

COMMUNITY GARDENS AS A FOOD SECURITY STRATEGY FOR ORPHAN
REINTEGRATION IN MGWAYI, MALAWI: A GRANT PROPOSAL PROJECT

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ABSTRACT

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BEN MEKI

The thesis study focuses on investigating the potential of community gardens as a long-term solution to food insecurity in Mgwai, Malawi. The study aims to explore how community involvement can play a crucial role in spreading awareness about the importance of caring for orphans and vulnerable people in the community, as part of the larger effort to improve nutritional values. The study will be conducted through a literature review to gather insights on the benefits of community gardens for promoting food security and nutrition and for community-based poverty reduction. It will also analyze the available options for financing community garden maintenance, training, and instruction.

The research is part of a grant proposal project in collaboration with Children of the Nations Malawi, which aims to establish community gardens in Mgwai and encourage community participation in caring for orphans and vulnerable people. The project will provide necessary resources and training for establishing and maintaining gardens and education on sustainable agricultural practices and the importance of nutrition for the community.

The goal of the thesis study and the grant proposal project is to contribute to a larger initiative to tackle food insecurity, poverty, and inequality in Malawi. By emphasizing the potential of community gardens as a tool for sustainable development and promoting community participation in caring for vulnerable people, this project aims to empower communities to take ownership of their development and create lasting change

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CHAPTER 1

1.1 Introduction

Orphan care in Malawi is a big challenge because of various socioeconomic difficulties. The four well-known crucial areas include HIV/AIDS, malaria, environmental challenges, and a lack of access to education. Children's loss of one or both parents has resulted in many orphans and vulnerable children across the country. This has resulted in the establishment of orphanages and fosters care organizations that support newborns and children to get the care they require in the short or long term. These local orphanages and foster homes are both local and international initiatives. Malawi is one of the poorest countries in the world and relies on support from stakeholders like developed countries and NGOs to address such challenges.

Children of the Nations has been in Malawi since 1998, headquartered in Silverdale, Washington, USA. It is a non-profit organization that nurtures orphans and destitute children that the government recommends. I started working with Children of the Nations as an intern in 2008 and became a staff member in 2014. My involvement with this organization has exposed me to the reality on the ground and the vast orphan issue in Malawi. The organization has been disbursing meal packages from COTN headquarters in Silverdale, Washington. The challenge has been shipment logistics and costs. Community gardens will be one way of mitigating these challenges.

The Malawi government and UNICEF, in the year 2016, did a feasibility study on the model of orphan care in Malawi. The results showed children are best cared for in a family setting. Thus, a child learns cultural values and has a family identity (UNICEF, p15). This reintegration process has been defined as a child returning to their immediate or extended family and being part of family and community life (UNICEF, p17).

Figure 1: Reintegration Model in Malawi

The reintegration model in Malawi has four phases to help childcare institutions in the implementation process.

