

AN EXPLORATORY STUDY HIGHLIGHTING THE COMPLEXITIES IN THE
TARGETING OF BENEFICIARIES IN MALAWI'S SOCIAL CASH TRANSFER
PROGRAMME

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ABSTRACT

“The rise of social protection in form of social safety nets is attributed to the forceful return of poverty onto the international development agenda credited to World Bank and the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP)” (Chisinga, 2007:3). The basis of the discussion of social protection as a new model for development derives from the vision of the initiative as a path to sustainable economic development due to its holistic approach to poverty eradication and capability deprivation (Taylor, 2008).“In Africa, where pre-existing welfare regimes are often absent or comparatively very weak, the origins of cash transfer schemes stem from the search for alternatives to food and input transfers to tackle hunger”(Slater,2011:256). In the sub-Saharan region, for example, countries such as South Africa, Zambia, Kenya, Namibia and Malawi have similarly embraced the trend by adopting social grants and cash transfers as a solution to poverty and capability deprivation. Malawi, portrays a vivid image of a country with little resources for 17 million inhabitants, leaving more than half of the population below the poverty line (Malawi Growth and Development Strategy (MDGS) III report (2017). The goal of the Malawi Social Cash Transfer Program (SCTP) is to reduce poverty, hunger and increase school enrolment among the poorest 10% of households. Targeting the correct 10% is key to the success of the program. The World Bank Group, Malawi Poverty Assessment (2016), calls into question the likelihood of precisely targeting the chronically poor people in such initiatives. On the other hand, Houssou et al., 2007 and Slater, 2011 insist on the need to evaluate the foresee-ability of contextual intervention programs, especially if a country does not have the capacity for widespread social grants as targeting becomes a matter of concern. The idea is that social cash transfers will be successful in reducing poverty if the right individuals are targeted. Considering the high poverty rate in Malawi and the gaps between the lower poverty deciles and the income profile are marginal (Ellis, 2008), how accurate is the decentralized targeting process? Based on this rationale, this exploratory research explored and highlights the complexities in targeting of beneficiaries in the program which, as

a result has contributed to the derailment of the program. Findings show that the Government of Malawi (GoM) has overlooked the necessary control mechanisms to achieve effective targeting. As such, the study identifies anomalies in the targeting process that play a significant role in affecting the achievement of the goal of the program. Thus, SCTP falls short of combating poverty in a multi-dimensional manner.

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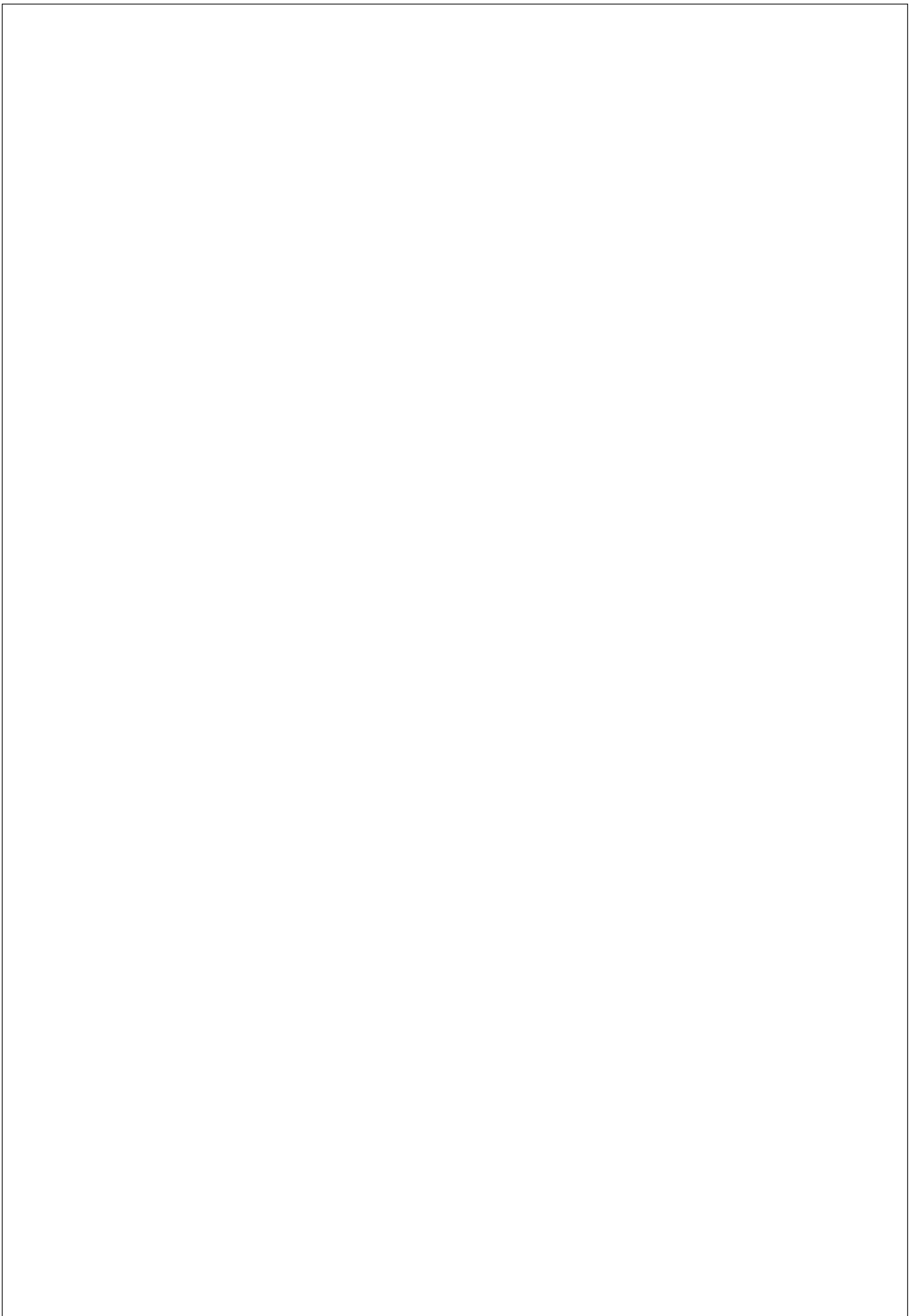
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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

SSA	sub-Saharan Africa
SCTP	Social Cash Transfers Programme
SCT	Social Cash Transfer
MNSSP	Malawi National Social Support Programme
UBR	Unified Beneficiary Registry
IHPS	Integrated Household Panel Survey
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
MDGS	Malawi's Development Growth Strategy
IHPS	Integrated Household Panel Survey
UN	United Nations
AU	Africa Union
CT	Cash Transfer
CCT	Conditional Cash Transfer
UCT	Unconditional Cash Transfer
UNDP	United Nations Development Programme
HDR	Human Development Report
CSSC	Community Social Support Committee
KFW	Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau
PWP	Public Work Program
WFS	World Food Summit



CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.0 Introduction

"Ideas about tackling persistent extreme poverty in Africa have grown rapidly over the last decade, largely under the umbrella term social protection" (Ellis and Maliro, 2013:576). Ferguson (2015) and Ellis (2006) have gone a long way towards describing the phenomenon that could be perceived as a new development model. Ellis (2006) has argued that the sub-Saharan Africa (SSA) region inhabits a highly vulnerable population of peasants and accredits their predicament to neo-liberal policies that cater to the interests of the Global North rather than to the South. Ndhlovu (2017), Ferguson (2015) and Ellis (2006) accordingly advocated for the need to shift the approach of development in Africa by abandoning the European and Eastern model of development to an African centred model of development where African development challenges are contextualized. To do this, they advocate for an approach to development that directly addresses the issue at hand in the SSA region: poverty.

To mitigate against the high vulnerability of households in the SSA region, Ellis (2006) called on policymakers to invest in social protection as an immediate and direct solution to the issue of vulnerable households. Rising economic inequality could be the primary driver behind social protection policies in Africa. Inequality is a 'pre-condition' for social grants in South Africa and Namibia, both in terms of generating a need and making it far more possible to prevent redistribution to the non-poor (Devereux 2001: 22; cited in Hickey, 2007:7).

Considering the high rate of poverty and inequality, SSA countries have taken initiatives in the hope of reducing the risk of vulnerable households in the region. South Africa is leading the pack with diverse social grants (Ferguson, 2015). Due to variations in context, Malawi also located in the SSA region has taken a slightly different approach to policy on social protection than South Africa. The discourse for social protection and initiatives of the programmes have been rooted as far back as Malawi's independence in 1964. However, there was a delay to acknowledge

social protection measures being provided as a development agenda (Chisinga, 2007). As Kalebe-Nyamongo and Marquette, (2014) placed the blame for the delay on Malawian elites that have looked at social grants as a form of encouraging the poor to be lazy rather than safety nets that act as a tool for poverty reduction.

“The key political actors and agencies that might be associated with social protection in Africa are arguably the political elites who set the terms of political and policy debates, and the administrative/bureaucratic agencies that will either lobby for, and/or implement social protection initiatives” (Hickey, 2007:5).

Pritchett 2005; cited in Hickey, (2007) and Kalebe-Nyamongo and Marquette, (2014) attribute poverty responses to perceptions/attitudes towards the causes of poverty. Should people accept that 'the poor' are poor because of their lack of commitment to contribute to national development or that the larger powers out of control play a role in their situation? The former perception will not generate favourable support compared to the latter, which sees the poor as worthy of support. In the latter case, the role of the government is emphasized and justified in responding to possible social protection programmes. This understanding is the source of Malawi's social protection intervention.

Global social protection policy informs how less developed countries such as Malawi, seeking donor approval, form their national social protection framework. It was only a matter of time before Malawi joins the SSA bandwagon that is revamping the face of its social protection system by protecting the vulnerable through a cash-based social welfare system. To be clear, similar social security development policies have been in effect in this part of the world since the 1960s, when most countries gained independence, albeit in varying forms. The development is not recent as stated; rather, the terminology of social protection is a relatively new addition to the vocabulary of SSA countries, especially Malawi. A social protection program was introduced in 2006, in line with what Ferguson (2015) proposes to transfer cash directly to the poor. This is an

intervention referred to as the Social Cash Transfers Program (SCTP) which targets 10% of the poorest households in a specific locality (district).

As other social grants in the SSA area, the project impact was both praised and criticized. Evident criticisms in literature and government reports, is the inconsistencies evident in the targeting of the program. Miller et al., (2010), Slater (2011) and the Review of the Malawi National Social Support Program (2016), highlighted predominant inclusion and exclusion errors in the Malawi SCTP.

Accordingly, this research focuses on the identification of discrepancies in the targeting of SCTP beneficiaries and the challenges the discrepancies have created in attaining the goals of the program; poverty and hunger reduction and increase in school enrolment. To begin with, Slater 2010; cited in Slater (2011), argued against the use of poverty-proxy labor constrained as an effective proxy for targeting the poor. It illustrates how labor constraint as a proxy for deprivation has led to the error of exclusion, ultimately creating difficulties in achieving the goals of the programme. The goal of this research is to illustrate common complexities that pose difficulties in achieving the objectives of the programme.

1.1 Background of the research

SCTP referred to locally as '*Mtukula Pakhomo*' is a poverty alleviation intervention (social protection program) which targets ten percent (10%) of the poorest households in Malawi. There is a decentralized system of targeting, whereby representatives of the local community from each district identify the ultra-poor and labor constrained households.

In 2009, the program was extended to eight additional districts, using the same selection criteria (ultra-poor and labor-constrained households). By 2014, Malawi's SCTP was extended to 9

additional districts, covering a total of 18 districts. It was only in 2017 that changes were made to the SCTP targeting approach to include Proxy Means of Testing (PMT) originating from the Unified Beneficiary Registry (UBR). The UBR is a database containing information on all beneficiaries of social support programs in Malawi, including SCTP recipients. The harmonized targeting mechanism employed under the UBR uses a combination of the initial SCTP targeting system, whereby local district representatives are still responsible for the selection of household beneficiaries and proxy means testing. “The UBR was implemented in 2017, when rolling out the SCTP program to the remaining 10 districts; having a total of 28 districts” (Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability and Social Welfare, 2017:10).

UBR was a response to the concerns of donors over disintegrated social protection programmes running concurrently in Malawi. Assuming it will also automatically reduce targeting errors observed since 2006 if applied to all 28 districts. Whether the assumption is valid or not is beyond the scope of the research as currently the UBR has not been introduced in the previous 18 districts that used the targeting criteria that this study is concerned with. As of 2019, the program had beneficiaries selected on two parallel targeting systems: those chosen before the introduction of the UBR and those selected after the harmonized mechanism. This research is concerned with the targeting system of these 18 districts before the introduction of UBR as re-targeting did not happen.

1.2 Research Problem:

1.2.1 Empirical Gap

Malawi's SCTP has two parallel selection criteria operating concurrently in a single social grant program which is problematic. This parallel dynamic contributes to the questioning of the eligibility of the beneficiary households selected. The relatively small number (10%) selected in each district increases the likelihood of exclusion errors, leaving some vulnerable households unprotected. Nevertheless, this work does not look at the effect of this targeting paradox on a

single social grant program, but instead to highlight the difficulty of uniform targeting by using a decentralized framework. The hypothesis is that the inconsistencies in the targeting process have created room for challenges that could hinder sustainable poverty reduction.

1.2.2 Scholarly Gap

“Ultra-poor has been defined as the lowest economic level, with no assets or living through under one meal a day” (Miller, Tsoka and Reichert, 2010:487). While Schubert and Slater (2006) define ultra-poor as hunger, malnourishment, begging, and having no valuable assets such as livestock. On the other hand, labour constrained households have been defined as households composed of members that are unfit to work, or if the ratio of unfit to fit members exceeds three (Miller, Tsoka and Reichert, 2011). The hypothesis questions the targeting criteria; the operationalization of the proxies of poverty, as to how they are being applied in a specific locality. This comes from what has been highlighted by Miller, Tsoka and Reichert (2010) in the studies of Malawi’s SCTP. “Some of these poverty proxies are inappropriate, given that households face hunger and most do not have valuable assets (83% own no goats, 93% no pigs and 95% no cattle)” (Miller et al., 2010:490). Does the conceptualization of the targeting criteria, in practise translate into inconsistent application of the proxies of poverty? If so, do these inconsistencies create challenges in meeting the program’s objective?

1.3 Poverty Defined

To shed more light on the targeting error, an understanding of poverty in Malawi and how poverty has been defined in this study is essential.

Defining poverty is complicated because it has become internationally politicized, adapting with time to the global climate. The current trend has seen the connection between poverty

and development. Graaff (2003) provided an account of how poverty was originally viewed as economic deprivation that could be eradicated with economic means.

However, failure to eradicate poverty with emphasis on economic interventions led to alternative ways of conceptualizing poverty and interventions. He, later terms poverty as “having economic, political, cultural, emotional and psychological dimensions to it. It means that people suffer many more wounds than just the physical, and it means that poverty is a state of vulnerability” (Graaff, 2003:8). It is consistent with Sen’s (1992) perception of poverty. To Sen (1992), an individual/household should be classified as poor if they do not have the vectors to enable their functioning’s of freedom. Essentially, being vulnerable and limited in what they perceive as possibilities in life.

Poverty therefore is a multidimensional phenomenon. Focus will not only dwell on the monetary limitation but also on the social, political, cultural, and psychological, thus looking into opportunities and access to health, education, infrastructure, agriculture, cash economy, and resistance to climate shocks. This multi-dimensional approach has been motivated by studies specific to Malawi, that have investigated the determinants of poverty. “Human resources, physical infrastructure, ownership of productive assets, access to wage jobs, and involvement in agriculture all help to minimize the probability of poverty” (Mussa and Pauw, 2011:2). What this study further highlights, is the widespread vulnerability to adverse shocks across the country. Consequently, acknowledging that Poverty in Malawi has different connotations and dynamics.

“Households might not currently be poor, but they may be prone to become poor due to adverse shocks. It is not always clear who are vulnerable, and accordingly, eradicating poverty entails both the identification of who are poor today and of ways to protect households that may become poor in the future” (Mussa and Pauw, 2011:3).

Studies such as these, justify the need for suitable poverty eradication interventions to the vulnerable groups but with accurate targeting. Drawing from Miller, Tsoka and Reichert (2010)

who allude to the targeting errors in the SCTP, there is a risk for poor households not to be selected as distinction between poor and ultra-poor recipients is not drawn. The research is under the assumption that, the decentralization of targeting has created inconsistencies in implementation. The understanding of ultra-poor and labour constrained for instance might not be consistent from government to local community representatives responsible for targeting in various districts. This can lead to the inclusion and the exclusion errors in the districts running the programme. Consequently, the hypothesis drawn from this: deferment in meeting the objective of SCTP.

1.4 Significance of the study

Literature has shunned away from the relational (linkages between various elements/people of the program) and symbolic (responses/interpretations based on significant symbols) dimensions of the impact of the SCT's in Malawi. Despite the promising results of the SCTP, MacAuslan and Riemenschneider (2011) have argued that impact assessment studies should go beyond material factors. Impact studies should be related to the symbolic and relational dimensions defined in the network. In this context, this research will explore the conceptualization and implementation of poverty from administrators, implementers, all the way to beneficiaries' perspectives. How this then plays a crucial role in shaping sustainable poverty reduction initiatives. The relationship between successful targeting and poverty reduction, putting the paper in the relational and symbolic dimensions of the social cash transfer system in Malawi.

Secondly, as Miller, Tsoka and Reichert (2010) pointed out, the initial pilot stage in Mchinji district was problematic because there were high cases of inclusion and exclusion errors. Now that the SCTP has been extended to all 28 districts, there is a need to stress the urgency

of retargeting the initial 18 districts in order to have a uniform selection criterion, since the introduction and use of the UBR should not be confused with rectification of the exclusion error targeting. This can be echoed if evidence has been demonstrated on the usefulness of uniformity in targeting.

Lastly, as Ferguson (2015) and Ellis, (2006) have said, social protection is a new development model. Motivated by Malawi's pervasive poverty and in line with the global wave of the interlink between poverty and development. The operation of the social cash transfer scheme in Malawi needs to be evaluated if the project is to contribute to the poverty reduction goal.

1.5 Summary of key issues

The aim of the research is to identify the discrepancies in targeting the SCTP and the obstacles generated to meet the goals of the programs; to achieve sustainable eradication of poverty.

Main research question: What are the complexities in targeting in Malawi's SCTP and the challenges created in attaining sustainable poverty reduction?

