AN ASSESSMENT OF PUBLIC PARTICIPATION PROCESSES IN THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT LEVEL WITH SPECIFIC REFERENCE TO AGRICULTURAL PROGRAMMES IN NTCHEU DISTRICT, MALAWI

BY

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DECLARATION

This work ‘an assessment of public participation processes in the Local government of Malawi with specific reference to agricultural programmes in Ntcheu district, Malawi’, is my own work. This work has not been submitted previously in part, or in whole for the award of any degree. Each significant contribution and quotation has been indicated, acknowledged and referenced.

Signature: ___________________________ Date: 10 May 2012
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### ABBREVIATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Description</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ADC</td>
<td>Area Development Committee</td>
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<td>ADD</td>
<td>Agriculture Development Divisions</td>
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<td>ADMARC</td>
<td>Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation</td>
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<td>AEDC</td>
<td>Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator</td>
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<td>AEDO</td>
<td>Agriculture Extension Development Officer</td>
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<td>ASP</td>
<td>Area Stakeholder Panel</td>
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<td>DA</td>
<td>District Assembly</td>
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<tr>
<td>DADO</td>
<td>District Agriculture development Officer</td>
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<td>DAC</td>
<td>District agriculture Committee</td>
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<td>DAECC</td>
<td>District Agriculture Extension Coordination Committee</td>
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<td>DAESS</td>
<td>District Agriculture Extension Services System</td>
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<tr>
<td>DDC</td>
<td>District development Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>DC</td>
<td>District Commissioner</td>
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<td>DCC</td>
<td>District Consultative Committee</td>
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<td>DEC</td>
<td>District Executive Committee</td>
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<td>DFS</td>
<td>District Focus Strategy</td>
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<td>DPP</td>
<td>Democratic People’s Party</td>
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<td>DSP</td>
<td>District Stakeholder Panel</td>
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<td>EPA</td>
<td>Extension Planning Area</td>
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<td>FAO</td>
<td>Food and Agricultural Organization</td>
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<td>GDP</td>
<td>Gross Domestic Product</td>
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<td>IFAD</td>
<td>International Fund for Agriculture Development</td>
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<tr>
<td>LG</td>
<td>Local Government</td>
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<tr>
<td>MAFS</td>
<td>Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security</td>
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<tr>
<td>Acronym</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<td>MDGs</td>
<td>Millennium Development Goals</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEC</td>
<td>Malawi Electoral Commission</td>
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<tr>
<td>MP</td>
<td>Member of Parliament</td>
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<tr>
<td>NGOs</td>
<td>Non-Governmental Organisations</td>
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<tr>
<td>SADC</td>
<td>Southern Africa Development Community</td>
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<tr>
<td>VDC</td>
<td>Village Development Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>UDF</td>
<td>United Democratic Front</td>
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<tr>
<td>UN</td>
<td>United Nations</td>
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<td>UNDP</td>
<td>United Nations Development Programme</td>
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<td>UWC</td>
<td>University of Western Cape</td>
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ABSTRACT

Agriculture is the greatest source of economic development in Malawi. Due to decentralisation process the Ministry of Agriculture and Food security through the Department of Agriculture Extension Services sector established the New Agricultural Extension policy to create participatory processes for farmers needs to be addressed. Research has shown that the more people participate in developmental issues the more their needs are prioritised and addressed as long as participatory structures have a legal backing and are respected by government officials. In Malawi respect of constitution in terms of supporting the local government and district assemblies in particular is minimal such that the elections of local government councillors who are supposed to be local people’s representatives and voting officials in the assembly have been postponed until further notice. This raises questions as to whether farmers concerns are prioritised in the District Executive Committee which reports to the assembly.

This research was aimed at assessing participatory processes in the local government of Malawi to establish effectiveness of institutions established to promote participation in agricultural processes and the ability for such institutions to satisfy the farmers’ needs. Considering that Malawi is a vast country and Ntcheu district covers a big area, Njolomole Extension Planning Area was chosen as the case study among other seven Extension Planning Areas within the district. Both quantitative and qualitative methods were used to gather relevant information. Data collected was analysed and presented inform of figures, chart and tables and is based on objectives and emerging themes. The research has established that participatory structures in agricultural processes are not effective because most of the committees that could allow participation of farmers in planning and decision making at Area and District levels are not operating. Farmers are able to use village committees to raise their concerns and in that way some of their needs are somehow addressed. However, there are challenges in the Agriculture Department, which are affecting implementation of participatory structures.

Key words
Public, Participation, Public participation, Local government, Extension Planning Area, Decentralisation, Agricultural processes, District Assembly, Malawi, Ntcheu, Njolomole
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CHAPTER ONE

BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

This study was aimed at assessing participatory processes in the local government of Malawi in order to establish effectiveness of participatory processes in agriculture. Participatory approaches have been the focus recently in coordinating developmental activities as well as promoting democratic governance in most developing countries. The rationale behind using participatory approaches is that when people are involved in decision making of whatever projects or programme at hand they will actively take part in the implementation and that their needs will be addressed. Malawi has not been an exception from such approaches especially after the multiparty elections in 1993 and the election of the democratic government in 1994, in which the United Democratic Front under the leadership of President Dr. Bakili Muluzi won the election. This led to the establishment of a new Constitution based on principles of participatory democracy and rule of law, which was approved in 1995. It was later followed by the Local Government Act of 1998, which provides for the creation of District Assemblies (DA) and other committees at area, ward and village levels in order to involve the people in decision-making and development processes thereby promoting democratic principles.

Furthermore, the decentralization policy of 1998, which seeks to devolve the powers and functions of governance and development to elected Local Government Units, gives mandate to institutionalising participatory processes. This is meant to engage the citizens in decision making as well as development process among other objectives. Due to decentralisation, process in Malawi the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security changed its roles of coordination,
facilitation and regulation of different player’s activities at the local level (Chinsinga & Cabral, 2010). The New Agriculture Extension Policy was developed to empower farmers to demand quality services and to participate in decision-making at grassroots level (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security [MAFS], 2006:2). Therefore, the District Agricultural Extension Services System (DAESS) that is in line with the decentralization policy and the local government Act, was developed to implement the objectives of the New Agriculture Extension Policy (MAFS, 2006: vi). The DAESS provides for participatory structures in agricultural processes at the district level.

This research assessed participatory processes in the local government of Malawi to establish effectiveness of institutions established to promote participation in agricultural processes and the ability for such institutions to satisfy the grassroots needs. The question of to what extent is the farmers participating in decision-making and development process in terms of agricultural processes was addressed. Participatory processes in Agriculture at the district level operate through Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) and Sections. Considering that Malawi is a vast country and Ntcheu district covers a big area, Njolomole Extension Planning Area was chosen as the case study among other seven EPAs within the district (see map in Appendix A).

**The establishment of Local Government in Malawi**

The local government is operating in twenty-eight districts within four regions of Malawi and is administered by the Regional Administrators and District Commissioners who are appointed by the central government. The Local Government of Malawi is composed of the assembly having the District Administration (administrative wing) and District Council (Political wing) (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2007:170). The establishment of the Local Government in Malawi was facilitated by the decentralisation policy of 1998 “as the basis and framework for the devolution
of functions, responsibilities, powers and resources to District Assemblies” (Tambulasi & Kayuni, 2007:170). According to Chinsinga (2005:531), District assemblies are “decentralised political and administrative authorities with elected representatives of the people primarily entrusted with the task of democratizing state power and advancing participatory democracy and collective decision making at the grassroots”.

Tambulasi and Kayuni (2007:170) indicated that Malawi has four types of Assemblies, which includes district, city, town and municipal assembly. Ntcheu is one of the district assemblies among twenty-eight assemblies. According to Husein (2003:275), the assemblies became operational following the local polls held on 21 November 2000 and they operated until 2005. The next local elections scheduled for May 2005 and 2011 respectively never happened. However, the District Consultative Committees (DCCs) were recommended by the Ministry of Local Government to all districts in order to replace the District Assembly (Cammack et al., 2007:15). The DCC is composed of ex-officio members of the normal assembly like the Members of Parliaments, Chiefs, District Commissioner, NGOs representatives and heads of departments. However, this arrangement does not have legal backing.

**Background to participatory approaches in Malawi**

Participatory approaches were realised prior to 1994, when Malawi was under one party political system led by President Hastings Kamuzu Banda. This was done through promotion of community participation in socio-economic development (Husein, 2003:273). According to Husein (2003:273), in 1965, District Development Committees (DDCs) and other institutions were approved to provide for participatory planning. Husein (2003:274) indicated that DDCs and other institutions became operational from 1966 in order to promote the government development policies at the local level and to coordinate the various stages of decision-making
and project management. Participatory approaches were prevalent in the Integrated Rural and Regional Policy and Extension Policy, and the Social Mobilisation Policy that were aimed at promoting community involvement in self-help projects at the local level (Husein, 2003:274). Despite having these policies, participation of the grassroots was not effective during the Banda era, it was highly manipulated and the local people hardly had any role in the political arena (Husein, 2003:274).

In 1993, the District Focus Strategy (DFS) was adopted and changes were made to refresh participatory approaches at the local level through deconcentration (accountability of the central administrators to the central ministries [Ore, 2007:8]). Furthermore, the Area Development Committees (ADCs) and Village Development Committees (VDCs) were reorganised (Husein, 2006:373). The DFS focused on transferring decision-making authority to local government agencies and field structures such as DDCs, District Executive Committee, ADCs, Area Executive Committee and VDCs (Husein, 2003:274). The DFS was aimed at promoting community empowerment and to enhance capacities to mobilize resources required for community or local development. Therefore, the establishment of the new Constitution in 1995 consolidated the creation of government authorities to promote local democratic participation as one of its responsibilities (Husein, 2003:274). Chinsinga (2005:530) argues that the legalisation of participatory approaches is to build up local capacity and grassroots institutions and adequately institutionalise arenas of participation.

**Agricultural processes in Malawi**

Agriculture contributes to the overall economic growth of Malawi, about 40% of the GDP, accounts for more than 90% of export earnings, offers employment to more than 80% of the population and supplies over 90% of the food consumption in the country (MAFS, 2006:1). Prior
to 1993, agriculture development in Malawi flourished because Agricultural Development and Marketing Corporation (ADMARC), a parastatal organisation, dominated agricultural services. ADMARC had a role of supplying inputs and providing marketing and extension services to farmers (Chinsinga & Cabral, 2010). Due to political changes in the country, the role of ADMARC diminished and the public sector took over the control of agricultural processes in the country.

The establishment of the decentralisation process led to the changes in the operations in agriculture in order to bring planning and decision-making at the lower level. The New Extension Agriculture Policy was developed to devolve the powers and control to local farmers. Structures were established for individual farmers to find extension workers to request services and forums created to specify extension priorities and hold service to account for meeting farmers’ requests (Chinsinga & Cabral, 2010). Therefore, District Agriculture Development Offices (DADOs) were created in 28 districts of Malawi in order to make the district a focal point for planning and service delivery. DADOs were, further divided into 154 Extension Planning Areas (EPAs) and Sections. Agriculture Extension Development Executive Coordinator coordinates the EPAs and the Agriculture Extension Development Officer oversees the sections. The District Assemblies were established as legitimate centres of implementation of responsibilities for agriculture services at the local level, with the aim of improving efficiency, effectiveness and equity of development interventions, as well as promoting local participation and democracy (Chinsinga & Cabral, 2010).

At the district level, committees/forums were established to provide a platform for the various stakeholders to meet and discuss agricultural related issues at various levels in order to promote stakeholder participation. These are District Agricultural Committee (DAC), District
Agricultural Extension Coordination Committee (DAECC), and District Stakeholder Panel (DSP) and at the lower level is Area Stakeholder Panel (ASP) and Model Villages (MAFS, 2006:5). The duty to facilitate and establish such institutions rests in the hands of the District Agriculture Development Officer with the support from the District Commissioner (MAFS, 2006:5). According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2006:1), the District Assembly oversees agricultural extension service provision through the DAC. DSP reports directly to the DAC however, the DADO is supposed to brief the DEC regularly on the progress. Farmers’ demands are passed on to the DSP through ASP while other development issues are sent to the DA through ADC. According to Chinsinga and Cabral (2010), the sections are the main point of service delivery to farmers.

**General overview of the case study area**

Ntcheu district is in the southern end of central region of Malawi. It shares boundaries with Dedza district to the North, Mozambique to the North –West, Mwanza to the South, Balaka to the South-East and Mangochi to the North-East see appendix B (Government of Malawi, 2008:1). According to the Government of Malawi (2008:1), the area of the district is 3,424 square kilometers, representing 3.63% of the total land area of the country in terms of size. According to the 1998 census,Ntcheu has a population of 370,988 and it has been growing by and annual rate of 0.3%, which means that the growing rate is lower than the 1.9% for Malawi (Government of Malawi, 2008:11). The major tribes are Ngoni, Chewa and Yao, and the main language spoken is Chichewa. The district has nine traditional authorities and one sub-traditional authority and all these, are under one paramount chief Inkosi Gomani IV (Government of Malawi, 2008:11).

Ntcheu is one of the districts in which, about 89 percent of the population are subsistence
farmers mainly growing crops like Irish potatoes, beans, vegetables and maize especially in the uplands of Tsangano and Lizulu and tobacco and cotton in Bwanjevalley (Government of Malawi, 2008: vi). About 40 percent of the land is arable while the rest is mountainous and farming takes place in such areas. Ntcheu District Agricultural Office is under Lilongwe Agriculture Development Division (ADD) and the District Agriculture Development Officer is in charge and reports to the District Commissioner.

Ntcheu district has seven EPAs and these are; Njolomole with eight sections, Kandeu with 20 sections, Nsipe with 11 sections, Tsangano with 13 sections, Bilira with 19 sections, Manjawira with 16 sections and Sharpe valley with 15 sections (Government of Malawi, 2008:17). Due to time and cost limits, Njolomole EPA was chosen as the area of focus for this study. Its sections cover from Nkhande where there is Biriwiri section to Masasa section which boarders Dedza. Njolomole EPA is composed of three traditional authorities named Njolomole, Chankhumhira, and Masasa.

Njolomole EPA was one of the best areas to assess participation of farmers in decision making, planning and development processes to assess participatory processes in agriculture at Ntcheu district because the uplands of Tsangano and Lizulu (residence for majority of farmers) are within Njolomole EPA and the area was accessible to the researcher.

1.2 Statement of the problem

According to the Malawi Local Government Act of 1998, the assembly is meant to promote effective public participation in decision-making, planning and implementation of policy and developmental activities among other objectives. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2006) argues that the DA is a legitimate centre of implementation of responsibilities for
Agriculture services at the local level. In 2005, the local government elections were postponed and the district assemblies in Malawi have been administering their duties in the absence of local councilors since then. The local councilors are meant to represent the people in the Local Assembly where decisions are made and according to the Local Government Act (1998), they are voting members in the assembly from the political side at the local level. Furthermore, they are supposed to be involved in monitoring and provision of information to local communities about government decisions and actions and to the District Assembly about community priorities (Cammacket.al, 2007: 19).

In the absence of mandated local representatives, questions arise as to whether the institutions established for farmers to participate are achieving their intended purposes; how decisions are made without the mandated local people’s representatives and voting officials in the District Assembly; and who benefits from agricultural operations at the local government level. According to Msewa (2005:73) participation by representation is one of the processes that the public are seen to have participated in decision-making in the Local Assembly in Malawi. This process assumes that the chosen will represent the people’s views and in that way the people are said to have participated in the decision making process. Whether farmers’ views are considered in the absence of voting officials in Ntcheu District Assembly as required by legislature, is questionable. It was therefore important to find out what the government and the public have done to ensure accountability of public officials if legislation is not implemented accordingly.

1.3 Purpose of the study

This study was aimed at assessing participatory processes in Agriculture to establish effectiveness of participatory processes at the local government of Malawi in Ntcheu District.
1.4 Objectives of the study

In general, the study was aimed at determining whether public participation processes are effective in the local government of Malawi in Ntcheu district.

Specifically, the study sought to:

- Explore the theoretical framework on public participation in local government.
- Examine legal and policy framework on public participation in agricultural processes in the local government of Malawi.
- Explore public participation processes in Agriculture in Ntcheu district.
- Determine the impact of public participation processes in Agricultural processes in Ntcheu district.
- Identify challenges in implementing public participation in Agriculture in Ntcheu district.
- Suggest other ways of implementing public participation in Ntcheu district.

