices located in the rural Phalombe and Mulanje districts of southern Malawi, Africa. The group of NGOs consisted of international and local organizations. The representatives from each NGO were personally interviewed in their field offices; each NGO was interviewed separately. The interviews took place during the months of July and August of 2011. Project directors and project managers participated in a majority of the interviews; seldom did an entire NGO staff participate. The selection of NGOs was based on recommendations from a knowledgeable and well-connected NGO manager in the area. The NGO interviewees were asked a series of non-leading and open-ended questions (see Appendix A for questions). Very rarely were the NGOs probed for additional information. Although two NGO representatives requested that only hand written notes be taken during the interviews, the remaining 13 NGO representatives gave permission for the use of a digital recorder. The NGO representatives requested that their own identities and the

identities of their employers be kept anonymous. Therefore, individual names and the names of the organizations will not be used. Throughout this thesis project the representatives interviewed will be referred to as, for example, NGO 7 or NGO 15. Moreover, for the purpose of this thesis project, the 15 southern Malawian NGOs interviewed will simply be referred to as *the NGOs* when depicted in a collective context.

Childhood Study (Secondary Study)

The aim of the secondary study was to comprehend how childhood is perceived by Malawian children and adults as well as to understand how children's rights are perceived and protected in Malawi, Africa. This study was initially conceived of for use in university coursework only, but the results were found to be relevant to the Recommendation Platform section of the thesis project.

Participants and procedure.

The participant group consisted of 10 students, five adult community members, and five NGOs residing and/or working in or near Phalombe, Malawi. All students were in high school or had recently graduated from high school and were under the age of 18 at the time of the study. The adult community members were randomly chosen through a referral process. The NGOs interviewed in the primary study were solicited to participate in this secondary study; five NGOs responded. Separate questionnaires were created for the three participant groups (see Appendix B for questionnaires). The questionnaires were distributed and responded to by means of email.

NGO Community Development Work in Southern Malawi

NGO community development work in the Phalombe and Mulanje districts of southern Malawi is separated into two categories; project and program work. Projects have a defined time frame—generally only two to five years—and address a specific issue with regard to poverty

whereas programs are more flexible, include several projects, and tackle a broad array of changing issues over a longer time period—generally 10 to 15 years. Regardless of whether the NGOs are working on a project or a program, the NGOs emphasized that during the community development process they do not act as planners or implementers, but rather they act as facilitators. NGO 10 reported:

We are facilitators. We need to facilitate things on the ground so that communities should take it from there; so that they should do things on their own at the end of the day. Once they have been empowered we know that activity, that development [project], will be sustainable because it will be in their hands. So our role is to facilitate. (personal communication, July 22, 2011, 6:04)

Multiple NGOs pointed out that they work with volunteers often referred to as *village agents* from local Community Based Organizations. It is the village agents who plan and implement the projects and programs. The NGOs train village agents to distribute knowledge within the village agents' communities (personal communication, July/August 2011). This process increases the sustainability of community development projects and programs as well as empowers the local community—the terms sustainability and empowerment as defined by the NGOs are depicted in the following section. Through the facilitation rather than the implementation of projects and programs, the NGOs work in a sustainable and empowering way within impoverished communities despite their daily challenges.

In addition, the NGOs also act as facilitators with regard to the local government. The NGOs view the local government as the number one duty bearer with regard to human rights and development work. The NGOs strongly believe that the local government is ultimately responsible to provide for the needs of its community members and that the NGOs should merely

assist the local government in the process (Multiple NGOs, personal communication, July/August 2011). NGO 4 asserted:

We believe that NGOs are just complimenting government efforts; whatever we do... there is a government department that is also responsible for the activity.... Our assumption is that when we impart knowledge into these people [government officials], they will continue to be serving the people [community members] because they are employed to work in that area while a project can just be there for a specific period of time. (personal communication, July 26, 2011, 20:49)

Although there are challenges in the process of working with the local government as discussed in the Challenges section below, NGO 1 stated that working with the local government ensures sustainability, “To ensure that the project is sustainable, we are working closely with government structures and our role is basically to facilitate the process and the logistics” (personal communication, July 12, 2011, 0:06). Upon completion of a project, the NGOs expect to transfer the responsibility of further facilitation—if required—and general oversight of the project area to the local government. Several of the NGOs strive to work alongside the local government during projects and programs even though it is an arduous process while others prefer to hand over the project to the local government once the project is complete (Multiple NGOs, personal communication, July/August 2011). Although several of the NGOs attempt to work with the local government during a project, an increased amount of cooperation from both groups is required as discussed in the Collaborative Partnerships section below.

Prior to the commencement of development projects and programs, a majority of the NGOs perform Participatory Rural Assessments or similar evaluations in order to understand not only a community’s problems and needs, but also their assets. NGO 14 stated, “So it [the

assessment] is not necessarily just to go and look at their problems, but also to appreciate what potential and opportunities are there with them” (personal communication, August 2, 2011, 9:37). As facilitators, the NGOs then assist the community members to propose solutions to their own problems and to build their own development plans. Once the initial assessment is complete, the NGOs focus on capacity building, awareness, and sensitization activities. These activities form the foundation of the NGOs’ efforts to address poverty. Multiple NGOs described that capacity building involves training activities that increase the knowledge, resource, and hands-on capacity of community members and various key stakeholders within communities such as government employees, healthcare workers, educators, etc. In addition, through capacity building efforts, the NGOs work to provide sustainable livelihoods and income generating activities for community members. Awareness efforts educate community members regarding prevention, treatment, and care for health issues such as malaria and HIV/AIDS. Through sensitization efforts such as community meetings, campaign events, and the provision of free legal services, the NGOs sensitize community members regarding government as the primary duty bearer and empower community members to work alongside the local government during community development projects and to demand their rights from the local government (personal communication, July/August 2011). NGO 2 stated:

Since the people at the grassroots [level] mostly are not all that educated, they do not know who to contact and that the civil servants are supposed to serve the people, but it has not been like that. It meant that the civil servants were behaving like masters and the community were [behaving] like tenants so we are trying to remove that barrier and [teach] that civil servants are accountable to people... but if you don’t know that those

people are there for you then there is danger. (personal communication, July 12, 2011, 2:39)

Moreover, the NGOs sensitize community members regarding the decentralization of the Malawian government. The decentralization process allows community members to have a voice in the decision making process regarding government sponsored community development projects (Multiple NGOs, personal communication, July/August 2011).

The NGOs' community development work further focuses on maternal and child health, nutrition, education, gender and child based rights, food security, disaster risk management, clean water, sanitation, and advocacy efforts. Due to the fact that the Phalombe and Mulanje districts border the Mulanje mountain range, several of the NGOs also provide specific sustainable management for the Mulanje Mountain Forest Reserve (Multiple NGOs, personal communication, July/August 2011). Through their community development work efforts, NGO 6 reported, "We avoid providing handouts for the communities; that most of the time erodes sustainability. We want them to invest a lot whereby we come up with a small proportion" (personal communication, July 19, 2011, 19:34). To enhance sustainability and empowerment, the NGOs provide a majority of the material and financial resources required for projects, but request community members to provide a majority of the human resources and only a small amount of the material resources (Multiple NGOs, personal communication, July/August 2011). In general, NGO 14 stated, "We want to make sure that children and communities are educated for life. We want to impart upon them the necessary skills and knowledge so that they can make a living out of their education" (personal communication, August 2, 2011, 1:32). Due to the fact that 80 percent of the Malawian population depends on agriculture (CIA World Factbook), the NGOs impart the skills and knowledge necessary not only for subsistence farming, but also for

surplus farming. NGO 14 emphasized that making a living not only equates to employment outside of the home, but more so for sustainability and empowerment in everyday life (personal communication, August 2, 2011).

Sustainability and Empowerment Defined

As illustrated by the NGOs' statements above, the terms sustainability and empowerment are two words often used by development practitioners. The challenges and recommendations described in this thesis project are inextricably linked to sustainability and empowerment. Moreover, the two terms themselves cannot be separated. To better understand the meaning of sustainability and empowerment in relation to the NGOs' community development work, the two terms as defined by the NGOs are depicted below.

Sustainability

The NGOs primarily defined sustainability in terms of the continuity of programs and projects as well as attributed sustainability to the empowerment of community members. Although the NGOs expect the local government to take responsibility for a community once the NGOs have phased out, the NGOs place a majority of the responsibility of sustainability on community members. NGO 6 asserted:

We are looking at continuity of processes that we indulge with the communities as well as the benefits to themselves. The issue of sustainability comes in because we know that projects have got a lifespan.... After five years down the line people should come to the project impact area and actually see something or hear something that the [project] was being implemented in the area.... The other thing that people are supposed to bear in mind... is that sustainability may not be in absolute terms. Some people have the feeling that when they are saying sustainability it means that things should happen at same

intensity as it is happening with the existence of the project. We have this challenge with our government colleagues. They want us to leave resources... so that they can continue with what the NGO is doing. To me that is not sustainability, to me that is an extension of the project more or less. But sustainability should happen even if you withdraw the resources. (personal communication, July 19, 2011, 16:45)

For project sustainability, the NGOs build the capacities of communities so that community members can lead projects, with government facilitation as required, for the long-term on their own accord. NGO 14 stated, "Sustainable development is to do with continuity without any external support" (personal communication, August 2, 2011, 17:50). NGO 5 defined sustainability as:

Putting mechanisms [in place] that the participants in what they are doing, they should understand it and maintain it even without a NGO supervising them each day. If they can see the benefits of the intervention that they are doing, they will be motivated to do more without supervision. (personal communication, July 19, 2011, 1:06:44)

Without capacity building efforts by the NGOs, the sustainability of community development projects and programs is not possible.

