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How Self-Reliance Is Understood: Viewpoints from One Local Community in Malawi

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Abstract

This paper examined principles of self-reliance within the context of development taking place in rural Malawi. Rather than participating in a macro-level national development programme, the paper argues that local-level development that is dependent upon the participation and motivation of key players is more likely to precede community changes which could then be described as sustainable. It proposes that the factors building an alternative paradigm for development are the pragmatic utilisation of local resources, a holistic approach to needs, and an active participation

by community leaders from all areas of society. Using semi-structured interviews and content analysis methodology this paper argues that by validating indigenous knowledge an alternative model that resists dependence on external aid, empowers community development, and provides opportunities to sustain development activity through local initiative, can be employed to increase social capital leading to sustainable growth.

Key Words: empowerment, development, participation, self-reliance, social capital

Introduction

The interest in *Agricultural Activities* shown by respondents in this study is an indication of the potential this area has in encouraging the implementation of self-reliance in the rural community. Malawi has been depending on agriculture to ensure the country's solvency ever since it became independent in 1964 but has experienced difficulty in achieving independence from outside aid. The three main areas of difficulty include the poor implementation of innovation, over-reliance upon donor finance and a failure to provide education and follow-up for new methods. Various reports cover the challenge Malawi faces to distance itself from a culture of dependency.

One report, in 2015, from the on-line version of 'The Nation' (a Malawian newspaper), recounts an interview given by President Peter Mutharika to the American Magazine 'Foreign Affairs' where he set a five-year deadline for the country 'to start balancing its national budget without relying on contributions from donors' (Munthali 2015). Another, coming from the Malawi Broadcasting Service, shows that some stakeholders in Malawian resurgence, such as the Malawi Scotland Partnership, believe that Malawians should take responsibility for aid reduction and food security into their own hands (Nthenda 2016). The topic of self-reliance, or self-sufficiency, has become central to much NGO activity since then involving local communities increasingly in the process of change. Reports are calling for Malawi to seek new ways to take advantage of innovative methods and practices in agriculture while reducing reliance on outside aid. If this can be achieved, the struggle for survival need not be so difficult.

The prevalent thinking about development among Malawian farmers can be described as a set of mental approaches to problems that too readily relies upon outside intervention for a successful outcome. The continued presence of the outside intervention makes it easy to see why there is less commitment to self-sufficiency and the 'implementation of sustainable development has lagged' (Drexhage & Murphy 2010, p.16). The presence of an NGO or government safety-net explains risk-taking behaviour (selling off government supplied fertiliser is an example of this). For a long time, Malawi has depended on international donor aid and this has arguably served to

encourage a dependency mindset (Moyo 2009 pp.65-67). After ‘Cashgate,’ when international donors withheld aid to the Malawian government due to revelations of systemic looting, there was a resurgence of talk regarding strategies to bring about self-reliance. The subsequent restrictions on aid disbursement, and calls for a zero-aid budget, required a change in the approach to development issues across all stakeholder groups.

A view expressed by the charity ‘ActionAid’ in 2011 is that aid dependency reduces when aid is given ‘in a such a way that it supports poor countries to lead their own development’ (Thomas et al 2011). The negative effects of aid in Malawi can be avoided if the NGOs can ensure that self-reliance is targeted from the onset of the intervention.

Review of Literature

The review of the literature surrounding the concept of self-reliance in development presents a few interesting anomalies and tensions. The present understanding of ‘Self-reliance’ may indicate a move towards self-sufficiency and even entertain principles of sustainability, but earlier writers saw the concept differently. An early explication from Tostensen in 1982 suggested that self-reliance was a reduction of a nation’s vulnerability towards others. In 1985 Hultin reported that Skill-development encouraged self-reliance in eastern and southern Africa and noted Tanzania’s 1967 policy of self-reliance (Hultin 1985, p.8).

Before looking at the way self-reliance is understood in rural Malawi during a process of development, it may be beneficial to look at some of the tensions between micro and macro forms of development.