Research questions

To achieve the objectives, the study answered the following questions:

1. Under what theoretical basis is public participation in local government?

2. Does public participation in agricultural processes have any legal backing in Malawi?

3. What structures are available in Ntcheu district to ensure farmers participation in planning and implementation of agricultural processes?

4. How do farmers in Ntcheu perceive these structures?
5. What impact do these structures have on development of farmers in Ntcheu district?

6. What challenges do farmers and workers within the agricultural sector face within the district in order to implement participation processes?

7. What other ways can the department and the district employ to implement participation processes in the agricultural sector and other sectors within the district?

1.5 Significance of the study

Democratic principles of governance require the citizens or public to participate in all matters that affect their lives (Creighton, 2005:17). The pursuit of the research helped to establish whether structures/institutions established to promote public participation in agricultural activities are effective. The study will help Ntcheu district assembly to evaluate implementation of the legislation and be able to adjust where necessary. Public participation is important in that it helps the government to recognise the concerns of people (Chiweza, 2005:2), hence the results of the study will help the Government of Malawi to enhance service delivery and promote accountability of the public officials in the Agriculture Sector. In addition, the results will help local governments in Malawi to identify and clarify the implementation challenges of the public participation process because according to Brynard and De Conning (2006) implementation stage of programmes is usually faced with challenges. The study, will further add new knowledge to the public administration discipline in Malawi and the world.
1.6 Delimitation of the study

This study assessed participation of farmers in planning, decision-making and implementation of agriculture processes in Ntcheu district. It further considered the impact of operations at the district assembly in the absence of local councilors and its linkage to agricultural processes. The study would have covered all seven EPAs in the district to have a broader picture of experiences of farmers in different sections. Due to limited time and costs, Njolomole EPA was the case study and it provided a clear picture of participatory processes in agriculture since all EPAs follow similar participatory structures within the district.

Furthermore, the study would have selected several sectors at the local government level in order to compare public participation in all. This could have helped in assessing public participation at the local government as a whole. Agriculture was chosen due to its economic impact at district and national levels in Malawi.

1.7 Concept clarification

The research study used several concepts briefly clarified in this section and thoroughly explained in chapter two. The concepts include public, participation, decentralisation and local government.

Public

The concept of public for the purpose of this study is adopted from Brynard (1996:41) who defines it as the subjects of local government decisions. The public therefore, refers to all the people in local government area especially those at grassroots level because they are the most vulnerable and most negatively affected with decisions made in the assembly.
Participation

Participation can be defined as an activity undertaken by one or more individuals previously excluded from the decision making process in conjunction with one or more other individuals who were previously the supporters/leading in the process (Brynard, 1996: 41). Creighton (2005:9), views participation as a term used to describe public hearings on which the public comments on what an organisation proposes to do or reach an agreement with the public that will be affected by the decision. It is therefore important to consider participation as a dialogue, which involves the agency officials and the public. According to Brynard (1996:41) the process of participation requires resources to carry out decisions, available options and final choice otherwise it will be a conflict of interests and no achievement would be made. Participation could be divided in two main categories, which are, the mere receiving of information from authorities on proposed actions and sharing of power with citizens to shape the final decisions (Brynard, 1996:41).

Public Participation

Public participation can be defined by combining the concept public and participation. According to McLaverty (2002:4) it means involving the public or citizens in decision-making and development in order to foster democratic governance.

Decentralisation

Decentralisation is defined as distribution of power to local people at the local level of government. Samuels etal. (2009:1) quoting Walker (2002) define decentralisation as ‘the transfer of political power, decision-making capacity and resources from central to sub-national levels of government’. Chiweza (2005:2) use several concepts like deconcentration, devolution, delegation and privatization to define decentralisation and these are clarified in chapter two. The
proponents of decentralisation like the African governments and international institutions like the World Bank promoted this concept as a tool for good governance and the democratisation agenda (Ore, 2007:8). This concept was supported by the civil society and the community activist and the pro-poor activist who welcomed decentralisation as an agenda to promote participatory democracy because the power of decision making rest in the hands of the community ideally.

**Local government**

Local government is viewed as a sphere, which interacts most closely with the citizens through service delivery and can be more responsive and effective to local problems. According to Heymans and Totemeyer (1988:2) quoted by Geldenhuys (1996:16), local government is “decentralised representative institution with general and specific powers devolved in respect of and identified restricted geographical area within a state”. The combination of local and government can be viewed as the specific structure that provides certain public service and strong enough to provide local goods (Geldenhuys, 1996:17). The powers provided to local authorities may be either mandatory (must be done) or permissive (may be done).

**1.8 Outline of the research thesis**

**Chapter 1** introduced the overall content of the dissertation and justifies why the research took place. It further explained the background to the topic of interest.

**Chapter 2** is the literature review that explains the concepts that are used in the assessment process and the theoretical framework that the dissertation stems from.

**Chapter 3** discusses the research methodology employed to assess participatory processes at the government level in terms of participation in agriculture in Njolomole EPA and at the district
Chapter 4 analyses and discusses the findings presented in line with the research objectives and questions.

Chapter 5 constitutes conclusions and recommendations for future investigations.

1.9 Ethics

Before commencement of the research, permission was asked from the District Agriculture Development Office to conduct the study because she is the overseer of agricultural activities in the district. A letter of introduction from the University of the Western Cape was submitted. Confidentiality of information to be gathered was assured to every participant before any interview and discussion.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter has described the background of public participation in the local government and in agriculture programmes which stems from the decentralization process implemented in Malawi. The aims and significance of the research is highlighted to guide the research process and several concepts have been defined in this chapter and will be clarified in chapter two.
CHAPTER TWO
LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews literature based on different concepts that describe public participation in local government considering its benefits and challenges in attaining effective public participation in modern decentralised societies. The chapter discusses the conceptual framework to explain arguments underlying public participation. The concepts of public participation and decentralisation to be discussed provide the background of the importance of public participation, which promotes good governance and democratic principles. The chapter further highlights the theoretical basis of public participation because it provides an understanding of participatory processes and challenges in achieving effective participation. Theories of people-centered development, empowerment and capability will be discussed to provide theoretical arguments underlying public participation. General description of social, political and economic situation of Malawi is also provided in the chapter for the better understanding of participatory structures and its challenges. Legislative framework is discussed towards the end of the chapter in order to explain how public participation is legislated and supported in the constitution of the Republic of Malawi through the political rights, Local Government Act. Furthermore, the New Agriculture Extension Policy, which guides implementation of participation in agricultural programmes, will be discussed.
2.2 Conceptual framework

This section discusses the concepts of public participation and decentralisation. Public participation has been supported and discarded by several writers and their arguments are discussed below. Decentralisation is defined using different concepts and the concept that is consistent with participatory democracy is devolution because administrators are accountable to local authorities thereby promoting participation of local people in decision making and implementation of programmes.

Public participation

Public participation began to appear in literature in the 1950s and 1960s (Mackay, 2004:12). Although, different meanings of public participation emerge from different authors and it applies to different settings, several countries especially developing countries have adopted the approach of involving the public or citizens in decision-making and development in order to foster democratic governance. According to McLaverty (2002:4), public participation promotes provision of service delivery, ensures accountability and promotes participatory planning in order to create a better society for everyone. Terms like citizen, popular, public, people, community when it comes to participation become umbrella terms for the idea of development intercession. Although the terms can be differentiated, they will be used interchangeably to provide a broader perspective of the way different authors view participation. According to Brynard (1996:41) the process of participation requires resources to carry out decisions, available options and final choice otherwise it will be a conflict of interests and no achievement would be made. Furthermore, Brynard (1996:41) argues that in participatory approaches, common values are identified and linked to produce the relevant outcome.
Kinds of participation

Quoting Coakley (1989), Creighton (2005:9) highlighted various kinds of participations that occur in a continuum. These are:

A. Informing the public

It is important to inform the public although it is a one-way communication; citizens need to be informed in order to participate.

B. Procedural participation

Procedural participation involves public hearings, for instance, whereby the public can comment on proposed actions, the public are able to access information through issued reports or visiting established information repositories. Despite the advantage of serving the public in absence of other processes, participation process can become simply procedures without the public having an impact on the decision.

C. Consultative and collaborative problem solving

This is when the government works hand in hand with the public to find solutions that will be supported. Through this process, the organisation or agency seeks consensus by aiming at getting support from the public, and the public influences the decision. Participation through consultation and collaboration is preferred by power-holders as the total extent of participation (Mackay, 2004:15). In this process, citizens may hear and be heard but lack the power to ensure that their views are taken into consideration. The problem comes in when agents like local councilors, chiefs and others define problems and solutions, and tend to modify their ideas in the light of people’s responses. There is a high possibility that participation by consultation may be clouded with statistical abstraction and can be used as evidence by local government officials that their decisions are done through participation (Mackay, 2004:13).
These forms of participation could be misused by state officials in order to further their own agenda at the same time fulfilling statutory requirements, for instance in the context of Local government Act of 1998 in Malawi. In the case where statutory requirements are not fulfilled a possibility of manipulation would be higher. Participation therefore should create a chance for the most vulnerable to speak out and be heard so that participation structures should be meaningful to the grassroots.

**Ideals of public participation**

In view of the two concepts (public and participation) highlighted, it is important to define what public participation is, based on different authors. Creighton (2005:7) defines public participation as “a process by which public concerns, needs, and values are incorporated into governmental and corporate decision making”. The motive is to make better decisions that are supported by the public. Marsden (1991:30) describes public participation, as “means to an end and an end in itself”. Participation should be a process and not just considering consulting the people before decision making without informing them about the feedback. For example, asking people for ideas without providing feedback. Creighton (2005:7) concurs with Marsden and contends that public participation includes administrative decisions like agencies and some private organisations and that elected officials ideas matters less; involves interaction between the decision makers and people who want to participate; there is organised process for involving the public; and the participants have an impact or influence on the decision that is made. Based on these definitions, it can be argued that people have the right to influence decisions however the ultimate authority to decision making rests in the hands of the agency. Furthermore, for participation to take place, organised procedures must be put in place for the public and officials to engage in productive discussions. It is important to view public participation like
Davids (2005:19) who sees it as a basic need and a democratic right.

Public participation is a way of ensuring that decision makers discuss with whom the decision will affect before making decisions. Since public participation involves two parties the agency and the public, they tend to view the process differently. According to Creighton (2005:17), the public views participation as a process that increases their influence on the decisions that affect their lives. The government officials view public participation as that which provides a means by which contentious issues can be resolved. It is a way of ensuring genuine interaction and reassuring the public that all viewpoints are being considered (Creighton 2005:17). Creighton (2005:8) cited the International Association for Public Participation that describes the values for public participation. The values highlighted, support that the public should be aware of the issue at hand and must be assured of the impact of their contributions before the process. It is also important to inform the public of the decisions made and for them to be knowledgeable on when and how to participate by informing them about the issue before participation process.

According to Lindeman (in De Crecq, 1969:36) cited in Clapper (1996a:52), citizen participation is an end in itself and it needs to be promoted and encouraged in order to preserve democracy. Clapper (1996a:52), argues that normally only a few members of any institution are actively involved in the functioning of a particular institution and these minority individuals constitute an elite and they fulfill basic tenets of democracy by indirect participation on behalf of the masses (representative democracy and not participatory democracy). The elite are expected to act in the interest of the community that they represent. However, Ile and Mapuva (2010:34) argue that citizen participation can be facilitated if there is appropriate organisational structure for expressing interest and this may require organising a control group that may be inexistence in a community and unless the experience is rewarding the process might discontinue. According to
Ranney (1971:73) effective control of the elite is exercised through, popular voting into office of elites; limiting power that any elite may exercise while in office; and removal from office on failure to perform according to, and in favor of popular demand. Clapper (1996a:52) argues that it is impossible to find either a pure representative democracy or a pure participatory democracy. However, wherever a democracy exists the system in its complexity would contain elements of both representative and participatory democracy. Most literature indicates that developing countries and Malawi in particular uses representative democracy and is promoting participatory democracy. Whether both democracies are effective in Malawi is what the research aims to establish.

Public participation is a broad concept that has been supported and discarded for different reasons, which are discussed below.

**Arguments for public participation**

Kayuni (2005:16) highlighted some of the benefits of participation which include to: provide information to citizens and government; get information from and about citizens; improve public decisions, programmes or projects and services; supplement public agency work; alter political power patterns and resource allocation; protect individual minority group rights and interests; and delay or avoid complicating difficult public decisions. Considering these benefits, participation is viewed in a broad perspective and confusion can arise from especially the last point because officials might neglect going through the process to avoid complications. Brynard (1996:42) argues that effective participation is determined to exist when the decision-making effort aimed at planning, funding, advocacy or delivery of services directly involves those whom the decisions affect so the results reflect their concerns. The outcome of the participatory process indicates whether the public were involved in decision-making or not because of the support they
Arguments against public participation

According to Brynard (1996:44) although citizen participation is consistent with democratic ideals and sound planning at local government, it does not fully involve the voice of the masses but only a partial voice to many of the interests and groups affected by the local government decisions. The public is supposed to share in making developmental plans at the formative stage and this would determine where the loyalties of the local government officials lie. That is whether to serve the people or their own interests. Clapper (1996b:70) discussed the challenges for public participation as follows:

- If the government sponsors citizen participation activities, it does so to achieve its aims such that significance of empowerment of the citizens is hardly seen. (Clapper, 1996b:70)
- Low citizen participation level is possible due to low levels of education and or lack of motivation (Clapper, 1996b:71)
- Participation presents a threat to the profession image of public administration, which is deeply at odds with citizen participation. It is a challenge to the expertise of the officials (Clapper, 1996b:71). According to Lynn (2002) cited by Ile and Mapuva (2010:31) officials justify lack of participation by arguing that it undermines institution of representative government and therefore, should be left to government officials to make public decisions
- There is a potential for conflict between citizen groups, citizen and public officials (Clapper, 1996b:72).
- Lack of government response characterise most participation programmes because
officials often ignore these activities (Clapper, 1996b:73). For instance a study by Williams (2006:51), indicates that the Area Coordinating Teams (ACTs) structure (participatory structures in Cape Town municipality) proved to be a failure because the council is not obliged to follow through any issues raised through the ACTs, and the individual officials, councilors who are supposed to participate in ACTs are not obliged to attend scheduled meetings. This is a challenge in the participation process because it inhibits the value of the process and it wastes people’s time such that it can discourage them from participating in other different programmes.

- Lack of representativeness features in most participation programmes, dominated by small groups of elites (Clapper, 1996b:73).
- Attitude of public managers towards increased participation is suspicious (Clapper, 1996b:73).
- There is lack of information for the public to participate intelligibly and optimally because the government is not transparent. The public is not provided with information about strategies, government issues and problems hence this limits its participation (Clapper, 1996b:73).
- Participation mechanisms, which are afforded through statutory research institutions, may result into domination by the elite group (Clapper, 1996b:74).
- Citizen competence raises questions as to whether the citizens are capable of influencing the decision on issues concerning service delivery (Clapper, 1996b:74). According to Marsden (1991:30), effective public participation process should aim at achieving the goals and objectives, and enhance efficiency of service delivery system.
Public participation is therefore crucial for developmental activities to achieve their intended purposes. Based on the above discussions participatory structures are manipulated by the elite and since disadvantages outweighs the advantages it is not fully practiced in many governments. According to Ile and Mapuva (2010:34), even the proponents of democracy do not practice what they preach.

The concept of decentralisation

Decentralisation refers to the distribution of power and functions to various levels of government below the national level. The proponents of decentralisation share the worldview dominated by elitism where order and rule is more important and where real popular participation upsets order and rule. According to Chiweza (2005:2) decentralisation is defined through four concepts and these are deconcentration, devolution, delegation and privatization. The first two concepts are more relevant to the study and are defined based on other researchers’ views.

Ore (2007) defines deconcentration as accountability of the central administrators to the central ministries. In this case, the administrative structures are decentralised or are given power to decide on certain issues. Devolution has been viewed as accountability of the administrators to the elected local authorities (Hussein, 2003:272). The local authorities in Malawi are under the local government, which is an essential instrument to allow the individual to voice his or her needs. At the local government level, local councilors despite being elected bodies are expected to develop policies within the framework of national legislation that will be in the interests of their localities. However, this does not mean that they are simply local functionaries of the national government they have powers as well (Geldenhuys, 1996:17). Geldenhuys, (1996:17) views such kind of participation as important to democracy because it is in the community that people appreciate and tolerate each other’s views and learn the art of practical politics.
Therefore, devolution is more consistent with the ideals of participatory democracy.

However, Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006:11) indicated that the review of National Decentralisation Programme carried out in 2004 in Malawi identified a number of challenges and recognised that in the form of devolution, decentralisation is one of the most radical reforms any country can make. With this thought, practicing the principles of democracy would promote effective participation. The challenge with Southern African countries is that the proponents of decentralisation do not practice what they preach and decentralisation will continue to be ideal. The people will always follow what their political elites and international institutions advocate because they have the power in society and society tends to support the power holders. Msewa (2005:70) observed that in Malawi, institutions have been established in different districts in order to facilitate participation. However, most of these institutions prove to be ineffective because of lack of coordination between the District Assembly (DA) and the District Executive Committee, which get funding from the DA to coordinate all the programmes that take place in a district. This leads to poor service delivery.

2.3 Theoretical Framework

This section discusses three theories that underlie participation of farmers in agricultural processes. The theories focus on the idea behind participatory processes and its benefits in order to achieve development. According to Schenck and Louw (1995:82) theory is important in that it gives explanations to phenomena and directs action. Therefore, people-centred development theory, empowerment and capability theory are discussed below.

People-centered or Participatory development theory

People-centered or participatory development theory originates from person-centered theory
founded by Carl Rogers also known as the father of client-centered theory (Schenck & Louw 1995:82). Cited in Schenck and Louw (1995:83), Rogers (1987) argues that any development project can be successful if its beneficiaries are put at the centre and they feel to be part of the programme. In that way they feel that their capacities, talents, energies and other human resources are appreciated and hence they contribute more towards the project.

The nature of development that used to guide policies in the developing world stemmed from the western countries and these include modernisation, dependency and world systems theories of development. Based on these theories, developing countries were still faced with so many problems and this is the reason of lack of success in the projects of the past. According to chambers (1993) quoted in Mackenzie (1999:1) previous development theories fail to allow the meaningful inclusion of indigenous experience and knowledge. This is because development is viewed as a process of growth stimulated by transfer of technology, a transfer in one direction, from rich, powerful to poor, and weak, and from “first to last” (Mackenzie, 1999:1). Development policy therefore was influenced to be that of instruction and direction of third world people by western countries or developed nations. For instance, Ile and Mapuva (2008:125) indicated that in recent years global civil society institutions, namely the Breton Woods’ institutions and UN agencies as well as global donor community have prescribed good governance, democracy and the observance of human rights as qualifications for aid. This means that policies established in developing countries were and are influenced by donor nations. The shift in participatory development puts the choice of clients, professional values, research methods and roles first. It avoids biases in urban, industrial, capital intensive, centralised, high technology, and planned top-down that often leave poor people out or make things worse for them.
People–centered development is defined by Korten (1990:76) quoted by Theron (2009:17), as “a process by which the members of a society increase their personal and institutional capacities to mobilize and manage resources to produce sustainable and justly distributed improvements in their quality of life consistent with their aspirations”. In order to enable the community to develop themselves, the focus of development must be on the people’s capabilities, potentials, power, resources, knowledge and skills. Participatory development theory therefore, is publicly stated as the new paradigm to follow in all aspects of welfare and development (Schenck & Louw 1995:82). Schenk and Louw (1995:82) further argued that people-centered development is important in that it essentially changes and is slow but the improvements and change may have more impact and be sustainable than technologically sophisticated fast development that cannot be sustained. Participatory development should therefore empower the people and enable them to use their capacities for any project or programme to succeed.

Mackenzie (1999:1) used four descriptions of people-centered development based on the following schools of thought; normative, conceptual, empirical and practical approaches. The normative level of development, centers on “the primacy of people in development” (Mackenzie 1999:1 quoting Chambers, 1993). This thought prefers the people first, gives priority to the more deprived, poor, physically weak, vulnerable, isolated and powerless and help them change these conditions. In this case, the grassroots are given a right, which enables them to identify and demand what they want and need. The belief in this thought is that development planning emphasis should be placed upon primarily helping the poorest members of society achieve goals that they themselves help define. In the case of Malawi, the new Agriculture extension policy is based on this thought where farmers are encouraged to demand a service.

The conceptual level of development is based on development not as a process in a single
direction but a process of continuous adaptation, problem solving and opportunity (Mackenzie, 1999:1). This thought argues that development is not a movement towards a fixed goal but continuous adaptation to maximize well-being in changing conditions. It stresses the need for adaptable approaches that can continually search for solutions and take advantage of unique opportunities that arise (Chambers (1993) cited in Mackenzie, 1999:1). Change is the main focus of this thought and according to Korten (1991:4) cited in Schenk and Louw (1995:81), people-centered development seeks to facilitate transformation in communities. That is “returning control over resources to the people and their communities to be used in meeting their own needs including the basic needs of justice, sustainability and inclusiveness” (Korten, 1991 quoted by Schenk & Louw, 1995:81).

The empirical level of development is premised on the argument that conditions in the participatory development approach are diverse and complex and “rates of acceleration is diverse” (Chambers (1993) quoted by Mackenzie (1999:1). There is a need to operate in a dynamic environment and it is crucial to have theoretical viewpoints and empirical knowledge of indigenous people controlled in order to make use of it. Based on this analysis, poor people are knowledgeable and can be depended upon to provide local adaptability as well as leadership in development theory and policy. This approach acknowledges baseline research as crucial before implementation of a development project because the real problem of an area will be identified and the project to be implemented might gain community support because it is tackling the most wanted issues by the community. People must be consulted in that way their needs might be addressed and they may end up supporting the whole project.

The practical approach acknowledges the concepts of decentralisation and empowerment as crucial to enable local people to exploit the diverse complexities of their own conditions and to
adapt to rapid change. It emphasizes on increased local participation and power required in the development process. Development must be empowering, that is, to enable people to elicit and increase the power they have by encouraging them to work together. Empowerment theory has been further discussed in the next section.

It is important to note that participatory development theory is criticized due to its technological underpinnings, especially the level of technology for development projects. Mackenzie (1999:1) proposed that developers should use technological advantages but always be aware of the need for technology to be adapted to the specific needs and requirements of the developing world.

Participatory or people-centered theory has been crucial in various developmental projects and has influenced policy in all countries. Governments and non-governmental organizations all over the world are using the theory to implement their development projects. Whether the practical part of the theory is effective in most countries is somehow questionable. The study by Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006) on the review of the decentralization programme carried out in 2004 in Malawi identified more challenges than successes. This means that the implementation part of participatory development is somehow crucial. Hence, better ways of encouraging participation must be used to the maximum for development to achieve its intended purpose.

**Empowerment theory**

Empowerment can be understood as a personal process by which an individual acquires control over her or his own life or a collective process to obtain and guarantee rights for a marginal group. Friedman classified empowerment into three categories, social, political and psychological (Khosa, 2001). Friedman views social empowerment as having knowledge and skills, financial resources, surplus time, instrument of work and livelihood. If one is empowered
socially, he or she can achieve all the necessities of life thereby improving one’s life. Political empowerment entails ability of the public to participate in matters that affect their future for instance, people having the rights to vote, speak out and act collectively. Psychological empowerment entails individual sense of potency, which is a result of successful action in the social and political domains. Friedman’s theory is important because it shows that if you have knowledge about something, you are empowered to act and contribute to matters that affect you and you can be free psychologically. McLaverty (2002:185) supports Rousseau’s view of participation that goes hand in hand with empowerment through social contract. He argues that participation in decision-making is important because it produces desirable outcomes and helps people to develop as social individuals. Furthermore, they learn to belong to the society and develop a sense of justice. Based on Mills’ view cited by McLaverty (2002:185), through participation, people gain education, which enables them to participate at the highest level of decision-making.

The government of Malawi established local government based on the decentralisation principles to delegate responsibilities in order to promote public participation, devolution and local control of resources and decision-making (Husein, 2006:377). In this view, if people know their rights, they are empowered to participate in matters that affect them. This can imply that the poor in Malawi who lack knowledge of their rights and have no access to the basics are disempowered to participate in decision-making at grassroots level although the structure of the government provides ways to accommodate them. Friedman’s empowerment theory advocates a change in national strategies through a more inclusive democracy to allow claims of the disempowered, appropriate economic growth assessed by the most deprived, gender equality and sustainability (Friedman, 1992:135). The fact that the local government of Malawi has been operating its
functions in the absence of local councilors can be indicative that people are disempowered to react against government. An empowered community is supposed to react when government violates the constitution and other legislation in Malawi. It is important to point out that local action is severely constrained by global forces and structures of unequal wealth and this restrains the disempowered to participate.

According to Friedman (1992:72), the poor require power and control over their own lives, natural, and human resources, which would enable them to participate actively in developing themselves. This means that participation processes should be empowering to meet the needs of the most poor. It is only through participation that their needs can be discovered. Kafakoma et al. (2005:7) observed that awareness of policies, acts and other legislative frameworks is important. However, most communities are not aware of their rights and mandates, roles and responsibilities over policy formulation and management of forestry resources. This is a major problem in most third world countries because most communities are illiterate and lack of knowledge inhibits participation. For example the study by Kafakoma et al. (2005:7), on the local government accountability tools, case study of the forestry dependent people in some parts of Malawi found that the knowledge of people on the impact of the particular forest resource in satisfying their needs and demands, attracted more participation because people were empowered.

**Capability Theory**

Capability approach is a theory advocated by Sen and is based on what a person could achieve in life based on a set of real opportunities. According to Sen, a person’s capability reflects ones freedom to use real opportunities (Alkire, Qizibalsh& Comic, 2008: 3). “A person’s capability refers to the alternative combination of functionings” (something that a person may value doing
or being) “that are feasible for one to achieve” (Alkire, 2008:29). This means a person should be capable to achieve valuable human functionings. According to Mehrotra (2008: 387), human functionings are divided in two categories, simple and complex. Simple functionings like being able to read and write are linked to more complex ones like not being able to participate in participatory processes in the society. In this case, one needs simple functionings to accomplish complex ones. A capable state is able to influence effective participation by devolving authority to the local level to involve the community.

Through the capability approach, Sen is concerned with the demand of effective services at the community level from collective voice and collective action that it will promote effective supply of good quality service. Therefore, participatory processes are to be used effectively to achieve this purpose. Sens’ capability approach is individual focused and therefore linked with empowerment theory because if the community is able to use simple functionings, they will be empowered to use complex ones like participating in participatory processes. Capability approach is supported through the New Agriculture Extension Policy whereby farmers are expected to demand quality services. For instance, when people are poor, illiterate and unhealthy, they lack certain basic capabilities for leading a life of their choice. Furthermore, they are vulnerable and subject to all forms of exploitation and domination. Mehrotra (2008:389) suggests that the complex functioning of participation has to be contextualised at the level of the community to have operational use.

This section has discussed theories, which are used as guidelines when dealing with human beings individually and groups. When it comes to assessing participatory processes in agricultural activities theories of people-centered development theory, empowerment theory and capability theory best describe approaches used to implement participatory structures with the
influence of decentralisation process, which was introduced in Malawi in 1998. These theories therefore guide policy in the Agriculture sector and promote people’s participation in different projects. Whether this participation is effective or not will be established in this research.

2.4 General overview of Malawi

In order to understand participatory processes in Malawi, a background of the country’s social, political and economic situation is necessary. This section therefore, discusses the social, political and economic situation of Malawi.

Geographical and Social background

Malawi is a landlocked country, which lies along the great African rift valley. It shares the border with three countries, Tanzania to the North and North East; Zambia to the North West; and Mozambique to the East, South East, South and South West (Sangala, 2006). As a low income, food-deficit and least developed country, the majority of its population of 15.7 Million lives below the poverty line (Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations [FAO], 2011) and it is ranked 171 out of 187 on the 2011 Human Development Index (United Nations Development Programme [UNDP], 2011). FAO (2011) further indicated that about 80 percent of the people live in rural areas with low access to basic health, education services, good roads and transportation. Access to education, which is a major driver of relative wealth, is highly unequal (International Fund for Agricultural Development [IFAD], 2007). Almost 30% of poor children do not even start primary school although it is free in Malawi, while, secondary and higher education is largely confined to non-poor households due to required enrollment fees (IFAD, 2007). According to IFAD (2007), access to assets, services and economic opportunities is
unequal across the population. The problems mentioned above and high incidences of HIV/AIDS make the poor highly vulnerable to effects of natural disasters and food insecurity (FAO, 2011).

**Political situation**

Malawi became democratic in 1994 with Dr. Bakili Muluzi as first democratic president. Elections of presidents in the democratic Malawi are done after every five years. Dr. Bakili Muluzi was succeeded by the late Professor Bingu wa Mutharika in 2004. In 2009, the late Mutharika was re-elected under the Democratic People’s Party (DPP). He died in April 2012 before the end of his term of office. During the same month Mrs. Joyce Banda, the former vice-president in the Mutharika administration took office of the president to complete late Mutharika’s term of office.

The government of Malawi launched the Malawi Poverty Reduction strategy, which was reformulated in 2005 as Malawi Growth and Development Strategy to be the overarching policy framework for social and economic development (International Monetary Fund [IMF], 2010). The Civil Society Organizations contribute by influencing development process and constantly influencing policy decisions in various sectors of the Malawi economy (United Nations, 2010:67). The Africa Economic Outlook (2012) indicates that Malawi has improved in the Transparency International 2010 Corruption Perception Index to 85 out of 178 countries from 89 in the 2009 index. In the Economist Intelligence Units Democracy Index 2010, Malawi ranks 85 out of 167 countries 14 places up compared to its 2009 record of rank 99 out of 167 countries. The 2010 Ibrahim Index of African governance ranked Malawi 22nd out of 53 countries with an overall score of 51.7 out of 100.
Malawi has been politically very stable and peaceful, although aspects of domestic and gender-based violence have been more frequently reported in recent years (United Nations, 2010:69). Furthermore, there have been inter-party conflicts that were very prevalent during the first term of the late Mutharika administration and the Section 65 and budget impasse, which characterized the previous government. Political conflict resolution mechanisms, both within parties and between parties, have been weak to non-existent and lack of inter-party consultations and dialogue, poses a recurrent risk factor around specific political events like elections. According to the Africa Economic Outlook (2012), the Malawi Electoral Commission (MEC) was suspended in 2010 following an audit report that indicated that 1.4 billion kwacha (USD 9.3 million) disappeared from the MEC account without justification. However, initiatives have been made to strengthen governance and the rule of law and this includes the establishment of the Democratic Governance Sector Working Group to facilitate coordination of the democratic governance interventions in the country.

Malawi is facing challenges to ensure democratic governance for instance, use of state resources by incumbents for campaigning purposes, limited means for citizens to hold their elected representatives accountable and inter-party conflicts. Furthermore, recently approved Media-ban laws that empower the minister of information to ban any publication considered to contain information against the public interest. The passing of bills including national budgets, from 2009 to 2011 without enough input from the opposition as the then ruling DPP had majority of seats in parliament is yet another challenge.

**Economic situation**

Malawi is an Agro-based economy employing about 80% of the workforce (IFAD, 2007). The Agriculture sector is comprised of smallholders and estates and the smallholder farmers
dominate the sector. More than 90% of the rural population is smallholder farmers with customary land tenure (IFAD, 2007). The smallholder land is mainly used to grow maize while estate land is for tobacco, tea, sugar and coffee. More than a third of rural households earn their living only from farming and fishing and other income sources tend to be limited to agricultural labor, which is not rewarding (IFAD, 2007).

The government of Malawi launched the farm input subsidy programme in 2005-06 to increase agricultural production and ensure food security by providing government- subsidized agricultural inputs to small holding farmers through increased maize and legume production (IFAD, 2007). In 2010, the government continued with the execution of the farm input subsidy programme, which reported surpluses in maize production of 1.3 million metric tons in 2008/2009 and 900,000 metric tons of maize above annual food requirement in 2010 (Africa Economic Outlook, 2012). However, implementation of the programme faces several policy challenges. According to IFAD (2007), the cost of the programme is so high that most other initiatives such as the extension and research services needed to ensure optimal use of inputs have to be sidelined. Furthermore, the programme has tended to displace commercial input purchases by farmers and the distribution of inputs has tended to favor the more food-secure households. IFAD (2007) also indicated that since the introduction of the programme, the Ministry of Agriculture’s budget is used for subsidized fertilizers, which greatly reduces expenditure on agriculture research and extension.