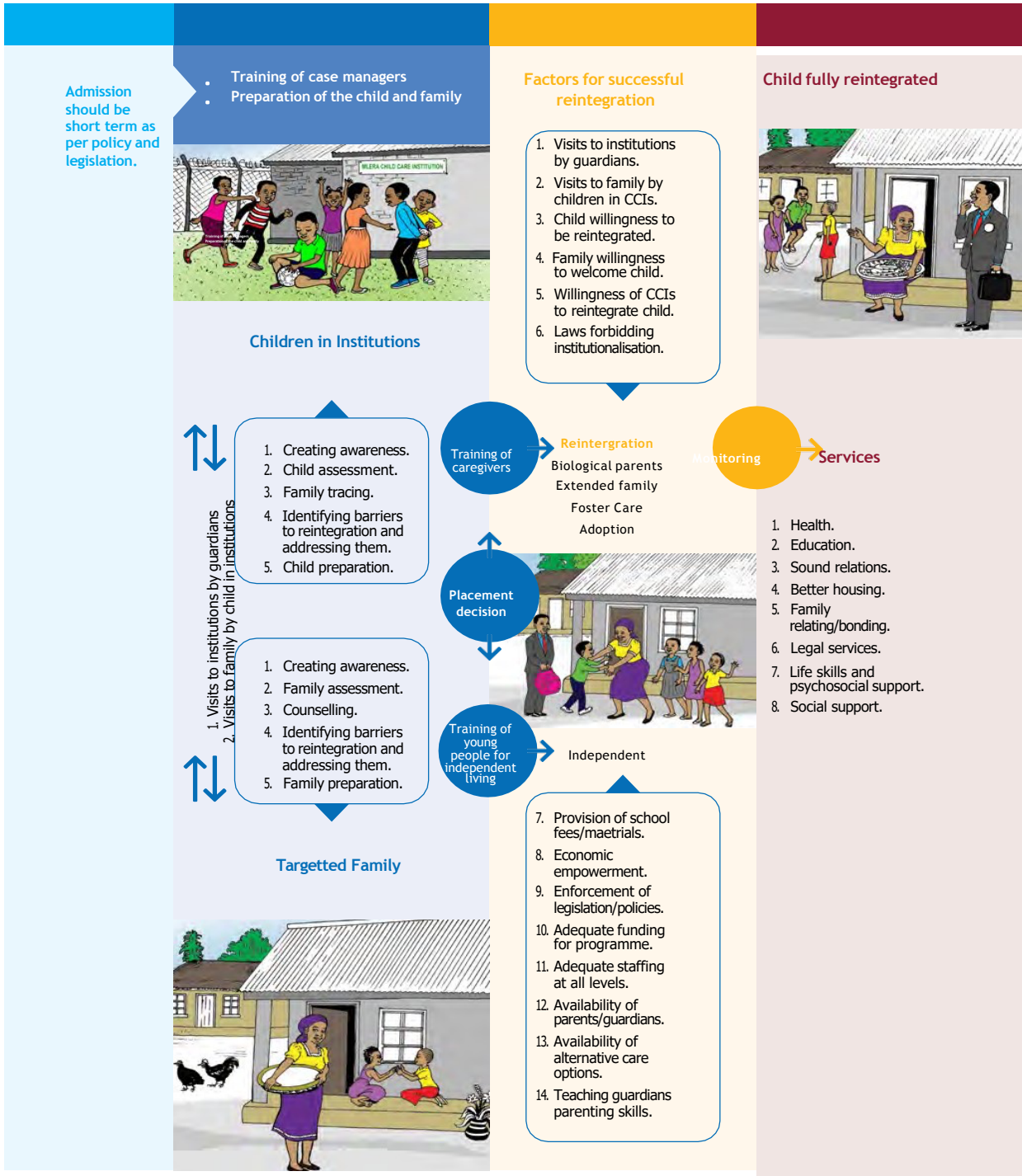


Figure 2: Reintegration Phases

: Source: <https://www.unicef.org/malawi/media/>.

This reintegration study has presented a recommendation adopted by the Malawi national police agency that deals with orphans and other vulnerable children. Now, the government is recommending that vulnerable and orphan children be raised in an extended family environment. The best solution is for children to be raised in their home community, where relatives can help support orphans, and cultural values can be learned. Institutionalization should be the last option. Therefore, institutions such as Children of the Nations are being asked to reintegrate children back into the villages.

This thesis project is a grant application for a community garden in Mgwayi village, which has been working with Children of the Nations (COTN) for over ten years. This garden initiative intends to enhance collaboration by providing more opportunities for underprivileged youth and children in the village. This would also allow the community to play a parental role in providing nutritional meals to the vulnerable children being reintegrated. The garden projects are just one of the initiatives that COTN will use to continue supporting the Mgwayi community.

1.1.1 Mgwayi Village Profile

Mgwayi village is within the capital city of Malawi, Lilongwe. It is located a few kilometers from the central point. Mgwayi is under the traditional authority (T.A) Njewa. It is within walking distance from COTN headquarters.



Figure 3: House structure in Mgwayi village

Gondwe (2013), who researched Mgwayi village, provides a brief history of the community, stating that in the late 1980s, the inhabitants lived across the creek in Njewa, to the east of where the village is located now. When the government sold the property to Seed-Co, the people were forced to relocate by crossing the river to Mgwayi with the help of their chiefs and divided the land. The history of Mgwayi village has been passed on through word of mouth. This way of passing on information is common in Malawi villages.

1.1.1.1 Population

The community comprises 200 households and about 3,000 people. The villagers are of the Chewa tribe. The people live a communal lifestyle and freely share basic needs. The village demographic shows many children under 15 and more women than men (Gondwe, 2013).

1.1.1.2 Social Structure

Mgwayi is a community that follows patriarchal values, and it is mainly inhabited by the Chewa tribe, which is dominant in the central region of Malawi. The Chewa community has a rich tradition of dancing, and their language is recognized as the official language of Malawi. In this society, there are clear social expectations for men and women, with women expected to take care of household chores and cooking, while men are expected to engage in farming or part-time work nearby. Men hold a position of authority and power over women and children, which is reflected in the leadership positions of the chief, which are consistently held by men. The Chewa people also follow a tradition where the wife's brother is considered the head of the family, even if the husband is still alive. Polygamy is also accepted in this society, which contributes to the spread of HIV/AIDS and often leaves children orphaned when their parents die (2013).

1.1.1.3 Economic and Literacy levels

Mgwayi is five kilometers from the center of the capital city of Malawi, Lilongwe. However, the economic conditions could be better with more attention from the government, whose headquarters are within reach. The people live in mud houses with roofs covered with thatched grass. The people work extra hard to meet daily basic needs. The men and women of Mgwayi work low-paying jobs as maids or landscapers in middle- or upper-class city homes. There is also high illiteracy because many parents or guardians still need to attend school. The implication of this can be seen in the younger generation needing to be encouraged to get educated. As a result, some children in the community have dropped out of school, while others become alcoholics at a young age (Gondwe, 2013).

1.1.1.4 Biodiversity and Ecosystem in Mgwai Community

The dangers to biodiversity in Malawi are severe loss of habitat, the fragmentation of species and habitats, and the isolation of remnant populations due to unsustainable land use practices. Agriculture, urbanization, infrastructural development, and human settlements are the primary land uses in Malawi (Ministry of Environment, 2016). Furthermore, inorganic fertilizers are being used by more than 70 percent of Malawi's farming population to increase agricultural output. This creates an economic dependency, and the agricultural chemicals have a detrimental ecological impact on ecosystems such as water and soil, which are constantly polluted (National Biodiversity Strategy, 2015).