Objectives of the study:

1. To identify irregularities in conceptualization of the targeting criteria
2. To identify irregularities in implementation of the Targeting criteria
3. To identify complexities when targeting beneficiaries
4. To highlight the influence of the complexities on achieving sustainable poverty reduction

Specific research questions:

1. How has ultra-poor, labor constraint and poverty been defined (by the beneficiaries, ministry level and district level)?
2. How have the proxies of ultra-poor been applied (comparison of ministry level to district level)?

3. How is the eligibility criteria to become a recipient of the SCTP different on paper and in praxis?
4. How do inefficiencies in targeting affect the goal of poverty reduction?

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.0 Introduction

To contextualize my argument, this chapter provides literature that sheds light on the Social Protection Program. The literature discussed was tailored to show, first, how the discipline of social protection has evolved, secondly, to highlight methodological connections between targeting of SCTP and its objective, in the process identifying the gaps observed. To do this, it is essential to provide an overview of Social Protection in Africa, then narrow it down to Malawi, thereby placing the narratives in broader literature. Lastly, a brief country profile dwelling on the political and social economy will also be provided. This is relevant to document as it provides a context for the reader to understand factors that have the potential to influence the achievement of the objectives of the programme.

2.1 Social Protection in Africa

“Significant shifts in thinking are taking place within Africa and elsewhere in the world on how Social Protection is understood, its links to sustainable economic development and its relevance as a comprehensive response to poverty and capability deprivations” (Taylor, 2008:7). The change in perceptions of poverty on the global front necessitated the advocacy of different approaches in the late '90s; a shift from economic focus to multi-dimensional poverty eradication strategies.

It is then not surprising that Africa followed in the footsteps of Latin America and the globe by introducing Social Protection measures as a poverty alleviation strategy. The stagnant social-economic context of Africa and its place on the global stage created the urgency for this occurrence. Taylor (2008), Niño-Zarazúa, Barrientos, Hickey and Hulme, (2012) and

Devereux (2016), have written on the wave of Social Protection in Africa and emphasized the importance of the regional and global congregations that took place to recognize the wave.

By early 2000, with the support of the United Nations (UN), African governments committed to drawing up social protection frameworks that exhibited a link to poverty reduction and development. The Livingstone conference in 2006 for instance, has stood out as a relevant occasion agreed upon in the literature on the new wave of Social Protection in Africa. Taylor (2008) described the Livingstone Conference; March 2006 as a critical moment for African nations to consider the growing vulnerability of people as a new crisis in Africa. As a result, their support for social welfare as an inevitable response.

“At a regional level, the Livingstone conference, under the leadership of the African Union (AU), has taken forward commitments by national governments to enhance social policy initiatives. International partners have also pushed the new agenda in the knowledge that emergency aid must be replaced with regular and reliable support for poverty reduction in the region” (Niño-Zarazúa, Barrientos, Hickey and Hulme, 2012:163).

It should be stressed that the conference is committed to pushing for national policies on social protection that are effective in the reduction of poverty. What has emerged from this is an understanding of the conceptual component of poverty alleviation. "The AU defines Social Protection as a ‘package’ of policies and programmes to reduce poverty and vulnerability of large segments of the population (Taylor, 2008:9)". Social protection is also now widely accepted as an important policy mechanism for resolving the acute poverty and insecurity that characterizes SSA (2005 Report | Commission for Africa and Niño-Zarazúa, Barrientos, Hickey and Hulme, 2012). “There is no consensus on the conceptual boundaries of social protection, but most operational definitions include two elements: social assistance-protection against poverty and social insurance-protection against vulnerability” (Devereux, 2016:52).

Although African countries have adopted social protection initiatives as poverty reduction strategies, there has been diversity in the types of social protection frameworks adopted. It should be remembered that every approach to social protection applied has systematic, theoretical and institutional consequences. Might that be the explanation for the diversity of framework implemented in African countries? It is plausible to suggest that variation may be due to the distinctive essence of the context in which the social protection policies are implemented, affected both by external and internal influence.

Siachiwena (2016) presents a range of findings from studies carried out on social protection in Africa: variation across the continent in terms of agenda-driven stakeholders, types of programs, methods of targeting beneficiaries, and scope of coverage. Von Gliszczynski and Leisering (2016) emphasizes how the transition has been shaped by the expansion of the spheres of international organizations ('socialization of global politics') and the opening of global discourses and development policies to 'social' issues.

In agreement, Niño-Zarazúa, Barrientos, Hickey and Hulme (2012) argues that they are three determinant key factors that influence the dynamics of social protection in the region: the politics and the policy process; financial viability, and institutional capacity. Unpacking the politics and policy process, Hickey (2007), demonstrates how this is possible. "Patron-client politics can shape the design and targeting of Social Protection programmes during the planning and implementation phases. For example, the coverage of programmes might be extended to include areas favoured by associated patrons" (Hickey, 2007:4).

Furthermore, "comparative literature on welfare state-building has shown that in democratic settings, electoral competition for votes of poor citizens has encouraged leaders to introduce programmatic pro-poor reforms" (Siachiwena, 2016:5). Fundamentally, the country's unique history, political and social-economic context will influence what sort of social protection programme to be reinforced by policymakers. For instance, Niño-Zarazúa et al., (2012) states that the anti-poverty strategy of the South African Government has been primarily driven by

unconditional cash transfers. In comparison to the rest of the continent, South Africa has a daunting legacy of apartheid that has lasted into the 21st century with it having the highest inequality level in the world and a high level of unemployment. Seeing that poverty remains divided along with demographics (race, gender) lines, it explains why the government would adopt cash transfers as a social protection-poverty reduction strategy.

“Cash Transfers (CTs) are non-contributory safety net programs that give cash grants to poor households and vulnerable groups to satisfy basic consumption needs” (Owusu-Addoa, Renzahoa and Smitha, 2018: 47). These CTs are categorized into two: conditional cash transfers (CCTs) and unconditional cash transfers (UCTs). “Conditionality could be imposed within each type of protective or promotional support by requiring a particular action of the recipient, such as attending school; or conditionality could simply refer to the qualification parameters, such as income level or age” (Allan, 2010:17). UCTs similarly, provide money transfer but do not have any explicit conditions (Baird, Ferreira, Özler, and Woolcock, 2013; Fiszbein and Schady, 2009; cited in Owusu-Addoa, Renzahoa and Smitha, 2018: 47). Conditional cash transfers (CCTs) have been dominant in Latin America as opposed to Africa.

Siachiwena (2016) argues that countries in Africa that have implemented strong social security policies follow social democratic solutions because they have trust in their outcome; comprehensive and generous benefits that alleviate poverty, redistribute assets and resolve the systemic roots of deprivation and social exclusion. In agreement, Niño-Zarazúa et al., (2012) reported a significant shift in policy thought in sub-Saharan Africa, from providing emergency humanitarian aid to routine income transfer systems.

Likewise, Devereux (2016) highlights the change in the phenomenon where food aid has been increasingly replaced by unconditional cash transfers as the dominant form of social protection response in Africa. Cash transfers as a solution to poverty reduction are viewed as an alternative strategy that enables flexibility and is less coercive by enabling the recipient to

identify their needs. Consequently, in line with Sen's (1992) capability approach, the beneficiary defines their ability and freedom by deciding on what needs to be addressed.

Niño-Zarazúa et al., (2012) describes two main models of social protection in the region: one age-based income transfers in middle-income countries dominant in Southern Africa, and another more complex poverty-driven transfers in low-income countries in Eastern, Central and Western Africa. Malawi falls in the latter. Other examples include, “productive Safety Net Program (PSNP) in Ethiopia, the Orphans and Vulnerable Children Program (CT-OVC) in Kenya, the Livelihood Empowerment Against Poverty (LEAP) in Ghana, and the scaling up of the Mchinji Social Transfer Scheme in Malawi” (Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2012:163).

In summary, as Taylor (2008) pointed out, social protection initiatives in the African region include cash transfers for elderly people 's benefits, grants for children and families, food cash and public works programs. Each of these services is a response to the urgent need to eliminate poverty. In addition, a holistic scheme will include housing, education, and healthcare.

2.1.1 Social Protection as a New Development Theory

Foucault (1991), suggests that governing and social policy should be about experimentation. “The whole field of social policy, he proposed, should be treated as a vast experimental field, in such a way as to decide which taps need turning, which bolts need to be loosened here or there, to get the desired outcome” (Ferguson, 2015: 32). Following the footsteps of Latin America, Africa has shown attributes that present it as the playground of the experiment of social policy. The social and economic changes in Southern Africa have proved undesirable, consequently, raising the appeal for social protection (Ferguson, 2015). Ellis (2006), Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme (2010), and Von-Glisczynski and Leisering (2016) have also shown that the change in thinking by the Global South to experiment cash transfers as a poverty

reduction and development strategy comes from both internal and external pressure that left the region vulnerable.

Several specific factors have been implicated in this state of affairs in the literature. “Flaws in the market liberalisation project; economic growth failures; politics and governance failures; adverse trends in natural resource access and environmental conditions; climate change; the HIV/AIDS pandemic; trade disadvantages; and globalisation” (Ellis, 2006:387).

The failure of neoliberal policies has been highly criticized in the development literature. Ellis (2006), thoroughly recorded how peasant families in the region were left in a desperate situation when market and trade liberalization was followed by failed prices of agricultural commodities. In contrast to what the advocates of neoliberal policies had anticipated, development projected to trickle down to the poor did not materialize.

Conversely, Hanlon et al., (2010) suggest that failure of earlier poverty reduction strategies such as aid, that strived on complexity is unproductive as it simply manages to take away resources from real development. It is then not surprising that proponents of development on the international arena and Southern African governments began to look at alternative ways to protect the poor by prioritizing social welfare.

“The southern response is a quiet revolution that has created a new development paradigm. It says that, rather than international sources giving aid to government bureaucrats and consultants, North and South, it should be given directly to poor people so they can pull themselves out of the poverty trap” (Hanlon et al., 2010:10).

The change witnessed is a result of the realization of contextualizing development strategies fit for African problems. Considering social welfare in the Global North is highly job-related, succeeding similar policies from industrialized nations as previously done would have resulted in similar outcomes; exclusion of the very poor. The high unemployment persistent in Southern Africa and a high number of workers classified in the informal sector asserts this

claim. Hence, the validity of the argument by Hanlon et al., (2010) that cash transfers are the alternative to job-related social protection. Primarily, the new wave of cash transfers represents a model shift in development and poverty reduction.

Cash transfers have probably gained momentum across the region from the impact that continues to be documented. Taylor (2008) claimed that cash transfers in Africa have made a huge difference to empowering women and helping those afflicted with HIV / AIDS and other infectious diseases. Hanlon et al., (2010) and Hjelm et al., (2017) suggest that cash transfers create a virtuous cycle of growth that not only reduces perceived stress, but also improves economic security (per capita consumption, food security, and asset ownership) at the household , community and national levels. Likewise, as shown by Davies and Davey (2008), “evidence for the local market multiplier effects of cash transfers came from a study in one district of Malawi where cash transfers were disbursed in 2007, which found a multiplier of over 2.0” (Devereux, 2016:55).

2.2 Social Protection in Malawi

The dialogue on social protection in Malawi is not altogether new. “It has existed since independence in July 1964 in various forms and guises but the shift of terminology to Social Protection is, however, a recent one” (Chisinga, 2007:7). Slater and Tsoka (2007) provide four stages (Summarized below table 1) to the evolution of Social Protection initiatives that have led up to the current Social Protection policy framework.

Table (1). A Summary of Social Protection Programmes in Malawi

Period	Types	Comments
1964-1981	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Input and output price controls -Universal inputs subsidy -Farmer and credit facilities 	These were formal interventions, but market-based
1981-1990	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Input and outprice decontrols -Phasing universal subsidies -Targeted nutrition programs -Food transfers (relief) 	Structural Adjustments Plans (SAPS) under stabilization forced GoM to dismantle the Social protection program without replacements
1990-1994	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Interventions under SDA -Targeted nutrition programs -Food transfers (relief) -Credit schemes 	Inspired by adjustment with a human face call
1994-2006	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Credit Schemes -Public works programs -Input transfers (food transfers) -School feeding 	-Dominated by government initiatives despite the mushrooming of NGO's

	-Cash transfers (pilot)	offering social protection
	-Targeted input subsidies	interventions
	-Targeted nutrition programme	-Most interventions were in the spirit of safety nets
	-Integrated nutrition programs	focusing on vulnerability and transient poverty
	-Integrated livelihoods support	

Source: Slater and Tsoka, 2007; cited in Chisinga, 2007:9

As observed from the table (1), it was only in 2006 that the government and NGOs started working together to reduce vulnerabilities and the risk of being vulnerable among the poor. One of the ways agreed upon was through Social Cash Transfers, with the introduction of the pilot phase in Mchinji (one of the twenty-eight districts). Vulnerability has been defined as “the quality or the state of being exposed to risks and potentially harmful states such as poverty and the ability to withstand shocks” (Malawi National Social Support Programme-MNSSP II report, 2018:7).

2.2.1 Social Cash Transfers in Malawi

SCTP is a poverty alleviation program that provides cash transfers to 10% of ultra-poor households in all 28 districts. There are three dominant critiques of the program in the literature: lack of comprehensiveness, concerns about the feasibility of the system and the targeting efficiency. This section will address what has been reported on these three topics. There has been a consensus in literature on the disintegration of the social protection programmes running in Malawi. “Overall, Malawi's social protection system suffers from a

lack of comprehensiveness. Selection criteria, databases, benefit formulae, and overall ground operations at the local level” (Arruda, 2018:7). The blame for this fragmentation has been pointed to GoM in their inability to dominantly fund the programmes under Social Protection, consequently, allowing different funders to come in with their conditions. For instance, identifying the fragmentation in the SCTP, one should review the targeting system.

“The best example of how the fragmented operation of the SCTP compromises its coordination at the national level is probably the current stalemate between the World Bank and the other funders of the SCTP. The World Bank uses a new registry (the UBR) to select beneficiaries in the districts where it funds the programme, whereas the other donors use the registry that has existed prior to this” (Arruda, 2018:13).

As of 2017, the program was being implemented through financial support from the German Government through KfW (7 districts), European Union (7 districts), Irish Aid (1 district), World Bank (2 districts) and the Government of Malawi (GoM) (1 district) to total eighteen districts (GoM, annual report, 2017). With donors practically funding the programme, questions arise about the sustainability, policy orientation and administration of the program. Considering how the eighteen districts running the program are being sponsored by five separate donors, what sort of implications comes with this? Does this impact the targeting criteria?

If we relate the discrepancies in targeting criteria to exclusion errors as Slater (2011) argues, then it implies that policy cannot be separated from targeting of beneficiaries. "Policymakers face difficult choices about targeting. In many developing countries, information about who is poor is difficult and costly to collect, analyze and apply in a timely fashion (Farrington, Sharp and Sjoblom, 2007; cited in Slater, 2011:253). As a result, some inclusion and exclusion errors are common.

Despite the discrepancies in targeting evident in most social cash transfer programmes such as Malawi, we cannot deny the validity of still running the programme in Malawi. “For nearly a period of 20 years, Malawi’s economy has been characteristically unstable. Since 1981, the country’s economy has experienced boom and bust type of growth patterns underpinned by rising levels of inflation, declining agricultural activity, rising interest rates and spirals in both domestic and external debt” (Jenkins and Tsoka, 2003; cited in Chisinga, 2007:3).

Malawi is one of the least developed countries situated in South-East Africa with a population of 17million and a colonial legacy that has left the country heavily reliant on exporting tobacco and tea and a stagnant industrialization base (MGDS III report 2017). Being landlocked, and a country limited in natural resources as compared to its South-Eastern counterparts, Malawi's economy has heavily relied on agriculture alongside the export of tobacco and tea.

The agricultural sector alone contributes a third of the country's GDP employing most of the labor force through smallholder farming. The MGDS’s III report, (2017) highlights the reliance on rain-fed agriculture, lack of agricultural diversification, small size landholding, land degradation and lack of investment in research, extension and underdeveloped market systems as impediments to the blossoming of the sector into industry. Malawi's overdependence on tobacco as the main export earner makes it a country with one of the highest levels of export dependence on a single commodity in the World (Kaluwa, 2010, cited in Lombe, 2013:5).

The Malawi National Social Support Programme report II (2018), highlights the alarming widespread poverty and vulnerability across the country. Consequently, Social Protection was a response to urgency to assist people to meet basic needs and overcome exposure to risks. Chisinga (2007), argues that the 2005 Malawi Integrated Household Survey (IHS) data clearly illustrate how poverty and vulnerability are deeply entrenched in the Malawian context. Worse

still, a decade later, the 2016/2017 IHS4 as seen from the table (2) below depicts a similar picture.

Table (2): Proportion of households reporting inadequate consumption of food, by background characteristics.

Background Characteristics	Food	Food	Food
	Inadequate	Adequate	More-than adequate
Malawi	63.8%	32.2%	4.0%
Residence			
Urban	41.6%	51.4%	7.0%
Rural	69.0%	27.6%	3.3%
Region			
North	55.2%	38.5%	6.3%
Central	65.0%	31.7%	3.4%
South	64.4%	31.4%	4.2%

Source: Malawi IHS4, (2017)

The table above highlights, the high number of people that are vulnerable and are at high risk to be affected if a shock was to redefine the poverty line. Overall, 64percent of Malawians regardless of location is struggling to provide for one of the basic needs, food. This essentially shows the high rate of vulnerable people in Malawi that have inadequate food and should be considered for eligibility into the social protection programme.

How then has the cut-off line of ultra-poverty been conceptualized and implemented in the SCTP? One can argue that a higher number than ten percent of the rural population falls under

the lowest economic level. How accurate is the application of proxies of poverty that exclude some extremely poor households in the targeting?

2.2.2 Targeting of Social Cash Transfer Programme

As mentioned earlier, the selection criteria of the SCTP is decentralized and has been based on households being ultra-poor and labor constrained. Ultra-poor and labour constrained is assessed by the Community Social Support Committee (CSSC) members on a discretionary basis. The CSSC would have the authority to decide which households to visit to assess the eligibility of the SCTP, depending on how the CSSC perceives poverty (Arruda, 2018). The CSSC comprises of local district members that are selected based on village clusters, literacy and previous development/social work with the local district council. CSSC members come up with a list of 15% of the poorest households from their immediate village clusters to be assessed together as a group (Van de Meerendonk et al., 2016). It is from this assessment done together by CSSC that the final 10percent ultra-poor households are selected.

Miller et al., (2010), who evaluated the pilot phase targeting process in 2006, provided a detailed decentralized system with some checks and balances. The targeting approach evaluated by Miller et al., (2010) is provided below, divided into 10 stages with a summary of each stage and a critique of each stage after the assessment.