Malawi’s Gross Domestic Product (GDP) was estimated to fall to 6.7% in 2010 from 7.6% in 2009 due to reduced agriculture output of maize and tobacco because of drought experienced in some parts of the country at the beginning of 2009/2010 growing season (Africa Economic Outlook, 2012). The driving force for economic growth in 2010 was a strong performance in
mining and quarrying, construction, financial and insurance services and information and technology. Therefore, the real GDP growth is forecasted at 6.4% in 2011 and 6.0% in 2012 reflecting stability in uranium output and leveling off productivity gains in the agriculture sector (Africa Economic Outlook, 2012).

Malawi’s emerging partners on development have concentrated on infrastructure development, agriculture, education and health, and this has increased the possibilities of employing the youth and enabled the acquisition of cheaper goods than western alternatives (Africa Economic Outlook, 2012). These partners complement traditional ones like UK, USA and EU in trade. The presence of China and India has flooded the market with cheaper goods crippling local industries (Africa Economic Outlook, 2012).

The world financial crisis has affected Malawi in terms of the export sector, which faced fluctuating international prices of tea, coffee, and tobacco resulting in worsening terms of trade. In addition, official development assistance, Foreign Direct Investment, and remittances to Malawi also declined following the global credit crisis (Africa Economic Outlook, 2012). However, Malawi has made progress on most Millennium Development Goals targets. According to Malawi’s MDGs report 2010, the country is on track to attain five of the eight MDGs targets by 2015. These are eradication of extreme poverty, reduction of infant mortality, combating HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases, ensuring environmental sustainability and developing global partnership for development (Africa Economic Outlook, 2012).

This section has discussed the socio-political and economic situation in Malawi. It has highlighted how dependent Malawi is on Agriculture and the policy governing agriculture development. Challenges affecting Malawi due global challenges, it is highly dependence on
Tobacco and Maize production and party politics have been discussed. It is therefore important for the country to solve its political problems to enable the most vulnerable to benefit from democratic governance.

2.5 Legislative and policy framework of public participation and agricultural processes in Malawi

Public participation in Malawi is mandated in the constitution of Malawi through the Local Government Act of 1998. Public participation has further been supported by the decentralisation policy of 1998, which led to the formation of the new agriculture extension policy in order to devolve the powers to the local people and encourage farmers to demand services. This section will discuss the constitution of Malawi by highlighting what the Local Government Act entails and it will further explain the New Agriculture Extension policy.

The constitution

According to Ile and Mapuva (2008:126), the constitution is the supreme law of a land and all national legislation is derived from and should conform to it. According to the Government of Malawi (2000), the constitution of Malawi since its adoption in 1995 has undergone several amendments. However, people are mandated to participate based on the political rights under section 6 of the 1995 constitution of Malawi and the Local Government Act of 1998 (Government of Malawi, 2004:22, 73). Since the establishment of the 1995 constitution, these two acts have never been amended.

Section 40 of the 2004 constitution of Malawi on political rights indicates that

Every person has the right to form, join and participate in activities of; and recruit members for a political party; to campaign for a political party and to participate in peaceful political activity intended to influence the composition and policies of the
This means that people are supposed to participate in decision-making by influencing policy making. Furthermore, under this section, people are also mandated to participate in voting and to stand for election for a public office. However, the extent to which citizens fully participate in terms of the day to day running of activities of most states in the SADC region and subsequently into a democratically-elected political leadership as Ile and Mapuva (2010:37) put it, is questionable considering the way elections have been handled in countries like Kenya and Zimbabwe lately.

According to the Government of Malawi (2004:72), section 146 of the constitution of Malawi seeks for the creation of local government authorities, which will have powers mandated by the constitution and Act of parliament to represent the people in their jurisdiction area and to consolidate, promote local democratic institutions and democratic participation. Local authorities are mandated to represent the people; however, whether they should consult the people before any forum in the district assembly is not clarified in the constitution.

Furthermore, according to the Government of Malawi (2004, Section 147 of the constitution), the composition of the local government officers, are to be elected by free, secret and equal suffrage by the registered voters in the area over which that local government authority is to have jurisdiction and the election shall be organized, conducted and supervised by the Electoral Commission. The officers of local government shall include Mayors in cities and municipalities and Local Councilors in all areas. This section provides a scapegoat for those people who are not interested in participating in these processes. Furthermore, an Act of Parliament shall lay down the functions, powers and responsibilities of local government officers as indicated in the constitution section 146 act 3 (Government of Malawi, 2004:73). In this case, citizens have the

government; and to freely make political choices. (Government of Malawi, 2004: 22)
power and right to participate in decision-making and implementation of programs at local government level.

**The Local Government Act**

The local government Act of 1998 was established in order to form a legal backing in implementing the decentralisation policy. In Malawi, the decentralisation policy was approved in 1998 and it seeks to;

- Devolve central administration authority to District Assemblies;
- Integrate local agencies at the district and local levels into one administrative unit; divert the centre of implementation responsibilities and transfer these to District Assemblies; assign functions and responsibilities to various levels of government; and promote popular participation (Hussein, 2003:274).

As indicated in the constitution the objectives of the local government are to further the constitutional order based on democratic principles, accountability, transparency and participation of the people in decision-making and development processes (Government of Malawi, 2004:73). According to the Local government Act of 1998, the composition of the assembly in every local government as indicated in the constitution of 2004 was as follows:

- One member elected from each ward within the local Assembly government area
- Traditional Authorities and Sub-Traditional Authorities from the local government area as non-voting members ex-officio;
- Members of Parliament from the constituencies that fall within the local
government area as non-voting members ex officio

- Five persons as non-voting members to be appointed by the elected members to cater for the interests of such special interest groups as the Assembly may determine. (Local Government Act, No. 42 of 1998: s5)

As indicated in the local government act of 1998, the assembly is responsible for executing these functions listed below:

- To make policy and decisions on local governance and the Assembly development for the local government area;

- To consolidate and promote local democratic institutions and democratic participation;

- To promote infrastructural and economic development through the formulation, approval and execution of district development plans. (Local Government Act, No. 42 of 1998: s6)

The functions of the assembly are meant to promote effective public participation in decision-making, planning and implementation of policy and developmental activities. Ineffectiveness in all these would affect public participation process thereby affecting service delivery in Ntcheu district. Instead of the Assembly, the District Executive Committee performs the functions of the assembly and whether farmer’s needs are prioritised is the basis of the research. This indicates that despite the constitution being the supreme law to be adhered to by everyone, the government of Malawi does not respect it. This brings fear and manipulation of democratic practice, which forms the basis of the constitution and means lack of respect for human rights. The Local Government Act therefore has to be amended in order to meet the practice then the constitution
The New Agriculture Extension Policy

The new national policy for agriculture extension services was developed and approved in 2000 (MAFS, 2006:2). The agriculture extension policy is in line with the decentralisation policy with its aim to empower local level stakeholders to participate more effectively in decision-making, programme development and implementation. The policy allows for the participation of many players in addressing extension services using various methods, promoting participatory planning and implementation of agricultural extension services through its focus in:

- Pluralism (having a variety and choice of service providers) in the provision of agricultural extension services.

- Demand driven service provision that ensures that clients have a clear idea of standards and quality of services to be provided and they will request services they need. This empowers farmers to express their demands.

- Decentralised coordination that allows for decisions to be made at lower levels in order to harmonise plans or activities of various service providers (MAFS, 2006:2).

The policy points to decentralisation as an opportunity to bring control of extension closer to the people and offer services that fit better with the local situation. According to the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2004:2), the New District Agriculture Extension Services System
is a translation of the Agricultural Extension Policy into practice. Hence, the Department of Agriculture and Extension Services decided to establish a parallel structure for planning, coordination and delivery of extension services and these include DSP, ASP and model villages (see chapter one). However, the policy was formulated under the background of democratisation, market liberalisation, HIV/AIDS, shrinking public sector resources, public sector reform, coordination, difficulty to assess extension impact, high malnutrition levels among the farming communities, low literacy levels of farmers and shrinking production resources (MAFS, 2004:2).

Based on the study by Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006:11) the Agriculture Sector has several functions and responsibilities which according to the decentralisation policy includes livestock extension, control of livestock diseases, land husbandry, crop husbandry, food and nutrition, and construction, rehabilitation and maintenance of small dams. Their study established that although the agricultural sector tried to decentralise its functions there are still many challenges facing the sector. One of the challenges includes the absence of councilors, which is affecting guidance and proper decision-making at both districts and EPA levels (Kaarhus & Nyirenda, 2006:11).

Although legislation is available in Malawi to foster public participation at the local government level and enable the election of political leaders through voting, the Malawi Nation needs to add more legislation specifically for participation processes and serious actions need to be taken against lack of respect of the constitution. It is therefore important to find solutions and ways of ensuring that the constitution is respected and that the most vulnerable people are protected.

Based on the analysis of citizen participation in the United States and Nigeria by Sampson and Ile (2010:142), citizens have been locked away from their own democracy such that they no longer trust their elected leaders to do the right thing and that people’s views are not considered as important. The same can apply to Malawi because if the supreme law that guides the country
is manipulated, people’s trust in democracy and their elected leaders is lost.

2.6 Conclusion

Chapter two has thoroughly explained the concepts of public participation and decentralization. Public participation is a process which needs collaboration between participants. Malawi adopted decentralization to foster democratic governance and hence in agriculture it enhanced establishment of the new agriculture extension policy to allow farmers coordination, participation and demand driven principle for developmental purposes. The availability of theoretical clarification locates the research to participatory processes in democratic governance. Furthermore, legislative framework in the chapter, gives evidence of how important it is to translate policy into practice. The chapter therefore has ended up with the description of political, economic and social situations in Malawi for a clear understanding of how different issues are arising in the country and the results of the research.
3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the methods that were used to collect data. Both qualitative and quantitative methods were used to collect data that would provide valid information on participatory processes in agricultural activities in Ntcheu district. Non-probability sampling was used to identify respondents within Njolomole EPA. Data collected were presented, analysed and emerging themes discussed.

3.1 Research design and methodology

A research design is important in that it provides a structure or framework for collecting and analysing information for the research. According to Babbie and Mouton (2003:74), a research design is the set of guidelines to be followed in addressing a research problem. Babbie and Mouton (2003:75) argue that research methodology pays attention to the research process and information on the tools and procedures to be used. For this study, combinations of different research tools were necessary to gather the relevant information. Both qualitative and quantitative methods therefore, were employed to obtain comprehensive information on the research topic. Both primary and secondary sources of data were utilised. These methods were chosen to ensure validity of the results.

According to Brynard and Hanekom (1997:29), qualitative methodology is research, which produces descriptive data (people’s own written or spoken words) and where the researcher
interprets the world from the participants’ point of view. Quantitative methods involve reaching inferences through looking at relationships and patterns and expressing these patterns in numbers (Rudestam & Newton, 1992:24). Quantitative methods require numbers to be assigned to observations. Cook and Reichardt (1979) noted that a combination of qualitative and quantitative methods of which Neuman (2003:139) referred to as triangulation of method might have the potential to produce a study that is superior to that which can be produced by any single-method approach. Triangulation of method helps to remove biases that would result from using only one method. As every method has its shortcomings, it is imperative to combine several methods to overcome the deficiencies. In this research, triangulation was used in the tools developed to collect data and the respondents. For instance, the same questionnaire developed was used for face-to-face interviews with agriculture officers in Njolomole EPA and focus group discussions with farmers within eight sections in the EPA. It was important to employ triangulation of the sources and methods in order to collect reliable data. Apart from the two mentioned data collection methods, other data collection methods used in this research included case study approach, literature review and observations.

Case study

Case study research method is defined as empirical research that examines a contemporary phenomenon within its real-life context (Yin, 1994:23). According to Babbie and Mouton (2001:281), a case study is “an intensive investigation of a single unit”. However, multiple individual units can be investigated. Cases can be individuals, groups, organisations, movements, events, or geographic units (Neuman, 2003: 33). Yin (2003: 13) argues that the researcher uses this method to cover contextual conditions that she or he believes to be important to the phenomenon under study. Case study approach was chosen in this research because there are
multiple EPAs in Ntcheu district hence, limitation of funds could not allow all EPAs to be considered. In this research, Njolomole EPA is a unit chosen among seven EPAs in Ntcheu district and its sections cover from Nkhande (Ntcheu Agriculture District Office) where there is Biriwiri section to Masasa section which boarders Dedza district (see a map on Appendix C). The sections that were investigated are Biriwiri, Kadzakalowa, Mlangeni, Njolomole, Chilobwe, Lizulu, Mlanda and Masasa. Yin (2003:14) contends that the case study method is a comprehensive strategy, which entails the logic of design, data collection techniques and specific approaches to data analysis. It therefore relies on theoretical propositions that guide data collection and analysis. The measuring instruments are both qualitative and quantitative as Yin (2003:17) argues that case studies can be based on evidence from both measures. Further distinction between quantitative and qualitative research approaches is discussed in section 3.3.

3.2 Population and sample

O’Leary (2004:102) defines population as “the total membership of a defined class of people, objects or events”. The population of this research was composed of ten agriculture officers responsible for operating Njolomole EPA and farmers from 202 villages in the areas of TA Njolomole, Chakhumbira and Masasa. Considering that one cannot gather data from everyone one can be interested in, selection of a sample is very crucial. Sampling is a process of selecting respondents, which requires thought as to how best to minimize bias and clarity on which type of the sample (Laws, Harper and Marcus, 2003:358). Sampling is important in a research because it simplifies the research, it saves time considering that one cannot study the whole population and it cuts costs (Brynard and Hanekom, 1997:29).

There are two different types of sampling and these are random or probability sampling and purposive or non-probability sampling. This research has used purposive or non-probability
sampling which entails selection of respondents based on the purpose of the research (Laws, Harper & Marcus, 2003:358). Non-probability sampling methods were used to obtain the sample because participants were selected based on the nature of their work in the agriculture sector and availability of farmers from villages within Njolomole EPA at the time of visit. The sample population was made up of ten workers from the Agriculture Department and eight groups of farmers in villages within the EPA. Therefore, purposive and convenient sampling was used to select respondents within the EPA to officers and farmers respectively.

According to Babbie and Mouton (2003:166), purposive sampling is based on the researcher’s knowledge of the population, its elements and the research objectives. Referring to this method as handpicked sampling, O’Leary (2004:103) describes it as involving the selection of cases that meet particular criteria. In this research, extension workers who deal with farmers directly in Njolomole EPA and agriculture officials to whom the workers report to were considered. Furthermore, following the DAESS structure, key participants of the committees like DEC, DAC, DSP, ASP and model village groups from the government side were elements that determined the sample. Therefore, the DADO was the first to be interviewed because she is the overseer of agricultural processes in Ntcheu district and has knowledge of the location of officers in Njolomole EPA and key participants of the DAESS structure from the government side. This sampling technique proved to be useful because from the interview by the DADO the researcher was able to locate respondents. Agricultural officers like the District Agriculture Development Officer (DADO) and the Area Extension Development Executive Coordinator (AEDEC) were interviewed at their offices while six extension workers called Area Extension Development Officers (AEDOs) were interviewed in their various homes because they do not have offices. The results generated from this research could be generalised to the similar population within
Ntcheu district because the organisation structure of Njolomole EPA is similar to all EPAs within the district.

Laws, Harper and Marcus (2003:366) describe convenient sampling as a sample that includes whoever happens to be around at the time of visit. Farmers were selected using this method because contacts were not available to make them all available at the time of visit. Furthermore, the Njolomole EPA is hilly and villages are scattered therefore it was difficult to visit them in order to book appointments. The researcher visited farmers in their various villages and interviewed those available in a focus group discussion at the time of visit. Farmers of all categories from eight villages that are manned by eight extension workers within the EPA were involved in focus group discussions. Respondents were composed of members of Model village groups, which are composed of farmers in the villages supervised by the eight extension workers. All categories were represented like gender, youth and the disability. The groups had more women than men and at least one youth and one disabled.

3.3 Data collection

Both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection were used. These include literature review, face-to-face interviews, observations and focus group discussions.