This decline in biodiversity and traditional crops has also had a detrimental impact on the Mgwai community's food sovereignty have become dependent on a small number of crops and have lost control over their food system. Food sovereignty is the idea that people have the right to access healthy and culturally appropriate food that is produced in a way that is environmentally friendly and sustainable. This concept prioritizes the needs and aspirations of those who grow, distribute, and consume food over the demands of corporations and markets. It also aims to ensure that future generations have access to food and is a way to resist and dismantle the current corporate-dominated food system. Food sovereignty advocates for local and national economies and markets and promotes farming and fishing practices that are driven by peasants, family farmers, and pastoralists, and that prioritize environmental, social, and economic sustainability (Epting, 2018). Gálvez argues that free trade agreements can undermine food sovereignty by flooding a country with cheap, highly processed foods from other countries. This can displace small-scale farmers and erode the rich culinary traditions of a country (Gálvez, 2018).

Pollution from agriculture is threatening Malawi's biodiversity. Malawi's cultural variety has played an essential role in conserving biodiversity for generations. Most

civilizations have classified eco-systems locations as sacred or protected sites for a variety of reasons. For example, graveyards throughout Malawi have been declared holy and protected areas, making exploitation of forest and wildlife resources illegal. However, most of these conservation-sensitive traditional behaviors, beliefs, and rituals are fast deteriorating and vanishing, along with the biodiversity they may have helped protect. In addition, changes in the socioeconomic environment have resulted in the loss of substantial conventional knowledge systems, practices, and inventions. The consequences of such changes for biological and cultural variety must be considered (National Biodiversity Strategy, 2015).

1.1.2 Grant Project Proposal Rationale

This grant project proposal allows the Mgwayi community to be equipped to mitigate some of the food challenges its residents face regularly. This project aims to promote the importance of caring for orphans and the vulnerable as a community and to boost nutritional values. The people of Mgwayi are only one community in Malawi, experiencing poverty, inequality, and economic hardships. The thesis project will review the literature on community gardens in Malawi and community participation and look at local funding sources for training, education development, and maintenance.

COTN has always been open to innovative revenue-generating initiatives to address the need to care for orphaned children. The organization's principal source of funding is a sponsorship program. Unfortunately, owing to the worldwide economic crisis, many devoted contributors and sponsors have paused contributing because of the coronavirus epidemic. COTN, as an organization that cares for vulnerable children, will have to implement the policy to reintegrate the children back into their communities during reduced financing. Because of the Covid epidemic, it is unclear if all funders will renew their help. Currently, only half have resumed their donations

1.1.3 Target Population

The target population for the proposed community gardens will be Mgwayi village's reintegrated children as a priority, but eventually the whole community. This community has been in a village partnership program with the Children of the Nations organization for over ten years, with different projects already implemented.

The project will be done through Children of the Nations Malawi, a non-profit organization that has existed in Malawi for over 25 years working with orphans and vulnerable children. Funding sources require that an established organization like COTN manage grants. The partnership between Mgwayi and COTN through the village partnership program (VPP) has allowed several projects to be done in the community. One project is Big Johns School, constructed in Mgwayi village to promote child education. This school has grade 1 to grade 8 classes, with over 200 kids from the community attending classes.

The Slow Food Foundation (SFF) has been approached to assist with community garden training. They have established almost 3,000 gardens across Africa. The group works with Malawians to address malnutrition, obesity, and imbalanced diets. They primarily teach people how to cultivate healthy and nutritious crops. Traditional methods are preferred over the usage of fertilizers and pesticides. SFF began in Italy in 1989. Slow Food recommends that people should know about food since it strongly connects with areas of life such as culture, politics, and the environment (Kondowe, 2020).

This project aims to secure a funding source for COTN to establish community gardens in Mgwayi village that will help supply nutritious food for orphans re-integrating into communities and the village partners. This project will offer training by the Slow Food Foundation and permaculture experts to the Mgwayi community garden committee and COTN village partnership staff. According to the permaculture training, these two groups will strategize and brainstorm the best ways to establish community gardens and provide nutritious

fresh foods in Mgwayi. As a result, community people will have access to permaculture knowledge and be part of the first-hand implementation through establishing a community garden; this project work will empower the Mgwayi community to supply nutritious food for their families and people in need by having farming knowledge and other resources. Promoting gender equality in all tasks and responsibilities will also be critical in encouraging everyone to participate.

The project will be done with the required existing structure of the Ministry of the Local Government and Community Development. The Group Village Headman and the Village Development Committee will be made aware of this project. The community garden committee, a village development committee, is encouraged by the government to be inclusive and comprise members of different political parties, male and female, old and young, etc., according to the Ministry of Local Government committee's guidelines.

This project will help add value to the community residents work together to find common ground and build their welfare. The community will be involved in every decision and plan through the representation of the garden committee. The village committee will select the garden committee personnel.



Figure 4: Leadership Structure

Source: Ministry of Local Government Website

My project seeks to understand how community gardens can be a tool for community participation and inclusion while offering food and nutrition in a community. The questions that will guide the implementation of the project are:

1. What are the primary obstacles to implementing community gardens in Mgwayi village, and how may these obstacles be overcome?
2. How might community gardens increase food security and nutrition in Mgwayi, and how can this potential be realized?
3. What are the best practices for sustainable land use in this setting, and how can community gardens be developed and managed to promote local ecosystems and biodiversity?