Stage 1: District extension workers mobilise meetings to introduce the SCTS and elect members to make up the CSSC team.

Stage 2: The District trainers SCTP officers and extension Ministry workers train the CSSC team

Stage 3: The CSSC is responsible for listing all eligible households that meet the eligibility requirements in their specific areas. In other cases, the CSSC team is presented with application forms to list only 10% of possible beneficiary households.

Stage 4: CSSC team visits households for form completions: Abnormalities in the process are occurring due to high levels of illiteracy under which the community lacks understanding of the targeting mechanism and the eligibility criteria. The lack of supervision of the CSSC is the root cause of error in the targeting process. For example, two members of the CSSC oversee the process of filling out forms by household representatives. It can be argued that these forms are submitted in order to illustrate eligibility rather than actual reporting of the circumstances of the household as CSSC members are put in a position to justify their listing.

Stage 5: Local village headmen verifies if the household's names submitted are found in the village/area

Stage 6: The CSSC will meet with limited direction to compile a list (poor to poorest) from their reviews. The basis for placement in the hierarchy is ambiguous. For example, we have seen a scenario in which a 70-year-old man living alone is considered worse than a 34-year-old woman caring for five children.

Stage 7: A community meeting follows: The Community Development Assistant shall hold a meeting on behalf of the community, where the CSSC team is required to clarify the decisions taken in the ranking. The meeting offers members of the community an opportunity to challenge decisions and correct misinformation. Households listed as potential beneficiaries are not permitted to attend. In practice, the trainers agree that this community approval meeting is a disappointment for several reasons. First, community participation is minimal because people think the recipients have already

been chosen. Second, the relatives of listed households come to argue for their inclusion, while there is rarely anyone to argue for excluded households.

Stage 8: The District Social Welfare Officer/SCTP Officer recommends approval. After the community meeting, the CSSC submits the list of applicants to the District authorities. In some cases, ineligible households receive approval.

Stage 9: The District Social Protection Sub-Committee (DSPC) approves eligible households. The task of this multi-sectoral committee, consisting of various district coordinators, is to verify each household's eligibility, and assign a payment level based on the household size and the number of school-aged children. There was full attendance at the approval meetings early on.

Stage 10: Identifying and monitoring changes. Among beneficiaries, changes in household circumstances occur due to death, migration, marriage, inappropriate behaviour, fraud and so on. However, all district stakeholders agree that administering changes is important, but overlooked, process.

What stands out in this decentralized method without PMT is, firstly, the lack of participation of extension staff in the selection phase for beneficiary households. Extension workers are government employees who are based in each district (mainly native to the district) to assist government in development projects or any other government related activities.

It is alarming that members of the CSSC team should supervise each other when visiting households when extension workers who trained the selection team could oversee the process. Second, as highlighted in stage 3, members of the CSSC have the mandate to list which households to assess from the catchment area, while members of the PMT CSSC team are not given the same authority to determine eligibility. With PMT, all households in the catchment

area must be visited by CSSC members to complete a Form 1-assessment form in Appendix Y (Angeles et al., 2016; Van de Meerendonk et al., 2016; cited in Arruda, 2018: 9).

Furthermore, scholars (Miller et al., 2010, Ellis and Maliro 2013) have written against the bias in the decentralized targeting. The case of village heads influencing CSSC members to include their family members or friends as eligible beneficiary households. "The members of the CSSC lacked the ability or confidence to manage local politics that interfere with the selection process of the CSSC" (Miller et al., 2010:493). As a result, this study is exploring other complexities that can be identified in this decentralized selection process where the CSSC has control over which households should be part of the program.

Scholars have agreed on the relevance of efficient targeting to the eradication of poverty and development precisely for developing countries. "Targeting is widely acknowledged to be crucial for efficient resource use and is particularly important in poor countries with limited resources available for social protection" (Slater and Farrington, 2010; cited in Slater, 2011:253). Similar manner, Houssou et al., (2007) argue that the perseverance of large-scale poverty and hunger poses a significant risk to macro-economic stability and long-term development. Accurate targeting of the poor is indeed one of the basic principles on the road to sustainable development.

Conversely, Ellis (2008) argues that targeting beneficiaries for social protection programs in low-income countries is extremely problematic, particularly where the poverty rate is high and the differences between the lower poverty rate and the income profile are negligible. In Malawi for instance, farmers rejected targeting of input transfers and argued that they were equally poor (Levy, Barahona and Chinsinga, 2004; cited in Chinsinga, 2007).

Implementers and district-level stakeholders indicated that poverty-targeting strategies in Malawi are difficult to adopt due to widespread and diverse country-wide poverty, which raises

the likelihood of arbitrary exclusion of potentially eligible beneficiaries and inclusion errors (MNSSP II Report, 2018). Specifically, Malawi Network for Older Person's Organization-MANEPO (2017) has raised the issue of focusing on household-level labor capacity as problematic, as it does not capture the poorest households in the country, instead, it has created conflicts and jealousy in the communities. "Three quarters of older people are not recipients of the SCTP, analysis of the Integrated Household Survey (IHS3) shows that only 16 percent of older people (60+) live in households receiving social assistance, and only 3 percent of older people are the direct recipients of this support" (MANEPO, 2017:2). Accordingly, Slater (2011) indicates that targeting based on social groups is likely to cause significant errors of inclusion and exclusion. This may include, for example, elderly people who are not poor or excluding prime-age adults who are poor.

Review of the Malawi National Social Support Programme (2016), unearthed challenges around targeting accuracy and community understanding of eligibility criteria of SCTP, as well as overall sector coherence. It has been suggested that rural communities often feel that everyone is equally poor and therefore have limited understanding for poverty rankings that facilitate beneficiary selection processes. It is therefore essential to have a district case study to investigate the targeting criteria in order to understand the mechanism used to identify beneficiaries, as this study assumes that the proxies of poverty used to identify beneficiaries are not clear and therefore poses challenges that derail the objective of the programme.

2.2.3 Brief Profile on the political- economy of SCTP in Malawi

The relationship between social protection programs and the political economy is multi-dimensional and multi-directional. Niles (1999); cited in Casamatta et al., (2000) have argued that the economic dimension of social protection has often overshadowed the political by

creating a technocratic-hypothetical system of social protection. Hickey, (2007) and Slater, (2011) have related the influence of socio-economic forces in the international and internal context (particularly concerning public attitudes and levels and forms of inequality) to the political institutions and actors. What they highlight in their studies, is the critical role of donor agencies in influencing the narratives and policies of social protection programmes in African countries.

On the other hand, as discussed, key political actors locally have a critical role to play in attributing poverty to individual failures rather than structural systematic causes. Despite the focus on economics, the key role of politics and the political economy in social protection is gaining momentum and recognition. Hickey, (2007) highlights the missing discourse of the role of politics in the social protection narratives in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, thus his study focuses on the significant role of policy-making that shapes social protection initiatives.

Similarly, Hossain and Moore (2001), Hossain (2005) and Hickey (2005); cited in Hickey (2007), have surfaced specifically; the central role of the political actors and agencies that set the terms of the political, policy debates, administrative/bureaucratic agencies that eventually either lobby for or implement social protection initiatives. For instance, “whether political elites consider certain groups to be ‘deserving’ of social assistance is likely to be a significant factor in the establishment, targeting and size of social protection programmes” (Hickey, 2007:4). Against this background, the researcher is under the impression that forms of social protection programme directly influence the type of support that the political elites can rally.

Contextualizing this with the social protection programs in Malawi, as Chisinga (2007) argues against the complete blackout of the social protection programs discourse in the media and yet policies are being developed and implemented. Questions then arise about the lack of debate on public attitudes towards the causes of poverty in Malawi. Kalebe-Nyamongo and Marquette

(2014), have, however, specifically looked at the elites' attitudes on the causes of poverty in Malawi, of which the study concludes that predominately the Malawian elites perceive causes of poverty as a result of individual failure and laziness.

Since political elites that make policy decisions are classified in this category by this study, it gives us the legitimacy to question whether their view has influenced the type of social protection program and the targeting being implemented. The lack of media discourse for SCTP implies political agendas where the program may be manipulated to appear as if the initiative is directly aided by the ruling party. Slater (2011) argued that conditions and targeting are important for maintaining political support for cash transfers.

However, for Malawi, we cannot speak of SCTP separate from donor support. As of 2019, 27 of the 28 districts are fully sponsored by donors with GoM taking financial responsibility for one district. The question of conditions and targeting of SCTP should then be raised. As Slater (2011) argued, cash transfer arrangements are likely to be politically feasible and linked to financing, while affordability is not just about cost but also about policy choices. What can be identified from the relationship between politics and the SCTP in Malawi is the choice of one district for which GoM has taken overall financial responsibility? What is interesting about the selection of the district of Thyolo to be sponsored by GoM is the district of origin of the former president (2014-2020) and the dominant number of political elites that belonged to the ruling party (DDP). GoM 's funding in this particular district offers an example of how political structures infiltrate social protection programs in their respective counties.

However, this study will not dwell on the political implication of GoM's choice. Rather the study will look out for any political, and economic influences on targeting at the local level in the case study district. As such it would be relevant to look at how the selection team at the local level has also perceived the causes of poverty.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses the research methods used to collect data that address the research question. The study is methodological in the sense that rationality guides the design, from decisions taken in the construction of research questions to decisions taken in the collection and analysis of data. In this discussion of the methodologies used, three sub-sections will be used to present the chapter. The three subsections are research methods, data collection techniques and data analysis strategy adopted.

3.1 Research Methods

The study employed qualitative research methods to answer the specific research questions. Considering the interpretative nature of the research questions, using qualitative methods provided the best way to achieve this. "Qualitative research aims to produce rounded and contextual understandings based on rich, nuanced and detailed data" (Mason, 2002:3). "If you have chosen qualitative interviewing it may be because your ontological position suggests that people's knowledge, views, understandings, interpretations, experiences, and interactions are meaningful properties of the social reality which your research questions are designed to explore" (Wetherell et al., 2001; cited in Mason, 2002:63).

Punch (2014) argued that qualitative interviews are the most effective way to understand others, and if one is to understand the participants' way of thinking or experience, the researcher should simply ask them. Using semi-structured in-depth interviews as the preferred qualitative method for this study, Punch's (2014) guideline was followed. The nature of qualitative methods allowed the study to gain access to the samples' perspective in their natural social context. It was necessary for this study to use qualitative methods in order to understand the attitudes and

perceptions behind the targeting process to arrive at a deeper understanding of the conceptualization and implementation of ultra-poverty.

The research aims to proceed based on a thorough grasp of the appropriate methodologies and awareness of their limitations by employing methodological technologies, practicalities and ethics that are coherent and consistent. The research question is divided into two specific parts: what complexities are evident in the decentralized targeting system and what sort of challenges this has generated in attaining the programs objective. In summary, semi-structured in-depth interviews were used for the sample selected by means of purposeful and snowball sampling methods. While thematic analysis was used to analyze data after collection, these decisions will be explained in the sub-section of data collection techniques.

3.2 Data collection techniques

Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with participants in their natural environment. Their natural setting was preferred as a cultural sign of respect, which also worked effectively to create a good rapport and communication between the researcher and the participants. In-depth interviews were used to achieve both breadth and depth. In-depth interviews were helpful in reducing the possibility of enforcing prior categorization that could restrict the results of the analysis. As Mason (2002) argues, depending on the depth and the open-endedness of the question, qualitative in-depth interviews are likely to lead to a fairer and more complete representation of the perspectives of the subjects.

To attain this, content mapping and content mining questions were respectively used to interview the participants. “Content mapping questions are designed to open up the research territory and to identify the issues that are relevant to the participants while content mining questions are designed to explore the detail which lies within each issue, to access the meaning it holds for the participants” (Legard, Keegan and Wart, 2003:148).

“To understand the participant's perspective fully there is a need to have an opportunity to give them more room than just their first thoughts on the subject. Encouraging the participant to look at issues from a different perspective will uncover more layers of meaning and greater richness" (Legard, Keegan and Wart, 2003:149).

Accordingly, content mining questions were asked in addition to the content mapping questions to probe on the issues posed. Content mining questions were imperative as they allowed extensive content exploration and thus helped to add meaning to the concepts raised. This was all possible with the use of semi-structured face to face interviews. The open-endedness of semi-structured interviews allowed the participants to freely express what they mean in their own words without being restricted to options of responses drawn from the researcher's perspective.

3.3 Research area

Data was collected in Mangochi district, one of the 28 districts in Malawi. Mangochi represented a window to explore the complexities involved when targeting through a decentralized system as opposed to a case study to generalize the results to other districts. Rather than generalizing the results of this qualitative research, the results explored serve the purpose of unveiling the depth of a social phenomenon in a specific context.

As Flyvbjerg (2006) argued, a case study is used to generate and test hypotheses, but not limited to these research functions alone, the ability of a case study to produce or hypothesize is determined by each study. Generalizing the results of this Mangochi study to all 18 districts where SCTP is being implemented with this specific targeting currently underway, raises issues of reliability.

“When the objective is to achieve the greatest possible amount of information on a given problem or phenomenon, a representative case or a random sample may not be the most appropriate strategy. This is because the typical or average case is often not the richest in information. A typical or extreme case often reveal more information because they activate more actors and more basic mechanisms in the situation studied” (Flyvbjerg, 2006:13).

I am inclined to not generalize the results. Opposed not because of scientific rigor (criticism raised on qualitative case studies being flawed on their generalizability). Rather, because the study chose to study the phenomenon using a single unit of analysis that was not authenticated as an extreme case. It would be plausible to generalize if Mangochi were to be classified as extreme and possibly if more analytical units were to be used as it allows some form of replication.

However, the use of case study methodology was preferred for this study as it enabled a holistic approach to understand the decentralized process of targeting recipients in a specific context. Case studies aim to focus on a specific issue, featuring an analysis that enables the capture of emerging and immanent properties of life organizations and the flow of organizational activity (Mohd Noor, 2008). Apart from addressing 'how' and 'why' questions, the case study approach often explores the phenomenon in its natural setting by using various forms of data collection to obtain information from one or more entities: persons, groups or organizations (Yin 1984, Stake 1988; Miles and Huberman 1994; Brewer 2000; cited in Chileshe, 2014).

Mangochi was chosen as the unit of analysis for the following reasons: first, the district was one of the districts that implemented SCTP in 2009 after the pilot phase was considered a success. Since then, the GoM Annual Report (2017) indicates that the district has been re-targeted in the 2016/2017 calendar as stipulated in the SCTP policy that re-targeting should

take place after five years of implementation. The initial targeting and re-targeting carried out used the initial selection criteria of ultra-poor and labor constrained households. As a result, desirable as a fifth of the 28 districts have gone through re-targeting. The study assumes that the targeting of complexities discovered in the initial phase must have been investigated before re-targeting commenced.

Second, the program in Mangochi is financed by German assistance through the Kreditanstalt für Wiederaufbau (KfW), which sponsors most (6) districts under the programme. As a result, the stated administration approaches in Mangochi made by the sponsor will be identical to six other districts. The intended preference for a rural district in the southern region of Malawi was based on the poverty ratio. The poverty rates in Malawi, as discussed earlier, have been stagnant. Of the three regions (South, North and Central), the worst poverty is concentrated in rural areas of the southern and northern regions. The Central Region is better off (World Bank Report, 2007).

“Urban areas have much lower percentages of people living below the poverty line, and they also have the lowest percentages of ultra-poor people. About 25 percent of the population in urban areas is living in poverty, compared to 56 percent of the rural population. That is, a person in a rural area is more than twice as likely to be poor” (World Bank Report, 2007:3).

3.3.1 Sampling

The study used two types of sampling; purposive and snowballing. Purposive sampling is a type of non-probability sampling in which participants are selected based on the category in which they fall into that is of interest to the researcher. Purposive sampling was the best fit for this study as Etikan, Musa and Alkassim (2016) suggests that purposive sampling does not

need any underlying theories, rather in purposive sampling, the researcher decides what about the characteristics of the participants that are needed for the study. This agrees with Dolores and Tongco (2007) who suggests that purposive sampling is a deliberate choice of an informant due to the qualities the informant possesses. Schatzman and Strauss (1973) rightly show that purposive sampling is shaped by the research objectives, the time the researcher has available, data collection methodology, interview length, sampling frame, and recruitment method.

Purposive sampling was used to select participants who have a role to play in the targeting process at both the Ministry and the district level. This sampling approach was used to identify the two SCTP officers responsible for training the community selection team and overseeing the SCTP program in Mangochi (Ministry level administrators). Five participants responsible for targeting beneficiaries at the local level (CSSC team) were identified using the same sampling strategy. As for the targeting of the five beneficiary households, two sampling strategies (purpose and snowballing) were applied using a mixed sampling approach. The five participants responsible for targeting the beneficiaries were asked to provide contact details to the beneficiary households that would be willing to be interviewed. What followed was contacting the recipients to identify the recipients of the program.

Snowballing was introduced to control the influence of the CSSC in deciding the sample choice. Snowball sampling of cases also falls under non-probability sampling where instead of selecting cases randomly, cases are selected based on their accessibility. "Snowball sampling begins with a convenience sample of an initial subject, this initial subject serves as "seeds," through which wave 1 subject is recruited; wave 1 subject, in turn, recruit wave 2 subjects and so on, creating a snowball effect" (Etikan, Musa and Alkassim, 2015:1).

A list of fifteen beneficiary households was established using snowballing. Beneficiary households out of the fifteen were excluded because of accessibility; all beneficiaries residing

further away from accessible roads were removed. The data collection period was during the rainy season, so the roads were muddy. In addition, what village cluster the beneficiary household belonged to also played a pivotal role in eliminating some of the beneficiary households. To control the likelihood of similarity between participating households in composition. Consequently, the study identified five beneficiary households from different village clusters.

In all, seven participants and five beneficiary household members (see Table 3 below, which indicates the composition of the sample divided into three groups) were interviewed. Interviews first took place in December, involving the first seven participants and the second phase of interviews in February, involving beneficiary households and follow-up interviews with the first phase interviewees. The decision to conduct the interviews in two stages was intentional as the research question has two components. It was important to step back, contemplate and draw out themes onset from the data relating to complexities when targeting before interviewing beneficiary households for a thorough exploration of the research question. It was from this approach that the evaluation perimeters (themes) were drawn for an in-depth approach to the interviews with the three groups that were part of the second phase of the interviews.