In addition, sustainable development extends beyond those community members initially served by the project. Sustainable development requires community members to assist each other rather than merely focusing on the development of oneself or one's immediate family. NGO 9 pointed out:

Sustainability is quite good because even though the project phases out there will be a continuation ... and it will not be only for those people who are involved, it will grow wider and wider and wider to help those other people [who have not yet been

assisted]...Community members must be helpful; not be a helped person always, but you have to assist others. (personal communication, July 22, 2011, 19:47)

Moreover, when a project is sustainable, there should not be a need for repetition of projects; different NGOs should not work in the same area one after the other to provide the same resources over and over again. Furthermore, NGO7 described a sustainable project as one that, "... is going to have a lasting impact on people after we have phased out of project; people will continue benefitting from that project; they will own that project.... It goes hand in hand with empowerment" (personal communication, July 27, 2011, 0:13). If a development project is not sustainable, the NGOs will not empower the community members involved.

Empowerment

Although several of the NGOs noted that empowerment is one and the same with capacity building, empowerment cannot merely be defined as the ability of individuals and families to support themselves and discontinue their dependency on outside support. Tagoe (2008) took the definition of empowerment one step further. Tagoe defined empowerment as the "... awareness and personal competency for proactive action to deal with problems" (p. 717). In general, the NGOs' definitions of empowerment were synonymous with Tagoe's definition. For instance, NGO 14 expressed:

Empowerment is a process... giving people all what they need for them to be self-advancing.... [NGOs] give that enabling environment to the communities or to a person so they would stand on their own, make informed decisions, act responsibly knowing that they are going to achieve what it takes for them [to succeed].... [Empowerment requires] physical liberation from poverty, physical liberation from oppression in all forms.
(personal communication, August 2, 2011, 12:08)

By providing a hand-up rather than a handout through empowering development activities, the NGOs strive to physically liberate the community members with whom they work from poverty.

In addition, NGO 7 stated:

You are giving them the power to decide on their destiny.... They should be able to define their own development and demand that specific development from government. If they do that, that development when it comes, they will also be very happy to participate in that development; then the development will be sustainable.” (personal communication, July 27, 2011, 0:42).

Through awareness and sensitization activities, the NGOs empower community members to better understand how to deal with their problems and demand their rights from duty bearers in order to improve their future. By acting as facilitators rather than as implementers and by requiring community members to propose solutions to their own problems, the NGOs empower community members.

Per the NGOs’ definitions and based on this author’s personal observations, as previously stated, empowerment and sustainability in the context of NGO development work cannot be separated. Without sustainable efforts such as capacity building that increase knowledge and resources, the empowerment of not only community members, but also entire communities including community leaders, healthcare workers, educators, government workers, etc. is not attainable. Without empowerment efforts such as sensitization and awareness campaigns that increase the power of the collective voice of community members, the sustainability of programs and projects is not achievable. Therefore, for the purpose of this thesis project empowerment and sustainability are collectively defined as the ability of multiple entire communities—with their own resources and voices—to develop a long-term strategy in order to emerge from poverty on

their own accord by continually maintaining development projects and demanding their rights in the absence of NGO assistance.

Challenges

Although the challenges described by the NGOs are illustrated separately in the following sections, the challenges cannot be separated from one another in the field. Each challenge is interconnected and compounded by several or all of the other challenges, which negatively affects the NGOs' ability to provide sustainable and empowering development work. These challenges include adult illiteracy, lack of resources, the dependency syndrome, differing approaches to development work, duty bearers, short term projects versus long term programs, donor expectations, HIV/AIDS, and climate change.

Adult Illiteracy

Due to the response to the 1990 Jomtien World Conference on Education for All and a new democratic government in 1994 that recognized the importance of education in relation to poverty alleviation, Malawi became the first sub-Saharan African country to establish a free primary education system and universal primary education (Chimombo, 2009). In addition, the new Malawian democratic government initiated mass literacy programs that included adult literacy programs (NGO 7, personal communication, December 29, 2011). Although these initiatives are in place, only 62.7 percent of the Malawian population is literate; 76.1 percent male and 49.8 percent female (CIA World Factbook). Similar to the remainder of the country, the Phalombe and Mulanje districts of southern Malawi suffer from low literacy levels. Ten of the 15 NGOs emphasized that low literacy levels represent the greatest challenge in their endeavor to provide sustainable and empowering development work. Although a few of the NGOs facilitate adult literacy programs, each of the NGOs reiterated that the literacy levels of

the community members with whom they work remains very low. The main challenge associated with adult illiteracy is the fact that uneducated community members do not have the ability to immediately understand the development concepts that the NGOs are presenting to them (Multiple NGOs, personal communication, July/August 2011). For instance, without substantial training, community members cannot take part in livelihood development programs such as micro lending. NGO 6 remarked:

They have to do bookkeeping if they are doing natural resource based enterprise, they have to see how much they are spending on their businesses, how much profit they are making, but in the event that they cannot add one and two, it becomes a very big challenge. So we try to deal with that by ensuring that we are using participatory methodologies whereby the communities actually still take a leading role. Maybe we use a few farmers who are based within the communities that have a higher literacy level so that the other farmers can learn from these lead farmers and it becomes easier when learning from a colleague. (personal communication, July 19, 2011, 15:00)

Thus, many of the NGOs associated low literacy levels with increased time required for development programs. NGO 1 stated, “For people to understand the messages and to start to react to the messages, it takes some time” (personal communication, July 12, 2011, 18:00). The NGOs know that the facilitation of livelihood interventions is key to the development of communities and they recognize that adult literacy efforts must come first, which delays the community development process, but not all of the NGOs currently have the resources for the provision of adult literacy efforts.

In addition, although the NGOs work with local traditional village chiefs in an effort to change harmful cultural practices and community members’ existing cultural mindset, several of

the NGOs mentioned these practices and mindsets pose a challenge to their development work and associated them with low literacy levels. NGO 7 cited that women mainly attend adult literacy classes because men are too embarrassed to join (personal communication, July 27, 2011). NGO 11 reported that child labor and child initiation ceremonies such as those that prepare girls for marriage at a young age are an issue (personal communication, July 26, 2011). NGO 12 observed that low numbers of men show up for HIV/AIDS testing and that few men participate in community development projects (personal communication, July 27, 2011). The fact that such a small percentage of women are literate—only 49.8 percent of overall 62.7 percent in the country—only compounds the NGOs challenges due to the fact that the NGOs for the most part work with women in community development activities.

Moreover, NGO 11 differentiated between *hardware* and *software projects*. Community members are able to easily understand and accept hardware projects such as the construction of a school or a bore hole from the NGOs whereas community members normally are not able to comprehend software projects such as those projects promoting awareness regarding HIV/AIDS, sanitation, bed nets, etc. When the NGOs present only a software project to a community, the community often questions why they are not also receiving a hardware project from the NGOs (personal communication, July 26, 2011). Similarly, NGO 13 stated that some communities simply do not understand what the NGOs' intentions are within the community (personal communication, July 27, 2011). To counteract illiteracy regarding software projects, the NGOs currently utilize song, dance, and drama—mediums that are part of everyday life in Malawi—to spread awareness about development issues as well as health issues such as HIV/AIDS (NGO 12, personal communication, July 27, 2011). Van Buren (2011) cited that this is a common practice across developing countries in Africa. Furthermore, NGO 2 observed what the *silence*

syndrome. NGO 2 pointed out that illiterate community members often feel intimidated when discussing their rights with an educated member of the government. NGO 2 stated, “In Malawi, as in Africa, the illiteracy rate is high. An illiterate person has a difficult [time] in being assertive. They are not strong enough to stand and oppose what they feel is against their rights. There is a silence syndrome” (personal communication, July 12, 2011, 2:26). NGO 4 cited the correlation between low literacy and low confidence levels:

Our initiatives require someone who is literate... someone who is at least able to read and write... able to understand concepts that we are trying to impart in them... Many fail to have confidence in themselves that they can do something better to improve their lives.
(personal communication, July 26, 2011, 22:06)

Although the NGOs’ utilization of song, dance, and drama is a commendable and appropriate response to adult illiteracy as are the NGOs’ empowerment efforts, the NGOs must further adult literacy efforts to truly combat the low literacy levels. This issue is addressed in the Recommendation Platform section below.

On the other hand, one NGO noted mixed feelings regarding literacy. NGO 9 stated that illiteracy was not an issue because there are many literacy classes offered in the specific area where they work. But, NGO 9 admitted that the community members they worked with had a hard time understanding the concept of working in groups in order to achieve community development (personal communication, July 22, 2011). This illustrates that illiteracy is related not only to writing, reading, and arithmetic, but also to concepts of daily life in general as will be expounded upon in the Recommendation Platform section below.

Lack of Resources

Although the NGOs did not state the lack of resources as their greatest challenge, 12 of the 15 NGOs declared that the lack of resources significantly affects their ability to provide sustainable and empowering development work. One of the main concerns regards the lack of financial resources. NGO 3 suggested that due to the fact that they receive funding from a large, well-known donor, other donors often turn down their funding proposals because the other donors would prefer to fund a NGO not receiving funds from the large, well-known donor (personal communication, July 12, 2011). NGO 12 acknowledged that local traditional village chiefs often request that the NGOs commence or expand development work within the chief's community, but the NGOs regularly lack funding to be able to do so (personal communication, July 27, 2011). NGO 11 claimed that the recent economic downturn significantly decreased the funding available for community development projects (personal communication, July 26, 2011).