4. What role can community gardens play in creating social cohesion and communal development, and how may the Mgwayi community reap these benefits?
5. Finally, how can the community gardens be sustained over time, and what role can local government and other stakeholders play in supporting this initiative?

CHAPTER 2

Theoretical Framework and Literature Review

2.1 Theoretical Framework

There have been many projects and initiatives that the government or NGOs have undertaken in Malawi. The common debate among curious Malawians has been if the locals benefit and have a role to play. This thesis research emphasizes the value of including community members in setting up and maintaining community gardens by drawing on the concepts of community participation theory.

2.2 Partnership

Children of the Nations has been in a village partnership program for over ten years with the Mgwayi community. The partnership offers an opportunity for individuals in the community to be empowered by training and gives them resources to take care of destitute children in the community. The organization's approach when dealing with communities is “hand up” and not “handouts.” COTN works with local leaders to identify and support destitute children in the community and address other immediate needs (cotni.org).

Arnstein (1969), in her influential article, explains the eight rungs on a ladder of citizen participation. Many schools of thought have referred to her work, especially with community participation and development. This ladder of citizen participation is vital for the community garden project as it adds valuable insights into dealing with the Mgwayi community and their involvement. The ladder presents each rung as a building up of citizen control and power.

2.3 Citizen Participation

Arnstein's Ladder of Citizen Participation

Source: American planning association journal (1969)

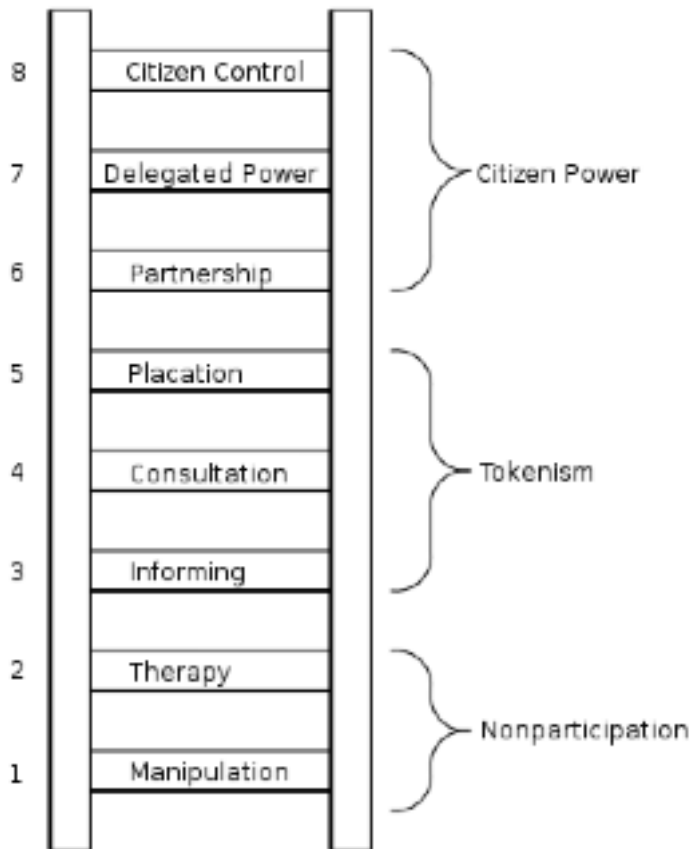


Figure 5: Ladder of Citizen Participation

Arnstein explains the ladder as follows:

Manipulation: Citizens seem to have power in principle, but in reality, they are only used by officials in public office to advance their agendas (1969).

Therapy: In this rung, citizens are viewed as the problem. The missing piece that the citizens need is a cure for their minds. At the same time, the actual truth is that public officials and institutions manipulate systems for their selfish gains while citizens face challenges.

Informing: Arnstein argues that citizens fear giving feedback to officials due. She provides an example of meetings where citizens are afraid of high officials querying information brought forward.

Consultation: Citizen concerns and input to be considered require other modes of participation. However, what is commonly done by officials is to use things like brochures or questionnaires, which limits participation from the citizens.

Placation: Citizens need more power in the process. Citizens are used only to show they were part of it.

Partnership: Arnstein explains that at this rung, citizens share power with decision-makers through negotiations, joint planning, and decision-making. On the other hand, it takes citizens holding demonstrations or community organizing to share their passion and force decision-makers to include them.

Delegated Power: Governments and NGOs, among others, charge citizens to take the lead on some projects.

Citizen Control: At this point, citizens are entirely in charge of policy and can bargain conditions vital to them.

This thesis research has incorporated Model cities in the theoretical framework. Much happened in the U.S., in the decade before Model Cities and Arnstein's "A Ladder of Citizen Participation." It was the 1960s, a decade marked by protests and movements such as the civil rights movement, the "Black Power/Black Is Beautiful" movement, the anti-Vietnam War movement, the second wave of feminism, the women's movement, the environmental movement, beginning of the gay rights struggle, and youth movement. The Demonstration Cities and Metropolitan Development Act passed into law on November 3, 1966, included Model Cities and ran until 1974. The protests and movements show the importance of power and involvement to a group of people. The fact that both initiatives focus on community and

development suggests a link between the community garden project and the historical details of the Model Cities initiative. For example, the Model Cities initiative involved locals in the planning and execution of programs to revive urban regions. Similarly, the community garden project aims to involve the Mgwai community in establishing and keeping a shared area for producing nutritious food. The community garden initiative and the Model Cities program stress the value of community involvement and ownership. The Model Cities initiative understood the importance of giving locals a say in decisions and encouraging them to take charge of the growth of their neighborhoods. Similarly, the community garden project promotes ownership among locals by getting them to collaborate to design a place that represents their wants and interests.