Qualitative methods

Qualitative research methods are interpretive and usually follow a non-linear research path. In addition, they are concerned with soft data (impressions, symbols, words, sentences) and detailed examination of cases (Neuman, 2003: 139). The primary goal of qualitative research is to understand and describe rather than to explain and predict human behavior (Babbie and Mouton, 2003: 53). Case study, literature review, face-to-face interviews and focus group discussion are the methods used in collecting qualitative data.
Literature review

Literature review is defined as a systematic, explicit, and reproducible method for identifying, evaluating and synthesizing the existing body of completed and recorded work produced by researchers, scholars and practitioners (Blaxter, Hughes and Tight, 2006:122 citing Fink, 2005:3). Literature review entailed the researcher reviewing the related body of literature in order to discern relevant and pertinent information and debates that are related to the topic. It is crucial to collect data using this method because it helps to locate the research in a body of theory and support some of the research findings while avoiding errors and what has already been done. Reports from Ntcheu district office and other relevant documents were reviewed to explore the theoretical and legal framework on public participation and agricultural processes in the Malawi local government. Secondary data was reviewed from various sources like electronic resources (Internet), books, journal articles, and newspapers. Secondary data is important because everything is written and can be obtained easily (Brynard and Hanekom, 1997:31). Other methods were employed to overcome its disadvantage of heavily relying on second hand information.

Face-to-face interviews

Interviews as a method of collecting data are important because they allow the researcher to clarify on the questions if the respondent is not clear and probe deeper following the answer of the respondent (De Wet et.al., 1981:16-163 cited in Brynard and Hanekom, 1997:32). The method was chosen because agricultural officers are busy people and may neglect answering questionnaires on their own. Using face-to-face interviews enabled the researcher to collect data at the specified time and was able to seek clarifications in some of the responses. Semi-structured
questionnaire was used to interview seven officers within the district and each scheduled
interview took about forty-five minutes. According to Brynard and Hanekom (1997:38) face-to-
face interviews has a disadvantage of fear among respondents that might be created and might
destruct them from telling the truth. To overcome this disadvantage, the researcher assured
respondents that their responses would be treated with confidentiality and that names will not be
included in the report. The respondents were composed of the DADO, AEDEC of Njolomole
EPA and five AEDOs located within Njolomole EPA.

The interviews identified the participatory processes in agriculture in the district, the impact of
participatory processes in agriculture within Njolomole EPA and other ways of implementing
participatory processes in the Agricultural sector in Ntcheu district. Snowball sampling was used
to identify respondents who could provide the required information regarding the extent to which
the farmers participate in Agricultural processes. The researcher visited respondents in their
offices especially the DADO, AEDEC based on appointment. AEDOs were visited in their
various homes without appointments because the AEDEC was reluctant to provide phone
numbers and names of AEDOs hence it was difficult to book appointments. The plan was to
interview all eight AEDOs however, at the time of visit, AEDOs from Lizulu, Masasa sections
were at a meeting, and it was difficult to schedule for another meeting. The AEDO of Mlanda
section was two weeks old in the area hence, could not respond to the questions. Before any
commencement of the interview, permission was sought and confidentiality assured to different
respondents. During the interviews, responses were written on the semi-structured questionnaires
and a recorder was used during the process in order to capture all responses during the discussion
to avoid misquoting respondents. It also helped the researcher during transcription of data to
validate what was written and clarify what was not clear during the discussion. However, the
interview by the DADO, a recorder was not used because she refused hence notes were taken carefully.

**Focus group discussion**

Focus group discussions (FDGs) are a form of informal interview in a group setting (Neuman, 2003:396). This criterion is important because the respondents are in their natural setting and they feel empowered (Neuman, 2003:396). Since in focus group discussion only few ideas are discussed, it was chosen to supplement face-to-face interviews although the study used it as the main source of data collection from the farmers. Focus group discussion method was considered as the main method to collect information from farmers because the AEDOs reach out to farmers through the groups. Farmers are encouraged to establish groups from each village for AEDOs of the area to demonstrate agricultural activities and to enable them help one another when some issues are forgotten.

The focus group discussion was composed of such groups of farmers formed from different villages within the EPA. This allowed an interaction with farmers and more issues to be captured. To overcome the disadvantage of providing less depth and detail about the opinions and experiences as indicated by Babbie and Mouton (2003: 292), about ten participants were included in a group. This helped to source more opinions and to ask other members if others are silent. Convenient sampling was used to identify available farmers at the time of visit. Eight Focus group discussions were done composed of eight to ten farmers from each section within Njolomole EPA. Notes were taken during the discussion and with permission from respondents; a recorder captured the discussion for further clarification. The discussion took about forty-five minutes and focused on the knowledge and perceptions of farmer’s on agricultural processes and the impact of their participation in such processes. Furthermore, challenges faced by farmers to
participate in agricultural processes and suggestions on other ways of implementing agricultural processes were sought.

**Quantitative methods**

According to Casley and Kumar (1988), quantitative data is needed when a number, rate or proportion related to the target population must be estimated. Quantitative research methods are concerned with hard data (figures) and measuring of variables and testing of hypothesis linked to general causes of phenomena (Neuman, 2003:139). The emphasis is on quantifying the properties of phenomena (Babbie and Mouton, 2003:49). The methods like face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and observations were the methods used to collect quantitative data. When collecting qualitative data using face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions, quantitative data was collected to justify what was being explained. Therefore, face-to-face interviews helped in collecting statistical information in percentages where officers in the agriculture sector scored their operations and their perceptions on farmers’ participation in the agricultural processes. Since the study undertook a small-scale study, face-to-face interviews proved to be useful to gather quantitative data at the specified time.

In addition, focus group discussions collected statistical information of scores on farmers’ perceptions of the agriculture process and its impact on them. All demographic and socio-economic information from respondents was also gathered using the method.

**Observations**

According to Brynard and Hanekom (1997:39) citing Dewet et al (1981:163-165) indicated that observation technique is used to determine how individuals or groups of individuals react under specific circumstances, either natural or artificial. This method guards against bias or giving of a
distorted picture. Using observation method Brynard and Hanekom (1997:39) argue that real life behaviours can be perceived and misunderstandings can be clarified on the spot. This method has a disadvantage of making the target group uncomfortable because they may feel that an outsider was interrupting (Brynard and Hanekom, 1997:39). The researcher was introduced as one of the agriculture workers helping the extension worker of Biriwiri section during the data collection period especially when observing the meeting between the extension worker and farmers. This helped to overcome the disadvantage of the researcher causing discomfort among farmers.

Observations through focus group discussions and interview schedules determined other statistical preferences in this research and this helped to clarify on the responses given in both cases. Observation was used as a methodology for data collection by systematically and keenly noting and recording the flow of events. The researcher observed two meetings in which the extension worker of Biriwiri section was meeting the farmers. In this case, participation of farmers was observed. Further, the interaction process between the Extension worker and the farmers was observed. This helped to justify some of the responses given through face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions.

**Validity**

Babbie and Mouton (2003:122) defines validity as the extent to which an instrument measures what it is supposed to measure. One of the criteria of validity is content validity, which refers to “the correctness and appropriateness of the questions included in a test or questionnaire” (Brynard and Hanekom, 1997:39). In this research, the questions developed were relevant and tested what it was required to test. This was verified through pilot study, which helped to avoid duplication of questions. Pilot study was conducted at Tsangano EPA to clarify any mistakes on
the questionnaires. The face-to-face interview questionnaire was tested to the AEDEC of Tsangano EPA and one AEDO. Few mistakes were discovered on the questionnaire and corrections were made. The focus group discussion questionnaire was tested to farmers from Kombe village from Tsangano EPA and it helped to determine the duration of the discussion and an addition of one question dealing with the kind of crops the farmers grow in the area. Use of both qualitative and quantitative methods of data collection was employed to ensure validity of the results. Furthermore, several data collection methods were employed like face-to-face interviews, group discussions and observation to ensure valid results.

**Reliability**

According to Babbie and Mouton (2003:119), reliability is whether the same results can be obtained if the same procedures were repeated (if nothing else has changed). Through the pilot study, the instruments used to obtain data proved reliable. Furthermore, the results of the research were critically reviewed to detect any errors. The researcher is trained in research course and has experience because she has ever worked as a research assistant. This helped to avoid errors in the collection and analysis of data. The data that has been analysed is that which was given by respondents. Any explanations made are based on the data obtained and observations made.

**3.4 Data analysis**

Data analysis entails the processes of interpreting collected data for the purpose of drawing conclusions that reflect on the interests, ideas and theories that initiated the inquiry (Babbie and Mouton, 2003:101). In this research, qualitative data obtained through face-to-face interviews, focus group discussions and observations were analysed using tables and themes emerging from the field. According to Laws, Harper and Marcus (2003:394), it is important to draw a set of key
themes from the data which summarizes the important categories within the data when dealing with qualitative analysis. Laws, Harper and Marcus (2003:396) further indicated that the categories come from the original research questions, aims and objectives; the questions asked to respondents; the data itself; and theories about what is going on. Quantitative data obtained through face-to-face interviews and focus group discussions were analyzed using descriptive statistics for example the mean and frequencies, tables in Microsoft Excel. Laws, Harper and Marcus (2003:405) argue that quantitative analysis can use simple analysis of number-based data and simple statistics of using percentages and describing data using averages and measures of spread.

The results obtained were presented using tables and analysis was based on the outline of the objectives and emerging themes. Conclusions and recommendations will be made based on the results obtained.

3.5 Ethical considerations

Whenever research involves human subjects, certain requirements need to be met in order to be sure that no harm of any kind comes to the subjects of the research either directly or indirectly (Laws, Harper & Marcus, 2003:234). According to O’Leary (2004:50), ethics is required in research “to ensure the integrity of the knowledge produced and to promote the practice of ethical responsibilities towards participants”. In this research, no harm was made and permission was sought from any respondents for the interviews and discussions conducted. Permission was sought to use a recorder in the process and confidentiality was assured to all respondents because data collected has only been used for the study and not for anything else. The research has not mentioned names of the respondents’ only titles of office bearers for the sake of confidentiality.
3.6 Conclusion

This chapter has highlighted the methodology employed to collect data that helped in determining the extent to which participatory structures in the agriculture sector are effective and benefit farmers. Challenges were there in collecting data these include lack of presence of all farmers in a group because most of them at the time of visit were in their gardens. Furthermore, the researcher failed to reach the Masasa and Lizulu AEDOs because at the time of visit, they were attending a meeting and due to costs, it was difficult to reach them again. However, data collected from available respondents were enough to generate valid conclusions.
CHAPTER FOUR

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

4.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the results of the research, which was aimed at assessing participatory processes in agriculture in Ntcheu district. An assessment of participatory processes in agricultural programmes in Njolomole Extension Planning Area was made and the results are presented based on research objectives and themes generated from the research questions. The first section discusses participatory processes in the local government of Malawi. The second section explores agricultural processes in Malawi. The third section discusses participatory processes in agricultural activities in Ntcheu district giving examples from Njolomole Extension Planning Area. The fourth section discusses the impact of participatory processes in Njolomole Extension Planning Area. The final section highlights challenges faced by agricultural officers in their dissemination of functions and farmers in their implementation of their farming.

4.1 Participatory processes in the Local Government of Malawi

The decentralisation process and the establishment of the Local Government Act of 1998 as discussed in chapters one and two, was meant to promote citizen participation in planning and implementation of development programmes in Malawi among other objectives. This gives the citizens of Malawi the right to participate in different ways in matters that affect their lives. According to Chinsinga (2005:529), Malawi adopted democratic decentralisation in order to bring the government closer to the grassroots thereby making it more responsive, accountable and representative. Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006:15) referred to this decentralisation as focusing...
on institution scope of activities and responsibilities called integrated decentralisation and sectoral decentralisation. Integrated decentralisation is referred to as the “transfer of tasks or authority to local multi-purpose institutions which are territorially restricted mandates” like the District Assembly (Kaarhus and Nyirenda, 2006:15). Sectoral decentralisation is “the transfer of responsibility from one sector or one type of activity to a local level institution responsible for the defined function” like the District Agriculture Development Office. Hence, the District Assemblies were established composed of the political structure and the administrative structure as discussed in chapter two.

The people in Malawi therefore, participate through being represented in the District Assembly and being physically involved in planning and implementation of projects. Participation is done through elections of political leaders countrywide and in ensuring that the leaders elected are serving as expected (Dambala, 2003:62). Citizens are expected to participate in the implementation of projects at the district level through contributing materially, labour, supervise or monitor the projects and report to the assembly (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development 2005:41). The projects include building of schools, hospitals, roads, boreholes and other developments.

In terms of planning, the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development (2005:41) indicated that at the district level, the district development planning system was developed to ensure that planning is a participatory process and works from the bottom upwards. It starts with Village Action Plans in which villagers are asked to define their most urgent development needs, prioritise them and suggest solutions, which are then included in the District Development Plans. Within the current decentralisation framework, Ntcheu is designated as a District Assembly with 30 wards. Each ward is supposed to be represented by a councilor who is supposed to present the
social and economic development interests of her/his ward to the District Assembly thereby coordinating and supervising the planning and management of district development projects (Government of Malawi, 2008:4). However, this has not been possible because since 2005, the District Assemblies have been operating without councilors and this has compromised their roles in society. The District Executive Committee, which is supposed to report to the DA, has now complete control of the operations at the district level.

The Malawi government through the Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development has established entry points for people to participate in planning and implementation of development projects at the district level (Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development, 2005:41). These include:

A. **District Executive Committee (DEC)**

According to the Government of Malawi (2008:5), DEC is a committee of heads of government departments, non-governmental organization (NGOs) and parastatal organizations. It is the technical advisory body of the District Assembly headed by the District Commissioner. The DEC facilitates the process of district development planning and management, which was one of the roles of the councilors (Government of Malawi, 2008:5). It is comprised of Group Village Heads, chairpersons of political parties, two representatives from each of the Village Development Committees, and representatives from the business community, youth and women groups, religious groups, other interest groups and the councilors are supposed to be members as well. In Ntcheu district, the District Commissioner is the head of the district and the management team, which comprised of Directorates namely Administration, Planning and Development, Finance, Public Works, Health and Social Welfare Services, Education Youth and Sports, Agriculture Environment and Natural Resources, Commerce and Industry, and Internal audit.
The District Agriculture Development officer reports to the DEC on issues concerning agriculture in Ntcheu district.

**B. Area Development Committee (ADC)**

The ADC is comprised of Group Village Headmen, Ward Councilors, chairpersons of registered political parties, representatives of the business community, youth and women groups, religious leaders, two representatives from the Village Development Committee one of whom is a woman and other co-opted groups such as NGOs and is chaired by the Traditional Authority (TA) (Government of Malawi, 2008:7). ADC operates at a traditional authority. In Ntcheu district there are 14 ADCs and in Njolomole EPA, there are five ADCs because Traditional Authorities Njolomole and Masasa have two ADCs each because they man big areas (Upper and lower). The ADCs have the duty to facilitate development in their areas. Proposals from the ADCs are referred to the DEC.

**C. Area Executive Committee (AEC)**

The AEC is comprised of grassroots extension workers from the government and NGOs. It is the technical arm of the Area Development Committee responsible for providing technical expertise on all issues related to development planning and management at area level (Government of Malawi, 2008:5). The project proposals from the VDC are scrutinised by the AEC before referring them to the ADC.

**D. Village Development Committee (VDC)**

The VDC is a representative body from a village or group of villagers and is the lowest level of planning in the district (MGPDD, 2005:41). It is comprised of village headmen, extension workers and NGO’s as well as other elected representatives from each village (Government of
The VDC is mandated to facilitate the planning and implementation of village action plans (Samuels, Sibale and Selvester, 2009). The VDCs are chaired by Group Village Headmen/women and in Ntcheu district, there are 88 VDCs representing 958 villages (Government of Malawi, 2008:8). The projects proposals drawn from the community at VDC level are scrutinized and are sent to the AEC.

The four structures discussed are meant to allow participation of the citizens in planning and decision-making so that programs established should address their problems. Research by Samuels, Sibale and Selvester (2009) has shown that due to lack of resources the ADCs and VDCs are unable to ensure that communities can participate in planning and programme implementation. In Njolomole Extension Planning Area, knowledge of the structures among farmers interviewed was low. For instance, out of eight groups of farmers interviewed, two groups acknowledged that they knew Area Development Committee and Village Development Committee as participatory structures; three groups claimed that they knew about Area Development Committee and Village Development Committee through the radios, but they were not available in their areas. The farmers who claimed that they had Village Development Committee and Area Development Committee as participatory structures, indicated that these committees were not helpful to them. This means that the grassroots are not aware of the participatory structures and they do not use them because the structures are not effective.