The lack of resources includes not only financial resources, but also land, infrastructure, human, and material resources. NGO 5 attributed the lack of resources to those resources not readily available within the communities in which the NGOs work (personal communication, July 19, 2011). According to the CIA World Factbook, "Landlocked Malawi ranks among the world's most densely populated and least developed countries. The economy is predominately agricultural with about 80% of the population living in rural areas" (<https://www.cia.gov/library/publications/the-world-factbook/geos/mi.html>). Within a population of over 16 million people, 53 percent of Malawians live below the poverty line (CIA World Factbook). Impoverished community members often do not have enough land to implement the NGOs' interventions. Multiple NGOs noted that the population of Malawi has outgrown the size of its land and can no longer be truly productive without innovative interventions and a decrease

in population (personal communication, July/August, 2011). In addition, the lack of infrastructure such as paved roads in the large districts of Phalombe and Mulanje decrease the amount of poor and vulnerable community members that the NGOs are able to assist due to long travel distances. Moreover, NGO 7 admitted that there are not enough staff members to supervise the large number of activities in the field and to interact with community members on a regular basis. There is also a high turnover ratio among community volunteers (personal communication, July 27, 2011). The low literacy levels of adult community members further contributes to the lack of human resources. Furthermore, due to lack of funding as well as inadequate donor expectations, which is mentioned in the Donor Expectations section below, the NGOs are not able to provide the *whole development package*, which includes material resources in addition to awareness, sensitization, and outreach activities. NGO 1 explained, “We are creating an awareness, the demand is there, but no [material resources] are available” (personal communication, July 12, 2011, 16:05). These material resources include medicine, soap, bed nets, HIV/AIDS test kits, condoms, etc. Material resources complement awareness efforts and create a whole development package. Based on the lack of material resources, NGO 13 observed, “Some people think you are not helping them.... [They] lose trust in NGO” (personal communication, July 27, 2011, 6:55). Donors and the NGOs often expect that the local or national government will provide these material resources in conjunction with the NGOs’ awareness efforts. But, the government often does not have the resources to provide these items, which only further exacerbates the issue.

Dependency Syndrome

Six NGOs referred to the *dependency syndrome* of poor and vulnerable community members as a challenge to their development work. The dependency syndrome simply means

that community members often prefer to receive handouts rather than participate in the development programs the NGOs offer. NGO 4 accredited this syndrome to the fact that the Phalombe and Mulanje districts are disaster prone leading to the implementation of many relief programs over the past years. Community members do not understand the difference between relief and development work. The relief programs as well as the handout efforts of other nonprofit organizations in the past have instilled a dependency mindset among the poor and vulnerable in the Phalombe and Mulanje districts (personal communication, July 26, 2011). NGO 5 emphasized that many of the NGOs are slowly changing the dependency mindset through livelihood interventions, but explained that, “Most of our beneficiaries turn up on the first day and when they see that there is no money or food to be handed over immediately, they resolve to work in the tea estates where they get payment every fortnight” (personal communication, July 19, 2011, 1:10:58). Several of the NGOs therefore provide small allowances to community members in order to retain them for a particular intervention, which, although needed, under certain circumstances can lead to the *allowance syndrome*.

Several of the NGOs also refer to the dependency syndrome as the allowance syndrome. Some of the NGOs provide allowances to volunteers for the reason previously stated as well as in lieu of a salary due to the lack of financial resources, while other NGOs do not provide any form of allowances. Several of the NGOs viewed allowances as a way to assist their volunteers whereas several of the NGOs such as NGO 12 disapproved of allowances due to the fact that the local government does not provide allowances for their development work and therefore neither should the NGOs (personal communication, July 27, 2011). NGO 6 also criticized allowances because allowances demean the sustainability of a project. NGO 6 explained that incentives attract community members who under normal circumstances would not participate in a project.

The only reason those members participate is due to the incentive the NGO is offering not because of the sustainability that the project offers to the community. Those community members will no longer participate once an NGO has left an area (personal communication, July 19, 2011). Moreover, allowance rates vary greatly among the NGOs. NGO 11 claimed that community members as well as local government workers compare the allowance rates of the different NGOs prior to choosing which NGO to work with (personal communication, July 26, 2011).

Differing Approaches to Development Work

The decision of whether or not to provide allowances illustrates the fact that the NGOs have differing approaches to development work. Although this challenge can be viewed as an internal challenge, this thesis project considers it to be an external challenge due to the fact that the NGOs conflict and do not collaborate externally with one another on the issue. Seven of the 15 NGOs stated that differing approaches among not only the NGOs, but also governments and donors negatively affects their development efforts. Although the amount of handouts has decreased significantly in the area, NGO 11 stated that the main challenge is that some of the NGOs continue to offer direct benefits in lieu of or in conjunction with utilizing the community development approach (personal communication, July 26, 2011). NGO 7 observed, “When we are working in the same area, you’ll find that people would prefer the NGOs that are giving them immediate needs other than strategic needs” (personal communication, July 27, 2011, 7:22). This issue relates to the challenge of illiteracy in that uneducated community members will concentrate on their direct needs rather than long-term needs. In addition, even though there is a district committee that assigns the NGOs to work in specific areas in order to avoid the overlap of activities, NGO 13 stated, “Different NGOs duplicate their [other NGOs] work; they don’t

inform each other of what they are doing” (personal communication, July 27, 2011, 8:45).

Communication and collaboration among the NGOs are crucial elements to addressing the differing approaches of the NGOs.

Duty Bearers

Although the Malawian government has been decentralized, which empowers community members to take part in the country’s development process through Area Development Committees and Village Development Committees, six of the NGOs reported that the lack of cooperation, partnership, and support received from duty bearers during the development process and subsequent to a project challenges their endeavor to provide sustainable and empowering development work. NGO 6 explained:

We are supposed to a large extent only do the facilitation. We help government sectors to ensure that they have the resources... so that they become more efficient, but if they are not cooperating it becomes difficult because by the end of the day we are forced to become implementers, but how long are we going to do the implementation? (personal communication, July 19, 2011)

Local government officials often require the NGOs to commit to providing allowances and material resources prior to submitting their cooperation during and subsequent to a project. Although the NGOs work to provide sustainability among community members, in order for development work to be truly sustainable, duty bearers must supervise a community and implement further development projects after the NGOs have left. The NGOs lack trust in the ability of duty bearers to do so. NGO 15 stated:

When [a NGO] is phasing out, what will be the next move? Because we actually came in upon noticing that the government is not reaching the whole community. Now we came

in and we have closed that gap and now if we happen to be moving out, we are going to create another gap and I don't think the government can fill that gap which is a great challenge to the communities. (personal communication, August 2, 2011, 13:14)

In addition, NGO 4 contended that duty bearers often bypass working in communities based on the assumption that if a NGO is working within a community there is no need for the duty bearer's assistance (personal communication, July 26, 2011). But, in reality the NGOs cannot tackle the complexities of poverty on their own and need assistance from duty bearers.

Moreover, NGO 7 expressed that, "When empowering people, usually duty bearers are not happy with [community members] who know their rights because it is difficult to twist their rights so that they [the duty bearers] can drive certain policies" (personal communication, July 27, 2011, 2:34). In an effort to alter duty bearers' mindsets on this issue, the NGOs portray empowered community members to duty bearers as allies rather than enemies who are able to assist duty bearers during the development process with ideas and skills. In this way the ownership of development is at both the district and community levels. But, duty bearers often still fear the NGOs' interventions (Multiple NGOs, personal communication, July/August 2011). NGO 2 pointed out, "The mentality of the duty bearers is that we are trying to investigate to find out faults on them, so it was a welcome idea but somehow it was a bit awkward. They were afraid of our interventions" (personal communication, July 12, 2011, 0:56). The NGOs therefore are required to educate not only community members regarding their development work, but also the local government.

Furthermore, rather than supporting the NGOs, duty bearers often interfere. NGO 14 shared that in an effort to create a sustainable food security project, the community with whom NGO 14 was working agreed to pay back the material resource that NGO 14 provided. During

the process a group of community members did not understand the development concept and complained to their duty bearers that the NGO was forcing them to pay back the resource. Rather than recognize the sustainable and empowering efforts of the NGO, the duty bearers dismissed the concept, told the community members they were not required to pay back the resource, and disciplined the NGO (personal communication, August 2, 2011). Low literacy rates created this issue, but the lack of cooperation, partnership, and support from duty bearers only negatively intensified the issue. Once more, communication and collaboration is key to overcoming this challenge.

Short-Term Projects Versus Long-Term Programs

Short-term projects restrict the NGOs to address specific needs and do not allow the NGOs to respond to the diverse needs of a community whereas long-term programs are broad in nature and allow the NGOs to address diverse needs over time. Although only three of the 15 NGOs explicitly expressed this issue as a challenge, the issue is directly related to the challenges of donor expectations, lack of cooperation from duty bearers, and illiteracy. Donors expect results in a short time period, but long-term, sustainable results are not easily achieved with short-term projects. In addition, NGO 5 expressed that exit strategies are often an issue. Short-term projects require an increased amount of handovers to duty bearers which has already been expressed as a challenge (personal communication, July 19, 2011). Moreover, NGO 6 cited an example of a community who at the commencement of a two year, short-term project were not willing to provide their contribution to the development project. Once the community noted the development that was occurring in a nearby community as a result of the same project, they were ready to contribute, but the project was already nearly over (personal communication, July 19, 2011). It is difficult to make an impact in a short time frame due to the low literacy levels of

communities. On the other hand, although long-term programs appear to better benefit communities, short-term projects are still needed, but can be enhanced through collaborative efforts of NGOs as discussed in the Collaborative Partnerships section.