Using both Arnstein's lenses and model cities, the community garden project in Mgwai village will be done so that citizens can control and take the lead on the work. Furthermore, it is a desired aim that when the project is fully established, other communities can learn from and implement this COTN model in their local villages.

2.4 Community Participation

Community participation suggests the importance of local people's involvement in social development. It is important to note that local people's involvement in social development shows that ordinary people have historically been excluded from participating in decisions that affect them. Politicians, bureaucrats, and NGOs have often made these decisions without considering the perspectives and needs of the local population (Sanoff, 2000). There is a need for greater inclusivity and participation in social development initiatives, recognizing that local people have valuable knowledge and insights that can contribute to the success and sustainability of these efforts. By empowering local communities and giving them a voice in decision-making processes, social development initiatives can be more effective in achieving their goals and promoting positive change

(Sanoff,2000). This concept was first used by the World Health Organization (WHO) as a health-promotion strategy, and it was then known as citizen participation (Butterfoss, 2006). The theory argues that when people are excluded from decision-making processes, development programs create solutions that do not consider the wants and desires of the local community. These initiatives are, therefore, not productive and impactful.

A World Bank document (1987) defines community involvement as "an active process through which beneficiary or client groups influence the design and execution of a development project to better their wellbeing in terms of income, personal growth, self-reliance, or other qualities they cherish" (Paul, 1987). Furthermore, community involvement is a mechanism through which individuals address their problems by gathering to think and take collective action (Zakus, 1998). It is critical to recognize that diverse community engagement interpretations directly impact development practice (Oakley, 1989). As a result, some researchers who define community engagement have gone so far as to explain it in two extremes. According to Pauline Rose, there is pseudo-participation, in which citizens are kept informed but have limited ability to contribute, and actual participation, in which citizens have equal influence in an activity (Rose, 2003).

The notion of community is vast and complicated. It can be considered individuals working together for a shared goal or relying on one another for necessities. This is because they live near each other and interact regularly. Expectations and obligations are communicated to all members of the group while community leaders ensure the well-being of their community (Ismail, 2009). Despite the controversies and significant issues in definitions and inclusion, community engagement provides advantages.

Development researchers and practitioners have contested the idea of involvement. While other researchers and practitioners see mutual benefits of participation in projects, others view it as a tool for increasing project efficiency (Paul, 1987).

Other works of literature define 'participation' as both a means and an aim. Oakley (1989) clarifies this point. Involvement is considered a means to an end, and the outcomes of that end are deemed more essential than the act of participation itself. In contrast, participation as a goal emphasizes elevating the people. Development projects should be participatory, which means that the people affected by the project should be involved in the project's design, implementation, and evaluation (Oakley, 1989). According to Ghazala and Rao (2004), involvement can occur at many levels. The fundamental goal is to include local expertise in the project's decision-making processes. When communities make essential project decisions, participation transforms into self-initiated action. This is also known as exercising one's voice and determination, or empowerment.

Community participation effectively allows rural and urban people to focus energy and mobilize resources to solve their health, environmental, and economic problems (Hindworth, 2009). The article "Spaces and Times of Community Farming" explain more about the community land space where people choose to dwell and undertake fulfilling activities with the same mindset. This community farming encourages everyday practices that help people experience community (Liu et al., 2017). The Nutrition Embedded Evaluation Program Impact Evaluation (NEEP-IE) has implemented integrated agricultural interventions to promote community farming practices in the southern region of Malawi. The NEEP-IE integrated nutritional and agricultural intervention aims to improve the knowledge and practices around diets, feeding, health, and cleanliness in households with infants and young children. This includes promoting the best feeding and caring practices through parenting groups, involving parents, teenagers, and other community members in the planning and preparation of meals for children within Community Based Child Care Centers, improving agricultural production of nutrient-dense foods and food distribution by using CBCC gardens as a learning site for communities, and establishing Village Savings and Loans (VSL) groups

to assist communities in saving and gaining access to funds to buy supplies needed (Gelli, 2017). Trials were conducted as part of the National Evaluation Platform for Agriculture-led Growth (NEEP), a research initiative to evaluate the impact of various agricultural and nutrition interventions on food security, livelihoods, and nutrition outcomes in Malawi. These are randomly controlled trial clusters across Malawi to assess how agricultural and nutritional interventions impact young children. The results showed how agricultural and nutrition initiatives could enhance Malawi's early childhood physical and emotional well-being and offer information to support programs and policies. (NEEP, 2017).

This community garden project is in line with the ideas of Wilcox (1994) in his guide to effective participation. He explains that promoting participation requires information, consultation, and decisions. Therefore, there should be room for feedback and opportunities for joint decision-making.

2.5 Literature Review

This research will review the literature on poverty and orphan challenges in Malawi, food security and nutrition, community development, and community gardens.

2.5.1 Poverty and Orphan Challenges in Malawi

First, it is essential to understand the need for these community gardens. Poverty has been a challenge in many village communities. This is why there has been a rise in non-governmental organizations in the country offering support in various forms. Some organizations are responding to the need for orphan care.