Table 3: Composition of participants

SAMPLE CATEGORY	POSITION/ TITLE	GENDER	PSEUDO NAME	PARTICIPANT NUMBER
ONE	GOVERNMENT(GoM) SCTP Officer	Male	GoM (1)	One

	GoM SCTP Officer	Male	GoM (2)	Two
TWO	CSSC Member	Female	CSSC (1)	Three
	CSSC Member	Female	CSSC (2)	Four
	CSSC Member	Female	CSSC (3)	Five
	CSSC Member	Male	CSSC (4)	Six
	CSSC Member	Male	CSSC (5)	Seven
THREE	Beneficiary Household	Male and Female (Husband and wife) with 4 dependents	BH (1)	Eight
	Beneficiary Household	Female (Mother of 4 dependents)	BH (2)	Nine
	Beneficiary Household	Female (Grandmother of two dependents)	BH (3)	Ten
	Beneficiary Household	Female (mother of two dependents)	BH (4)	Eleven

	Beneficiary Household	Male (Grandfather no dependents)	BH (5)	Twelve
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3.4 Analysis of qualitative data

“Qualitative analysis is a process of resolving data into its constituent components, to reveal its characteristic elements and structure” (Dey, 1993: 31). The study employs descriptive thematic analysis to analyze the data collected. Descriptive themes were beneficial for this study for it was essential to pay attention to details of language that is being used by the subject. "Language is central to the descriptive enterprise, actual words used by the study participants portray how a phenomenon is conceived, how important it is and the richness of color it holds" (Spencer et al., 2014:310).

According to Miles and Huberman (1994), there are six steps that researchers follow for a systematic approach to data analysis: organizing data, immersion in the data, generating themes, coding, offering interpretations through analytic memos, and searching for alternative understanding. The study adopted the approach, but not diligently followed for it did not seem relevant to code the data that was collected thus after themes were generated, what followed was interpretation of the themes.

Data organization, data immersion and theme generation: the three will be explained together as they have happened interchangeably. During the interviews that were recorded, I was constantly jotting down memos for follow-up and observable issues to minimize overlooking the data that would come to be relevant. Every end of the day, the first stage of the interviews, I would go back to these notes that were ultimately helpful in raising emerging themes. When the first stage of the interviews was concluded, a comparison of emerging narratives and literature on the

subject led to the development of three themes that became the three perimeters of the assessment that guided the semi-structured in-depth interviews. Discussion on the perimeters of assessment will commence below. Essentially, the analysis was an inductive process and structured.

3.4.1 Three perimeters of assessment

Republic of Malawi Poverty Assessment (2016) suggests that, the main factors affecting the level of household poverty in Malawi are: household size, education, access to non-farm employment, access to irrigation, proximity to markets and trading centres, and access to tarmac roads. The last three factors are categorized as participation in the cash crop economy. To address this vulnerability, GoM has implemented strategies that support the most vulnerable people with limited production function. This is being implemented in the context of social protection policies such as the SCTP.

A comparison of factors affecting poverty and emerging themes from the first phase of the interviews led to the identification of three common issues. Participation in cash economy, education and food and nutrition was therefore established as the study perimeters to address part two of the research question.

It should be noted that the research did not seek to establish a dominant complexity over another, so the anomalies identified in the next chapter do not indicate any hierarchy or supremacy. Instead, once transcribed, issues that arose across the sample were documented using themes. This was in line with the inductive method in which assumptions are drawn from raw data.

3.5 Consent, Confidentiality and Ethical Considerations

All interviews were on a voluntary basis. Consent was received orally with the participants agreeing to be interviewed and voice recorded. I was also advised by SCTP officers not to have beneficiary households sign any documents because, due to delays in payments, they might assume that they are signing for cash transfers. As a result, the consent of the beneficiary household participants was tape recorded. As Morrell, Epstein and Moletsane (2012) claim, even though research subjects are frequently supposed to sign an agreement indicating their willingness to participate it does not always work that way. Anonymity was promised to the participants. The recorded interviews have not been shared with a third party and will be used solely for the purpose of this study.

Ultimately, when quoting real accounts, numbers instead of pseudonyms will be used accordingly. Refer to table (3) above, showing the sample group, the role of the participants and the number allocated. Using numbers as opposed to the alternative is for easy reference for the reader. The role of the participant will only be highlighted if it contributes directly to the discussion.

The research deals with personal information on poverty (social-economic issues) that is sensitive and may cause resistance. As such, I have taken the initiative for ethical clearance at the University of Cape Town; Sociology Department (ethics letter appendix X). With the potential sensitivity of this study, I needed to build trust among the research participants. As a result, I also found myself giving participants the ethical clearance and student ID to demonstrate my academic intentions with the interviews. I also needed to give priority to their well-being even after leaving, by assuring them of my intentions.

Finally, considering study area is in the rural part of Malawi and includes participants who have been classified as ultra-poor and some illiterate, as a researcher coming from a privileged

context, I had to be aware of my privilege (in terms of dressing, etiquette, language and presentation) to establish good rapport that was required for interviews.

3.6 Conclusion

This chapter outlines selected research methods, identified data collection tools, and approaches to data analysis, and explains how best to answer the research question: What are the complexities in targeting the Malawi SCTP and the challenges of achieving the program's objective? This chapter explains why the study was qualitative and resulted in the use of tools for collecting qualitative data over quantitative methods. It also explains how and why evaluation parameters and themes were constructed during the data collection process. Accordingly, this chapter serves as a pathway to the design of the research.

CHAPTER FOUR: PRESENTATION AND DISCUSSION OF FINDINGS

4.0 Introduction: Irregularities

A positive link has been identified between successful targeting and sustainable poverty reduction (Slater, 2011). Malawi's limited resources bring into question the viability of the program as a scaling-up and continuity relies on donor support. Research therefore argues that targeting the right individuals is key to achieving the objective of the program.

Accordingly, this chapter presents irregularities which challenge targeting the right individuals. Results from the study of the first part of the research question; what are the evident complexities in targeting for the program? The Chapter will, (1) show weaknesses in the decentralized system by highlighting complexities. (2) Categorize complexities into themes based on similarity in narratives. (3) Lay a foundation on how the identified complexities could create challenges in meeting the objectives of the programme.

The chapter presents the problems described by the narratives of the participants. The decision to include detailed narratives of the participants is deliberate and informed by Farmer and Bertrand 2000; Tvedten et al., 2013; cited in Allan, 2010). They propose that the use of detailed narratives and thick explanations of the participants reflects the true comprehension of the participant.

4.1 Inconsistencies in Conceptualization

4.1.1 Inconsistencies in the conceptualization of ultra-poor by the CSSC team

One aspect that stood out in the interviews was the contradictory conceptualization of poverty and ultra-poor by the targeting team. Recalling literature review, as identified by Kalebe-Nyamongo and Marquette (2014), the response to poverty in Malawi is influenced by the

attitudes of those who have the power to formulate policies to address the issue. In the same vein, Miller et al., (2010) also pointed out how the Ministry running the program provided the CSSC team with the criteria for selecting beneficiary SCTP households. Nonetheless, results show that the CSSC committee, has shown authority to select beneficiaries, can classify, compare and describe who is well-to-do, only poor and very poor in this programme.

It must be pointed out that since the in-depth interviews were semi-structured the interview questions attached in the appendix W, do not fully represent the exact phrasing of the questions during the interviews. The interview questions attached is a guideline to the in-depth interviews conducted. Four of the five CSSC participants' responses regarding their understanding of the ultra-poor are listed below:

“Ultra-poverty in this context, I can say is relative to each district. The same applies to who is poor. In this district to say the beneficiaries we have on the program are part of the 10percent ultra-poor of Malawi, it is valid. However, I cannot say the same for a district that is close to a city/town. For instance, the beneficiaries in Chiradzulu they have a different lifestyle from us here in Mangochi. Money is constantly circulating so the beneficiaries from Chiradzulu cannot qualify as part of the 10percent of ultra-poor in Malawi, they have cash we do not” (Participant 4).

“My understanding of an ultra-poor household has to do with the assets the household owns. As you will see when you visit the beneficiary houses, they do not have assets, anything of value to show like livestock or furniture (Participant 3)

“You know you cannot define ultra-poverty, it's hard to explain it. What I can say is when I went out to interview these households chosen to assess the poverty level, you just know what you are looking for when you see it, like who is needy and who is not, you just know when they are in front of you.....

Like finding two able parents that are under 55years but claiming they are poor did not

work for me because they can do some piece work or something to maintain the household (Participant 5).

“I can say, it all comes down to food. Is the household having two to three times a meal a day or does the household find problems with having frequent meals?.....

.....I will not be true to myself if I identify household A that is missing meals but not acknowledge household B that is equally sleeping hungry as ultra-poor, simply because household A has elderly people or too many dependents compared to household B. My conscious will not allow it, both households A and B are struggling (Participant 7).

What is intriguing about the responses from the targeting team is the diverse understanding of an ultra-poor household in Mangochi. What comes across from these responses is the perceptions they hold over what is poverty. If one examines the first response by participant (4), what is clear is the correlation between cash flow (market economy) and poverty, which means that Mangochi households would find themselves poorer compared to districts with more cash-flowing economic activities. There are two things that need to be highlighted in this statement that is problematic.

First, that the district of Mangochi is not as involved in the market as Chiradzulu is based on the latter being located next to the commercial city of Malawi. This assertion made by the member of the CSSC team is an inference, because the participant has no evidence to support the argument and, contrary to the opinion of the participant, Mangochi has more cash flow circulating in the district than Chiradzulu (Republic of Malawi Poverty Assessment, 2016). Mangochi is the home of the fishing industry as Lake of Malawi (Appendix Z) flows into the district.

Secondly, it must be pointed out the participant concludes this statement by implying that ultra-poverty households have limited cash rather than means to access cash. The study is grappling with this. Does it therefore imply, with the understanding expressed by the participant (4), that her targeting criteria could be based mainly on participation in household economic activities? What about assessing how the household relates to other tools of social development? Henceforth raising the issue that if a member of the CSSC team perceives ultra-poverty as the lack thereof of monetary value, then the CSSC team member is most likely to place relevance on economic characteristics above anything else when assessing the households.

To understand the justification for calling the statement problematic, Graaff (2003), shows the importance of moving from the conceptualization and measurement of poverty and development from economic terms whereby poverty was equated to the amount of money to keep someone alive. He argues for a holistic approach to understanding poverty for development to materialize where the emphasis is on quality of life, power, and access to resources. The member of the CSSC team has a narrow perspective on how poverty should be characterized and a different perspective from the Ministry 's understanding of ultra-poverty.

The Ministry has seemingly portrayed ultra-poverty as the state of vulnerability that multi-dimensional. This is evident from what they present as an approach to tackling poverty (by providing cash transfers) as outlined in Miller et al., (2011) and Niño-Zarazúa et al., (2012) in Chapter Two where the implementation of the program itself is an initiative for a contextualized multi-dimensional social protection initiative aimed at reducing the risk of vulnerability. "The program aims to reduce hunger and vulnerability among these households and ensure that children attend school and have access to basic health care" (Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2012:168).

Social cash transfers in the region are a response against the many social protection initiatives that narrowly defined poverty and accordingly provided linear response measures to mitigate this in the form of food transfers. Niño-Zarazúa et al., (2012), explains that first-generation social protection measures in the region have focused primarily on developing a profile of poverty, while current initiatives are looking more deeply at factors driving households into poverty and a wider range of initiatives that could prevent them from absolute poverty and promote ways out of poverty.

When a follow-up question was asked on this to confirm where the line is drawn in this hierarchy, the participant opted to read out the official targeting criteria documented by the Ministry; *'ultra-poor and labor constrained'*. However, as the interview progressed and questions specific to targeting were posed, for instance; what sort of proxies were implemented to identify ultra-poor? The participant moved uncomfortably in his seat and stated that *he has been answering the same question*. Attempts to rephrase the question to show how different the questions are were made, but it was apparent that the participant did not want to continue being questioned about their conceptualization of "ultra-poor".

On the other hand, participants (3) response:

"My understanding of an ultra-poor household has to do with the assets the household owns. As you will see when you visit the beneficiary houses, they do not have assets, anything of value to show like livestock or furniture (Participant 3)

is on face value placing relevance to ownership of assets or lack thereof as an indication of one that is ultra-poor to become a beneficiary or not. Unlike participant (4), this participant (3) is willing and happy to expand what they mean by this statement thus giving the researcher a chance to fully comprehend the CSSC team member's understanding of ultra-poor. What is particularly different from the first response is, this participant does not place the relevance of

assets over other proxies to identify a beneficiary household. It was clarified later into the interview by the participants, why households that have assets such as livestock, car, Tv sets and fancy radios were not included as beneficiaries.

“I was born and raised in this village; I know most of the people here. I know which households own what, which ones I had to visit to clarify and which ones are mostly affected by bad harvest” these households that have assets can sell these items when life is hard or they need different services not available in the area, but it also tells me they had a lot of money coming in that is why they are able to acquire these things. (Participant 3).

What further stands out from this response is the holistic approach to understanding ultra-poverty. The CSSC team member's response implies an interlocking facet to poverty whereby the focus is not only placed on the economy and the individual but also the institution with access to social services and considers resistance to risk and vulnerability.

What has therefore surfaced is how distinct this response is from the rest of the three presented with its holistic approach to understanding ultra-poverty thus supporting the claim that the CSSC team at the time of targeting had a diverse understanding of ultra-poor. However, the study has also observed that the response provided by participant (3) has its limitation for it fails to clarify the drawing line between a poor household from an ultra-poor. While the visibility of assets can be used to separate the well-off from the poor, how can they use the same understanding to draw a line between a poor neighbor and an ultra-poor household? Failure to draw a line between ultra-poor and poor households is probably one of the reasons that has led to errors in inclusion and exclusion.

Recalling the literature review, Ellis (2008) challenged the differences in circumstances between 50-60 per cent of the population in the sub-Saharan region. Similarly, in stage 7 of the

targeting process, Miller et al., (2010) interrogates the 10% cut-off used at the community meeting to rank eligible recipients. The findings presented by Miller et al., (2010) from the Mchinji Targeting Approach Evaluation suggest that the rejected applications were often simply rejected for reaching the cut-off point rather than for being well-off. "There are narrow economic differences between the population in the SSA region, there should be a doubt on the merits of the 10 percent rule that has been used to establish cut-off points in pilot social cash transfers specifically in Zambia and Malawi" (Ellis, 2008:9). As discussed, the rural areas of Malawi have a high poverty rate with limited resources to share in the area, and the claim that the surrounding neighbors of the beneficiary households are equally poor is valid.

"While CSSC team may believe they are correctly targeting households, in reality, they may fail to distinguish between poor and ultra-poor households" (Miller et al., 2010:490). Unlike Miller's et al., (2010) evaluation cut-off deliberation meeting with the community in attendance, this cut-off in Mangochi takes place without the community, but in the presence of district and SCTP officials who are not native to the district but work for the government. This raises the issue of effective checks and balances during the targeting process. Why do SCTP officers who are not familiar with the circumstances of qualifying households track the supervision of the CSSC team? Worse still, how does the CSSC team ensure a 10% cut-off targeting accuracy?

The study highlights the ambiguity of the 10 % cut-off as problematic and creates irregularities in the targeting process. This is an agreement with the observation made by Miller et al., (2010) Community members responsible for targeting in Malawi do not, of course, have detailed expenditure information of households, so they use proxies for targeting. However, the proxies of poverty and lack of labour are not operationalised at the village level with any clarity.

Finally, looking at the last two responses from the participants (5) and (7), the only similarity they share is their partial approach to understanding poverty. What is intriguing about the two responses is their focus on a specific element when targeting an ultra-poor household, which they repeatedly emphasize. Participant (5) places focus on age while participant (7) places emphasis on morality in his work.

Like you know the thing about your age, it speaks to your ability to function. The younger you are the more likely you have enough energy to work than the elderly in this village you cannot expect them to be looking out for piece work daily (Participant 5).

I am a Christian first before being an agricultural extension worker which is how I found myself as member of SCTP CSSC team. I told myself your conscience will speak to you, do not include households just because you know them personally and I stuck to my intuition. I went there visited homes, for some I did not even finish asking all the questions, I know them and their story. At the end of it all the names I put up are deserving to be beneficiaries (Participant 7).

The above follow-up responses from the participant (5 and 7) support the argument that, despite the fact that the targeting criteria has been handed to them by the Ministry, the members of the CSSC team have the freedom to interpret the targeting criteria as they see fit. In this context, the decentralized system leaves room for the CSSC team to impose their understanding of the targeting criteria when selecting beneficiaries.

Participant (5) reveals how age influences the final decision on household names to be identified and participant (7), on the other hand, has an ongoing struggle to be ethically right or morally correct. Ethically correct to follow the targeting criteria presented to them and morally correct by doing what the participant believes is right based on their values and

beliefs. Begging the question, where is the line drawn with morality when targeting? Leaving this question unanswered, as it is clear that the Participant (7) feels that they have done justice to the targeting requirements given to them.

Once again, the study shows that the 10% ratio is problematic when targeting in each district. Recalling the earlier poverty discussion, the Malawi-specific studies. In contrast to the program's assumptions, widespread poverty in Malawi is more than 10% higher in rural areas and one is likely to find different levels of poverty among households. The focus should not be on identifying and protecting the poorest, but rather on identifying which households will not be able to cope with adverse shocks.

Mussa and Pauw (2011) who investigated the determinants of poverty in Malawi have identified a link between protecting the poor and those likely to be poor from shocks. The study draws on this rationale and argues that targeting should focus on identifying households that will not be able to protect themselves from adverse shocks as opposed to the poorest 10%. As a result, changing the emphasis from defining and identifying who is poor with a vague description to identifying to secure broader household coverage at high risk of vulnerability.

4.1.2 Inconsistencies in the conceptualization of the program objective

What also resulted from interviews conducted through all three sets of participants was how they interpreted the purpose of the program. Having both the administrators and the beneficiaries correctly understand the objective of the program is essential for the program to move towards a sustainable reduction in poverty. The joint effort of the two camps is mandatory. It was under this premise that the study investigated whether those involved understood their role in eradicating poverty.

Unfortunately, the interviews conducted provided diverse interpretation of the objective of the program. What this section illustrates is the contradictions in the conceptualization of the

program goal in all three sets of participants in Mangochi. In summary, as reported in the Malawi Social Cash Transfer Baseline Evaluation report (2014), the SCTP 's objective is essentially to reduce poverty and vulnerability by ensuring poverty reduction, hunger and increasing school enrolment among the most vulnerable. When asked whether they understood or if they were told what the purpose of the program was, the answers from the participants were as follows:

SCTP officers and CSSC team members' responses

SCTP is there to improve education, improve the nutrition status of people, improve levels of poverty, and improve the living status of people. It's broad plan that has been put in place to tackle poverty in rural areas (Participant 2).