Leading to Self-Reliance

Development Aid is a term that has been discussed at length in many journals (‘Journal of International Development’; ‘Development and Change’; ‘World Development,’ ‘Journal of Sustainable Development’ and ‘Development’). The financial support given by rich countries supporting poorer nations is designed to raise their capacity to enable strong economic, environmental, social or political development growth where there would otherwise be a considerable struggle. In the past, these needy nations have been termed ‘developing countries,’ referred to as ‘third-world’ countries or countries of the ‘south.’ In addition to raising capacity to precipitate national growth in the above-mentioned areas, humanitarian aid provides funding for countries where crisis’ stretch government ability to respond effectively. National agencies such as DfID (UK), Norad (Norway), USAID (USA) and GIZ (Germany), work together, or separately, with major international financial institutions such as the International Monetary Fund (IMF) or the World Bank, and negotiate with national governments as to where to place, or establish their projects.

In contrast to these macro-level interventions working with national governments, there are numerous local NGOs, and some international NGOs working at a micro-level to provide capacity building in a local area across the sectors (Theron 2008 pp 3-8). Often these can 'bring lessons of effective local action' (Ulleburg 2009 pg. 20). However, differences in approach have led to tensions particularly over the question of sustainability. These 'tensions,' between macro and micro level approaches, are explored in recent literature (Lewis & Kanji 2009 pg. 159-160; Lal 2011 pg. 9-13), and often focus on the availability of finance to enable self-help efforts (Lewis & Kanji 2009 pg. 150-153; Mall & Mishra 2013 pp.70-73). They also focus on the methods used to 'empower communities' (Lal 2011 pg.12) and show how NGOs prepare communities to take control of the process of development and attain a measure of self-reliance through financial autonomy (Mustafa, Gill & Azid 2000 pg.787; Brehm 2004 pg.1). The aim for most development is to prepare the recipient of aid to become self-sufficient. It has been argued that development that is not leading towards sustainability may not be ethically sound, as it is not considering the needs of the future (Bruntland 1987 pg.37; Goulet 1996 p.4).

Development that attempts to work nationally, holistically and is culturally sensitive with a view to 'do no harm', may be said to be sustainable. If in addition, it embeds existing self-help strategies, builds a sound economic base from which to balance the budget while improving the capacity of the nation, or local community, to feed itself, it may be said to be working towards self-reliance

The concept of sustainable development and sustainable communities was being discussed in the late nineteen-eighties but not given voice until 1987 when the World Commission on Environment and Development's report was published. This report was known as 'Our Common Future' (UNCWED 1987) and discussed principles for sustainable communities that were similar to Hultin's principles for self-reliance.

It appears that while Tostensen notes that many African states had 'officially opted for self-reliance...' in 1982 (Torensen 1982 pg.25), the United Nations were opting for 'sustainable development' (UNCWED 1987, p.5), and only mentions self-reliance in passing (ibid pg.101), and with reference to natural resources (ibid pg.162), and a reinforcement to the report's proposed aid programmes (ibid p.208). As a descriptor of development, 'self-reliance' took a back seat as 'sustainable development' sought to protect the future, repair the present, and end poverty after 'meeting the needs of all' (ibid pg.16). It was not long after this robust entrance into the 'development debate' that sustainability became the buzz-word for NGO interventions despite the term's ambiguous interpretation.

As large sums of money became available to satisfy the planners development, the process of curing the world of poverty began to attract considerable opposition due

to suspicions of self-interest, corruption and the flawed approaches to the recipients of aid (Hancock 1989; Sogge 2002; Easterly 2006; Caldachi 2006; Moyo 2009). It was not so much that the 'sustainable' objective was at fault, but the means of delivering the future undamaged, was questionable. It was argued that this was because it contained neo-colonialist elements projecting superiority for the 'giving' over the 'receiving' partner.' (Hayter 1971). An alternative paradigm posits that the only 'aid' that is going to create a sustainable community is the aid that leads to self-reliance (Nikkhah & Redzuan 2010 pp.85-92).