Donor Expectations

Three of the NGOs stated that donor expectations hinder their development work. This challenge coincides with the challenge of differing approaches to development work, but is attributed to donors rather than the NGOs. Donors and the NGOs often conflict on their approach to development work. NGO 9 acknowledged that there are often disagreements between donors and the NGOs on the NGOs' project facilitation efforts (personal communication, July 22, 2011). In addition, NGO 4 stated that on occasion donors request the NGOs to complete specific projects that conflict with the projects of other NGOs working in the same area (personal communication, July 26, 2011). Moreover, this challenge overlaps with the challenge of short-term projects versus long-term programs. NGO 6 reported that donors advertise in specific areas for project proposals from the NGOs. Each project proposal is accompanied by a time frame of typically two to three years, but no more than five years. Although in their proposals, the NGOs often communicate that a longer timeframe is required for the project, donors insist upon a short time frame with the expectation of quick results (personal communication, July 19, 2011).

HIV/AIDS

Similar to the remainder of the country, the Phalombe and Mulanje districts suffer from a high prevalence of HIV/AIDS (Multiple NGOs, personal communication, July/August, 2011). The HIV/AIDS prevalence rate among adults in Malawi is 11 percent; the ninth highest prevalence rate in the world. Roughly 920,000 Malawians live with HIV/AIDS. Approximately 51,000 adults and children in Malawi died from AIDS in 2009 (CIA World Factbook). Four of

the NGOs stated that the high incidence of HIV/AIDS greatly impacts their development work negatively because HIV/AIDS is a *cross-cutting* issue. NGO 6 explained:

A project that is holistic, tackling different components in as far as life is concerned— issues to do with agriculture, issues to do with natural resources management, issues to do with income generations—it [HIV/AIDS] is cross cutting because we know that HIV/AIDS has a bearing on everything that a person is doing. (personal communication, July 19, 2011, 12:30)

In general, HIV/AIDS results in low productivity in all areas of life in Malawi; development work is not an exception. NGO 3 stressed that Malawi cannot be a productive country at this time because there are too many people living with HIV/AIDS (personal communication, July 12, 2011). It is not only those community members with HIV/AIDS that present a challenge, but also those who act as their caregivers. NGO 7 explained:

As you are working with people, you expect people that are energetic; that will have all their heart and soul and body together in that project. But you will find that a lot of people that we are working with have a patient at home to look after. Because most of the people we work with are women, they have divided minds. In that way it becomes difficult to fully empower them because they have something to attend to. (personal communication, July 27, 2011, 4:43)

Rather than relinquish their work due to the high prevalence of HIV/AIDS, the NGOs instead meet only the immediate needs of those community members with HIV/AIDS and their caregivers, thus forfeiting those development efforts that contribute to sustainability and empowerment.

Climate Change

Five of the NGOs agreed that climate change detrimentally affects their development work. NGO 12 stated that in addition to the fact that the Mulanje mountain range stretches between the Phalombe and Mulanje districts, thus forming a natural disaster prone area, the weather is not as reliable as it has been in the past resulting in an increased incidence of natural disasters, flash floods, and mud slides in the area (personal communication, July, 27, 2011). NGO 4 cited that warmer temperatures yield increased amounts of mosquitoes as well as a reduction in rainfall (personal communication, July 26, 2011). NGO 11 noted that the rainfall is much more erratic with climate change (personal communication, July 26, 2011). Due to the fact that a majority of Malawian's inhabitants depend on rain-fed agriculture, climate change greatly impacts sustainable and empowering development work. NGO 14 explained:

You might have a very ambitious plan with the communities to support them, but then it's either you have too little rains or too much rains so all your efforts are down the drain and the impact is nowhere to be seen. You can have two or three successful farming seasons, but then the other season [is bad] and that takes back the communities to where they were years ago. (personal communication, August 2, 2011, 2:10)

Similar to the challenge of HIV/AIDS, rather than surrender to the climate, NGO 12 pointed out that during a drought the NGOs must focus on hunger through the direct provision of food (personal communication, July, 27, 2011). This activity supersedes the NGOs' sustainable and empowering food security efforts.

Recommendation Platform

The recommendation platform for this thesis project includes five recommendations intended to address the challenges expressed by the NGOs. The fight against poverty by the

NGOs and their struggle to provide sustainable and empowering development work are complex issues affected by many circumstances beyond their control. This recommendation platform is not meant to be exhaustive, but rather it is meant to produce an awareness of shared challenges and to create a foundation for dialog among the NGOs. This author views the five recommendations cited below as the most critical based on the current challenges stated by the NGOs. Although this thesis project does not address each individual challenge in depth, the recommendation platform broadly address aspects of each challenge. In order to attend to the challenges in their endeavor to provide sustainable and empowering development work, the NGOs should establish new or enhance existing adult literacy programs, advocate for increased donor education, increase child participation, incorporate social entrepreneurship, and increase collaborative partnership efforts (see Table 1 for the list of recommendations and the challenges addressed by each recommendation).

Table 1

NGO Challenges Addressed by Recommendation Platform

Recommendation	(1) Adult Literacy Programs	(2) Donor Education	(3) Child Participation	(4) Social Entrepreneurship	(5) Collaborative Partnerships
Challenges Addressed*	Adult Illiteracy Lack of Resources Dependency Syndrome HIV/AIDS	Lack of Resources Short-Term projects versus Long-Term Programs Donor Expectations Climate Change	Adult Illiteracy Lack of Resources Dependency Syndrome	Lack of Resources Dependency Syndrome Donor Expectations	All*

* Comprehensive List of Challenges: Adult Illiteracy, Lack of Resources, Dependency Syndrome, Differing Approaches to Development Work, Duty Bearers, Short-Term Projects versus Long-Term Programs, Donor Expectations, HIV/AIDS, Climate Change

Adult Literacy Programs

The UNESCO World Report (1991 & 1995) as cited in Jogwu (2010) illustrated that developed countries such as the United States and Japan have a high level of literacy whereas the highest percentage of illiterate adults in the world inhabit Africa and Asia; continents that encompass a majority of the underdeveloped nations in the world. Jogwu argued that, at its source, the problem of underdevelopment in the countries of Africa can largely be attributed to a high percentage of adult illiteracy. The challenge of adult illiteracy does not only exist in the Phalombe and Mulanje districts of southern Malawi, but is a challenge to the development of the entire continent of Africa. Jogwu further asserted that if significant attention is placed on decreasing the incidence of adult illiteracy, underdeveloped African countries will become developed countries. Education is one of the many valuable tools in the fight against poverty. Discussion regarding education in developing countries is often focused on children, but it should apply to adults as well. Adult illiteracy is undervalued and lacks the appropriate resources for proper and effective development (UNESCO, 2008 & Archer, 2004). Jogwu asserted:

It is not enough to invest in the education of children as the leaders of the future. We need also to focus on the education of illiterate adults who constitute the bulk of leaders of today, and who make critical decisions and choices on the development of the future.
(p. 492)

Although 45.1 percent of the Malawian population is under the age of 14 (CIA World Factbook) and children are our future, adults are our present. Low adult literacy levels must be addressed now for the productive future of developing countries such as Malawi.

Therefore, it is recommended that the NGOs establish adult literacy programs or reevaluate and enhance their current adult literacy programs. This recommendation addresses the challenges of adult illiteracy, lack of resources, the dependency syndrome, and HIV/AIDS. This section of this thesis project will mainly address the challenge of adult illiteracy. Regarding the lack of resources, with increased literacy, adult community members will become an asset to the NGOs by increasing the availability of constructive human resources. Regarding HIV/AIDS, although increased adult literacy will not directly decrease the loss of human resources due to HIV/AIDS in daily development work, increased adult knowledge of HIV/AIDS can alleviate the burden on the NGOs as the primary source of spreading awareness about HIV/AIDS. The task can be shared between the NGOs and educated adult community members. The dependency syndrome will be discussed below. Although rural based NGOs should be aware of adult education initiatives occurring at national and international levels, such as those by UNESCO, as well as arguments between national governments and international organizations that hinder the progress of such initiatives (Omolewa, 2008), this thesis project will focus on ground level and context specific recommendations. Adult literacy programs must balance quality with quantity, address specific literacies, take into account the psychosocial needs of adult learners, and recognize the importance of *family literacy*.

Quality and quantity.

While the increased quantity of adult literacy programs is required to address the challenge of adult illiteracy, quality must be the main focus. Literature illustrated that there is a

growing awareness that adult literacy programs need to develop beyond the teaching of mere reading, writing, and arithmetic. McDonald and Jones (2009) explained that *functional literacy*—literacy focused strictly on future employment—is being overridden by the *socially constituted contextual approach*—literacy focused on everyday life. Moreover, Tagoe (2008) declared that adult literacy classes must be centered not only on one’s own personal development and empowerment, but also on the development and empowerment of the entire community. UNESCO (1997) as cited in Omolewa (2008) stated, “‘Literacy’ ... ‘must be relevant to pupils’ socio-economic and cultural contexts’ enabling ‘individuals to function effectively in their societies and to fashion and shape them’” (p. 705). For instance, the Nkosinathi Literacy Project in the Kwazulu Natal province of South Africa focused on many aspects of quality. Evans (2008) asserted that the project has been successful due to the fact that the development agent used a participatory approach whereby allowing adult learners to be part of the development process for the literacy project, avoided dependency by acknowledging that the adult program members would eventually take over the project, took into account socio-cultural factors when handing over the project to an indigenous facilitator, and based the learning material on the everyday life experiences of the adult learners. Although several of these factors are self explanatory, the NGOs should not dismiss the factors as arbitrary recommendations and should take each into account in the development or reevaluation of adult literacy programs.