SCTP is a social protection program that has been put in place to reduce poverty levels of the poorest in Malawi (Participant 1)

It's all the in the name of what we call the program "mtukula pakhomu", translating it to English meaning improving the status quo of a household. So basically, the initiative was implemented to improve the living status of the poor in all aspects of their lives (Participant 6)

It's mainly a way of empowering people, I think we give them money so that they can find ways of empowering themselves. They can use the money, for instance, to save, invest or do small business for their household to embitter their lives in a period of three years (Participant 4).

Beneficiary responses

Basically, what they said is that money should be used to improve the circumstances in our households. If you did not have a hut as a beneficiary, you should now have a hut. Like for me what I really want is to put all my farming in order, like buy all the

necessary fertilizers so that I can harvest enough to last me a long time if the rains continue like this. You see if I have maize in storage I can now stop worrying about food and move on to invest in other things like building a hut without thinking twice about what I will spend. (Participant 9).

Democratic Progress Party-DPP (ruling party) cares for us, with the bad harvest that has been happening for years now. GoM has come in to help us people in the village to stop suffering. It is making sure we have regular meals; we will no longer sleep hungry under DPP leadership (Participant 8).

SCTP is a Government intervention for the elderly. Governments plan to help the elderly in rural areas so that they can live a long life, you see it is the Government's responsibility to take care of the elderly. However, I have come across younger beneficiaries, I cannot say the Government should not include them because all of us it's our right to receive this assistance (Participant 12).

From what I was advised Government is trying to end the feeding program that is here, whereby we received maize, cooking oil and beans to supplement our meals. Now it has decided on giving us cash. Unlike those feeding programs that gave us food, which we appreciate but food will not pay for medicine if needed, so this is a good move from the Government (Participant 10).

It was imperative that the above responses be grouped into two groups, not because of the titles they hold as implementers and beneficiaries, but mainly because they have a different understanding of the objective of the programme. The first group with the implementer responses (CSSC and SCTP officers) shows a good understanding of the objective of the program, poverty eradication. Although expressed in different ways, from the participant (1), who is general and broad in their understanding of the objective, to the participants (2, 4 and 6) who are specific in identifying vectors such as health, nutrition, empowerment as steps to be taken to improve people's lives in order to achieve poverty reduction. In all, the analysis

establishes a common train of thinking and comprehension of the SCTP goal by both the administrators and implementers. On the other hand, the same cannot be said for the beneficiary's responses which are not only different from the first group, but also vary within the group.

Three issues that stand out from the category of beneficiary responses that are not in line with the SCTP objective. In the first place, the participant (8) sees the program as a political initiative. The participant believes that the ruling party has gone out of its way to compensate for the initiative and claims that it would not be the same if another party were in power. Slater (2011) reports and predicts the same. "Targeting shifts the balance of political support: those excluded may increase their opposition, but this may be outweighed by increased support from the poorer segment of the population, as seems to have happened during the 2006 presidential elections in Brazil" (Slater, 2011:255). Participant (8) is grateful to the leadership of the ruling party for ensuring that their households have food through this program. The question to be answered is, do other beneficiaries have similar beliefs? If not in support of the ruling government, would the beneficiaries portray a negative attitude towards the program?

This paper does not have answers to these questions, and it is rather unclear if the cash transfer system in Mangochi is an election issue. However, in chapter two, Hickey (2007) points to politics as a key determinant of social protection initiatives. (Hossain and Moore (2001), Hossain (2005) and Hickey (2005), cited in Hickey (2007), further grapples with the issue of 'political contract' in explaining the ways in which forms of politics combine to shape social protection in Africa. How important is this political comment by participant (8) highlighted above?

This finding resurfaces what Ellis, Devereux and White (2009), and Niño-Zarazúa et al., (2012) have discussed and which shows a positive correlation between democratic policies (elections) and social protection programs and social policy spending in democratic countries. Where, in the sub-Saharan region, it is common practice for ruling parties in government to present social protection initiatives as parties initiatives rather than

government-led initiatives. This is intended to rally political support of the beneficiaries and the masses who are ignorant of the functioning of social protection initiatives. This pattern is prevalent in low-income democratic countries (Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2012) and Malawi is no exception. The timely scaling up of the SCTP before the May 2019 presidential elections, the misleading propaganda (benching on the misconception of government development initiatives as ruling party initiatives) during campaign period- leading up to the elections and the results in question indicate that the SCTP is politicized, but not profoundly.

Similarly, we have participant (12) who is under the impression that it is their civil right as an elder person and any poor individual to be receiving social grants from its Government. Sentiments by participant (12) are not far-fetched if one reviews the idea closely in SCTP literature, Pozarny (2015) shows the importance of the cash transfers to the elderly beneficiaries. He suggests that, the cash transfers increase household income for the elderly who hire help for farm tasks they cannot do on their own.

The research suggests that if beneficiaries have a misconception of the objective of the program or why they are beneficiaries as case participants (8 and 12), it could have a negative impact on the government's overall objective. This line of thinking creates opportunities for households not to actively play their part in improving their livelihoods by requiring the State to support them as perceived as their right. Critics of the new form of social protection initiatives have consistently urged against the possibility of creating dependency and laziness from the beneficiaries. "The schemes are often criticized by politicians for allegedly creating dependency, fueling wasteful expenditures such as on alcohol, and helping only those who choose to loaf off the recipients" (Devereux 2001: 27; cited in Hickey, 2007:5).

Beneficiaries should be aware of their role if they are to contribute to meeting the objectives of the programme. If assumptions such as these (exemplified by Participants 8 and 12) are not evaluated by the implementers, the plan can provide space for cases of dependency.

Conversely, participant (10) assumes that SCTP is a response to the failures of supposedly previous social protection programs. There are a few issues to point out from this response: Firstly, the participant highlights that SCTP is a response to the feeding program. It must be mentioned that even though both programs are financed by international organizations, the administration and implementation of SCTP is run by government employees, unlike the feeding program that is administered and implemented by World Food Programme (WFP).

Secondly, the participant is under the wrong assumption by stating that the feeding program has been replaced by SCTP. When I followed up on this claim with the administrators it was highlighted that the feeding program is still running in Mangochi, however, SCTP beneficiaries are de-prioritized on related social protection programs to allow other 'poor' people to benefit as well. Furthermore, criticism of the feeding program has nothing to do with the introduction of SCTP in Mangochi. The officer appeared bewildered as to why this participant has decided to make these claims. Thus, from the responses provided by the beneficiaries that are dissimilar to those of the administrators one may ask if the beneficiaries are informed on why they are beneficiaries, as claimed?

These issues, if overlooked, might lead to derailing the objective of the program of poverty reduction as highlighted above. However, one of the five beneficiaries (participant 9) was able to relate the objective of the program, in line with the interpretation of the administrators. Participant (9) is on the right track with their conceptualization of the improvement of living standards and investment. Unfortunately, regardless of the small sample size, three of the five beneficiaries misconstruing the objective of the program is significant to raise a concern.

4.2 Inconsistent implementation of proxies of poverty

Across the interviews what also surfaced as an irregularity when targeting is the inconsistent implementation of the proxies of poverty. The relationship between efficient targeting and the

achievement of the objective of social grants programs have been shown above. Emphasis is placed on having the right beneficiaries in the program if the program is to reach its goal.

Henceforth, this category of irregularities highlights the inconsistencies in the implementation of the proxies of poverty across the CSSC team. Before the responses from the participants are presented, it must be recalled what GoM /Ministry has documented as targeting criteria, proxies of poverty in Malawi.

“Eligibility criteria are based on a household being ultra-poor (unable to meet the most basic urgent needs, including food and essential non-food items such as soap and clothing) and labor constrained (defined as having a ratio of 'fit to work' to 'not fit to work' of more than three). Household members are defined as 'unfit' if they are below 18 or above 64 years of age, or if they are age 18 to 64 but have a chronic illness or disability or are otherwise unable to work. A household is labor constrained if there are no 'fit to work' members in the household, or if the ratio of unfit to fit exceeds three” (Malawi Social Cash Transfer Baseline Evaluation Report, 2014: 16).

Considering that the CSSC team went through training on how to target, with emphasis on the targeting criteria, the above description of the targeting criteria and proxies of poverty is the benchmark that the CSSC responses are examined against. Below are the responses from the four CSSC participants.

Mmmmmm I cannot say for certain that this is it, what I know is what I have experienced. We were just told on what the criteria is and to work with what we were told. Individuals that are physically challenged to work, old people, individuals that can work but do not make enough to support the entire household. So, we give them this money every three months to improve their lives (Participant 4).

I fail to understand how literacy and gender come in the ultra-poor and labour constrained. Where am I coming with this? I have said, I am a health officer, so I know

female-headed households and those that have not gone to school dominate the poverty charts. Sooooo, my question is, how does this targeting criteria not cater to these factors? I will give you an example, there is an elderly lady in this village who did not really comprehend the questions I was asking her when assessing the situation of the household, her answers were contradicting. I made a judgment call just to include her not because of her age which she could not even recall but because she was female and uneducated and stood no chance (Participant 6).

Okay, for this program Social Cash transfer, we believe that in a household one individual cannot take care of more than 3(three) dependents. In the program, anyone under the age of eighteen years is categorized as a child. So, if an adult has more than 3 to 4 dependents, it makes them eligible to become beneficiaries of the program. Age is important because of the labour aspect of the targeting itself. Anyone from the age of 19 to 64 is an adult that can work to earn a living so will not be eligible candidate unlike children and those above 65years categorized as elderly. However, they might be individuals within the working-age between 19-64 years that might be physically challenged or have a chronic illness and cannot work. A family composition as one of the tolls to measure poverty looks out for these characteristics of the household for eligibility into the program (Participant 9).

You see the thing is honestly, the extension/local team responsible for writing down the list of households at the initial stage are human beings just like us, they make mistakes. Mistakes we cannot run away from, but they are also cases where these individuals will deliberately leave out ultra-poor household so that that spot is filled in by another household that they personally approve of, for whatever reason. So yes, we have such cases (Participant 1).

What stood out from the seven responses from the CSSC team and the SCTP officers are the four responses highlighted above. These four responses represent the four diverse proxies of

poverty by the CSSC team implemented. It should not come as a surprise how the CSSC team members in Mangochi have inversely implemented what they were advised as the proxies of poverty considering their diverse understanding of ultra-poor highlighted above.

Focusing on the participant 's response (4), it is interesting that the member of the CSSC team considers the earnings of the breadwinners to be an appropriate criterion for the proxy for poverty. Recalling earlier analysis of misconceptions about measuring poverty because of economic standards. There is a greater issue to be revealed in this response if one considers the measure of poverty in economic terms. As Miller et al., (2010) suggests, if terms such as ultra-poverty and labor-constrained are operationalized to estimate the number of households that meet the SCTS criteria just as the Malawi SCTP, the results might be disparate because the various definitions for the terms are conceptually different.

Consistent with the issue of using labor constraint as a targeting proxy, Conning and Kevane (2002) indicate that there is a tendency for household demography to adapt in order to suit the description of targeting criteria-labor constraint (cited in Ellis and Maliro, 2013). What is problematic about this response is how the participant conceptualizes labour-constrained differently from the official interpretation. The participant replaces labor constraint (if the ratio of unfit to fit exceeds three) with (household earnings not being enough). This might look comparable, but the targeting criteria does not specify nor calculate what income is suitable for beneficiary households.

Furthermore, the criteria of using labor constraint is not clear on the extent of the disability to be qualified as unfit to work, this leaves room for the CSSC team members to defend irregular targeting as the criteria itself is vague. This has happened in this case, the participant in question is taking upon themselves to enhance the targeting criteria which is tricky as fellow CSSC team members are not aware of the amendments thus opening a window for inconsistencies in the targeting process.

Similarly, participant (6) commits a comparable crime by introducing gender and illiteracy as part of the proxies for the targeting criteria. In as much as poverty in Malawi is predominant amongst female-headed households and illiterate households (Brugh et al., 2018), the participant is at fault for inserting proxies that SCTP has not designated for targeting thus also creating room for use of different targeting proxies of poverty within a district. This can result in excluding those in most need to receive assistance.

In addition, we have case participant (1) as the supervisor of the members of the CSSC team who acknowledges the errors that occur when targeting. Mistakes are inevitable in such a program, but participant (1) also highlights the intentional actions of members of the CSSC to exclude 'other' households from their preference. When asked why this is happening, participant (1) chose not to go into depth on individual incidents, but rather to point out the factors behind the incidents. Three issues were highlighted as "frequent" accusations that household names were excluded from the list of beneficiaries: witchcraft charges, previous beneficiaries of other social protection programs, and animosity between certain households and the CSSC members.

In addition, the accusation of including households who are CSSC relations or acquaintances has been raised. Recalling the literature, "One pitfall in a community-based approach is that there may be biases in the selection of community members who identify beneficiaries. In turn, those community members will favor close relatives rather than the poorest households" (Miller et al., 2010:484). Ellis and Maliro (2013) concurs that SCTs poverty targeted are vulnerable to error as the prevalence of individuals linked to leaders/chiefs and targeting personnel find their way to the recipient list.

The research focuses on the claim made by beneficiaries that there is some flaw in the application of the targeting criteria. The findings confirm the literary works above, community-based approach was vulnerable to immoral targeting behaviors. Essentially, the

CSSC team inconsistently applied the poverty proxies in the selection of SCTP beneficiary households resulting in inclusion and exclusion errors.

On the other hand, the Participant (9) refers to the targeting criteria that is consistent with what GoM has documented. It should be noted that participation (9) was also in line with GoM 's position on the objective of the program. It would be a hasty generalization if we were to conclude that a participant who is at fault for not being consistent in their conceptualization of ultra-poor, will also not be at par with GoM stipulated implementation of proxies. In so far as the participant (9) is otherwise a good example of the occurrence, it would be naive to conclude the incident as a trend. Looking at participants (4 and 6) who are not in line with GoM on the application of proxies of poverty, were however in line with GoM interpretation of the program's objective provide evidence for this.

4.3 Complexities in relation to targeting: Insufficient funding

Lastly, the problems that arose from limited funding to run the program were also highlighted throughout the interviews. GoM has relied mainly on various international financial donors to run the program from its pilot stage in 2006 to date. As reported in the MNSSP II report (2018), the SCTP funding arrangements are fragmented, with each donor having various funding modalities, timeframes, and reporting requirements. The financial role of GoM is to provide salaries for SCTP officers implementing the program and to fund one of the 28 districts.

To deal with this responsibility strategically, GoM employed SCTP officers as full-time civil servants. On the other hand, the funds required for the one district have been allocated to the budget of the National Social Protection Sector. In doing so, GoM did not have to set aside a specific budget to pay monthly salaries, pensions, and all remuneration to SCTP officers.

However, this strategic thinking has its disadvantages, which have affected the specific aspects of the programme. As a result, GoM relies heavily on community volunteers to do much of the heavy lifting on the ground. "Programs such as SCT depend heavily on community volunteers, and although some stakeholders supported these arrangements for their low cost and community participation potential, others have questioned their reliability, sustainability, and effectiveness" (MNSSP II report, 2018:13).

As an institution responsible for the administrative capacity to implement the program, GoM may have overlooked the strong relationship between the amount allocated for funding and efficiency targeting. With the bulk of donor funding guided to monthly cash transfer payments, GoM set aside less budget for targeting recipients. This issue was expressed predominantly (Four of the five participants). Three of the participants raised the issue as a concern while the fourth participant pointed it out as a positive attribute. Below are the views on targeting specifically.

For me as a beneficiary, as much as I am appreciative that I am receiving money and it helps me in a lot of ways, but I also worry about my neighbours that were not included to become beneficiaries. The way our names found their way on this list, it is only by the Grace of God. These guys responsible for targeting did not visit every home in this village to assess the situation. I have a neighbour an elder lady who has no help and is not a beneficiary now am forced to always cook for her. Because of this, I approached two of the guys responsible to ask why her name was not included. 'Their response was, they are not paid a salary to visit every home, nor are they given enough financial support to assess the situation for every home..... However, they will rectify the issue, now that they know and so they promised' (Participant 11).

I always say this whenever we have meetings, that we need more monitoring and evaluation specific to targeting. Too much power has been given to us. Like this targeting we do, cannot qualify as systematic.....

Yes, the SCTP officers are told to monitor and evaluate to confirm the 10percent beneficiaries provided to them. There are two to four officers per district, do you really think they can manage to visit all these households? Like most times households of those not included, other villagers bring the names rather than discovering the names ourselves or through monitoring and evaluation. GoM should try outsourcing monitoring and evaluation for targeting every four years when targeting occurs (Participant 5).

As mentioned earlier the issue of specifically stipulating that 10percent of the district total should qualify as an ultra-poor, it's a problem. This allocated number for a district contributes to leaving out some poor people or even including people that are better off because that district has better percentages of poverty. I know all this has to do with not enough funds coming from GoM for the program (Participant 4)

I do not like the way this program selected their beneficiaries, why does it have to be through these representatives? Other Social Protection programs do things differently. These guys giving us money have a lot of money, why else would they be giving us money for free? There is a lot where this money is coming from, they can do better with targeting, even include more people that are making the selection (Participant 8).

It is obvious that GoM does not have enough money for some of these programs that it implements, and this is one of them. But I am impressed by the way it has tried to use us (local individuals) who are not civil servants to gain a little something for the targeting process. The lunch allowances and day allowances that were paid to us for doing this for me. It is a good move (Participant 6).

What is intriguing is that all the five participants responses above were able to draw a correlation between efficient targeting and funding. The research identifies inadequate funds for targeting as one of the challenges in targeting recipients. Their approach towards targeting is elusive in the way they are seemingly eager to rectify inclusion errors other than exclusion errors. The program identified contingency measures to correct inclusion errors early in the

targeting process by having SCTP officers visit the households of recently selected beneficiaries to confirm their poverty status.

Similarly, Miller's et al., (2010) phases of the targeting approach provide controls to minimize inclusion errors, as seen from stage 5 to 7. However, there is no stage in this 10-step process that illustrates the intervention to correct the error of exclusion. What this study has presented demonstrates incompetence in correcting the exclusion errors that need to be tackled. Participant (5) points out the disparity in approach to the correction of exclusion errors by which, in "most" situations, those excluded are not detected by system managers as they should be by means of checks and balances at the early stages of targeting or by means of monitoring and evaluation. The SCTP officer also confirmed this adversity:

We have a mechanism called case management to resolve exclusion errors, sooo uuuhm only after the issues or claims have been reported to us, what happens is, we open an investigation to find out the claims/reports are true. From experience it goes both ways, some claims have been investigated as legit while others have been refuted based on our investigation. If we have some names that should not be on the list only then can we remove that name for the excluded name? As I mentioned earlier there is a specific number stipulated for beneficiary households (Participant 1).