Post-Developmental Self-Sufficiency

If 'development' is what is 'done-to' a nation lacking in some area, 'self-sufficiency' may describe the position of a country empowered to rely on themselves to find the solution. Kim & Isma'il (2013 pg.586) claim that self-reliance is: 'a new blueprint for community development' but earlier moves within the development debate (Eade 2001) show that self-reliance has earlier antecedents. However, the approach was often undermined through unwitting over-involvement by donors, ignorance of local knowledge, gender inequality or passive participation (Thomas-Slayter & Sodikoff 2004 pp.143-166). Writers discussed the concept until it became an established principle of development, differing insignificantly from self-help and mutual-help (Tostensen 1982 pg. 25; Hultin 1985 pg.11-13; Fonchingong & Fonjong 2003 pp.196-219).

In order to develop self-sufficiency Hultin recommends considering the needs of communities; education and training for beneficiaries, active participation of stakeholders, and the development of skills to satisfy basic needs. (Hultin 1985, p.11). Continuing the same theme of collective action, Hobbs described the definition of this mutually beneficial collective action, earlier identified by Bourdieu (1986 p.242) as: 'social capital.' (Hobbs 2000, p.1). His review of the literature surrounding social capital shows correlation with the communal actions necessary to become self-sufficient. Bridger and Luloff introduce five dimensions of a sustainable community, a phrase which holds the same meaning as a community that is self-reliant. In each case, the community boasts economic diversity, robust markets and production, cooperation and independence (Bridger & Luloff 1999 p.381). They show that when social capital is created it is likely that 'development' will lead to self-reliance, and this will, in turn, lead to self-sufficiency. This is because acquiring social capital involves taking collective action, participation, and the building of networks – elements needed before self-reliance can occur (Bridger & Luloff 1999 p.462; 2001, p.462).

Facets of the Paradigm

Reporting in 2004 about educational initiatives in Ghana, Akyeampong writes: 'Many of the NGOs try to promote the spirit of self-help efforts among poor rural people using strategies that encourage community participation and ownership of the basic education initiative' (Akyeampong 2004 p.43). He was highlighting a facet of self-sufficiency. Ownership of the initiative is also a key element in the writing of Nicola Smithers writing for the World Bank Institute Capacity Development and Results, in 2011. She writes that the strength of stakeholder ownership 'has probably become the most widely held principle of development in recent years' (Smithers 2011 pg.8) making the point that aid impact depends on community engagement with the process of change. However, it is not going to be enough just to hope for ownership, it has to be planned for. The strategies Akyeampong advocated included making 'local participation and ownership an important ingredient.' He considered that it was necessary for the community to accept the philosophy surrounding the initiative for this to become a reality (Akyeampong 2004 pg.43). Overcoming the drift towards a 'culture of dependency' (Chisinga & Kayuni 2008 pg.5) was identified as the challenge to long-term sustainability, overcome through the transference of the intervention's initial philosophy.

The spiritual essence of self-reliance is acknowledged by United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR 2005 pp.1&7) when they defined self-reliance as: '...the social and economic ability of an individual, household or community to meet basic needs (including protection, food, water, shelter, personal safety, health and education) in a sustainable manner and *with dignity*' (UNHCR 2005, p.15; *italics mine*). In three stages it speaks of 'strengthening livelihoods' and 'reducing vulnerability' and reducing 'reliance on external assistance' and provides clear practical steps to achieve goals leading to self-reliance. These include identifying needs and creating a programme to meet them, identifying those who possess transferable skills and are capable and assisting others towards similar levels of capacity, and thirdly, targeting those whose capacity has already developed to the point where they might provide long-term benefits to the community. At this stage, a clearly worked out exit-strategy will encourage the growth of self-reliant measures (UNHCR 2011 pg.16).

Methodology

Design

In the Salima district of Malawi's Central Region, where the non-governmental organisation LIVINGWAY EDUCATION (LWE) is establishing its development project, research is pointing to 'self-reliance' as a philosophical starting point for sustainable development. The current research shows how self-reliance is perceived

by members of a rural community, and makes recommendations to build economic capital through activities initiated by community members. The methodology chosen to reflect the perceptions, concerns and recommendations of this community is the qualitative instrument of semi-structured interviews analysed using a form of content analysis (Kulatunga & Amaratunga et al 2007 p.501).