The government of Malawi defines an orphan in the National Policy on Orphans (2003) as "a child who has lost one or both parents because of death and is under the age of 18 years." Furthermore, a vulnerable child has been described as a "child who has no able parents or guardians, staying alone or with elderly grandparents or lives in a sibling-headed household or has no fixed place of abode and lacks access to health care, material, and psychological

care, education and has no shelter" (National Policy on Orphans, 2003). There have been different approaches to orphan care. Some communities have opted for institutional care, while others prefer only feeding programs. Despite the approaches to orphan care, orphans are still a critical issue in Malawi. There were an estimated 510,000 orphans, in 2021 according to UNICEF, many of whom were impacted by HIV/AIDS, poverty, and other issues that could make them additionally vulnerable. Many of these orphans might not have access to fundamental necessities like food, healthcare, and schooling, which could impact their health and prospects for the future. In addition, they may experience various difficulties, such as discrimination, shame, and the possibility of exploitation, abuse, and negligence. Some might also be coerced into harmful situations like child labor, early marriage, or other harmful practices that could make them even more vulnerable (UNICEF, 2021).

Both internal and external factors have contributed to poverty which has affected orphans and vulnerable children. The common causes of poverty are climate change, the HIV and AIDS pandemic, and rapid population growth.



Figure 6: Rural Community in Malawi
Source: Disaster Risk Reduction Network of African Journalists

Seventy percent of Malawians live below the poverty threshold of \$1.90 per day (World Bank Document, Report No. 132785). HIV and AIDS have been significant impediments to the country's progress. According to the Joint United Nations Program on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), as of 2021, an estimated 1.1 million people were living with HIV in Malawi, and approximately 12,000 people died from AIDS-related illnesses that year. HIV disproportionately affects women and young people in the country, with young women aged 15-24 almost three times more likely to be living with HIV than young men of the same age (UNAIDS, 2021).

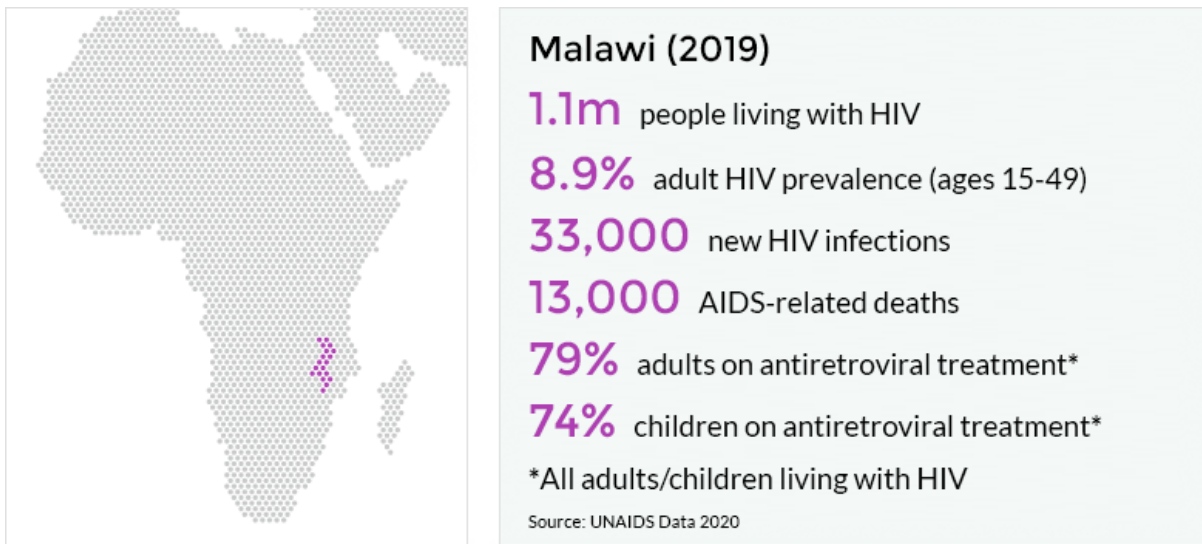


Figure 7: Malawi 2019 AIDS DATA
Source: UNAIDS Data 2020

The Malawi National Strategic Plan for HIV and AIDS states that Malawi remains one of the countries with the highest HIV burdens in Southern Africa (MNSP report, 2020). The two groups affected most by the pandemic are children and women. Over the years, children have been considered a vulnerable group in Malawi. Numerous orphanages and childcare institutions have taken action to assist this group, particularly those affected by HIV and AIDS.

Malawi's definition of a vulnerable child considers four vulnerability factors: (i) children living in a household in the bottom three wealth quintiles; (ii) children not living with either parent; (iii) children living in households with adults with no education; and (iv) children who have lost one or both parents. The report further explains that children with disabilities and those living with HIV, who can also have any of the four vulnerability factors, should be included. Based on this definition, there are 1.8 million vulnerable children in Malawi, 53 percent girls, and 47 percent boys. These factors significantly contribute to high levels of child labor, teenage pregnancy, child marriage, early sexual debut, placement of children in orphanages and other childcare institutions, children living in the street, low education, and poor health outcomes among children (MNSP report 2020). Women living with HIV have also been victims of gender inequality, disempowerment, and prejudice. Masanjala (2007) outlines how HIV has resulted in women not fully engaging in and benefiting from the productive sector.