There is a problem with monitoring and evaluation in the early stages of targeting that this study has identified. Is this a question of insufficient funding, as the participants pointed out, or is there a major issue of administrative failure that the study should have investigated? What is clear are the concerns raised by the participants about the lack of funding for targeting beneficiaries. As a result, the study argues that the current approach to targeting is flawed. It has left control in the hands of a few CSSC members that GoM can afford to offer day allowances because they are technically volunteers, leading to errors of inclusion and exclusion.

Recalling phases 1 and 2 of the targeting approach involves extension workers who orient the targeting criteria and the program to the CSSC team (Miller et al., 2010). Extension workers are government employees who are locally employed to assist in the administration or supervision of development or government-related activities in their native areas. In view of their knowledge of the specific area and the targeting criteria, why does the targeting process not involve them in the supervision of the CSSC team when assessing the eligible beneficiary households prior to confirmation? Such supervision by extension workers would act as a control, as SCTP officers are not native to the area and therefore lack information on the circumstances of the household.

Is this a financial issue by having them less involved in the process? If extension workers were more involved, as the study suggests, the Government will have to raise its budget for targeting by providing payments for the hours worked. This seems like a forthright matter once approved. However, unlike other social cash transfer programs in the region, Malawi's Social Cash Transfer program is supported by donor funding. "The SCTS is currently funded by international donors with a small fraction of the cost coming from the Government of Malawi" (Miller, Tsoka and Reichert, 2011:237). This complicates the matter of making amendments to the targeting approach. Niño-Zarazúa et al., (2012), highlights one of the challenges of scaling up the financial viability of social protection initiatives has to do with the decision-makers who fear fiscal and political pressures with the increment and incorporation of the program into the national budget.

Conversely, incorporating the expense into the donor budget adds to the uncertainty of the sustainability of the program. As Miller et al., (2011) argues that, in Malawi even though politicians might be optimistic about the scaling up of the program, there is no guarantee that it will continue as development assistance fluctuates and priorities shift by donors. What this study highpoint is, GoM overlooked the standing of control mechanisms to acquiring of

efficient targeting, which is attainable by providing sufficient internal controls and external monitors to evaluate the process at an early stage.

The response from participant (6) applauding the targeting approach stands out. In retrospect, there is something to gain for the participant in question, as opposed to the community, and hence the applause. Regardless, noteworthy to include the applause as all issues arising were recorded rather than prevalence. The issue of internal controls, monitoring and evaluation should be raised.

4.4 Conclusion

In hindsight, the 10 stages targeting approach highlighted by Miller et al., (2010) in the literature review was not dutifully followed, rather the CSSC team selected by the community was given the mandate to assess households in the area. This chapter identified irregularities in the targeting process. Irregularities categorized into contradictions in conceptualization, implementation, and inadequate funding. It should be emphasized that, these irregularities should not be generalized to the rest of the districts, considering the various contexts, and targeting teams. For the results to be generalized, a broader sample size derived from different districts must be used.

Noteworthy, However, the study further urges targeting of SCTP should focus on identifying households that will not be able to protect themselves from adverse shocks as opposed to how the program is focused on identifying the poorest 10percent. Consequently, switching the focus to protecting a wider coverage of households at high risk of vulnerability from defining and recognizing who is poor from the perceived definition. Because of the detection of anomalies, the study should investigate how these problems hinder the next phase of the comprehensive programme.

CHAPTER FIVE: INFLUENCE OF IRREGULARITIES ON THE OBJECTIVE OF THE PROGRAM

5.0 Introduction

The research set out to highlight issues other than the limitation of labor constrains that present challenges in achieving the objectives of the program. The previous chapter set out targeting irregularities that are caused by contradictions in conceptualization, execution and shortage of funds. Such targeting anomalies have effectively contributed to errors of inclusion and exclusion in the district.

The purpose of the chapter is to highlight the evident influence of inclusion and exclusion errors on the goal of the program. In comparison to the previous chapter, which presented lengthy narratives from the study to provide an argument, this chapter will strike a balance of material from the literature, the researcher's observation, and engagement with the sample.

The analysis sheds more light on the observable relationship between exclusion errors and the objective of the program, as the literature has overshadowed unintended outcomes. In the end, what this study has observed is the role of inclusion and exclusion errors in positively and negatively influencing the program's objective. To recall, "the program aims to reduce hunger and vulnerability among these households and ensure that children attend school" (Niño-Zarazúa et al., 2012:168). To concur, the Government of Malawi has also documented the objective of the program is to essentially reduce poverty in Malawi, by reducing poverty levels and increasing the school enrolment rates in poor households (Malawi Social Cash Transfer Baseline Evaluation Report, 2014).

The objective of the program: to reduce poverty and hunger, and to increase school enrolment, was further divided into three subcategories for easier evaluation. The three components of the purpose of the program is listed in Table (4) below. Simultaneously with the guidance questions used in interviews.

Table 4: Components of the program objective

Program objective	Guideline question
To reduce hunger	What is the relationship between food consumption, food diversity, food security and excluded and included error cases?
To reduce poverty	What is the relationship between participation in economic activity, vulnerability, capabilities, asset accumulation and excluded and included error cases?
To increase school enrolment	What is the relationship between school enrolment and excluded and included error cases?

This table (4) offers a reference to the guideline questions that were crucial to the understanding of the relationship between inclusion and exclusion errors and the intent of the program. The chapter explores the relationship between errors and the achievement of the objectives of the programme.

5.1 The relationship between inclusion errors and the objective of the program

The adverse effects of inclusion errors on social protection programs in Africa have been reported mainly by scholars such as (Ellis, 2008, Miller et al., 2010 and Slater, 2011). The basis of this literature 's argument lies in the assumption that unworthy people are receiving cash that would benefit the poor, thus taking a step in the wrong direction. The analysis is critical

of the reasoning and finds its broad conclusion problematic. Rather, the study considers that inclusion errors can only be fatal depending on the context of the SCT and its purpose.

Specific to this case, for instance, the context; Mangochi is a rural district in the fourth poorest country in the world (World Bank Report, 2019). What are the chances of the included cases being poor? They may not be the top 10% of the district's ultra-poor population, but a good number if not all of them are relatively poor, and if poverty continues to mean lack of social development, freedom and ability as described by Sen (1992), then they are poor.

When exclusion errors are the subject of the correction of errors rather than the inclusion of error-cases, we can allow a broader scope of the system and the potential to improve their chances of vulnerability. Similarly, Brugha et al., (2018), maintains that poverty-reduction is the objective of a social grant, as such policymakers with a given budget should be more worried about exclusion errors than inclusion errors as they have done.

Looking towards contingency steps to correct inclusion errors early in the targeting process while ignoring the likelihood of exclusion errors poses a much greater obstacle to eradicating hunger and poverty. Attention should be moved to the latter issue of ensuring wide coverage of the poor by reducing exclusion errors rather than the former, as this proposal gives more weight to success in uplifting the living conditions of the poor.

The research suggests that decision-makers should focus on exclusion errors rather than inclusion errors in the poverty eradication programs. Tactlessly, SCTP focuses on inclusion mistakes. As a result, a discussion of the "supposedly" inclusion error-cases.

5.1.1 What happens to the included error-cases once they became beneficiaries?

5.1.1.1 Improvement in food consumption

World Food Summit (WFS) highlighted the multiple facets of food security and established the four pillars of food security: availability, accessibility, utilization, and stability (WFS, 1997 cited in Brugha, et al., 2018). Over the years the understanding of food security defined by WFS has evolved to include nutrition. Food security indicators look at food quantity, while nutrition indicators lean towards diet quality. Consequently, food and nutrition security indicators (quality and quantity) is the first perimeter that this study investigates.

In the interviews conducted, what was observable and stipulated by both the beneficiary households and SCTP officers is the improvement of food consumption among the beneficiary households selected.

Comparable to what was stipulated in Chapter Two, Slater (2011), Ellis and Maliro (2013), Pozarny (2015) and Tiwari et al., (2016) report on the positive correlation between social cash transfers and increment in food quantities in beneficiary households. The introduction of social cash transfers in the SSA region has tackled food-entitlement failures directly, by providing cash to the beneficiary households to purchase food (Ellis and Maliro, 2013). Specific to Malawi as indicated in the literature review, Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme (2010) infers that social cash transfers improve per capita consumption expenditure and food security in beneficiary households.

Accordingly, all five households interviewed agreed that SCTP had improved household food consumption by increasing the food quantity in the beneficiary households. Below are the responses of three of the five participants who are beneficiaries of the programme.

Yes, honestly when it comes to having food in this house. Coming from a background where we could have one meal a day, things have improved now to two sometimes but

usually three times a day once we get the payment. So am thankful for the cash transfers for that (Participant 9)

We have seen a significant change in this household since the introduction of the program before we became beneficiaries this household relied heavily on piece work and those are seasonal. There were times that we could not get any piece of work (like farming in other people's lands) which means there is no food in the house. Imagine seeing your children going to school hungry on an empty stomach, they even looked it then; weak (Participant 8)

I remember I have stayed for 21 days in this household without having the staple meal (nsima). What we used to have is just vegetables-the leaves grown naturally from the field outside with tea every day, for 21 days. I remember clearly because my daughter Prisca got sick during this period and she was diagnosed with one of the malnutrition diseases. At least now my immediate problem of having maize has been solved, I can afford to buy enough for the household (Participant 11).

The study shows that all the representatives have attested to an improvement in the quantity of food since joining the programme. However, it is not clear whether this increase in food intake is a sign of disrupting food insecurity in times of shock or is in fact adequate to disrupt previous trends in food shortages during the lean season. As such, further studies in the area need to be carried out to determine the extent of the intended effect of the increase in food quantity in beneficiary households. What is certain is that the introduction of social cash transfers in the area has shown an improvement in food consumption in beneficiary households.

The aforementioned responses include both an extreme case in which the household went without a proper meals for 21 days, and an improvement in their diet once selected as beneficiaries indicated by the participant (11) and the household of participant (9) who could

at least afford a meal on a day also witnessing change. Demonstrating the increase in food quantity with the implementation of SCTs, regardless of the circumstances in the beneficiary households and the efficiency of the targeting method. It is also reasonable to assume that the inclusion error-cases on the beneficiary list often benefit from the system explicitly to increase food consumption. However, we cannot look at food quantity without looking into the quality of what is being consumed.

5.1.1.2 Lack of diversity

In contrast to the improvement in food quantity, the observation of the nutritional benefits of this sample was not favourable. Interviews with beneficiary households on what kind of food they consume indicate a propensity of lack of diversity. It has consistently been discussed by all five beneficiary households is the minimal buying power of the cash they earn from the system. This is not surprising, as the previous SCTP research in Malawi showed that "after one year of program participation, beneficiary households have experienced little change in diet quality or current economic vulnerability to food insecurity" (Brugha, et al., 2018:19).

Beneficiary households have developed strategies to address the low purchasing power of the cash provided. Examples of strategies identified by the sample tend to be negative rather than beneficial to the nutritional status of households. The following responses provide a range of strategies to address the needs of beneficiary households.

When I go collect the money, I must buy maize. Sometimes you will buy maize at a very expensive price because it is not harvesting season and the prices have gone up. Twice I ended up just buying maize with all the money. As long as I have maize, that assures me that my family will not starve. What we have with that maize, will be bought eventually from the money that will come from piece work (Participant 11)

It's disappointing to see how some of the beneficiary households are not progressing. One time you visit them; you will find a bit of livestock like chickens which as an SCTP officer we consider as an asset. Then a follow-up visit they will tell you they sold their livestock because they ran out of maize. Again, and again this happens (Participant 2)

The aim right now is to eat twice a day. You eat the afternoon meal and, in the evening, to sleep peacefully, anything else like tea, snacks that you can randomly eat during the day it's not for us, we do not have enough (Participant 10).

We have not received payments, I think they are late, we usually receive them by this time of the month when they are due. So now as you can see, we are making tea for lunch then in the evening we should be able to find vegetables in the garden to have nsima (pap) and for tomorrow I was promised something from some piece work (ganya) I did way back (Participant 9)

What can be seen from the above reactions is that, as a strategy to purchase more resources from the cash provided, beneficiaries are choosing to purchase cheap calories as a staple food consisting of carbohydrates/starch rather than fine grains such as vegetables and meat products. This habit may imply a lack of dietary diversity and low household income expenditure.

This assumption is derived from Bennett's Law, which states that household demand for staple food reflects the average household desire for dietary diversity. As income rises, households reduce the budget share of starchy staple foods to restricted grains by adding more milk, meat, fruit, and vegetables to their diet (Brugha, et al., 2018). Even though Pozarny's (2015) findings on a study of SCT's show that beneficiaries spent much of their income on widening the variety of purchased foods, including eggs, meat, and beans, seemingly presenting a scenario of food diversity and quality. This sample of beneficiaries interviewed did not report on the same.

Concluding from the participants (2, 9 and 11) responses, this sample relies on maize for their meals and there was no indication of refined foods. Worse still, as reported by the SCTP officer the frequency of beneficiary households selling chickens, livestock to purchase maize is possibly a sign of retrogression. Nevertheless, considering that there is no clear evidence to support retrogression, concerns raised by Pozarny (2015) below, fit the narrative.

"Unpredictable transfer payments jeopardize household planning and the well-being of cash-dependent beneficiary households. Inconsistent payments threaten the credibility and authority of the CSSCs. Ensuring regular and predictable cash transfer payments is vital to the success of the SCT program" (Pozarny, 2015:276).

Participant (9) also comments on the delay in payment, but neutral to Pozarny's (2015) claim, the paper argues that coping strategies outlined suggest the restricted buying power of cash obtained to maintain a healthy diet. Therefore, this brings into question the adequacy of the cash earned per family, is adequate to ensure food security and eradicate poverty, especially during lean season. Is there a need to integrate the program with other initiatives in the field of social protection? It should be noted that SCTP beneficiaries are not allowed to benefit from other social protection initiatives in the area. The explanation behind this decision is to encourage other vulnerable people who are not beneficiaries of SCTP to have a fair share of the social security initiatives.

The question on the power purchase of the cash received, food security and the need for integration of the social Protection initiatives will be discussed below. Before we commence this discussion, beneficiaries had this to say concerning the purchasing power of the cash received.

With SCTP I now have a stable income, but because I am feeding two households, it is not enough. I rely on piece works which are also seasonal. So, knowing this they will be times without any food or money in this household I knew I needed a backup plan. This is where the village bank came to me because I could go and borrow money there and fix my immediate problem which is mostly food for the day. They trust me to pay back because of the SCTP, just piece works alone they wouldn't trust me (Participant 9).

I think the amount, for now, is not enough for this household to make significant progress where I can proudly show to them after 4years in the program that I used this money for this and that. As you have witnessed this money is used to buy food and school necessities, it is most likely that in two years once we have been removed from the beneficiary list, we will be facing the same old problems. Back to my previous problems, honestly, that is my fear (Participant 8).

All in all, they should increase the amount so that I can set aside money as capital for a small business. It's not like I have a certain amount exactly that I think is right or fair to improve our circumstances but the point you have to take is that the money is not enough for the expectations they have (Ku "mtukula pakhomo") meaning improving the status quo of the household (Participant 10).

How much are the beneficiaries receiving in a month? This response was provided by the SCTP officer which stands as a true depiction of what the beneficiaries are receiving in the SCTP.

It depends on the household composition. There is K2600 (\$3.54) allocation for a household of one person, K3300 (\$4.49) for a household of two people, K4400 (\$5.99) for a household of three people and five people or more is K5600(\$7.62).

..... But they are other issues like school

enrolment/attendance at what level are part of the issues we investigate. With this program, money paid to the household also depends on the number of children and what level of school they are in. A child in primary receives K800 (\$1.09) while one in is secondary (high school) school receives K1500 (\$2.04) (Participant 2)

The narratives on the effect of the cash received by the SCT were nothing short of admirable as presented in the literature review. Cash transfers create a virtuous cycle of growth by improving economic security (per capita consumption, food insecurity, and asset ownership) at household, community and national level (Taylor, 2008, Hanlon, Barrientos and Hulme, 2010 and Hjelm et al., 2017). Likewise, "evidence for the local market multiplier effects of cash transfers came from a study in one district of Malawi where cash transfers were disbursed in 2007, which found a multiplier of over 2.0" (Davies and Davey, 2008; cited in Devereux, 2016:55).

It should be stressed that the study does not oppose the effect of cash flows on the rise in economic activity and the accumulation of assets. Rather, the study notes and challenge the adequacy of the cash given to the planned outcome, the eradication of poverty.

This was also the issue posed by Miller et al., (2010) who argues that, despite encouraging findings of SCT's in Mchinji-Malawi, long-term durability of their impact to the related outcome is uncertain. Looking at the case of South, Africa for instance, social grants have been effective in bringing poor people closer to the poverty line as opposed to graduating them from poverty. Accordingly, Ellis (2008) stipulates that cash transfers do not remove beneficiary households from poverty as expected by the Malawi SCTP. Rather, they simply lift them from critical poverty, which is life-threatening, to moderate poverty.

Analyzing the beneficiary concern (participant 8 and 10) about the value of the money provided not being adequate for their immediate needs is in line with the literature examined. The

household in which the participant (10) is, receives the highest monthly payment for a specific household across the spectrum of beneficiaries, with a minimum of \$16 per month. Limiting it to the expenditure of half a dollar a day. This is rather low, for one to expect a household identified as ultra-poor to escape from poverty.

Worse still, the above research by Davies and Davey (2008), cited in Devereux (2016), was performed more than ten years earlier. Since then, the purchasing power of Malawi Kwacha cash given to these beneficiaries has declined over time as the system itself is not indexed to inflation.

Participant (9) above provided its resolution to borrow money from village banks or search for piecework whenever necessary. Acquiring credit and loans by beneficiaries is not surprising, as Pozarny (2015) 's research on Malawi's SCTP shows that some recipients sort loans when cash was small on the promise of impending cash transfers. "The SCT program increased the creditworthiness of beneficiaries, although payment delays eroded the trust of some vendors, a few did contribute to or take loans from, village savings and loans schemes" (Pozarny, 2015:276).

The study cannot report for certain how many of the beneficiaries are involved in the two schemes (loans and piecework) to generate more household income, but it is important to remind the reader of the labour constraint selection criteria of SCTP, which is why the latter scheme appears to be problematic. Worse still, as pointed out earlier beneficiaries on the program are not allowed to be beneficiaries of other social protection initiatives running while they are still beneficiaries of SCTP, this leaves them vulnerable and highly dependent on the provided cash.

Below, an officer confirms the isolation of SCTP beneficiaries from other initiatives.