This case study uses a qualitative research design consistent with DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree's approach allowing for openness and flexibility during interviews (2006 pp. 314-321). Their paradigm proposes the collection of data from a homogenous group of respondents, in this instance, identified from participation in previous research by the authors. DiCicco-Bloom's study used a semi-structured interview approach in order to allow the respondents to own the conversation and inject their own agendas in order to 'maximise the depth and richness of the data', thus increasing the understanding of pertinent issues (DiCicco-Bloom and Crabtree 2006 p. 317). The researcher wanted to focus on perspectives of development within the small rural location of which he was a resident. Often the inside, local, researcher can move alongside respondents in a way that outside researchers are unable. This, argues Kipnis and Broeckerhoff, allows the researcher to gain an in-depth contextual understanding of internal concepts and interpretations (Kipnis & Broeckerhoff 2016 p.139). Previous research had identified self-reliance as a theme worth further exploration and the sample group of seven chosen for the present research was selected on the basis of their earlier participation (Jamieson & Chisakala 2015). Justification for the size of the sample group follows.

Sample size, argues Sandelowski, although a matter of researcher judgement, is still important and must be adequate for the intended qualitative product (Sandelowski 1995 p. 179). The research still needs to reach informational redundancy to remain valid. The product, in this case was the critical reflection on the processes of development by local stakeholders who were sufficiently educated and experienced with regards to NGO activity. Even though the research field was limited, Mason, echoing Sandelowski, theorises that so long as the sample size provides access to enough data, it need not lose validity. Pointing to the work of Patton in 1990, Morse explains that if the sample is 'information rich' purposeful selection is justified (Morse 1994 Patton 1990). Concurring with this, Mason claims, this is because the selection provides access to the object of interest (Mason 2002 p. 134). The current research used a form of purposive sampling labelled criterion (Palys 2008), or judgement sampling (Marshall 1996 p. 523). The choices made by the researcher were due to the position respondents held in the community and their capacity to articulate that view (Palys 2008 p.697). Furthermore, the choice utilised the researcher's practical and personal knowledge of the research field and its community. Rather than taking a representative sample of the community, many of whom may have no critical

understanding of the issue, the researcher focussed upon those who had previously expressed a view on the subject critical to the research, namely, self-reliance. These respondents were drawn from the NGOs working in the area, and therefore the sample selection, though small, had the potential to gather relevant views on the subject of interest.

It may have benefited the study, and enabled greater generalisability, had the researcher sought views from a wider, random, selection of respondents. However, this would have unnecessarily extended the process of analysis requiring more time than was available for the study.

This study considers the ways in which self-reliance may be achieved in the area where the interviews were conducted. Most of the interviews took place at the offices of the NGO, LIVINGWAY EDUCATION, near Chitipi in Ngodzi zone, although others were conducted at the respondents' own places of work. The interviews were recorded using a hand-held recording device after gaining the permission of the respondent to do so.

The selected 'pool' of participants (Galletta 2013 p.34) included a local pastor, a worker from a medical center, a head-teacher, a primary education adviser, a teacher and a coordinator of a faith-based organisation.

Data Collection and Analysis

The study collected qualitative data from semi-structured interviews. This involves the steps described by Galletta whereby the researcher establishes an ethical foundation for the interviews, introduces broad parameters for the discussion, probes the initial responses and supports the flow of the conversation so that pre-determined themes might be visited (Galletta 2013, p. 47). Ideally, as Galletta suggests, these initial steps further probed, attended to nuance and looped back to key markers in the respondent's narrative.

Analysis of the data was completed by clustering the common themes and ideas so that they could be ranked. (See Table 1 – Frequency of themes during semi-structured interviews) The researcher analysed the interview transcripts using a form of content analysis as the main means of establishing analytic domains for further analysis (Kulatung, Amaratunga and Haigh 2007 p.503). This meant going over the transcript and highlighting common themes with different colour highlighter pens. The frequency of responses concerning a single issue allowed the researcher to compile a rank order of interests that uncovered the significant points understood by each respondent in the areas discussed (see Table 2 - Rank Order of respondent Concerns)

The three most frequently mentioned topics were chosen for discussion in this paper while minor ideas are also included in order to maintain balance and reflect the

scope of the interest shown by the respondents. As the codes emerge from the transcripts the coding is inductive. As the transcripts of the interviews were reviewed, themes, topics and interests emerged and were categorized (Coffee and Atkinson 1996 pg.42). These were teased apart to reveal the directions being taken by respondents and community alike and can be found in the next section.