Specific literacies and psychosocial needs.

Jogwu (2010) cited that low attendance rates of adult education programs can be attributed to the fact that instructors teach lessons that are incompatible in relation to daily life. Sibiya and Van Rooyen (2005) argued that for adult literacy programs to be successful and to decrease drop-out rates, educators must understand what motivates adult learners to attend adult

literacy classes—social motives, vocational motives, education of children, etc. Once these motives are understood educators must tailor the classes to suit those real world needs. One NGO in southern Malawi centers its existing adult literacy classes on current development issues within the community. In terms of specific literacies, this form of instruction can be termed community development literacy. In regard to the challenge of the dependency syndrome, community development literacy can decrease the dependency syndrome if adults are educated regarding the difference between short-term relief work and long-term development work.

Moreover, Jogwu (2010) cited that high dropout rates of adult education programs can be attributed to the adult student's long travel distances on foot as well as daily family tasks, stresses, and obligations. Therefore, adult learners' psychosocial needs and literacy needs cannot be separated (McDonald & Jones, 2009). McDonald and Jones pointed out the added value of an on-staff clinical social worker who addressed the personal and emotional needs of adult learners participating in an adult literacy program, thereby alleviating this pressure from teachers not trained to manage psychosocial needs and allowing the teachers to focus on instruction. On the other hand, Terry (2006) insisted that to achieve success among adult learners, strong positive relationships must be formed between students and teachers. Terry recommended that adult literacy program educators be trained to provide emotional support alongside that of teaching. It is understood that educators for current adult literacy programs established and operated by the NGOs in southern Malawi are unpaid volunteers or are volunteers who receive a minimal allowance. Therefore it is more than likely not financially feasible for the NGOs to hire a paid clinical social worker, but it would be beneficial to look into the option of having a volunteer social worker/counselor on board and/or training teachers to counsel their adult students. Regardless of whether a teacher and/or social worker responds to the psychosocial needs of adult

students, the most important issue for the NGOs to tackle is the fact that adult students have psychosocial needs that are not discarded upon entry into adult literacy classes.

Family literacy and home visits.

As previously mentioned many people associate adult literacy with merely teaching adults to read and to write. However, Lyster, Desmond, Thornton, Thornton, and Dlamini (2007) cited that the Family Literacy Project (FLP), an NGO that operates in rural areas of the KwaZulu-Natal province in South Africa, argues that adult literacy should also require that adults be taught the importance of an education for their children as well as the significance of their role in that educational process. NGO 14 mentioned, “It takes parents accepting responsibility over the education of their children so that they can send their children to school” (personal communication, August 2, 2011, 0:40). In addition, Wessels and Knoetze (2006) cited a family literacy program, the Academic Literacy Research Unit, which facilitates family literacy workshops in existing school libraries in the Tshwane province of South Africa and also focuses on the importance of the role of adults in a child’s education in order to reduce future illiteracy rates. Jogwu (2010) explained that literate adults are more likely to allow and urge their children to attend school, thus reducing adult illiteracy of future generations. In addition, literate adults will be empowered to elect upright leaders who will, among other things, strive for an improved formal and non-formal—adult—educational system.

Lyster et al. (2007) described the FLP as a *family literacy* program. Family literacy programs focus not only on adult literacy, but also on holistic literacy training for the entire family and can include children only, adults only, or children and adults together. The FLP stresses that adults are the primary educators of children and highlights the importance of a family’s involvement in a child’s education alongside that of educators. The FLP observed that

as the literacy level of adult participants increased, the participants were more frequently involved with their children's schoolwork and were better equipped to contribute to community meetings. The FLP operates several community libraries and conducts home visits. The FLP utilizes school libraries for group meetings and for the dissemination of information. Members already part of the FLP extend the project's reach into the community by visiting the homes of those families not already involved in the project. The visiting member's aim is to increase knowledge regarding a parent's or guardian's role in the early development of children and to promote messaging regarding health issues of the area. Home visits are essential for the dissemination of information and assistance in southern Malawi. For example, health surveillance workers employed by district hospitals or rural health clinics conduct home visits to increase awareness of best health practices. In addition, community based organizations conduct home visits to those in need such as the sick and elderly. Therefore, it is recommended that the NGOs facilitate family literacy home visits as part of their adult literacy initiatives.

Through the Childhood Study, in order to better understand children's interactions with members of their community, the participants were asked to describe the role(s) that families, teachers, church members, friends, and neighbors play in a child's life. Nearly all participants replied that children rely on their family solely for provision of material needs such as basic necessities and tuition assistance. The students reported that teachers impart knowledge, but also meet children's social and emotional needs with their encouragement toward the students to work diligently. Nearly all participants responded that children rely on friends for emotional support, spiritual knowledge, educational support (i.e. homework), and social needs. Although a more in depth study must be conducted to substantiate these findings, the initial results reveal that children in the regional focus area of this thesis project do not rely on adult family members

for educational assistance, but rather on teachers and friends. Therefore, in addition to family literacy home visits, it is recommended that the NGOs incorporate family literacy programs similar to the FLP or Academic Literacy Research Unit into their overall development strategy.

Donor Education

Donors are changing. This thesis project focuses on donors from the Global North. The greater population of current donors now evaluates nonprofit organizations based on organizational efficiency and program outcomes prior to making a donation whereas donors used to donate to nonprofits in the past without this information (Williams, 2007). Current donor education is therefore focused on assisting donors to craft informed decisions in order for a donor to know that his/her contribution will not be misspent on unnecessary administrative tasks or unsustainable development programs. Although this form of donor education is worthwhile, the NGOs must take donor education one step further. Wilson (2010) declared, “Attempting to rectify injustices such as global poverty... are hindered significantly by a *lack of awareness* [emphasis added] and motivation to act amongst populations in developed countries” (p. 276). NGOs must educate donors that in this globalization era a donor’s local actions directly affect the poor and vulnerable he/she desires to assist globally. To illustrate this point consider this thesis project’s theoretical example of John Smith who resides in the Global North. John received a bonus in the amount of 100 dollars. John contributed 10 dollars of his bonus to an NGO working in the Democratic Republic of the Congo that provides medical supplies to women and children displaced by the current conflict in the area. The following day John purchased a cell phone with the remaining 90 dollars of his bonus. At the time John had no knowledge that his new cell phone contained mineral resources such as tin ore, tantalite, and tungsten that were extracted from the Democratic Republic of the Congo nor does John know

that the sale of these mineral resources funded the armed groups that commit atrocities against the displaced women and children that John wanted to assist with his 10 dollar donation. The NGOs' concentration on obtaining and retaining new donors like John must be complemented with donor education focused on combating the Global North's *knowledge poverty*—lack of awareness that their lifestyle choices and actions affect those in the Global South and fuel the cycle of poverty. The NGOs must focus on what John Smith did with the remaining 90 dollars of his bonus in order for John's 10 dollar donation to be sustainable.

Although short-term donor project guidelines and timeframes do not entirely empower communities and do not facilitate sustainable development in southern Malawi, it is extremely difficult for the NGOs to refuse any form of donor funding. Therefore, donor education on local/global issues such as climate change, mineral resource conflict, etc. must be the foundation of donor education. In providing this educational underpinning, the NGOs will equip donors with an advanced thought process that will then allow the NGOs to address the challenges and negative side effects associated with the lack of resources, short-term project funding, unattainable donor expectations, and climate change. Due to the fact that the NGOs manage on-the-ground community development work and do not directly contribute to fundraising efforts or donor development, it is recommended that the NGO offices advocate to those entities within their organization in charge of donor development for increased donor education. The NGOs must expand advocacy efforts, educate donors such as John Smith through appropriate mediums (i.e., the internet) during a potential donor's information gathering and deliberation phase prior to giving, and integrate interactive donor education models into their overall development strategy.

Once more, donors are transforming. Rather than simply making a donation based on emotion, donors now demand more from nonprofit organizations through volunteer activities and

campaign efforts in order to “see the impact” and “become ‘involved’ and ‘engaged’” (Lawson & Ruderham, 2009, p. 379). Therefore, rather than merely soliciting donations, nonprofit organizations are taking the steps to invite the public to partner with them. For example, nonprofit organizations are asking donors to become supporters through advocacy efforts such as sending a persuasive email message to a state representative or congress member on a matter of social justice in order to bring about systemic change. These persuasive email messages are preformatted in order for donors to read about the issue and then simply click the “Send This Message Now” button. In addition to giving a voice to the poor and vulnerable, campaign and advocacy efforts such as these can increase donor education. But, does donor awareness increase? Do a majority of donors and supporters in the Global North take the time to read campaign information regarding the mineral conflict in the DRC or the HIV/AIDS pandemic in Malawi? Or do donors and supporters simply click the “Send This Message Now” button to send the email message? The assumed complacency of the latter option will have a negative impact on the future of advocacy efforts in the Global North and does not promote donor education. The NGOs should realize the downside of campaigning and advocating in this way and should go one step further with enhanced donor education. The NGOs must take advantage of these advocacy efforts to educate donors and supporters as to how their daily lifestyle contributes to the voicelessness and continuing state of poverty of those in the Global South.