All Agriculture Officers interviewed, indicated that Ntcheu District has District Executive Committee, Area Development Committee and Village Development Committee as participatory structure for different developmental activities. One Agriculture Development Officer (extension worker) argued that VDCs and ADCs are sometimes used as participation structures for agriculture activities although Agriculture Extension Development Officers or extension workers
are not invited formally whenever there are meetings. “We are not formally invited to ADC meetings we only hear about them when we meet chiefs on the road. We are only invited to the VDC.” Kadzakalowa Agriculture Development Officer claimed. This means that ADC meetings are sometimes held without extension workers presence and knowledge. Based on the responses by farmers and Agriculture Officers, it can be concluded that these structures are not effective because they do not achieve their intended purpose to allow the grassroots to participate in planning and decision-making. The fact that some villagers do not know them means they do not use them. This might have led to the establishment of a parallel structure by the District Agriculture Extension Services to deal with agricultural issues as indicated by the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2004:7) that the Department of Agriculture and Extension Services formed a parallel structure similar to that of government to solely deal with agricultural issues in different committees.

### 4.2 Agricultural processes in Malawi

The establishment of decentralisation process in Malawi has led to the ongoing important institutional changes in government structures and decision-making process at the local level (Chinsinga& Cabral, 2010). This has led to the reforms in agriculture sector in which the District Assemblies were established as legitimate centers of implementation of responsibilities for agriculture services at the local level to promote local participation and democracy among other objectives. The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security plays a role of policy formulation, coordination, facilitation and regulation of different players’ activities at the local level (Chinsinga & Cabral, 2010). The structure of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security is shown in figure one.
The structure and responsibilities of the Ministry of Agriculture

The Ministry of Agriculture is organised into six departments, which report directly to the Secretary for Agriculture. These are Administration and General Management, the Department of Agriculture Research Services (DARS), the Department of Animal Health and Industry...
(DAHI), the Department of Crop Production (DCP), the Department of Agriculture Extension Services (DAES) and the Department of Land Resources Conservation (DLRC) (Kaarhus & Nyirenda, 2006:16). The ministry has the mandate to:

- Attain and sustain household food-sufficiency and to improve the nutritional status of the population
- Expand and diversify agricultural production and exports
- Increase farm incomes
- Conserve the natural resource base
- Formulate agricultural policies, legislation and regulations with stakeholder participation
- Generate and disseminate agricultural information and technologies
- Regulate and ensure quality control of agricultural produce and services and
- Monitor and manage the food security situation (Kaarhus & Nyirenda, 2006:15)

Agriculture Development Divisions (ADDs)

The Ministry has further been divided administratively and technically into eight Agriculture Development Divisions (ADDs) headed by programme managers. The ADDs were established as ecosystem-related and geographically-based subdivisions within three regions of the country and these are: Shire valley ADD, Blantyre ADD, and Machinga ADD in the Southern Region of Malawi; Lilongwe ADD, Salima ADD, and Kasungu ADD in the Central Region of Malawi; and Mzuzu ADD and Karonga ADD in the Northern Region of Malawi. According to Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006:16), each ADD has specialists representing Crop production, Animal Health and
Veterinary Services, Agricultural Extension Support Services, Research and Technical services and Land Resources Conservation departments. The role of the ADDs is to interpret policies formulated at the central level, coordinate technical specialists, supervise programmes and develop technical messages and further training of technical specialists and extension workers (Kaarhus & Nyirenda, 2006:17).

**District Agriculture Development Offices (DADO)**

The ADDs are subdivided into 28 District Agriculture Development Offices (DADOs) formerly called Rural Development Projects (RDPs). The District Agriculture Development Officer (DADO) is in charge and is also responsible to the District Commissioner (Government of Malawi, 2008:17). The functions of the DADO at the district level are to disseminate messages, train EPA Staff and farmers, and provide technical advice and supervise EPA staff.

**Extension Planning Areas (EPAs)**

The District Agriculture Development Offices are divided into 154 Extension Planning Areas. The Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator (AEDC) oversees the EPA. The functions of the Extension Planning Area include, imparting technical messages to farmers, formation of farmer groups, conducting farmer demonstrations and linking farmers to credit institutions (Kaarhus & Nyirenda, 2006:17). The EPAs therefore have the responsibility to provide field extension services to farmers.

**Sections**

The Extension Planning Areas are further divided into sections (Kaarhus & Nyirenda, 2006:16). The Agriculture Extension Development Officer (AEDO) oversees the sections. The sections are the lowest level of the Ministry of agriculture and Food Security structure and the main point of
service delivery to farmers. Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006:18) indicated that although administrative decisions were devolved to the district level, political decision-making power was concentrated at the national level.

Within the agriculture sector, there are parastatals like ADMARC, National Food Reserve Agency (NFRA), and Smallholder Farmer Fertilizer Revolving Fund for Malawi (SFFRFM), and the Tobacco Control Commission (TCC) (Kaarhus&Nyirenda, 2006:17). According to the Government of Malawi (2008:21), parastatals involved in marketing of agriculture products in Ntcheu district include ADMARC, SFFRFM, AGORA, National Smallholder Farmers Association of Malawi, Farmers World and Kulima Gold. Credit providers include Malawi Rural Finance Company and Concern Universal Micro Project.

Based on the structure of the Ministry of Agriculture and Food security, the district was made a focal point for planning and service delivery for agricultural activities (Kaarhus&Nyirenda, 2006:19). Therefore, in Ntcheu District Assembly, District Agricultural Development Office was formed at Khande, which is under Lilongwe ADD. Seven Extension Planning Areas were formed namely: Njolomole, Kandeu, Bilira, Nsipe, Sharpevale, Tsangano and Manjawira. Furthermore, the Government of Malawi (2008:17) indicated that 107 sections in total, 856 blocks and 145,205 farming families were established in the district.

- Policy implementation in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security

According to Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006:26), there is still lack of well-defined sector implementation strategies and guidelines in the agriculture sector despite decentralising the responsibilities for the provision of extension services to the District Assembly. At a general level, effective implementation of the devolution process is still considered by many to be way
behind the expected targets. In this case, promotion of public participation is also affected. This is because District Assemblies on their part have limited capacity to formulate by-laws, which is within their mandate according to the decentralisation policy (Kaarhus&Nyirenda, 2006:28).

Furthermore, the absence of elected councilors at present and the shortage of competent well trained and experienced staff willing to work at the district level, coupled with limited resources at the DA and local levels are constraints in bringing the decentralisation process to full establishment (Kaarhus&Nyirenda, 2006:28).

Furthermore, Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006:26) indicated that there is limited capacity in most District Assemblies to enforce regulations effectively to the extent that there are increased levels of environment depletions, characterised by land degradation and deforestation threatening the sustainability and productivity of local natural resources. The higher-level institutions are using lack of capacity as a justification for withholding full devolution and retaining assets and programmes that should be part to the devolution process.

Lack of funding is also a problem. The decentralisation process and local-level efforts to implement decentralisation policies in the districts have raised farmers expectations hence they have prepared and forwarded project proposals facilitated by frontline staff (Agriculture Extension development Officers) to the district level but funding for most of the proposals is not secured (Kaarhus&Nyirenda, 2006:28). This is accompanied with a slow feedback to communities on their demands and proposals. Therefore, lack of funding and weak mechanisms of downward accountability may result in a lost opportunity for both agricultural development and farmers’ empowerment.

Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006:28) observed that in agriculture sector there is still strong resistance
especially from the Headquarters (ADDS) to devolve in full. This affects efficient and effective delivery of services at both the centre and district level. Although local-level representatives units such as VDC, farmer committees in villages and Area Stakeholder Panels have been established in a number of District Assemblies in most cases these are not pro-active (Kaarhus&Nyirenda, 2006:28).

Based on these arguments, it can be concluded that policy implementation of decentralisation process in the ministry of agriculture is faced with many challenges such that what is proposed on paper is not practically done.

**Challenges in the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security**

According to Government of Malawi (2008:18), the number of extension workers has always been less than requirement and this has led to having high ratios of extension worker to farmer at grassroots level. Furthermore, most extension workers are men. The ministry is therefore trying to recruit more female AEDOs through on job training programme. The Department of Agriculture is also trying to use different methodologies that can show impact to all farmers like use of Model Village approach, farmer-to-farmer extension, use of clusters, and village demonstrations open days in order to cater for low capacity of extension workers.

Njolomole Extension Planning Area has 13 sections but only eight are operating. This is due to the challenge of not having enough trained extension workers to fill the positions. Interviews with the eight Agriculture Officers on the challenges they face in order to address farmers’ needs, revealed that the sections are very big such that the ratio of farmer to extension worker is very high. For instance, “the ratio of extension worker to farmers is supposed to be 1- 800 but now it is 1-2500”said the Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator of Njolomole.
Agricultural Officers interviewed claimed that inadequate staff makes it difficult to reach out to all farmers at the needed time in order to provide services because extensions are very big. Other challenges are discussed later in the thesis.

4.3 Participatory processes in agricultural activities in Ntcheu district

Considering that the sections are centres of planning and service delivery for agricultural activities for the grassroots, the Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security through the Department of Agriculture Extension Services has established the new extension policy which is responsive to decentralisation demands and this proposes a bottom-up and participatory strategy for planning interventions. The policy calls for demand-driven and pluralistic supply response to the wide range of extension needs. This has led to the creation of District Agriculture Extension Services System to accommodate decentralisation concerns with reference to agriculture extension services at district level (Kaarhus&Nyirenda, 2006:19). Therefore, the forums were created to implement the policy to be extended down to the grassroots level at District, Area and Village Stakeholder Panels. Each of these forums brings together the diversity of agriculture sector players including NGO’s, farmers associations, smallholder farmers, traditional leaders and agri-businesses (Chinsinga& Cabral, 2010).

District Agriculture Extension System (DAES)

The District Agriculture Extension System is built upon four pillars on which, implementation guidelines are established. According to the Ministry of Agriculture (2004:6), these include:

- **Organisation of farmer demand:** farmers are grouped in categories of commercial, small-scale commercial and smallholder food security farmers. The Department of Agriculture Extension Services through stakeholder panels will assist farmers to identify their problems and needs, which will be aggregated so that collective demands and priorities can be formulated and
submitted to the District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee and later to the District Assembly.

- Facilitation of service provider response: this entails identification of service providers and their capacity, identification of best services for specific need, and coordination of services provision of farmers’ needs. The District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee will ensure of this so that equalization is achieved.

- Co-ordination and agricultural strategy development: there is need for effective coordination in planning, implementation, monitoring and evaluation in order to avoid provision of incoherent services that may bring confusion among farmers considering that service providers are many. In developing the agricultural development strategy, attention should be paid to the needs and concerns of all categories of farmers as clients, sponsors and stakeholders to ensure accountability to the farming community. The District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee will ensure of this.

- Funding acquisition: funding at the district level not to be solely dependent on the central government but other possible sources like co-financing arrangements between stakeholders, farmers, donors, and District Assembly locally generated funds to ensure resource sustainability.
Figure 2: The Organization structure of the District Agriculture Extension System

Source: The Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security (2004:8)

District Executive Committee (DEC)

As discussed in section 4.1, the DEC is a committee of heads of government departments, non-governmental organization (NGOs) and parastatal organisations. The District Commissioner heads it and the DADO is supposed to report to the DEC on Agricultural issues in the district. Currently in Ntcheu district, the DEC is the ultimate decision maker at the district level because
it reports directly to the ministry of Agriculture and not to the District Assembly. This is a threat to the Local Government Act and decentralisation policy because local priorities are somehow sidelined and there are signs of recentralisation due to the priorities made by the committee on programmes that are implemented in the district.

For instance, according to Chinsinga and Cabral (2010), the farm input subsidy policy introduced in 2005 by the government is largely a centrally driven initiative, which is quite demanding to local staff and local resources at the expense of routine activities including extension services, water and soils conservation as well as other locally defined priorities. Interviews with agriculture officers and a discussion with farmers on implementation of programmes in Njolomole EPA indicated that most programmes introduced follow top-down structure and directives from above giving farm input subsidy programme as an example. Agriculture officers indicated that farmers are not consulted in decision-making although they accept the programmes as they come. Farmers concurred with officers by indicating that decisions are made without consulting them and programmes are imposed. To substantiate this, one of the farmers said, “We were just told to register with chiefs to receive fertilizer subsidy coupons but they are not enough for everyone and they cause hatred between village headmen and us”. Despite not having the chance to participate in decision-making, farmers implemented the subsidy programme arguing, “We accept programmes because they brief us and explain the importance of the programmes but there is a need to improve on participation in decision-making”. Farmers indicated that their participation in programmes that are well explained and have a known impact is better than their participation in implementing programmes that are imposed on them. For instance, farmers indicated that the programmes that attracted support were the introduction of selection of potatoes while in the farms and planting of one maize seedling per planting station (locally
known as Sasakawa) because training was provided and demonstrations were done. Furthermore, the impact of the programmes was explained to farmers.

**District Agriculture Sub Committee (DASC)**

The Ministry of Agriculture (2004:6) indicated that DAC is composed of elected members of the assembly with DADO providing secretarial services and the councilor provides the facilitating role. Its functions among others according to the Ministry of Agriculture (2004:6) include to

- Recommend to the DA on policymaking decisions regarding the governance and agricultural extension delivery services in the district.
- Assist the DA in consolidating and promoting local agricultural institutions and public participation.
- Promote infrastructural and economic development through formulation, approval and execution of local agricultural development plans
- Ensure that there is equity in district agricultural extension service provision
- Supervise, monitor and evaluate the implementation of agricultural development activities in the district
- Encourage community to participate in agricultural self-help activities

In the District Agriculture Sub Committee, the councilors are supposed to play a facilitating role according to the Ministry of Agriculture (2004:6). Since May 2005, the district has been operating without elected local councilors. This can be attributed to implementation of programmes initiated by the central government sidelining local people’s priorities. For instance, in group discussions by farmers, they indicated that government do not address their concerns
citing an example of what happened in Beka village when they asked for a watering machine, treadle pump, actelic and dethane (chemicals for preservation of maize and potato plants respectively), but the government did not provide. Furthermore, in Mphoyo village, farmers demanded for new roots of Irish potatoes and beans but they came at a wrong time hence they did not use them and it was a waste of resources. Farmers therefore indicated that government has never helped them in terms of attaining to their demands but only the services the government feels farmers want are provided.

**District Agriculture Extension Coordinating Committee**

DAECC is composed of representatives from Department of Agriculture and Extension Services, NGO (those who provide services), micro-financing institutions such as Malawi Rural Finance Company, private sector such as input suppliers and farmer organizations (who provide services like farmer associations). The DAECC has several functions, which include

- Setting up standards for delivery of services
- Ensuring that quality services are provided
- Facilitating processing of memoranda of understanding and service charters
- Registering service providers
- Liaising with and advise the District Agriculture sub-committee on matters relating to agriculture development
- Planning agricultural extension services at district level
- Ensuring equity in service provision
- Coordinating provision of agricultural Extension services at District Level
- Harmonising approaches in service provision and delivery
- Receiving and providing feedback on service delivery
• Conducting monitoring and evaluation
• Lobbying for agriculture extension services within and outside the district assembly
• Linking agriculture extension service providers and farmers to the district assembly

District Stakeholder Panel (DSP)

According to the Ministry of Agriculture (2004:3), DSP is composed of representatives of smallholder security farmers who form 50% of the total membership, semi-commercial and commercial farmers, NGO farmer organisations, agribusiness groups, Community based organisations and relevant committees and the DADO plays a facilitating role. The DSP plays the following functions:

• Provides a forum for farmers through villages to express their demands
• Ensures right representation of all stakeholders and that each group is heard
• Ensures that villagers demands’ are articulated and aggregated
• Ensures that quality response to the demands is provided and maintained by the respective service providers (Ministry of Agriculture, 2004:4).

In Ntcheu district, the District Agriculture Development officer indicated that there are 20 members in the DSP, 10 are farmers and 10 are other stakeholders. She argued that since the composition of the DSP is similar to that of ASP, and that their functions are similar, agriculture issues are passed through Area development Committees and then to the District Stakeholder Panel. This means that Area Stakeholder panel is not functioning.