A review of recent literature pertaining to self-reliance, and the findings from the analysis of the interviews, are used together to present the main findings of this limited study. Further research will need to be done on the issues raised by these findings to determine more accurately the importance of each with regards to community needs for development. This case study uses the ideas from seven local stakeholders and considers their approach and understanding of self-reliance

Results

Table 1: Frequency of themes emerging during semi-structured interviews

Respondent Pseudonym	Change of Mindset	Agriculture	Micro finance loans	Trust	Communication	Problems in S/R implementation	Empowering the community
Ashe	6	7	2	6	2	7	1
Nels	5	9	1	0	1	10	2
Mona	6	3	1	1	1	2	3
Mara	7	2	3	2	0	3	3
Sasi	1	4	1	1	1	4	1
Miso	6	7	0	2	0	4	1
Tryl	2	1	1	3	1	0	0

During the examination of the transcripts key areas of concern were identified. While there were many topics some overlapped, and were later combined. This left a reduced list of seven key ideas, or concerns. While further conflation might reduce the

domains further the frequency of occurrence during interviews allowed three areas to emerge as significant.

Table 2 Rank order of respondent concerns

Respondent concerns
1. Agricultural concerns
2. Needing a change of mindset
3. Problems implementing self-reliance
4. Communication
5. Empowering the community
6. Micro finance & loans
7. Trust

The three most cited areas, or concerns, were:

1. Agricultural Activities
2. Change of Mindset
3. Problems associated with Self-reliance

While table one shows the range and incident strength of issues of concern, Table two gives the rank order of those concerns. Table three shows the issues that dominated the conversation with each respondent.

Agricultural Activities

Agricultural concerns featured in each of the seven interviews. For three respondents they were the dominant topic of the interview (see table 3). For one respondent the agricultural practice has a great impact on the capacity of rural self-reliance. He said: “if farming activities is done seriously with the aim of making it as a reliable thing it can help to implement self-reliance amongst families”.

A survey of local village heads in 2016 suggested much should be done with stakeholders so that some problems that communities face could be minimised through collaborative participation. Some of the activities suggested were early land preparation, the application of farmyard manure and the implementation of irrigation schemes. The rearing of livestock was also to be encouraged in each community. These

chiefs have shown understanding of the importance of self-reliance as many of their suggestions involved grassroots involvement, rather than somebody coming in from outside and starting a new project, especially as this may not match people's interest, and may even marginalise concerned citizens. Widespread support was given by all headmen for a scheme, exemplifying self-reliance, to tackle the low yields at harvest time. This involved discussion leading to the provision of training whereby able farmers would pass on skills to those less gifted.

The measures that respondents thought the government ought to take were unclear and not always consistent with the principles of self-reliance. One respondent noted that there was a need for people to change their mindset regarding the issue of self-reliance but was apparently unsure as to where responsibility lay for such a change. According to this respondent farming should be: "empowered by government or NGOs with the aim of making people rely on it instead of depending on donations".

This appears to be deflecting responsibility for the development of a sustainable approach to farming. Regarding responses to governmental involvement, and the acceptance of 'risk' one respondent opined:

People should be ready to ignore aid if not of good purpose and concentrate on their daily activities, which can be looked upon as risks, and finally, they have an achievement of having enough. This in itself, would be seen as a success story.

Concerning these principles other respondents made similar points but emphasised how self-reliance could be encouraged amongst the community members. All seven respondents appeared to agree that "*changes in mindset can help to implement self-reliance*". They also noted that corruption, missionary's handouts and gifts from politicians are challenges to self-reliance. These issues are dealt with in the following sections.