In addition to enhancing advocacy efforts once a donor or supporter is on board, the NGOs must take advantage of the fact that a majority of donors now take the time to seek information about nonprofit organizations and that donors discern their contribution before making a donation. It is within this timeframe that the NGOs can educate potential donors on the outcome of the NGOs’ development programs and overhead percentage, but also work to

decrease knowledge poverty. Many potential donors now utilize internet sites such as Charity Navigator or GuideStar to make informed giving decisions (Kim, 2010). The NGOs should strive to partner with online charity rating organizations to post information to educate donors. In addition the NGOs should display this information more prominently on their own website pages that potential donors actively browse.

Furthermore, it is recommended that the NGOs facilitate an interactive donor education model through direct experience efforts and/or *participatory theater*. Wilson (2010) contended that nonprofit organizations must utilize creative and innovative public education campaigns in order to change mindsets. The assumption is that a change in mindset will lead to a change in behavior. In order to alter mindsets, Wilson suggested the use of participatory theater that allows people to encounter the reality—at least partial reality—of injustices committed in the world. Although further research must be completed to determine the usefulness of participatory theater, initial results show that “... active participation and simulated experiences inviting or requiring individual response would also be effective tools in promoting active global citizenship on issues of injustices” (Wilson, 2010, p.277). Traditional awareness methods practiced by nonprofit organizations are one-way in nature whereas non-traditional methods are two-way and participatory in nature. Several of the NGOs currently use *interactive community theater* in order to sensitize rural residents regarding rights, health, and development based issues. Just as interactive community theater is used on the ground to educate indigenous community members, participatory theater should be utilized in the Global North to educate donors. Haigh (2006) insisted that nonprofit organizations have the option to collaborate with volunteer organizations and higher education learning facilities in order to offer donors and supporters practical experiences through volunteer work and assistance with nonprofit research efforts. Through

efforts such as these, Haigh found that those who participated were not only educated, but also went onto share their findings with those around them. NGO 2 noted that it would be beneficial for donors to visit development sites in order to increase donor education (personal communication, July 12, 2011). Traveling to a third world country is not an option or a desire for many due to health and/or financial issues. Therefore, experiential awareness methods, such as participatory theater, should be part of the solution to alleviating the Global North's knowledge poverty.

Through educational efforts mutual development is no longer a two-way process between facilitator (development practitioner/NGO) and receiver (the poor and vulnerable), but rather a three-way process between giver (the donor), facilitator, and receiver. As previously stated, a sizable portion of the NGOs' work in southern Malawi is focused on the sensitization of communities, but should focus on donor sensitization as well. Donors in the Global North must understand that their actions toward social justice cannot end with campaigning efforts to local government officials and educated donations to suitable nonprofit organizations, but donors must comprehend that their lifestyle choices impact the poor and vulnerable to a greater degree than their dollars or campaign efforts. Without addressing the Global North's knowledge poverty, the NGOs efforts in the Global South will not be truly sustainable in the long-term.

Child Participation

Reddy and Ratna (2002) contended that child participation is a rising concept—one that requires altered thinking from both adults and children. The common belief among adults and children that an adult has the right to make decisions for and on a child's behalf must be changed. In addition, Feeny and Boyden (2003) argued that the 19th century view of children as merely beings focused on play, as passive recipients of needs from adults, and as inept

contributors to society must be disregarded. Moreover, Hart (1992) asserted that even though children's competency levels may be slightly lower than that of adults, it does not mean that adults have the right to invalidate children's thoughts. Furthermore, James and Prout (1997) as cited in Feeny and Boyden stated, "... research shows that children are far more capable than once thought, with the cognitive, social and economic competencies to actively shape their own development and also to influence the development of the wider society" (p. 1). Based on the Convention on the Rights of the Child, Reddy and Ratna pointed out, "... that children have a right to determine the nature and quality of all protection and provision that they have a right to" (p. 6). Reddy and Ratna went on to state that for children, participation within their families and communities means that children can campaign for and produce change in their own lives. In the context of this thesis project, the concept of child participation is recommended not only among the children's families and communities, but also within the NGOs, which currently does not occur.

In the Childhood Study, the adult community members and students mentioned, among other characteristics, mental capacity and the level of involvement in community development activities as the differentiating factors between childhood and adulthood. A majority of participants responded that children are perceived to have a low mental capacity whereas adults are perceived to have a high mental capacity. This response correlates with the fact that several adult community members and students noted that adults are allowed to take part in community development activities whereas children are generally not. One student responded that childhood is hard because children are not allowed to participate in family and/or community decision making processes. Although several students stated that they feel included in their community when they are allowed to participate in development activities, these activities are often non-

significant tasks such as a part in a play or drama during a community assembly. One adult community member replied that children are allowed to participate in community projects such as the construction a school classroom. But rather than children being allowed to take part in the decision making process to build the classroom, the adult community member stated that children are merely invited to collect sand for the foundation of the building. Furthermore, several of the students stated that adults view children as important for the future of their community and country once they receive an education and become an adult, but that adults do not consider children to be mentally capable of participating in community development projects. Although active child participation may occur beyond this author's personal observations, the initial results reveal that children in the regional focus of this thesis project are often not invited to participate in significant aspects of community development projects due to their perceived limited mental capacity. As previously stated a more in-depth study must be conducted to substantiate these findings.

As a result of this study and based on this author's personal observations, it is recommended that the NGOs increase child participation efforts within community development activities. In addition to addressing the issues stated above, this recommendation also addresses the challenges of illiteracy, lack of resources, and the dependency syndrome. First, literate children can aid the NGOs working with uneducated adults to assist the adults to better understand development concepts, thereby increasing the pace at which development projects are completed. Next, although increased employment opportunities for paid program coordinators and program managers would be the ideal solution to address the lack of human resources, this challenge can also be addressed by allowing children to participate in community development activities, thus increasing the amount of human resources. Finally, as children participate in

community development efforts they are able to learn about the NGOs' philosophy that is directed against dependency regarding sustainable and empowering community development work. Child participation coupled with this learning process will decrease future occurrences of the dependency syndrome. In addition to child participation at the community level NGO 7 stated:

Increased child participation would be key if we are to claim that their voice is being heard. Other than just strengthening youth groups, the youth need to be included in strategic decision making positions at community level and other higher levels (e.g., district level). (personal communication, January 3, 2012)

There are a number of examples of child participation efforts currently in practice by nonprofit organizations around the world. Child participation projects are context specific. As a result, the remaining portion of this section does not focus on specific examples of child participation efforts, but rather focuses on overall concepts for the NGOs to be aware of in their efforts to increase child participation including adult and family responsibilities as well as the level of child involvement and collaboration.

Child participation efforts should not merely focus on children, but rather on children and adults alike. Hart (1992) pointed out that, "Children's participation does not mean supplanting adults" (p. 31). Nor does it mean, as Reddy and Ratna (2002) emphasized that adults are released from their duties toward children. Reddy and Ratna argued that as the participation of children increases, so does the responsibility of adults. It is important to note that child participation does not mean the participation of one child among several adults. Reddy and Ratna insisted that children, with the support of adults, should be given the opportunity to collaborate within a group of children in order to "... evolve an identity" (p. 8). Youth groups are key to the evolution

of identity, but as NGO 7 mentioned, youth clubs are only the beginning of a comprehensive child participation effort (personal communication, January 3, 2012).

There are several levels of child and adult interaction within the overall concept of child participation. Hart (1992) and Reddy and Ratna (2002) identified levels ranging from the decoration of children by adults such as children reciting poems or performing in plays at major events, to adult-initiated events in which adults allow children to partake in the decision making processes, to programs that children start and direct on their own accord, and finally to activities initiated and led cooperatively by adults and children. In addition to interactions with adult community members, the NGOs must also take children's interactions with their families into account. Hart (1992) pointed out that development practitioners should be aware that a child's empowerment through child participation may negatively influence a child's relationship with his/her family. The NGOs can discover this negative influence through visits to a child's home or through honest discussion with the child. It is in the NGOs best interest to allow an entire family to participate on an equal level in community development work. Moreover, due to the importance of adult interaction within child participation efforts, it is also recommended that the NGOs aim for child participation programs that are initiated and led collectively by adults and children.

There are many steps that must be taken prior to a child's engagement with adult members of their communities or at the district or national levels. O'Kane and Dolan (2008) recommended that development practitioners first create an enabling environment for children by sensitizing and empowering the entire community with regard to child participation. Next, rather than assuming the needs of children, development practitioners should consult with children in order to understand the issues that affect them and the issues that the children would prefer to

address. The NGOs should then plan and implement projects with full participation from children. In this process development practitioners should not only invite children to attend planning sessions, meetings, conferences, conventions, etc., but must also advise children that they will be asked to openly share their thoughts and viewpoints in front of adults. The NGOs must adequately prepare the children for these activities. Finally, development practitioners in conjunction with children must monitor and evaluate the projects as well as assess the impact of the children's participation upon the project's outcomes.

Social Entrepreneurship

Bornstein and Davis (2010) defined social entrepreneurship as, "... a process by which citizens build or transform institutions to advance solutions to social problems, such as poverty, illness, illiteracy, environmental destruction, human rights abuses and corruption, in order to make life better for many" (p. 1). To address the world's poverty, rather than rely solely on donor funding, institutions seek economic gains through self-generated business opportunities. Lynch and Walls (2009) explained that in the quest for profit, although business has contributed to much of the poverty that currently exists in the world, business has also contributed to a majority of the development seen in the world today and is "... the most potent force for turning things around" (p. 1). In addition to the fact that business is a rising and positive force in the fight against the world's problems, nonprofit organizations are exploring business opportunities as a source of program funding due to the fact that economists and development practitioners debate whether or not international aid is an adequate approach to development (Fowler, 2000). With the future of international aid in limbo and precarious donor funding during times of economic crisis, it is recommended that the NGOs diversify their funding sources by incorporating social entrepreneurship efforts into their overall development strategy.