Climate change is another reason many in Malawi have a food shortage, which increases poverty. A good example of climate change's disastrous effect is Cyclone Ida, which happened in March 2019. This affected Malawi and the neighboring countries of Mozambique and Zimbabwe. World Vision Organization (2019) reported that thousands of people were displaced and homeless. With a statistic of 3 million people affected, the poor living conditions led to cases of malaria and cholera, among other problems. Malawi's climate action report shows that most Malawians fail to harvest their agricultural produce because of droughts and floods (Malawi Climate Action Report, 2019). Malawi is one of the nations most susceptible to climate change. The most recent meteorological shocks affecting Malawi were Cyclone Ida in March 2019 and Tropical Storms Ana and Gombe in early 2022. The agricultural sector suffered significant losses due to all these incidents. Ana seriously damaged the Kapichira hydroelectric power facility, which will take at least six months to

recover its generation capability. After the flood of January 2015, a severe drought in 2016 caused bad harvests and sparked a humanitarian crisis (World Bank Report 2022).

Eleven million Malawians who live in rural communities are heavily affected since they depend on agricultural produce to survive (NAIP, 2018). Therefore, the government of Malawi has developed the National Agriculture Improvement Plan to strategize and ensure food security. This national plan recognizes that agriculture is increasingly vulnerable to natural shocks and is more challenging with climate change. Changes in weather events have affected agricultural production and rural livelihoods (NAIP, 2018). Rapid population expansion has also been mentioned as contributing to the strain on Malawi's natural resources. Since the 1960s, Malawi has witnessed a higher rural population increase than the rest of Sub-Saharan Africa, according to Komareki and Msangi (2019). Increasing population expansion has strained land and other natural resources, resulting in increased land fragmentation, degradation, and deforestation (NAIP, 2018).

The COVID-19 pandemic in Malawi put a blow to the already tough economy and devastated rural communities. The government put in place measures such as lockdowns to control the spread. This resulted in locals needing help to make ends meet. Many people lost jobs, and those who relied on farming to put food on the table had to follow lockdown protocols and stay in their homes.

Agricultural Policy Research in Africa (APRA) did a household food insecurity COVID-19 rapid assessment survey in June 2021. The first interviews were done between June and July 2020; these were done face-to-face. The other two rounds were done by telephone. The second round of interviews was done in October 2020, while the final round was in February 2021. These interviews had male and female respondents from different households and regions across Malawi. The survey showed that household food security

worsened during this period, resulting in other health implications like malnutrition. The data below indicates increased food insecurity.

Aspect	Percent reporting (%)		
	Round 1	Round 2	Round 3
Worried about inadequate food	76	87	83
Unable to eat healthy foods	78	89	88
Ate only a few kinds of food	78	87	88
Skipped meals	57	77	76
Ate less	70	82	82
I ran out of food	54	67	68
Hungry but with no food to eat	48	65	59
Went without eating for a whole day	31	34	31
Food not adequate for a family	75	83	86

Figure 8: COVID Survey
Source: APRA COVID-19 Rapid Assessment surveys

Food Security and Nutrition in Malawi

This community gardens project is a contribution to address the food and nutrition challenge in the country. The National Multi-Sector Nutrition Policy 2018-2022 defines food security and nutrition as physical and economic availability that satisfies people's dietary needs and food preferences to live productive and healthy lives. Food security comprises four components: food availability, food access, food use, and stability of the first three.

Farmers in Malawi have been harmed by the global rise in food and fuel prices brought on by the conflict in Ukraine because they have less money to purchase farm inputs for their farms in order to produce a good harvest. Net purchasers consume less when food costs are higher, while net producers earn more. This combination has a significant impact on poverty margins. In addition, the proportion of household budgets devoted to public transportation will rise as fuel prices rise. If food costs increase by percent, the number of people living in poverty will grow by 1.8 percentage points; if they increase by 20 percent, it will rise by four percentage points. Urban areas and rural parts of the Global South will

experience more significant poverty increases due to increases in food prices (World Bank, 2022).

Most Malawians live in rural areas as farmers—some farm to feed their families, while others do it for business. However, both parties have a setback due to poor agricultural practices, land degradation, and weather problems. These have affected the livelihoods of smallholder farmers, who constitute 80 percent of the population, according to the Food and Agricultural Organization (FAO).

Smallholder farmers across Malawi are growing various crops; most farms sell to the government, which packages and exports the crops in large quantities. Farmers struggle financially to find agricultural inputs such as fertilizer. Those that can harvest farm produce need more access to markets due to limited information and poor village roads to transport produce. In the Mgwayi village, access to farmland is challenging because the middle-class population from Lilongwe buys land from chiefs and builds houses to settle in. Many Malawians with a piece of land around their home prefer to grow vegetables or fruits than buy them at the market. However, due to the recent trend of land selling by rural communities and land grabs by the government, many are forced to move to slums in the cities.

Chisinga and Lewis (2013) argue that land grabs in Malawi result ultimately from land transfers under colonial rule. Malawi has three different categories of land: public, private, and customary. While private landowners have equal rights to those in other nations, the government owns and administers public land. Most of the land is considered "customary land," which is governed by customary law and is in the hands of traditional authorities. Most land grabs are done with customary land by traditional chiefs with self-interest in mind. This malpractice has led to heads selling land to private buyers without the community's consent (Chisinga and Lewis, 2013).