One assessment of the problem was that;

For a long time, people have been thinking how Malawi could be self-reliant but the techniques which have been discovered are not put into practice or are not followed up or fully supported. The type of farming that can help make Malawi self-reliant should be both irrigation and seasonal farming.

Another respondent suggested that: "...if there is greater use of new technology in farming it can boost the harvest of staple crops in our country and if this happens to agriculture it can help to make local people self-reliant".

There was talk of using solar panels to power pumps for irrigation, using new technologies to benefit communities. However, there was only limited understanding that implementing new methods would be costly. It was stated: “Sometimes there is a cost factor that cannot easily be overcome. Therefore, there is a need for rewarding new ideas where they are being put into practice”.

The lack of suggestion as to how change could be financed may indicate the difficulty in establishing a sustainability that rests upon self-reliance.

Table 3: Dominant Themes

<u>Dominant themes by respondent</u>							
<u>Respondent Pseudonym</u>	Change of Mindset	Agriculture	Micro finance loans	Trust	Communication	Problems in S/R implementation	Empowering the community
Ashe							
Nels							
Mona							
Mara							
Sasi							
Miso							
Tryl							

Changing the Mindset

Almost as dominant a topic of conversation was the notion that in order to implement change of any kind at all there would have to be a shift in attitude. Again, this was the dominant theme in three of the interviews but significant in five (see table

II). It was thought important to identify what prevents, as well as what lead to, self-reliance.

One is the mentality regarding self-reliance itself. One example exemplifies this: Early in the Independence era under the one-party system of governance, there were many self-help projects in the communities and at the climax of this, there was youth week. Youth week was the period set by the government whereby all youths in the country, including the elders, had to do development work which includes the cleaning of roads, planting of trees and much more. Even though the programme was set by the government it was useful because it encouraged self-reliance amongst the community members. Respondents provided the following views: “As somebody once said: ‘self-reliance should start from the villages.’ This was a good saying but contrary to what is happening these days. People still want to be paid to clear roads that lead to the houses”

Another said: “Some say that the Government or NGOs should come and pay people so that they should clear the surrounding of their own houses. This way we say self-reliance needs a change of mindset”. A more astute comment shows the inconsistency of the earlier view: “If people think that NGOs or government should come and do everything on their behalf, it may be difficult to see the importance of self-reliance.”

The respondents’ general thinking was that people should change their way of thinking regarding the role of government. Instead of waiting until everything is done for them they should require the government to empower communities to step-up to the challenge. Discussion with respondents revealed additional attitudes towards the role of government:

The government officials should also arrange their programmes ... with the aim to **empower the community** members ... and not encourage a tendency towards dependency”. “In all development projects, the stakeholders should have the **feeling of ownership**”. “**Lack of ownership** is destroying many development projects. When the people who are funding the project pull out, community involvement stagnates”. “When a community does not feel a sense of ownership, they just watch what is happening rather than investing in it. As a result, **they don’t have a knowledge** of how to run the development work and it may collapse if funding is reduced or fails”. (Emphasis ours).

Governmental failure to ‘empower’ communities, coupled with a lack of knowledge and ownership were seen as limiting factors self-reliance. Responsibility for redressing these factors was not however ‘owned’ by respondents.

Again deflecting blame respondents pointed out that foreign donors, who may not be familiar with cultural expectations, did not realise that their local management team may not perform as expected. More than one respondent claimed that: “donors do not consult widely enough” and so “fail to notice when the project plans are being undermined by personal interest.”

This suggests that respondents felt that the interests of many had become marginalised. It was also said that: “some local leaders acted ‘With the mask on their face’ despite being highly trusted.

Respondents acknowledged that donors and stakeholders both need to adjust their approach saying that it would be advantageous for both to assist the process of development and ensure long-term progress. Hopefully respondents claimed that: “If both work faithfully on this matter self-reliance can be achieved”.

Problems Associated with Self-Reliance

It is easy to see that concerns over how self-reliance might be implanted has made an impact in Malawi. It is mentioned by respondents in this study almost as frequently as the first two concerns and is the dominant topic in three of the conversations (see table II). However, despite being significant in terms of Frequency of incidence, four respondents had relatively little to say on the subject.