While the NGOs are able to address the lack of human resources through increased child participation, through the incorporation of social entrepreneurship efforts the NGOs are able to address the lack of financial resources. In addition to addressing the challenge of lack of resources, this recommendation also addresses the challenge of donor expectations. Funds generated by the NGOs through social entrepreneurship efforts are free from donor's rules and expectations and can be utilized for any form of program funding as designated by the NGOs. Moreover, this recommendation addresses the challenge of the dependency syndrome not only among communities, but also among the NGOs. In order to empower community members, one of the primary goals of the NGOs is to increase livelihood intervention strategies and entrepreneurship capabilities among the poor and vulnerable (Multiple NGOs, personal communication, July/August, 2011). Through these efforts the goal is for increased sustainability in the region. Why not increase these capabilities internally? By integrating social entrepreneurship efforts into the NGOs' overall development strategies, the NGOs not only empower and strengthen long-term sustainability among the poor and vulnerable, but also among the NGOs themselves. The NGOs therefore become role models of independence for the poor and vulnerable with whom they are working. Although this thesis project does not attempt to propose a model social enterprise or suggest a tax structure for the NGOs as they begin to incorporate social entrepreneurship efforts into daily practice at field offices, this thesis project advises that such efforts demand much consideration and a mindset change from all levels within the NGOs. During the incorporation of social entrepreneurship efforts focused on an increased financial impact the NGOs must remain true to their mission, vision, and values by striving for an increased social impact and must find an adequate balance between donor funding and social entrepreneurship activities.

Fowler (2000) pointed out two forms of social entrepreneurship; *integrated* and *complementary*. Through integrated social entrepreneurship, business opportunities produce not only a revenue surplus that the NGOs can utilize for program funding, but also engender a direct social benefit. Fowler stated that integrated practices, "... create reinforcing horizontal, vertical, backward and/or forward linkages to produce additional development and economic benefits for both existing and a wider array of people" (2010, p. 645). For example, a NGO may own and operate a maize mill in order to produce an earned income for the startup of a new development program, but at the same time benefit community members—those currently working with the NGO as well as those not—by creating not only employment opportunities, but also skills training experiences. In addition, Fowler stated that nonprofit organizations can convert vocational training programs into integrated social entrepreneurship activities by allowing learners to produce actual work for a fee as part of their training. Fowler went on to state that *re-interpretation* is a subset of integrated social entrepreneurship that utilizes a nonprofit organization's existing programs to innovatively increase and create a variety of incomes and/or decrease expenses. On the other hand, through complementary social entrepreneurship, business ventures merely produce a revenue surplus without direct benefit to the community. Through complementary efforts the NGOs can increase their financial resources for program funding, which indirectly benefits communities.

Although this thesis project recommends social entrepreneurship primarily as a way to address the lack of financial resources, the NGOs must recognize that social change remains the foremost objective of social entrepreneurship. As social entrepreneurs, the NGOs must continue their daily efforts to address the root causes of poverty and advocate for systemic change as well as work innovatively to alter society's mindsets "... that the world's toughest problems can be

solved” (Bornstein & Davis, 2010, p.75). As previously mentioned, an altering of mindsets can be accomplished through donor education. Consequently, the goal of social entrepreneurship should be focused not only on the output—the economic gain—but also on the throughput—assisting the poor and vulnerable during the process as well as educating donors. It is recommended that the NGOs continue to rely on donor funding in order to diversify funding sources, but more so for donor education capabilities as well as concentrate on a combination of both integrated and complementary social entrepreneurship efforts with an emphasis on integrated efforts. Social entrepreneurship must not replace the NGOs’ current and future programs, practices, and fundraising efforts, but rather complement those efforts. Furthermore, social entrepreneurship efforts must support the NGOs’ missions, visions, and values so that the NGOs do not lose focus and experience mission drift.

Collaborative Partnerships

Brinkerhoff (2002) as cited in Mahanty, Yasmi, Guernier, Ukkerman, and Nass (2009) asserted that, “...Partnership encompasses mutual influence, with a careful balance between synergy and respective autonomy, which incorporates mutual respect, equal participation in decision-making, mutual accountability and transparency” (p. 860). Partnerships are distinctly collaborative, not merely coordination or cooperation efforts (Shaw, 2003; Byrne & Hansberry, 2007). Literature concerning non-profit, private sector, and public sector entities described the increased importance of collaboration and partnership between these entities in order to attain sustainable and empowering results in the fight against world poverty. Although it is crucial for the NGOs to thoroughly develop internal systems and processes in regard to community development, children’s and women’s rights, access to education, etc., the NGOs act as a barrier to social change when they continue to work individually without collaboration and partnership.

The NGOs are unable to provide the whole development package to those community members whom they work with due to lack of collaborative partnerships. It is therefore recommended that just as the NGOs develop mutual relationships with those poor and vulnerable whom they work with, the NGOs must also form relationships, specifically collaborative partnerships, not only amongst themselves, but also with public sector entities. Although NGO 6 confirmed that they partnered with several NGOs for their current project (personal communication, July 19, 2011), an increased amount of collaborative partnerships, not mere cooperation, among more of the NGOs must occur. Moreover, the NGOs must enter into contractual partnerships with government entities from the very start of programs or projects rather than waiting until the end of a project to turn it over to the government. Shaw (2003) noted that, prior to providing funding, donor organizations often obligate nonprofit organizations to show proof of partnerships with government entities. To further collaborative efforts and receive increased funding, the NGOs must partner with government entities. This recommendation is the foundation for addressing all of the challenges stated by the NGOs. Without collaborative partnerships the NGOs will simply not be able to overcome any of the challenges. By utilizing partnerships the NGOs can directly address the challenges of lack of cooperation from duty bearers through working from start to finish on a project, differing approaches to development work through mutual understanding, and lack of resources through sharing of resources among partners. The last two challenges are further expanded upon within this section. To effectively establish collaborative partnerships the NGOs must first attend to the state of their existing Civil Society Organization followed by a process in which the NGOs can truly understand what is required for successful partnerships.

Civil society organization.

The NGOs are currently part of an existing Civil Society Organization (CSO). Non-governmental and governmental organizations established the CSO in order to expand networking opportunities through the communication of project plans, experiences, and best practices. NGO 7 remarked that the CSO is currently underutilized (personal communication, July 27, 2011). The CSO should therefore be strengthened. Once the organizations establish a stronger CSO, the NGOs will be able to discuss their differing approaches to community development work. For instance, the NGOs can either abolish allowances or establish a set rate for allowances to counteract the dependency/allowance syndrome. Shaw (2003) stated that for partnerships to be successful each organization must understand the other's views and opinions, but that each partner does not necessarily need to alter their own values in accordance with the other partner. Although it would be ideal for the NGOs to agree upon one approach, at minimum an understanding of the differing approaches is worthwhile and a positive step toward addressing this challenge.

Successful partnership characteristics.

Although non-profit, private sector, and public sector entities recognize the significance of collaboration and partnership, Batley and Rose (2011) as well as Mahanty et al. (2009) pointed out that collaboration and partnership are not easily attainable and that entities must allow ample time for the implementation and maintenance of partnerships. Shaw (2003) and Mahanty et al. emphasized that several factors must be taken into account prior to forming a partnership and diligently practiced once the partnership is formed. First, Wernet and Jones (1992) as cited in Shaw specified that each party must trust one another through a covenant relationship rather than a contractual relationship concentrated not on individual gains, but on

accomplishing a shared goal. Mahanty et al. stated that trust is formed between entities through honesty, the distribution of information, and the ability to rely on each other's strengths. Trust is formed through individual staff members working together across partnerships. Shaw emphasized that each partner must make the commitment to share any and all information pertinent to the collaborative partnership. Shaw further indicated that, "... successful partnerships ... were built not on negotiated agreements but on years of experience with partner agencies on the part of the individuals who actually worked together and had genuine affection for each other" (p. 118). Additionally, Mahanty et al. stated that informal connections are equally important to that of official arrangements between entities. It is critical for staff members working directly with one another from each entity to have formed a strong relationship and have the desire to work together.

Next, in order to achieve a shared goal each party must be flexible to deal with unforeseen circumstances. In addition, partnering entities must associate with one another as equals through balanced power relationships (Shaw, 2003) and equal contribution of time, ideas, and human resources (Mahanty et al., 2009) as well as financial resources (Mahanty et al.; Byrne & Hansberry, 2007). On the other hand, Batley and Rose (2011) suggested that nonprofit organizations remain financially independent of government entities during partnerships. Moreover, Shaw and Mahanty et al. stated that partnering entities must take the time to recognize and understand compatible missions. Furthermore, Shaw argued that top level staff must be entirely dedicated to the collaborative effort. Finally, Byrne and Hansberry (2007) asserted that each entity must be a successful and competent company in their own right outside of the partnership and that collaborative partnerships will be effective only when an organization's existing strengths are utilized and built upon.