Area Stakeholder Panel (ASP)

The Ministry of Agriculture (2004:4) indicated that ASP is composed of representatives of
smallholder food security farmers who form 50% of total membership, semi-commercial and commercial farmers, NGO’s, farmer organisations, relevant committees, and the Area Extension Development Coordinator play a facilitating role. The functions of ASP as indicated by the Ministry of Agriculture (2004:4) are similar to those of DSP. The ASP is formed at every ADC and located at every TA. According to the Government of Malawi (2008:17), Njolomole Extension Planning Area has three Traditional Authorities, which are TA Njolomole, Masasa and Chakhumbira. This means that there are three Area Stakeholder Panels in Njolomole EPA. The ASP reports to the District Stakeholder Panel. Furthermore, the DSP is formed at District Agricultural Development Office level while ASP is at Extension Planning Area level.

In Njolomole EPA, the Area Extension Development Coordinator (AEDC) as a facilitator of Area Stakeholder Panel acknowledged that there are three ASPs in Njolomole EPA. The AEDC’s duty is to take up issues that have been raised from the sections (Model Village level) and provide recommendations to the District Stakeholder Panel. The AEDC of Njolomole indicated that ASP was formed because agricultural issues were sidelined in the Area Development Committee and a parallel structure had to be established to allow farmers to take part in decision-making and help them to demand quality services. The question is, is the Area Stakeholder panel in Njolomole EPA effective?

**Participation of Farmers in Area Stakeholder Panel in Njolomole EPA**

In order to assess participation of farmers in the Area Stakeholder Panel, the DADO, AEDC and five Area Extension Development Officers were asked if the panels have been established in the area, farmers are represented and have any impact on the farmers. The seven agricultural officers interviewed indicated that Area Stakeholder Panels have been established in Njolomole EPA and are helpful in promoting participation of farmers in agricultural activities. Five Agriculture
Extension Development Officers indicated that Area Stakeholder Panel was established three months before the interview and they have met once for briefing. In the meeting, they agreed to be meeting once a month but the Agriculture Extension Development Officers admitted that they have not met as ASP since the briefing.

The farmers who were interviewed indicated that they do not know about Area Stakeholder Panel and yet it is a forum where they are supposed to have representatives. This means that the ASP structure has not been functioning and farmers do not yet know its purpose. Furthermore, among the eight groups of farmers interviewed, one group from Mphoyo village indicated that their chairperson was invited to a meeting once but he did not know whether that was the Area Stakeholder Panel while the rest of the farmers interviewed had never been called to attend such a meeting. This means that the seven groups of farmers interviewed do not have representatives in the panel and they do not have any idea of the structure and what it is discussed. Whatever concerns they have are passed through the Agriculture Extension Development Officers indicating that the Area Stakeholder Panel, which is supposed to enable farmers to take part in planning and decision making, is not functioning in Njolomole EPA hence farmers are not aware of it and are not represented. Clapper (1996a:73) noted that most participatory structures are not represented by the majority beneficiaries but it is dominated by small elite group. This therefore hampers participation of citizens in participatory structures and farmers’ participation is affected in this case. The composition of the Area stakeholder panel promotes representative democracy than participatory. The problem is that those who represent others do not inform them hence to claim that people are really represented is a lie. Furthermore, considering that the composition of ASP is similar to that of DSP, and that ASP is formed at every ADC, agriculture officers may decide to neglect forming the ASP and using DSP instead.
Model Village

According to the Ministry of Agriculture (2004:7), Model Village is the centre of all activities. It is where Participatory Rural Appraisal (PRA) (Road to progress) exercise is administered. Under PRAs the procedures to be done include telling the farmers the purpose of the meeting, asking farmers what things they enjoy and things they suffer from and discuss this in sub-groups. Furthermore, a joint analysis of problems is done and identification of options that farmers can do among themselves or require the assistance of the field extension workers. In addition, options that are beyond the scope of both the farmers and the field extension workers and that which require external assistance, and the aligning of different activities according to what is done by farmers, in what month, and using what resources. Then project proposal are developed (Ministry of Agriculture and Food Security, 2005:16). The Area Executive Development Officers facilitate the articulation of farmer demands at village level. It is therefore expected that each village should have agriculture committee at village level that will take all that has been discussed under PRAs and put them in a legible form to the Area Stakeholder Panel. At this level, all issues that have been discussed that are not related to agriculture are forwarded to the VDC or ADC. This means that the village is the entry point for development under the decentralised system.

Kaarhus and Nyirenda (2006:29) indicated that the concept of Model Village assumes that the village is a “natural grouping of households” and is a “homogenous grouping of people” for effective planning and implementation of programmes. However, when using Model Village concept for planning and implementation of programmes involving service delivery, it should be recognised that a village will not only be characterised by “well -defined leadership and norms of governing the inhabitants”, there is some degree of economic differentiation and differences in
access to resources (Kaarhus&Nyirenda, 2006:29). For instance, there is diversity of interest and power relationships that may involve conflict as well as unequal distribution of benefits even from a participatory planning process.

In Njolomole EPA, agriculture committees have been established in different villages and the Area Extension Development Officers (AEDOs) play a facilitating role. Based on the focus group discussion with farmers, the village committees are composed of anyone in the village interested in farming and a chairperson is chosen among the interested farmers. The Agriculture Extension Development Officers develop work plans where they indicate projects to be conducted in the village and days of meetings with farmers in different villages. Frequency of meetings is determined on the number of projects to be implemented in the village and the demands made by farmers. Table 1 indicates the sections managed by Area Extension Development Officers interviewed, the number of villages they oversee, and the frequency of meetings with villagers.
Table 1: AEDOs interviewed, number of villages they oversee and frequency of visits

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>AEDOs</th>
<th>Villages</th>
<th>Frequency of visits</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Kadzakalowa</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Twice a month and depends on work plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Biriwiri</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Twice a month and depends on work plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilobwe</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Thrice a month and depends on work plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mlangeni</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Once a month and depends on work plan</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Njolomole</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Twice a month and depends on work plan</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1, indicates that five Agriculture Extension Development Officers were interviewed and the frequency of visits to the villages to meet with farmers mainly depends on the work plan. Three AEDOs from Kadzakalowa, Biriwiri and Njolomole indicated that they visit each village twice a month while AEDO from Chilobwe visits each village thrice a month and AEDO from Mlangeni once a month. This means that the AEDO of Chilobwe section visits farmers more frequently than the other sections. This can be due to more projects done in the area or that farmers call the officer regularly.

Agriculture Extension Development Officers and farmers use the farmers committees in villages in different ways. According to the Agriculture Extension Development Officers, farmer committees are used for demonstrations of new models of farming like manure production and use, tree planting, Sasakawa, briefing of agricultural programmes to be introduced in the area and registration of interested farmers. For example, they use Participatory Rural Appraisals (PRAs) in order to isolate issues. For instance, the Department of Agriculture has introduced up
scaling of cotton in Malawi, hence, PRAs were used to identify interested farmers in Njolomole EPA. On the other hand, farmers use the committees to demand irrigation scheme systems and other farming products like Actelic and markets for their products. This means that in Njolomole EPA, a Model Village is mainly used for implementation of projects but does not provide for decision-making on the part of farmers.

**Farmers’ participation in Model Village in Njolomole Extension Planning Area**

In any participatory processes, certain procedures are followed to ensure service delivery, accountability and participatory planning (Mac Laverty, 2002:4). In participatory planning participants are supposed to be aware of the issues to be discussed and be able to contribute where necessary. In order to find out participation of farmers at village level, Agriculture Extension Development Officers as facilitators of meetings in Njolomole Extension Planning Area were asked to rate farmers’ participation in farmer committees at village level in percentages. The rating was dependent on these factors: attendance of farmers in meetings, ability to demand a service and express their problems and implementing what has been demonstrated. Figure 3, indicates participation percentages of farmers in village committees according to Agriculture Extension Development Officers of Njolomole EPA.
According to figure 3, participation of farmers in Biriwiri section is 90%, Mlangeni section is 75%, Njolomole Section is 60%, Kadzakalowa section is 45% and Chilobwe section is 30%. This means participation of farmers varies in different sections. Agriculture Extension Development Officers gave the above mentioned percentages because in Biriwiri section the village headmen/women are active and are part of the committees hence, they encourage people to participate in the groups and since farmers respect their village leaders they participate actively in meetings with AEDOs and implement what has been taught. In Mlangeni section, the percentage is good because a majority of farmers participates but some farmers lack interest and they tend to ignore the meetings. In Njolomole section, most farmers support the projects and participate in meetings but most youth farmers ignore the meetings and only invite the AEDO when they face problems. In Kadzakalowa section the percentage is below 50% because participation of farmers depends on things they think would have immediate impact. For
instance, on issues of tree planting, participation is low because it takes long for an impact to be seen while like production of manure participation is high. In Chilobwe section, participation of farmers is very low because their participation depends on the theme of the meeting and some issues they feel they already know. What happens in Njolomole EPA justifies the point that when using Model Village concept there is diversity of interest and power relationships that may involve conflict as well as unequal distribution of benefits. Apart from the reasons given by Agriculture Extension Development Officers to support the percentages they gave, other factors might have also contributed to the differences in percentages according to sections.

Creighton (2005:7) indicated that for participation to take place, organised procedures must be put in place for the public and officials to engage in productive discussion. Creighton (2005:9) argued that informing the participants of the meeting is important because it enhances participation process. He further argues that the value of participation lies in the fact that participants must be aware of the issue before participation and the impact of them to participate. Therefore, participation of farmers in meetings with Agriculture Extension Development Officers, ability to demand a service in discussion and implementation of agricultural services also depends on the farmers’ knowledge of the agenda of the meetings, the day of the meeting and briefing and explanation of the service to be implemented. Table two, indicates responses of Agriculture Extension Development Officers in Njolomole EPA on how long it takes farmers to know about the day of meetings and the agenda before the meetings in the village committees.
Table 2: Knowledge of farmers on the day and agenda of meetings in sections

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sections</th>
<th>Duration before meeting</th>
<th>Agenda</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Biriwiri</td>
<td>4 days</td>
<td>Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mlangeni</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Njolomole</td>
<td>4 days</td>
<td>Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kadzakalowa</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>Known</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chilobwe</td>
<td>3 days</td>
<td>Known</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in table 2, farmers in all sections know about the agenda of the meetings before the day. Furthermore, table two shows that it takes three days for farmers of Mlangeni, Kadzakalowa and Chilobwe to know about the day of the meeting, and four days for Biriwiri and Mlangeni sections for farmers to know about the day of the meetings. It is important for farmers to know about the agenda and the day of a participatory meeting to prepare themselves to participate in the meeting. Based on table2, all AEDOs try their best to allow farmers know when they will meet and what they will discuss. This indicates that the procedures for participation in village committees are followed such that AEDOs are able to know and report to the Area Executive Development Coordinator what the farmers’ needs are. The question to be answered considering that Area Stakeholder Panels are not effective where priorities for the farmers demands are debated upon and equal distribution of resources is determined is, are the farmers’ needs addressed?

**Addressing needs of farmers**

Implementation of any program is supposed to help in addressing a need or problem. Therefore, implementation of the District Agriculture Extension Services System is supposed to help in
addressing the needs of farmers in Ntcheu and Njolomole EPA. In order to know whether the services of the agriculture department addresses the people’s needs, Agriculture Officers composed of District Agriculture Development Officer, Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator and five Agriculture Extension Workers and farmers were asked to provide percentages on the provision of services to farmers. Table 3 presents the frequencies of percentages given by agriculture officers and farmers scoring the programmes implemented in Njolomole EPA to determine whether they address people’s needs.

Table 3: Agriculture officers and farmers scores on provision of services to farmers in Njolomole EPA

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Percentages % of service provision in Njolomole</th>
<th>Frequency / officers</th>
<th>frequency / farmers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>40</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>50</td>
<td>1</td>
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</tr>
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<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>70</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>80</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>90</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As indicated in Table 3, the mode percentages according to officers are 90% and 60%. Table 3 shows that two officers claimed that the government provides almost 90% of services; they argue that they are able to provide awareness and sensitization to farmers when a new programme is to be implemented. Despite having so many villages to operate in at a time, officers make a plan to
visit every village twice a month or more depending on projects to be done in the area. Officers however, admitted that they rarely manage to visit all villages in the area because the villages are many as indicated in table 1.

Two officers indicated that they provide about 60% of services to the farmers but farmers are not satisfied with the services. The officers argued that this is due to lack of enough workers in the area for instance; the District Agriculture Development Officer indicated that in Ntcheu district there are supposed to be 109 extension workers but only 49 are operating. In Njolomole EPA, the District Agriculture Development Officer indicated that there are supposed to be 13 sections but only eight are operating. The Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator indicated that the ratio of extension worker to farmers is supposed to be 1:800 but now it is 1:2500.

Furthermore, tables 3 shows that one officer indicated that the government provides about 40% of the services because farmers expect a lot from the government and sometimes fail to take initiatives. For instance, in Kadzakalowa section, farmers asked for a canal which seemed very important to them to be able to irrigate their plants but the government did not respond. One officer indicated that the government provides 50% of the services and another officer claimed that 70% of services are provided in the area.

Based on table 3 the percentages provided by officers seem to be exaggerated because the challenges available in the area outweigh the percentages given. According to officers, the Department of Agriculture tries to provide services that they feel will help to address farmers’ needs in Njolomole EPA. However, not all farmers’ needs are addressed due to challenges mentioned and lack of resources.

The percentages by officers differ from the percentages of farmers where six groups of farmers
scored the provision of services by the government as 40%. Farmers indicated that the government partly addresses their problems through farm input subsidy programme as discussed in section 4.2. However, distribution of coupons to buy the subsidised inputs is unequal and encourages hatred and misunderstanding between villagers and village headman. Farmers indicated that the government does not address their concerns for example in Beka village they asked for the watering machine, treadle pump, actelic and dethane (chemicals for preservation of maize and potato plants respectively), the government did not provide. Furthermore, in Mphoyo village, farmers demanded for new roots for Irish potatoes and beans but it came at a wrong time hence they did not use them and it was a waste of resources. Farmers therefore indicated that government has never helped them in terms of attaining to their demands but only the services the government feels farmers want are provided.

One group of farmers scored 30% and another group scored 50%. These scores came up because farmers indicated that they were not satisfied with most of the services the government provides. The farmers never used the structures available to seek explanations from the government as to why their problems were not addressed and when they would be because they were not aware of the structures like Area Stakeholder Panel and district Stakeholder Panel. Farmers therefore continue with their farming despite the fact that government does not address their needs because they realise that farming is theirs. For the sake of survival, farmers sell their produce at cheaper prices and they do several peace works to buy fertilizer for their crops. Therefore, the most occurring percentage of 40% by farmers indicates that government is not doing much in trying to address farmers’ needs. Farmers commended the government for providing Agriculture Extension Development Officers in the areas despite the fact that most of their demands are not addressed.
Despite failure of the government through the Department of Agriculture to provide services that addresses peoples’ needs as indicated by officers and farmers, six of the Agriculture Officers indicated that when farmers’ needs are not addressed officers are frank with them and assure them that the services will be provided at the right time. One AEDO indicated that farmers are assured that the services will be provided and neglect them when they are not able to provide that service. Furthermore, one of the officers indicated that most Agriculture Extension Development Officers are not well trained because they are supposed to hold a Diploma in the field of expertise like extension services from Natural Resources College in Lilongwe. This he argued is affecting implementation of some programmes.

Based on table 3, it can be concluded that the Department of Agriculture through the DAESS has more to do to ensure that farmers’ needs are addressed. The farmers heavily rely on the government to provide for them and whenever it fails, they lose trust. The Agriculture Officers admitted that resources are not enough in order to meet farmers’ needs. Therefore, the department is faced with many challenges in the provision of services to address farmers’ needs. More challenges are discussed further in the report.

4.4 The impact of participatory processes in agricultural activities in Njolomole EPA

Every programme that is implemented is supposed to have impact on the ones implementing and where the programme is being implemented. Similarly, participatory structures in agricultural activities have impacts on the officers, farmers and the community at large. In Njolomole EPA, Agriculture Officers interviewed admitted that participatory structures are not in full operation therefore, they did not want to attribute the impact of farming they have seen on farmers to be the result of participatory structures like DSP and ASP. According to Agriculture Officials, the impact of participatory structures in the area is minimal because the programme has just been
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started and briefing was done three months before the interview to have structures like DSP and ASP but the Model Village has been there for a long time. This means that most benefits are attributed to the functioning of Village Committees.