I can give you an example, recently there was a program run by the NGO; Concern Universal, which had a similar program ideology of social cash transfer. What they planned is to distribute money to beneficiaries in one installment, but they wanted the beneficiaries of social cash transfer as their targeted group. We objected to this and had an argument-discussions on this issue because that is against the program's policy. We want to reach as many people as possible in the intervention measures and this is one way that those excluded could also benefit (Participant 2)

The study calls into question the feasibility of the money received. If the cash provided is sufficient for households to invest and become self-sufficient? Drawing from Miller et al (2010)., the elimination of the persistent cycle of poverty by the program is fraught with ambiguity. The money that is currently being allocated to households has the potential to save households from sleeping hungry. The value given is not adequate to mitigate chronic poverty. Thus, inclusion error-cases are met with the same challenges, exposed and reliant on the poverty-stricken system.

5.2 The relationship between included cases and school enrolment?

Previous studies that were conducted to assess the likely impact of education on poverty, show that higher levels of educational attainment, especially for women, will prove effective in reducing poverty in Malawi (Mukherjee and Benson, 2003). "Education is essential for social-economic development and industrial growth. It is an instrument for empowering the poor, the weak and the voiceless as it provides them with equal opportunity to participate in local and national development" (Malawi: Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, 2012:31). The study focused solely on enrolment in education, regardless of gender, quality and relevance of the education provided, as this is beyond the scope of the study.

When asked about the evidence to back up their argument for increased school enrolment and less cases of absenteeism, officers confirmed that they had sent a hard copy file to the Ministry. Likewise, they reported being warned against the sharing of Ministry data with civilians. Attempts to obtain this paperwork from the Ministry were unsuccessful. The study sees this as a limitation; thus, the responses below merely stand as observations.

But in terms of education, there I can see a pattern, after making my investigation as a researcher and monitoring the beneficiaries, you can see that school enrolment has increased. You see the thing is, they are paid extra money for a child that is at school, now they have the motive to encourage their child to go to school. I remember a specific example where when the beneficiary household was introduced in the program, the child went back to school in primary standard 7 to get that extra money we were providing as an incentive. 4 years later, after evaluation, the child was in form four which is more money now as he is in secondary school (Participant 1)

We have a school enrolment verification exercise, for any beneficiary household that indicated that they have a child or children in school. We have a record of the name of the child/children, then verify with the school without informing the guardians that we will be checking in with the school. I can tell you; they have been changes even the headteacher of the school commends this program (Participant 2)

So, they give us more money if you have children in school, they make sure to remind us that money is for school things. I made sure all my four are in school and the schools nearby are government school and government schools are free. So, I make sure to save

as well and spend some of the money on the items we need here at home especially food items (Participant 9).

This program has directly impacted the daily lives of the children going to school in this household. I used to send them for piece works just to increase our chances instead of school. Now I can provide food for them, buy clothes which they urgently needed, books and writing materials-they did not have all that and I could not provide that for them (Participant 11).

I know my role and the rest of the team is merely to select the beneficiaries, but sometimes we follow up on these households for different reasons when they ask us to. Earlier this year, they had asked me to follow up on a household in my area because there was a child there that has just started going to school but was now absent for a month. I am sure you aware that most of these beneficiaries enroll their children in school to get more money, this child was one of those cases..... Unfortunately for the family/fortunately for the program the child was absent because he was ill so they continued receiving more money (Participant 4)

It's common information amongst beneficiaries' households that having more children in school earns you more cash every month. I was there at the collection point last payment. It was funny to hear beneficiary household representatives (two women) comparing how much they have received and one of them bragging that having so many children is rewarding as Government is paying them to keep children in school (Participant 6)

There is a clear positive connection between children from included beneficiary households and access to education. Interviews show that the beneficiaries are aware of the incentive to enroll children in school, and therefore there has been an increase in school enrolment.

Moreover, participants (2 and 4) speak on beneficiary households also being aware of the consequences of absenteeism and withdrawing a child/children from school for beneficiary households. As such, they speak highly of the influence of the program on keeping children in school. For example, participants (1 and 11) speak specifically of cases where children have been kept away from school, with the participant (11) claiming that lack of resources for the household is the reason behind absenteeism, while the participant (1) does not provide the reason for the child's withdrawal from school. Social cash transfer has increased household income and has led the child back to school. Specific to the case presented by the participant (1) the child that was withdrawn from school at the primary level is in their last year of their high school since enrolling back.

Literature confirms the positive correlation between social cash transfers and school enrolment. Handa and Stewart (2008); cited in Agbaam and Dinbabo (2014) and Pozarny (2015) reports on similar occurrences for their evaluation.

“Malawi's social cash transfer program showed that administering the transfer to households with children resulted in a 5% increase in school enrolment, whilst targeting households with orphans resulted in a 4.2% increase in school enrolment” (Handa and Stewart 2008 cited in Agbaam and Dinbabo, 2014:295).

"SCT reduced negative risk-coping strategies, such as absenteeism and withdrawing children from school" (Pozarny, 2015:276). Likewise, participant (1 and 11) had similar observation.

As far as education is concerned, the cash received encourages beneficiary households to invest in their children's education rather than sending the child to supplement household income. Concern posed by the participant (11) comparable to the discovery made by Pozarny (2015) that payment delays for SCTs had previously seen families return to their children to pursue

additional jobs. This is an unfortunate incident, which confirms the trend in debate, but also confirms the discussion above on the limited power of cash given to the household.

Essentially, as mentioned above, unique to Mangochi, SCTs have increased school enrolment, reduced absenteeism and reduced child labour, the anticipated result set out in the objectives of the program.

5.3 The relationship between exclusion errors and meeting the objective of the program

According to Sen (1982), food insecurity occurs when the sum of all food that individuals, households or groups acquire from production, labor, trade, and transfers is inadequate to meet their minimum consumption needs.

"Food insecurity is closely related to poverty and vulnerability, especially amongst farming households in rural areas, where income and crop production (especially food crops) overlap strongly. It follows that there is a close relationship between social protection and food security" (Devereux, 2016:53).

Aside from the nutrition consistency, food quantity and school enrolment discussed above, participation in the cash economy was also perceived to be an important factor to explore. This rationale is based on the Poverty Vulnerability Assessment for 2016, discussed in Chapter three, which states that household size, education, access to non-farm employment, access to irrigation and participation in cash crop production are factors affecting household poverty in Malawi (Republic of Malawi Poverty Assessment, 2016). How do the excluded cases relate to school enrollment and reducing their vulnerability?

Exclusion errors are the product of the various irregularities that occurred while selecting, illustrated in the previous chapter. To shed more light on the extreme situations of some of the excluded cases, the 10% drawing line used in the selection of beneficiaries may be problematic.

Regardless of the level of deprivation per area, 10 % of the population is used to identify the ultra-poor in each area. This was to be achieved inversely by making up 10% of the ultra-poor beneficiaries based on poverty rates in each district relative to the population. This is significant because what program policymakers have allowed is room for more cases of exclusion errors in areas where poverty levels are higher, as they must select 10% of the ultra-poor population.

The previous chapter addressed the problematic 10% cut-off. In this debate, the literature by Ellis (2008), Miller et al., (2010) and Slater (2011) opposes the use of a 10 % population cut off, when targeting beneficiaries on poverty reduction basis. The point is that knowledge on who is poor in disadvantaged countries is difficult to obtain, as widespread poverty is apparent. As a result, the targeting system is prone to inefficiencies, moral hazardous behaviours and biases that lead to exclusion and inclusion errors.

Malawi is no exception to the persistent and widespread poverty. "Poverty and undernutrition are widespread throughout Malawi as evidenced by high poverty headcount ratios, high poverty gaps, and a large prevalence of undernutrition" (Brugh et al., 2018:20). This relates to the possibility of the desperate condition of rural households in need of assistance being left out of the system. Participants have attested to this situation in the previous chapter.

Shockingly, the system has monitoring mechanisms used to correct inclusion errors rather than exclusion errors. This trend is nothing new when it comes to social protection programs. Precisely, it has been argued that standard proxy means test targeting in social protection programs in developing countries have in practice focused on reducing inclusion errors than exclusion errors (ILO Report, 2016).

The limited capacity of program implementers and policy makers creates difficulties in the vulnerability of excluded cases, thereby preventing the achievement of the program's goal.

The study argues that focusing on included cases rather than excluded cases is more expensive for the system. SCTP officers do not have uniform criteria to be used to select 10% of the 15% of the ultra-poor. Inclusion error-cases might also be poor depending on context and as of Mangochi, their claim is rational. These inclusion error-cases are individuals that are neighbors to 'legitimate' beneficiaries, individuals with similar capabilities of freedom that define their poverty level (Sen, 1992). Inclusion errors are likely to pose less of a threat to the creation of challenges to meet the objective of the program than exclusion errors in this context.

A comparable point is that the focus on resolving inclusion errors faster than exclusion errors leaves the excluded cases in isolation from the advantages of the SCT. Before expanding the claim, the responses below offer an indication of how the beneficiaries pointed out cases of exclusion and their views on the situation.

These guys responsible for targeting did not visit every home in this village to assess the situation. I have a neighbor an elder lady who has no help and is not a beneficiary now am forced to always cook for her. Because of this, I approached two of the guys responsible to ask why her name was not included. Their response was, they are not paid a salary to visit every home, nor are they given enough financial support to assess the situation for every home..... However, they will rectify the issue, now that they know and so they promised' (Participant 11).

With inclusion errors, we usually know in the first year because it is part of our administrative roles to surprise visit the beneficiaries to find out if they were lying about their living condition..... while with exclusion errors its complicated, that is a whole process of targeting that needs to be repeated to identify them, so we just wait for the people to come to us. We take it up from there (Participant 2)

I have said earlier, I feed two households, I do not understand why this other household is not receiving money like me. They are elderly people; the lady is a sister to my grandmother and their children just disappeared. Now here I am taking care of everyone with that little money I receive from SCTP. I even had a business of brewing alcohol, but I don't anymore all the capital went to feeding the two households (Participant 9).

Weight placed on rectification of inclusion errors rather than exclusion errors, leave excluded cases isolated from SCTP benefits. Observable benefits include monthly cash income, purchase of agricultural products, opportunities for education and increased consumption. This is borne out by the above discussion (relationship between inclusion errors and improvement of consumption and school enrolment).

Likewise, Slater (2011) and Pozarny (2015) acknowledged that the SCT already has quite significant impacts on the productivity of beneficiaries, often in the form of increased usage of improved agricultural techniques. The introduction of social cash transfer allows fuller engagement by the poor in their farming as the requirement to seek casual and unreliable off-farm work is reduced (Harnett and Cromwell, 2000; cited in Slater, 2011).

"The SCT is an important source of income, particularly for elderly beneficiaries. Reducing the need to engage in short-term rural labor or *ganyu* work which has been a major benefit for some households. Several beneficiaries were able to hire on-farm labor" (Pozarny, 2015:276).

All beneficiary households have commended the change in relation to agriculture. Comments ranged from applauding the cash system given that they increased their purchasing of fertilizer to small-scale farming and small-scale cash-growing. Unlike program beneficiaries, excluded

cases are at higher risk of vulnerability as they have limited opportunities and cash flow to generate household income.

Excluded households rely on work and handouts for survival as indicated by Pozarny (2015). At most, those who are lucky are beneficiaries of the Public Works Program (PWP). PWP is one of the Government's social security programs that offers compensation to rural residents who volunteer for manual labor in their districts. As compared to the State hiring full-time employees for district programs. One can argue that excluded cases are receiving money from PWP just as SCTP beneficiaries thus this should amount to something.

PWP and SCTP should not be comparable, this would be problematic in three ways. First, there is no requirement that PWP will graduate from poverty as opposed to SCTP, where recipients are supposed to graduate from poverty.

Secondly, PWP payments are once off payments based on how much work you have done, and if there is work to be completed, unlike SCTP, the beneficiaries earn monthly payments for being listed as ultra-poor. At the end of the day, not all excluded cases will be able to do all the manual labor that is paid for. We should bear in mind that some of these are individuals/households are the elderly population, as such doubtful on their capability to put in work for PWP. Henceforth, exclusion errors that remain isolated from the benefits of the SCTP pose a challenge in meeting the poverty reduction objective.

5.4 Conclusion

The chapter highlighted exclusion and inclusion errors as the result of the complexities identified when targeting in the decentralized system of SCTP. The chapter has discussed observable influences of included and excluded errors to meeting the objective of the program. Essentially, the research argued against the popular rationale for inclusion error-cases as fatal

to poverty-reduction social protection initiatives. Included error-cases are detrimental dependent on the context of the social protection initiative being implemented. In a setting such as Mangochi-Malawi, a rural district where poverty rates are high and the variances between the lower deciles of poverty and the income profile are small, the poverty reduction program should concentrate on fixing excluded errors-cases rather than included errors-cases. Excluded situations are detrimental and can hinder the goals of the program. Considering the purpose of the SCTP system and the context in which this analysis was carried out, the omitted error-cases should be treated with caution.

Observable changes from the introduction of the SCT's have shown an improvement in the consumption and school enrolment of the beneficiaries of the programme. However, the report cannot say the same thing about poverty reduction because poverty has several aspects that this report has not measured, and the longer-term result of poverty reduction is uncertain. It is obvious, on the other hand, that the error excluded cases remain segregated from the benefits of SCTP. As a result, the insistence on correcting inclusion errors as opposed to exclusion errors as seen in the study-disrupts the sustainability of the eradication of poverty, hunger and increase of school enrolment.

CHAPTER SIX: CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

6.0 Conclusion

The exploratory study questioned the functioning of the decentralized targeting system to identify any irregularities that might pose as a challenge in meeting the objectives of the program. To highlight the inefficiencies in the targeting process, the research question was, ‘what are the complexities in targeting in Malawi's SCTP and the challenges created in achieving sustainable poverty reduction’? A qualitative analysis through in-depth interviews (semi-structured) was conducted in the Mangochi district with a limited sample size of five beneficiaries, two SCTP officers and five CSSC members, as outlined in Chapter 3 of the methodology. The hypothesis was that the inconsistencies of the SCTP targeting process provided room for problems that hinder sustainable poverty reduction.

The findings of the inquiry have been discussed in two chapters (4 and 5); the irregularities during the targeting process and the influence of the irregularities on the purpose of the programme. The research described anomalies that come from the preferred decentralized system. The anomalies in the narratives of the study group were grouped into three themes. Namely, inconsistencies in the CSSC 's conceptualization of the ultra-poor, inconsistencies in the conceptualization of the program's objective, inconsistent implementation of poverty proxies and inadequate funding. The four irregularities are the reason for the ineffective targeting of SCTP in the Mangochi district, leading to errors of inclusion and exclusion. Accordingly, the inefficiencies in the decentralized system are laid down in Chapter 4.

Decisions about funding, clarification of concepts used in the targeting criteria are the responsibility of the Ministry. The Ministry shall implement SCTP and provide clarification to local representatives at the district level. To say that the decentralized system is at fault and needs to be cancelled will be a rushed and generalized conclusion, as not all 27 districts are similar to Mangochi in their targeting approach. Some of these 27 districts have significant

variations to Mangochi such as the poverty rates, the funder and targeting method used, which would otherwise affect the findings of a similar investigation. As such, a comparative analysis in where two or more districts with representative characteristics should be evaluated to determine where the issue lies.

What is also evident from the investigation is the averseness to correct the error of exclusion and yet the program has mechanisms in place to correct the error of inclusion. It is a policy problem because, immediately after selecting the beneficiaries, detecting errors of inclusion is established as the responsibility of SCTP officers. Why do they not address exclusion errors as urgently as they did with inclusion errors? With exclusion errors, once targeting has occurred, it is the responsibility of households, Mangochi district authorities or Mangochi residents to identify excluded cases and report to the SCTP officers. Outright, you can presume that the system is functioning successfully because excluded cases are registered. However, in order to achieve sustainable poverty reduction, the time over which excluded cases remain isolated from SCTP benefits is critical.

6.1 Contextualizing SCTP as a new development paradigm

Significant shifts in thought are taking place in Africa and across the globe. The basis for the discussion of social protection as a new paradigm for development stems from the perception of initiatives as a gateway to sustainable economic development due to its comprehensive approach to eradicating poverty and capacity deprivation (Taylor, 2008). Knowing the results of SCTP 's functionality, is the system in Mangochi functioning as a holistic solution to poverty and capability deprivation? Grappling with this problem will direct us in deciding whether the SCTP system is acting as a new development model in this field.

Accepting SCTP 's intervention as a new development model would mean that the benefits of social cash transfers provided would protect the poor from vulnerability and poverty. There are

six types of dominant vulnerabilities faced by the poor in Malawi, as reported by Taylor (2008). The six vulnerabilities range from agricultural, economic and process shocks, social vulnerability, health-nutrition risks, demographic and life cycle vulnerabilities.

Authors such as Ellis (2008), Miller et al., (2010) and Slater (2011) have reported on how cash transfers contributed to asset accumulation, food security, increased school enrollment and per capita consumption expenditure. Accordingly, the results indicate that the cash offered by the program serves as an incentive for guardians to enroll and keep their children in school. Even in minor cases, absentees (children forced to pursue economic projects to increase household income) remained in school. This was deliberately tackled to promote education, an integrated approach to sustainable poverty reduction.

The capability of the cash transfers to protect the beneficiary households from food deprivation, and social vulnerabilities, as Pozarny (2015) has argued enhances the beneficiary households' dignity with the ability to then use the money to buy clothes and reduce visible signs of poverty. However, given this positiveness, it is troublesome to assume that SCTP is on the right track to serve as a new development model. SCTP falls short in addressing poverty in a multi-dimensional way, and the research has consistently presented observations that challenge the long-term outcomes of cash transfers.

The research argues that in as much as the SCTP program is a response to poverty and vulnerabilities, evaluating aspects of the program reveals restricted the program was designed to act as a holistic solution to poverty and capability deprivations. 82% of Malawi's 17 million population are subsistence farmers in rural areas, dependent on rain-fed agriculture, leaving them vulnerable to shocks (Brugh et al., 2018). Beneficiary households are still dealing with rising maize prices during lean seasons. How, then, is SCTP deliberately and proactively shielding beneficiary households from this vulnerability?

The lack of integration with other development programs running in the area is a significant flop to the programme. Much like Brugh et al., (2018) indicates that the system could collaborate with other safety net initiatives aimed at improving the resilience of smallholders to crop failures that include in-kind transfers when local markets collapse or set price ceilings for staple foods. Likewise, MNSSP II (2018) reports on how fragmented the program is with other social protection programs. This has led to missed opportunities and inefficiencies, such as fragmented financial systems, lack of holistic support for beneficiaries, and limited linkages and referral systems.