It would highly benefit not only those NGOs working in the same areas of interest such as human rights, education, or healthcare to form collaborative partnerships within each segment, but it would also be valuable for the NGOs concentrating on different aspects of poverty to combine efforts across segments in order to work toward a more holistic response to poverty. One solution is not superior to the other and therefore multiple partnerships within and across segments are encouraged. It is also recommended that partnerships be ongoing rather than project specific in order to build empowering and sustainable partnerships. Through collaborative partnerships, the NGOs will be able to extend their reach and enhance their impact among the poor and vulnerable in the fight against poverty. A single NGO will not cure the world of its ills. To work individually is to work unsustainably.

Conclusion

Due to the complexity of poverty in the developing country of Malawi, the NGOs in the Phalombe and Mulanje districts face many external challenges in their daily endeavor to provide development work that is sustainable and empowering. The recommendation platform set forth in this thesis project addresses those challenges. The recommendations are meant to complement the NGOs' current efforts to address their struggles. Rather than select one or two recommendations, it is recommended that the NGOs put all five elements of the recommendation platform into practice in order to adequately address their challenges. The first step in the process is for the NGOs to recognize that many of their challenges are shared by their fellow NGOs. The most important next step is a discussion among the NGOs regarding their shared challenges as well as a collaborative effort to address those challenges. Without collaborative partnerships, the remainder of the recommendation platform will be ineffective. The recommendation platform of this thesis project is a starting point. Due to poverty's complex and ever-changing facets, the

NGOs will likely encounter varied challenges in the future and will need to collaboratively amend this thesis project's recommendation platform. It is the hope of this author that this thesis project will bring the NGOs' challenges to the forefront of discussion and that the NGOs will not only implement, but also build upon the recommendation platform set forth.

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Appendix A

Challenges of NGO Development Work Study Interview Questions

1. List the activities your NGO performs.
2. In relation to your development work activities, how would you define the term sustainability?
3. In relation to your development work activities, how would you define the term empowerment?
4. Based on your definitions of sustainability and empowerment, what are the challenges you face in trying to provide sustainable and empowering development work?

Appendix B

Childhood Study Questionnaire

Student Questionnaire

1. To me childhood is... [fill in the blank].
2. List 5 characteristics that make a person a child within your community.
3. Who are the children within your community?
4. To me adulthood is... [fill in the blank].
5. List 5 characteristics that make a person an adult within your community.
6. Who are the adults within your community?
7. My childhood ended when... [fill in the blank]or I became an adult when... [fill in the blank]or I still feel like a child because... [fill in the blank].
8. Childhood is hard because... [fill in the blank]or childhood is easy because... [fill in the blank].
9. As a child, adults in my community view/viewed me as... [fill in the blank].
10. As a child, I felt/feel included in my community when... [fill in the blank].
11. Children's rights (for example, you have the right to an education, a right to go to the hospital, a right to live in a safe environment free of harm, etc.) are protected by... [fill in the blank].
12. How does growing up as a boy or a girl affect your future? Is there a difference between boys and girls?
13. Describe the stages of growing up in your culture/community.

For the next few statements, think about the role that different members of your community played during your childhood as you developed from a baby to an adult. What interactions did

you have with these different members during your childhood as you got older? How have they contributed to your life?

14. During my childhood, my family... [fill in the blank].
15. During my childhood, my teachers/headmaster... [fill in the blank].
16. During my childhood, members of my church... [fill in the blank].
17. During my childhood, my friends... [fill in the blank].
18. During my childhood, my neighbors or other community members not already mentioned... [fill in the blank].

Adult questionnaire

1. Childhood is... [fill in the blank].
2. List 5 characteristics that make a person a child within your community.
3. Who are the children within your community?
4. Adulthood is... [fill in the blank].
5. List 5 characteristics that make a person an adult within your community.
6. Who are the adults within your community?
7. What kind of activities are children allowed to participate in within your community?
8. Children's rights (for example, the right to an education, the right to go to the hospital, the right to live in a safe environment free of harm, etc.) are protected by... [fill in the blank].
9. How does growing up as a boy or a girl affect a child's future? Is there a difference between boys and girls?

What is the responsibility of the following people in the child's life?

10. Family... [fill in the blank].

11. Teachers/headmasters... [fill in the blank].
12. Members of church... [fill in the blank].
13. Friends... [fill in the blank].
14. Neighbors or other community members not already mentioned above... [fill in the blank].

NGO questionnaire

1. What are children's rights?
2. Are children's rights universal?
3. Whose role is it to protect children?
4. How are children's rights enforced within southern Malawi? How can they be better enforced?
5. How are child offenders treated?

Appendix C

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Appendix D

Author's Personal Reflection

When I enrolled in the Master of Arts in International Care and Community Development (ICCD) program at Northwest University I assumed that a majority of nonprofit organizations in the world were operating against current community development knowledge due to the fact that poverty still existed in our world. I assumed that the work of nonprofit organizations would require a complete revamping and that I could create a model for the ideal nonprofit organizations. In September of 2009, Elias Makina and I cofounded the EKARI Foundation; a nonprofit organization originally formed to provide educational tuition assistance to poor and vulnerable students in the Phalombe district in the southern region of Malawi, Africa. At the time of the EKARI Foundation's inception, I assumed that education was the panacea to poverty, hence the start of our Sponsor a Student Program. The past two and a half years of combined personal fieldwork as well as studies and a practicum experience in the ICCD program have proven my thoughts about education as a panacea to poverty to be incorrect. I have learned that poverty is complex and ever changing and that a holistic approach is required in the fight against poverty. I also now recognize that because poverty is so complex, there cannot be a single model for the perfect nonprofit organization. Nonprofit organizations must constantly adapt in order to address poverty's complexity.

My research for this thesis project greatly impacted the future direction of the EKARI Foundation. Without the dialogue shared and knowledge gained during my interviews with the NGOs, I would have worked through the EKARI Foundation in an unsustainable and unempowering way. The recommendations provided in the Recommendation Platform section of this thesis project are directed not only toward the NGOs I interviewed, but also toward the

EKARI Foundation. It is essential that Elias and I follow the recommendations I set forth in this thesis project.

First and second, regarding social entrepreneurship and collaborative partnerships, when Elias and I cofounded the EKARI Foundation I naively assumed we could conquer the world's poverty on our own through providing education to the youth of southern Malawi. Shortly after the inception of the EKARI Foundation we realized the importance of business as an additional way to break the cycle of poverty. We are therefore in the process of creating an Income Generating Activity that will decrease our complete reliance on donor funding and establishing a Sustainable Livelihoods Program in order to provide small business opportunities to the family and community members of our students part of our Sponsor a Student Program. We recognize that education and business alone will not defeat poverty. But, education and business coupled with other forms of development work such as water, sanitation, health, food security, and advocacy programs provided by other NGOs in the area will overcome poverty. Consequently, we plan to form collaborative partnerships with the NGOs currently working in the Phalombe district.

Third, regarding adult literacy programs, prior to my time spent on the ground in southern Malawi I assumed that the focus on education for the youth—the future generation and future leaders of Malawi—was adequate. As I previously stated, I quickly recognized that children are our future, but adults are our present. Although the EKARI Foundation does not have the resources to start a complete adult literacy program of its own at this time, through our Sustainable Livelihoods Program our business trainers will provide business literacy training. We will also recommend that the adult family and community members in our programs attend adult literacy programs—if there are any—established within their communities.

Fourth, over the last six months I have begun to understand what child participation truly means. I assumed that I allowed our students to participate in the EKARI Foundation by soliciting their feedback on our programs and by including one student on the Malawian Board of Directors, but I now realize that my idea of child participation was essentially glorified *tokenism* or *assigned but informed* participation on Hart's Ladder (Hart, 1992). We plan to allow our students to form a youth group that will have a collective voice in future decision making processes for the EKARI Foundation as well as invite our students to participate in development activities within their communities as equals to that of adults.

Fifth, during my volunteer fundraising efforts for the poor and vulnerable in Africa over the past seven years through my church and through the EKARI Foundation, I focused solely on recruiting new donors and increasing donation amounts. I assumed that if each person in the Global North would assist one person in the Global South monetarily, our society would change the world by reducing poverty. But without an awareness of the global impact that a donor's local actions make, poverty will persist. I plan to make a concerted effort through our website and through face to face meetings to educate the EKARI Foundation donors that their actions here in the States can negatively affect our students and their family and community members in southern Malawi as well as those poor and vulnerable in the rest of the world.

With the knowledge gained through the ICCD program, the EKARI Foundation will now provide a unique approach to community development in the Phalombe district in the southern region of Malawi, Africa by working directly with the youth and their communities rather than focusing solely on one group or the other. On one end of the development spectrum, there are a small number of local NGOs in the area that focus solely on tuition assistance for students. The EKARI Foundation views that this practice places the burden of development on the youth. Once

a student earns his/her certificate or degree and gains employment the student is often expected to support his/her extended family. Youth who are empowered while their families/communities are not must take a step backward to support their extended families/communities rather than taking a step forward to support themselves and their future family. On the other end of the development spectrum, rather than focus directly on the youth with regard to education, several international and indigenous NGOs in the area concentrate on the development of the entire community through water, sanitation, and food security projects, etc. The NGOs view the direct provision of tuition assistance to youth as a handout—a detriment to community development—and prefer to empower entire communities so that one day the communities will be able to provide for the youth's education. The EKARI Foundation agrees with this concept and views the provision of tuition assistance unaccompanied by other community development projects as a handout, but also recognizes that the youth of today will be left behind in the challenging multiple year long process of empowering entire communities. Through our Sponsor a Student Program for the youth and our Sustainable Livelihoods Program for the youth's family and community members, the EKARI Foundation will empower family and community members alongside the youth enabling all the ability to move forward concurrently, thus sustainably assisting to break the cycle of poverty.