According to the seven agriculture officers interviewed, the impact of participatory processes on farmers is that since the programme is demand driven it has increased farmers participation in agricultural activities and that farmers are able to demand services for example when they do not have Actelic or need of fishponds they send requests and they get the services. Secondly, farmers have gained knowledge on the new styles of farming to produce more yields like Sasakawa, irrigation, selection of potato plants for the next season while still in the gardens. Thirdly, farmers are able to share knowledge to other villagers who are not part of the farming groups, remind each other in the absence of Agriculture Extension Development Officers and able to walk short distances to seek advice from extension workers because they live within the extension areas. Fourthly, the District Agriculture Development Officer indicated that she receives a report from the Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator every two weeks and the results indicate that food security to farmers and the community at large has been promoted due to the demand driven policy. Other benefits to farmers’ include buying of motorcycles, bicycles, goats and chicken. Farmers are also able to pay school fees for their children through farming.

Officers like the District Agriculture Development Officer and Agriculture Extension Development Coordinator indicated that participatory structures have eased their work because it is somehow simplified and the committees are so helpful. “If the implementation of the programme was well done we would have been enjoying in the offices because there could be less to be done” (Ntcheu District Agriculture Development Officer, Personal interview, 2011
March 14). Based on this view, the District Agriculture Development Officer admitted that implementation of participatory structures is ineffective in the area. However, as officers they have also benefited in gaining of new knowledge, improvement of their communication skills and employment especially Agriculture Extension Development Officers.

Farmers concurred with agriculture officers by highlighting the benefits that were mentioned by officers and acknowledging that although they have not been using other participatory structures apart from village groups their contact and dialogue with Agriculture Extension Development Officers have brought impacts in their farming.

4.5 Challenges in implementing public participation in the Agriculture Sector

Implementation of decentralisation process in the agriculture sector is faced with many challenges. Just as the challenges highlighted under section 4.2 on the Ministry of Agriculture and Food security, Njolomole EPA is affected with the same. For instance, interviews with Agriculture Officers on the challenges they face to ensure farmers participation in planning and implementation of agriculture activities in Njolomole EPA indicated that there is inadequate staff, which makes it difficult to reach out to all farmers at the needed time in order to provide services considering that sections are very big. Furthermore, resources are not enough to support the programme and address the people’s needs, for instance, the whole department has one car for the district and Agriculture Development Officers use bicycles. Considering that the area is hilly this affects mobility of officers to reach out to the farmers and during rainy season officers face difficulties to visit farmers because they do not have protective wear like boots. Furthermore, lack of incentives for Agriculture Development Officers is also affecting their performance, for instance, they are given 80 kwacha per month (an equivalent of three Rands) as maintenance fee. According to the District Agriculture Development Officer, the Agriculture
Sector Wide Approach Programme (ASWAP) is helping in pumping more resources to the programme but some resources are still lacking. Other challenges include low participation and lack of interest from farmers, illiteracy of farmers, which leads to consuming more time to demonstrate some programmes. Therefore, the district is not effective and efficient in the dissemination of services because managing the whole district with few resources is a big challenge and therefore participatory processes are compromised.

Eight groups of farmers indicated that they also face challenges in their farming. The challenges include difficulties for them to find fertilizer because it is expensive while their products are sold at cheaper rate. Farmers indicated that although the government is following fertilizer subsidy policy, the coupons for purchasing the fertilizer are not enough for all farmers. For instance, one farmer said that “One coupon we share a bag each” meaning although they are supposed to have two coupons for fertilizer, they only get one because the coupons are few. Other challenges include lack of resources like irrigation resources, cement for Mfuleni (rivers to make dams), lack of Actelic, Dethane, machine to pump water, sprayer although they bought one for the EPA but it is not enough for a large group and lack of markets to sell their produce.

According to farmers, lack of monitoring of projects in the EPA is also a problem. For instance, at Chapita village they were given goats by an NGO to be divided to every family when it gives birth but due to lack of monitoring, the projects did not benefit all. Furthermore, the same farmers asked for a fishpond and they were granted, but they do not know how to harvest fish although the Agriculture Extension Development Officer for the area is available. Farmers are sometimes promised Actelic “Super guard” at a cheaper rate but it is very scarce (the stock is not enough for all farmers) while available stock of Actelic is expensive. The challenges faced by farmers lead to lack of interest to participate in committees because they do not see the benefit.
In order to overcome the challenges, farmers indicated that they use manual cans, and sometimes they use stones to safeguard water for irrigation, which do not do much. They also buy fertilizer per kilogram and do piece jobs to support their farming. Therefore, farmers argued that the benefit of farming is not much because their products are sold at a cheaper price but they work hard realising that they are the ones who benefit. Brynard (1996:41) argues that the process of participation requires resources to carry out decisions, available options and final choice, otherwise it will be a conflict of interests and no achievement would be made. Lack of resources therefore is hampering effective implementation of participatory structures in Njolomole EPA.

**Conclusion**

This chapter has discussed participatory processes in the local government of Malawi and in agricultural activities. It has further presented the findings of the research, which aimed at assessing participatory processes in agricultural activities. This research has established that Malawi government has established participatory structures at the local government level to enable participation of the grassroots and these include Village Development Committees, Area Executive Committee, Area Development Committees and District Executive Committee. These committees have been established through the decentralisation policy and the local government act of 1998. Through the decentralization policy, the agriculture sector has also devolved its administrative power to the district level and through the New Agriculture Extension Policy participatory structures have been established to allow farmers to demand quality services and hold officers accountable for their responsibilities. From the findings, the chapter has indicated that although the participatory structures have been established, they are not effective to address the farmer’s needs. This is due to challenges like lack of full devolution of power to enable the district make by-laws and lack of resources among others. However, what has been implemented
in Njolomole Extension Planning Area so far is benefiting the farmers, Agriculture Officers as well as communities at large.
CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

This research was aimed at assessing public participation processes in the local government of Malawi with specific focus to agricultural processes in Ntcheu district. An assessment was made and the results indicated that participation of farmers in agriculture processes is low because of several factors that hinder them. Furthermore, the results indicated that although District Agriculture Extension Services System has not been put into maximum use what has been implemented so far has benefited farmers, the community and agricultural officers. However, there are so many challenges affecting effective implementation of the District Agriculture Extension Services System thereby affecting farmers’ participation in agricultural processes. The conclusions of the research will be discussed based on the findings, which are in line with the objectives. Recommendations have been provided based on what participants of the research recommended and insights from the literature read. Furthermore, areas of further research have been suggested.

5.1 Conclusions

Through the decentralisation processes and the local government act of 1998, the government of Malawi has managed to devolve its administrative power to the District Assemblies such that structures to enable the citizens to participate at grassroots level have been established. The research has established that the central government manipulates participatory processes because the structures established are not effective and therefore not able to allow the citizens to participate in planning and decision-making. The central government does not respect what is
mandated in the constitution thereby neglecting the election of local councilors who play a big role in the District Assembly and in facilitating participatory processes at the local level. This means that the decentralisation process has not promoted down-up planning and decision-making. As a result, top-down approaches are put into practice.

What is happening in participatory processes in Ntcheu district supports what Creighton (2005:7) claimed that in public participation administrative decisions matter more than those of elected officials such that the political elites may decide to neglect a participatory process. In Njolomole Extension Planning Area, some farmers do not know the structures they are supposed to use to raise their developmental concerns. Therefore, participatory structures in agricultural processes are more of theoretically where by farmers do not have impact on the decisions made.

In terms of agriculture processes in Malawi, the study has established that decentralisation processes enabled devolution of administrative power from the ministry to the district and the local level. Ntcheu District has not been an exception from this devolution. However, the dissemination of responsibilities is faced with challenges, which include lack of full devolution of some powers by the ministry and lack of enough resources at grassroots level.

The research has furthermore established that through the new Agriculture Extension Policy established in 2000, which is in line with the decentralization demands, participatory structures at district, area and village levels have been established in Ntcheu district. The research found that the District and Area Stakeholder Panels are not effective because they have just been established in the area but farmers use village committees to raise their concerns. Participation of farmers at village level varies among sections. However, in most sections participation is good because Agriculture Extension Development Officers inform the farmers about the day of the
meeting and agenda in time enabling farmers to prepare in advance.

Low participation in some sections is due to lack of interest on the part of farmers. This is possible because farmers might be discouraged since most of their needs are not addressed hence, this affects their participation. Lack of awareness of other available structures that would enhance farmers’ participation like District and Area Stakeholder Panels is also a problem. Theron (2009:17) emphasized through the people-centered development theory that the focus of development must be on the people’s capabilities, potentials, power, resources, knowledge and skills. It is therefore difficult to enhance farmers’ participation if they are not aware of available structures to influence their participation, which would enhance their capabilities. Knowledge of participatory structures is very crucial to the farmers because it would help them express their concerns and enable them to participate in decision-making process.

Empowerment theory by Friedman emphasizes that knowledge empowers people to participate in whatever issues that affect them. For instance, participation of farmers at village level has empowered most farmers to implement new models of farming, be able to teach other community members who are not in the groups, and farmers are now empowered to demand a service. However, participation at village level does not encourage decision-making but implementation of services. Therefore, lack of effective implementation of structures like Area Stakeholder Panel is affecting farmers’ participation in planning and decision-making because they only participate actively in village committees.

Ineffectiveness of the Area and District Stakeholder Panels is affecting dissemination of services especially for the agriculture department to address the farmers’ needs because what they provide is not what the people really want but what the government wants. However,
implementation of programmes developed by government attracts participation of farmers because they see the benefits although their decisions are not sought before implementation of programmes. Farmers perceive their government not as helpful because they are excluded from the decision making process.

5.2 Recommendations

Based on the research findings, the study recommends changes in the operations of Ntcheu district in order to allow participation in decision making for the farmers needs to be addressed. Therefore, the government of Malawi should:

- Respect different positions and their responsibilities and monitor them to avoid manipulation by the central government.

- Respect the constitution because it is a supreme law that guides the country. In that way policy implementation as supported by the Acts will bring more successes than challenges. There is a need to conduct elections of local councilors for accountability purposes and for the government to gain trust from the people.

- Follow the down-up planning whereby farmers’ ideas from village groups should be considered. In that way, farmers would support programmes. This means effective use of different panels developed in the DAES structure.

- Since the percentage of farmers in District Stakeholder Panel and Area Stakeholder Panel is 50%, farmers’ representatives should be monitored to ensure that issues discussed at the panels reach out to all the farmers. Furthermore, farmers’ representatives should consult farmers before the meetings.
• Provide more resources at Ntcheu Agriculture District Office for efficient and effective implementation of the District Agriculture Extension Services System. For example, provide transport like motorcycles to extension workers and gumboots, one more car for the district because they only have one. This would enable the workers to reach out to different villages at the needed time and would enable the District Agriculture Development Officer to easily facilitate the panels at district and area levels and through the panels to prioritise and allocate funds to the needs and demands of farmers.

• Employ more extension workers for Ntcheu district because in Njolomole Extension Planning Area, out of 13 sections eight are in operation. Lack of enough workers in the area is due to lack of incentives, therefore, by employing more workers and providing perquisites for them would help to match the ratio of 1-800 which is the recommended ration of worker to farmer and workers would be more efficient in their delivery of services.

• Through the Department of Agriculture in Ntcheu District, create awareness programmes to enable farmers know about different panels at district and area levels and provide information channels either through the extension workers or Village head men or women. This would enable farmers to know the channels where agriculture issues are prioritised and be able to raise their concerns and demands. In that way, committee members would be encouraged to report to their communities what they have discussed in different committees. Farmers therefore, would feel to be represented and hence be confident that they are taking part in planning and decision-making.

• Empower agriculture officers to raise their concerns through different channels for
devolution to be effective.

- Encourage extension workers to use different ways in reaching out to farmers in order to attract farmers’ participation.

- Through the Department of Agriculture, create markets to be an outlet for the farmers’ products. For example, the big companies must be encouraged to buy goods from the villages and build a tomato sauce factory in the district because most farmers lose tomato since it is difficult to preserve.

- Provide training on the preservation of tomato to farmers to cut on loss. For example, they can be making tomato paste, canned tomatoes, tomato puree and others to improve on the products thereby generating more money. Although farmers indicated that a market is being built at Lizulu within the district, it has been put on hold because of lack of resources.

- Provide materials for irrigation like treadle pumps and chemicals for prevention of diseases. This would enable farmers to produce more even out of rainy season.

- Reintroduce clubs to buy fertilizer on loan basis because only few benefit from the subsidy programme. Prior to democratic government in Malawi, farmers used to get farm inputs on loan basis through clubs and in this way, they were benefiting a lot. The introduction of fertilizer subsidy policy in 2005, enabled farmers to buy subsidised fertilizer using coupons but distribution of coupons is faced with corruption hence most people do not benefit.

This means that effective implementation of District Agriculture Extension Services System is
needed in Ntcheu district to allow farmers to participate in planning and decision making of programmes implemented in Njolomole EPA. The farmers are supposed to use different channels to raise their concerns especially when government is failing to address their needs and concerns. Furthermore, the farmers are encouraged to use different means to help the government generate resources for different programmes in that way their developmental needs would be addressed.

5.3 Areas for further study

Due to limitations of resources and time, some areas were not considered in this research study. Therefore, the study recommends the following areas for further study:

- Assess participation of NGOs in agricultural activities in Ntcheu district
- Compare farmers participation in different Extension Planning Areas of Ntcheu District
- Determine relationships of different stakeholders in the agriculture sector and their impact on agricultural processes
- Asses decentralisation process in Ntcheu District

5.4 Conclusion

This research has concluded that participation of farmers in agricultural programmes is poor. Programmes that could allow farmers to participate have been designed by the department of agriculture however, implementation is met with manipulation and lack of resources to the part of government and negligence to the part of farmers. Therefore the research has recommended effective implementation of the programmes through active participation of farmers and more support from the government.
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APPENDIX A: MAP OF NTCHEU DISTRICT EXTENSION PLANNING AREAS

APPENDIX B: MAP OF MALAWI SHOWING NTCHEU DISTRICT

Source: Government of Malawi, 2008
APPENDIX C: SEMI-STRUCTURED QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FACE TO FACE INTERVIEWS

1. What structures are available in Ntcheu that promotes participation of farmers in agricultural activities?

2. How many times do you meet as
   a. District Agricultural Committee
   b. District Agriculture Extension Coordination Committee
   c. District Stakeholder Panel
   d. Area Stakeholder Panel

3. How do you conduct your meetings?

4. What percentage can you give to participation of farmers in such committees?

5. What do you think is the reason for the outcome of question 3?

6. How long does it take for participant of the committee to know about the agenda of the meeting when it is scheduled?

7. For the programmes that have been implemented so far, are farmers informed before or after implementation? Please give an example

8. What percentage can you give yourself on the provision of services to farmers?

9. Do you think farmers are satisfied with the way services are provided to them? Please explain by giving examples.

10. What measures are taken if farmers’ needs are not addressed?

11. What percentage can you give to your relationship with farmers?

12. What do you think is the reason for the outcome of question 8?

13. Through this agricultural process (extension services) is there any impact on the farmers, the community and yourself as an officer?
14. What percentage can you give to the impact of this process?

15. Are there any challenges you face in providing services to farmers?

16. What are the challenges?

17. How do you overcome them?

18. Can you suggest any ways the department can do to influence participation of farmers in agricultural activities.

Extra question for the District Agriculture Development Officer

1. How do you ensure that farmers grievances are prioritised in the DAC as well as assembly.
APPENDIX D: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

1. What are the structures available within the district that you use to raise your concerns in your area?

2. Do you feel like you are part of these structures? How?

3. Are your concerns addressed?

4. Of the programs that have been implemented, when did you know about them? After or before?

5. Do you take part when decisions for the programs are being made?

6. What percentage can you give to the operations of DSP, ASP and the Agriculture department in the area? Why?

7. Are you satisfied with the way your needs are addressed?

8. What measures have you put in place to ensure that your needs are addressed?

9. If they are not, what do you do?

10. What have you benefited as farmers through your participation in the DSP and ASP?

11. What have your community benefitted with the presence of these structures?

12. Are there any challenges you face as farmers in participating in these structures?

13. How do you overcome them?

14. Please suggest other ways the department should do to influence your participation in agricultural activities.