Since it has been pointed out that the program is highly dependent on donors, the uncertainty of funding follows. Government should consider integrating with other development projects to resolve the issue of payment delays from donors and uncertainty. "No single donor is capable of completely funding the flagship social programs in the entire country, and a corruption scandal led donors to cut funds to collective pools and to initiatives they do not run themselves" (Arruda, 2018:398). With this uncertainty, the Government should plan and implement a program that bankrolls on efficiency. By taking advantage of the locally available development projects running alongside SCTP, this would save running costs and contribute to the productivity of the program. "The SCT program cannot permanently raise the living standards of vulnerable households on its own" (Pozarny, 2015:276).

SCTP is limited in its approach to tackling poverty as it has failed to integrate with other development and social protection initiatives. This sheds light on the government's failure to supplement the insufficient money provided by donors and to invest in the capacity of the beneficiary household breadwinners.

The key hypothesis of the study is that the erratic nature of the SCTP targeting mechanism has provided space for problems that obstruct the sustainability of poverty reduction. Inefficiencies

from policies such as; failure to stipulate quantifiable outcomes, failure to align the program with other development initiatives, failure to set controls to correct exclusion error and the insufficient cash value provided, all play a major role in the derailment of the program's objective. There is therefore a need for a more comprehensive study to measure the impact of these factors on the objectives of the programme. The findings are specific to Mangochi and therefore should not be generalized to other districts unless the district has a similar context to the Mangochi district.

6.2 Recommendations of the study

The research is opposed to the focus of correcting inclusion errors rather than exclusion errors. Social protection measures that tend to have a strong effect on poverty should instead focus on rectifying excluded errors to ensure that they are not isolated from SCTP benefits. Alternatively, carry out monitoring and assessment activities to assess the selection process in the first year of the program. GoM should consider outsourcing monitoring and evaluation for targeting every four years when targeting occurs (Participant 5). There is a problem regarding monitoring and evaluation in the early stages of targeting that this study has identified. If, as the participant suggests, this is a question of inadequate resources, or is there a greater weakness in the administration that the study should have investigated?

Secondly, in view of Malawi's limited resources and the questionable feasibility of the programme, the study emphasized that targeting the right individuals is crucial to achieving the objective of the programme. Therefore, there is a need to increase the SCTP coverage. Alternatively, as stipulated by one of the participants, 10 percent of the coverage should be based on the level of poverty of each district rather than 10 percent of the population as is the case. The current system is problematic as poverty rates vary across districts and the social development paradigm encourages the contextualization of these development initiatives.

The research has also observed a significant flop in the design policy, a lack of collaboration with other social protection and development projects. Continued isolation of the program with other programs is a policy strategy that lacks linkages and synergies. The key to achieving sustainable poverty reduction in a country like Malawi with high inequalities and persistent poverty is to integrate social protection initiatives, from focusing on individual programs to structural impacts.

The study recommends collaboration with other programs, such as food transfer programmes, which will demonstrate a reduction in the pressure of food purchase and growth and create more room for diversity in nutrition in the household. Secondly, work with government agricultural depots such as ADMARC, which is responsible for setting and regulating maize prices, which will support the retention of the original maize prices during the lean season for beneficiaries of the programme. Both partnerships will ensure value for cash transactions given with little effort by the SCTP itself.

Lastly, the research also highlights the need for decision-makers to clearly define key targeting concepts and to sensitize communities once they do so. The study highlighted the need for decision-makers to explicitly explain what the targeting criteria means by ultra-poor and labor constrained since the result problematizes the way local officials have adapted and used them which have led to targeting errors.

6.3 Limitations

1. In-depth interviews were mostly conducted in Chichewa, as a good number of the sample did not speak English. This posed a challenge in the transcription and analysis process. As a researcher, I felt that often, because of the lack of words in my local language, I could not catch the clear description of some of the words used by the sample to translate to English.

Furthermore, I fear when translating from Chichewa to English my preference of conjunctions,

vocabulary and phrases might have influenced the way the sample sounds relatively similar thus losing the diversity in the sample language.

2. The research did not calculate the effect of the established uncertainties and all other valuables on the objectives of the programme. This would have ensured a definitive conclusion about the correct approach to be used to achieve the goals of the project. Rather, Chapter 5 presented the observable challenges and influences that irregularities present in the achievement of the objective of the program, so that we cannot rule out the role that other valuables may play in the creation of these challenges.

3. The report was unable to obtain school enrolment data to check whether there has been a substantial improvement in enrolment since the implementation of SCTP. It is a significant limitation, because neither the statistics nor the district-specific literature support the narratives of the sample which account for an increase in school enrolment. As a result, the study provided observable findings and a more comprehensive study needed to confirm the extent of the change, if at all significant. Similarly, the findings suggest that the political manipulation of the program is not profound. Further studies need to be carried out to assess the study's argument and to what extent democratic politics influences the program.

4. While the study investigates issues of targeting irregularities with Malawi's SCTP, the discussion on why accurate targeting of beneficiaries in poverty eradication programs is important was brief. Similarly, while the study reported on how the initiative has helped the targeted households, the coverage of the subject should have been thorough. It is necessary to examine how the program intends to graduate the recipients out of poverty. This study did not specify how they plan to accomplish this.

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Appendix W: Interview guide questions

Demographic Questions:

Name of participant?	Highest level of schooling?
Age of participant?	Gender of participant?
Marital Status?	Household Composition (family and dependents)?
Village Cluster?	Professional/Employment Status?

Guideline Questions to SCTP Officers:

Political affiliation (if comfortable disclosing)?

Number of populations in the district against number of people on social cash transfer?

Inquiry about the targeting process:

Can you explain the targeting process?

So, what were the criteria for the selection committee?

So, what were the criteria for targeting beneficiaries?

What really is the concept of poverty?

What are the proxies and indicators of poverty?

Are there any other characteristics beyond the requirements, or are they not identified, that other beneficiaries have seen to be included?

What are the challenges of the targeting process, from your experience?

Do you ever have evaluation meetings with other social cash transfer officers from other districts to share experiences?

Do you think other poor people are left out from the selection process?

What is the cause/ How are they left out?

What are the consequences for their livelihood?

What control mechanisms are needed to reduce the errors of exclusion and inclusion?

What is the method for distinguishing included and excluded cases of error?

What factors determine the criteria for exclusion and inclusion?

How do they deal with exclusion errors once they have been identified?

How do they handle inclusion errors once they have been identified?

Have disputes / questions / misunderstandings arisen after the selection has been concluded?

Inquiry about the program:

How much money are beneficiaries given?

Do you think the money is enough?

Why do you say?

Are there other ways in which the beneficiaries are being supported other than monthly cash payments?

How reliable are the monthly payments made?

How long is the program supposed to run in Mangochi?

How did SCTP benefit targeted households?

What is the objective of the programme?

How SCTP plans to graduate recipients from poverty Would you say that the program is moving towards its goal?

Do you follow up as a department to check how the program works?

The effect of poverty reduction?

Limitations of the program

Guideline Questions to CSSC team:

Political affiliation (if comfortable disclosing)

Role related questions

How long is the program expected to run in Mangochi?

Why and how where you selected to become part of the CSSC team?

How do you feel about this role you hold?

Is there a set written manual handed out to the CSSC team regarding the targeting criteria?

Are there any other committees, individuals, friends and relatives that you worked with in the selection process?

Are you paid for this role?

2. Inquiry into the targeting criteria:

What is the targeting criteria of beneficiaries in SCTP?

Can you explain the targeting process that was carried out?

How was poverty been defined?

What were the proxies and indicators of poverty?

How was ultra-poor been identified and implemented?

How was labour-constrained been identified and implemented?

Are there any other characteristics outside the criteria or not described that have seen other beneficiaries to be included?

Is there a set manual from the ministry that you followed for the selection/running of the program?

What does the selection criteria manual say?

How did the selection committee implement this?

No assets/ unfit to work/ more than three dependents?

What would you define as assets in this district?

Do you think other poor people are left out from the selection?

What is the cause/ How are they left out?

What are the consequences for their livelihood?

What control mechanisms are used to reduce the errors of exclusion and inclusion?

What is the procedure for identifying cases of included and exclusion error?

What factors determine the criteria for exclusion and inclusion?

How do they handle exclusion and inclusion errors once they have been identified?

Do you prioritize inclusion over exclusion errors?

What challenges have you come across while targeting?

Do you ever have evaluation meetings with other CSSC team members from other districts to share experiences?

3. Inquiry into the program:

How much money are the recipients given?

Do you think that is enough money?

Why?

What is the objective of the program?

What are the drawbacks of the program based on your experience?

Are the beneficiaries allowed to be involved / enrolled in other projects / programs?

What is the objective of the program?

Can you say that the program is progressing towards its goal?

Guideline Questions to Beneficiary household representatives:

1. Inquiry about average household income per month (Comparison of circumstances before and after SCTP).

How much is the household earn in a month?

Are some of the dependents contributing to household income?

Are family members recipients of other development programs?

Is the household engaged in farming?

Is the household involved in some sort of production of cash crops?

Is the household involved in any kind of business?

How often do representatives of the household seek piece work?

2. Inquiry about the program

What is the objective of the program?

Is any of the dependents going to school?

What is their view of the program implementation?

What kind of challenges do they have with the program? What is their view of the targeting process?

Have disputes / questions / misunderstandings arisen after the selection has been concluded?

3. Inquiry into their stance as beneficiaries of SCTP

Where they informed, why they were selected as beneficiaries of SCTP?

How where they selected into the program?

Where they informed, how long they will be beneficiaries of SCTP?

How long have they been beneficiaries of the program?

How much money are they given by the program?

How reliable are the monthly payments?

Copying mechanisms, if not reliable?

3. Questions measuring food security and nutrition (availability, accessibility and stability):

How is the money spent in the household?

Does the household receive some other form of assistance (monetary, agricultural, food, piecework) from relatives / friends / neighbours and the government?

How many meals does the household take on a day (comparison of pre-and during SCTP)?

What is the main source of food consumed (daily food description)?

How have household members changed their daily lives since they became beneficiaries?

How did SCTP benefit the household?

What do you consider to be assets?

Have they acquired the assets with the program money?

Where is the nearest market: how often do they go to buy food? What kind of things are you buying? Do they have a garden for the household?

How else can SCTP boost their performance?

Appendix X: Ethics Clearance



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21 December 2018

Confirmation of Research Ethics Approval: Desire Mwanza [SOC2018/27]

This is to confirm that Desire's research proposal: An exploratory study highlighting the complexities in the targeting of beneficiaries in Malawi's Social Cash Transfer Programme, under the supervision of Dr. F. Garba, has been reviewed by the Sociology Department. Ms Mwanza presented her proposal to the Department on 21 November 2018.

The Department is satisfied that the research carries no significant risk of harm to human subjects. We are further satisfied that appropriate informed consent and confidentiality/anonymity/data protection mechanisms are in place.

It is a condition for the acceptance of Ms Mwanza's proposal that she complies consistently with strict ethical standards. This will entail proceeding only on the basis of the consistently informed consent of interviewees and will require regular monitoring of ethical issues which may emerge as the project develops.

Please contact the Department should you have any questions or concerns.

Kind regards,

Lorraine Valentine



GOVERNMENT OF THE REPUBLIC OF MALAWI
MINISTRY OF FINANCE, ECONOMIC PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

The Malawi National Social Support Programme (MNSSP)



>>> Start of Interview: Please introduce yourself and the objectives of the data collection exercise. Please refer to page 40 of the UBR data collection guidelines for the consent statement

36. Food from last harvest looked?

1	Less than 3 months	
2	3 months to less than 6 months	
3	6 months and over	
4	Did not harvest	

37. Food currently in storage will last?

1	Less than 3 months	
2	3 months to less than 6 months	
3	6 months and over	
4	Nothing at home	

38. Number of meals eaten by household in the past week.

1	1 meal per day	
2	2 meals per day	
3	3 meals per day	
4	None	

39. What was the main source of the food eaten in the past week. (mark all options that apply)

1	Corn production	
2	Food aid	
3	Purchased from market	
4	Begetting	
5	Barter	
6	Food for work	
7	Social Cash Transfer	
8	Public Works	
9	Genyu	

40. Did the household experience any crop failure in the last 2 years?
 1. Yes
 2. No

41. Did the household receive assistance of money, food or agricultural inputs from others during the last 12 months?

42. What types of cash crops and vegetables grown during the last 12 months:

43. What types of food crops and vegetables grown during the last 12 months:

44 - (1). Did the household use any organic fertilizer for crops grown in the last 12 months? (refer to 44 - 45 above)
 1. Yes ___ 2. No ___

44 - (2). If yes, what types? 1. Animal Manure, 2. Compost, 3. Green Manure.

45. Did you have access to any agricultural extension services in the last 12 months?
 1. Yes ___ 2. No ___

Section D. FOOD RESERVES AND FOOD SECURITY

46. (1). If Yes, what is the source? 1. Family, 2. Government, 3. NGO, 4. MVAC, 5. Other. Specify ___

46. (2). If Yes, what is the source? 1. Tobacco, 2. Cotton, 3. Tea, 4. Sugarcane, 5. Maize, 6. Legumes, 7. None, 8. Other, specify ___

46. (3). If Yes, what is the source? 1. Millet, 2. Rice, 3. Legumes, 4. Cassava, 5. None, 6. Other, specify ___

47 - (1). Did you save any money in the last 12 months?
 1. Yes ___ 2. No ___

47 - (2). If yes, what was the main method of saving your money?

1	Savings group	
2	Bank	
3	Investment	
4	Microfinance	
5	Business...	
6	At home...	
7	Other, specify	

47 - (3). On average, how much money did you save in the past 12 months?

1	Less than MK 10,000	
2	MK 10,000 to less than MK 30,000	
3	MK 30,000 to less than MK 60,000	
4	MK 60,000 to less than MK 90,000	
5	MK 90,000 to less than MK 120,000	
6	MK 120,000 and above	

48 - (1). Did you have access to any credit facility in the last 12 months?
 1. Yes ___ 2. No ___

48 - (2). If Yes, how did you access your main credit facility in the last 12 months?

1	Bank	
2	Microfinance institution	
3	Village Savings and Loans	
4	CONSP	
5	Mobile Money	
6	Other, Specify	

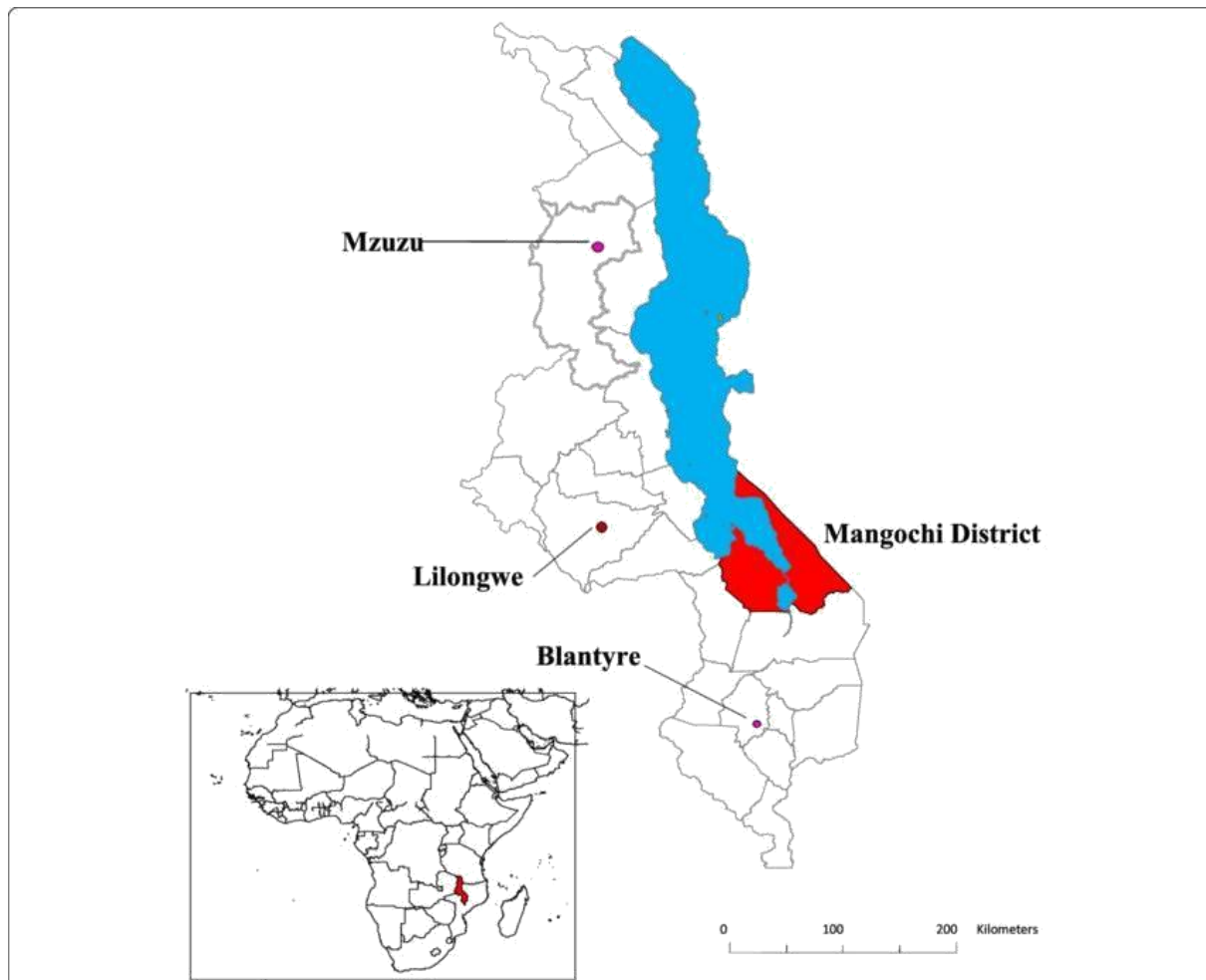
48 - (3). End of Questionnaire

I, undersigned, hereby certify that, to the best of my knowledge, the information in this document is true and correct. I also accept that the programmes reserve the right to take action if considers appropriate, including rescission of any benefits granted to me as a result of this application.

Respondent name _____
 Relationship _____
 Date _____
 Signature or Thumb Impression _____
 Name of Village Head _____ Date _____
 Signature or Thumb Impression _____

Appendix Y: UBR assessment questionnaire

Appendix Z: Map of Malawi; Mangochi



- Highlighted in red Mangochi district
- Highlighted in blue Lake Malawi