The problems connected to the manner by which self-reliance might be achieved may be divided between donor-led problems and beneficiary-led problems.

Handouts given by the missionaries set the wrong precedent leading to an expectation of more to come. As humane and caring individuals and organisations, missionaries are concerned when people are in trouble.

Even though it is very good and important to help the needy, it is very sad to see that some people take this as a permanent help, i.e. they stop working so hard and allow well-wishers will come in and provide them with food, and other materials, thereby undermining any aim to create self-sufficiency. Becoming self-reliant becomes unimportant to them.

The link between permanent help and the failure to achieve self-reliance is clearly established while the following statement shows that the perception of NGO failure to understand this link contributes to further dependency.

The challenge is found where donors come to help the needy. Most of the help offered has no intention of creating self-reliance among the community. For example, if the NGO come in with money transfer programme whereby people are given some money to buy what they want - every month a dependency lifestyle is encouraged.

Beneficiary-led problems begin with the Political parties who have a tendency to give out gifts so that people should vote for them. This system has built a reluctance to engage with the idea of self-reliance implementation among those affected.

It is very common to see people coming with different items including money from political rallies. No matter how little the incentive is it brings a certain feeling which can be destructive to anyone wanting to construct a self-sufficient approach.

It was said that: “Corruption prevents or destroys the possibility of development work leading to a self-sufficient approach”. Foreign governments responded negatively to the reports of money stolen in the ‘Cashgate’ scandal of 2013 and this meant that some essential development work was not implemented in succeeding years. It was shown that classroom blocks identified and paid for by DfID were left incomplete because of the misappropriation of funds by corrupt individuals (Baker-Tilly 2014, p.5). This report has had some negative impact on the desire to achieve self-reliance amongst some Malawians but has also led to the call from others to embrace the opportunity to achieve release from a reliance on donor-aid (Munthali 2015).

The respondents took the view that government corruption was harming the drive towards self-reliance. One respondent explained their view and said: “there are so many and some of them are corrupt as done in cashgate scandal whereby a lot of money has been stolen. This has a negative impact towards self-reliance”. The view that ‘Cashgate’ was propelling government to embrace self-reliance was not mentioned by the respondents in this study. One respondent said that politicians during campaign period were: “creating a certain problem in self-reliance activities whereby people wait for politicians to give them money or any gift with the aim to vote for them”.

Both politicians and ‘people’ are targeted as having a lack of understanding regarding the principles of self-reliance.

Recommendations

This section will introduce recommendations for community development that lead to self-reliance. These are suggested by the literature, the respondents and the researcher, to provide an alternative grassroots approach to development in contrast with a top-down approach by local agencies, local government and NGOs.

The literature shows the necessity for participating groups to own the process of development. It further suggests that for development to be sustainable it must not prejudice future benefits with short-term gains for the present. All development, therefore, needs to lead towards self-reliance if it is to truly allow the community increase social and economic capital.

The respondents in this research concur to a large extent with this view. They called both for more government intervention in times of difficulty but acknowledged the need to take responsibility for development by offering training to farmers who required it. The necessity for further education on all aspects of self-reliance was also of primary concern to all respondents.

The respondents believed that most people have a better understanding of development but they don't feel they have the possibility of being heard. Their recommendation is that more effort is taken to elicit the views at their heart of the development process. If community development is to be linked with self-reliance, then participation by the community is essential. As a prerequisite to community participation and engagement, there is a need for donors, government and NGOs to enter into a more meaningful dialogue with stakeholders. Both parties must work together if self-reliance is to be the goal for development programs.

The development of communities lies in the hands of the community members, though government and other agencies may enable efforts. All parties should be educated to enable understanding of the responsibilities required for developing to take place. A better understanding of ownership, partnership and the way to increase social capital will help put this in place. Where it is possible, informal and formal social networks can assist leaders to identify those with the ability to teach and train others. There will need to be a means to encourage gifted people to impart their skills to others if the skills base of the community is to be extended. Skill sharing may be required to help demonstrate the capacity of a community towards self-reliance. This will advance the understanding of development that is practised by an engaged community.

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