The Malawian government has recognized the urgent need to address food insecurity through the implementation of a National Nutrition Policy and Strategic Plan. The plan aims to coordinate food security and nutrition programs at both national and community levels by increasing access to farm inputs and promoting contract farming. Additionally, local communities will be empowered through the provision of resources. However, despite these efforts, the prevalent practice of growing only one crop, such as maize, rice, cassava, and potatoes, has resulted in poor food diversification, leading to malnutrition issues in Malawi (NNPSSP Document). Promoting food sovereignty and encouraging crop diversity is crucial to combat this problem. The Slow Food Foundation is an organization that is dedicated to achieving food sovereignty in Malawi. They are doing this by supporting community gardens and promoting the cultivation of diverse crops and traditional food systems. This initiative aims to increase the availability of nutritious foods in the region. Community members are encouraged to participate actively in ensuring food security by growing their food and sharing resources. Through collaboration, communities can achieve greater self-sufficiency and food sovereignty, resulting in better health and nutrition outcomes.

Both public health and development challenges strike women and children due to cultural norms. Men are recognized as favored, while women and children are looked down upon, men are the first to eat and are given the best foods available in the home because they are looked at as breadwinners. This leaves the women and children to feed on vegetables most of the time (USAID Malawi Profile, 2023). The Nutrition Capacity Assessment in Malawi report points out that many children younger than five years old suffer from chronic malnutrition. Homes in rural communities lack the necessary resources to ensure sufficient calorie and nutrient intake. Deficiencies of vitamin A, iron, and iodine are also high, resulting in disorders such as overweight, obesity, hypertension, and diabetes. The average life expectancy in Malawi is just over 64 years of age due to the high mortality rate (Malawi

National Nutrition Policy, 2022t). The government of Malawi has a national resilience strategy focusing on four pillars that will help with the challenges. However, the government needs other stakeholders and locals to help alleviate challenges. In line with this strategy, the community gardens project will promote food diversification and land care to avoid soil pollution. As a result, the community will be able to grow crops all year round rather than the seasonal way of farming.

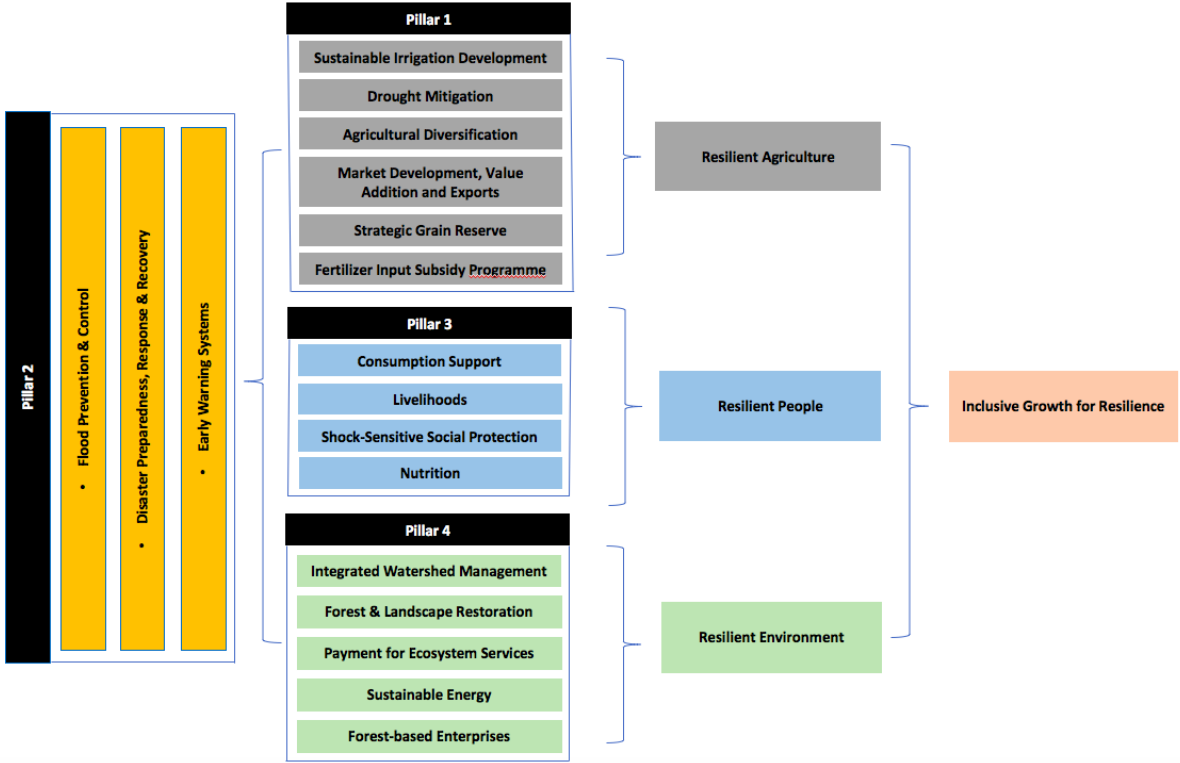


Figure 9: National Resilience Policy
Source: National Resilience Strategy

2.5.2 Community Development

Community development is a difficult concept to define but aims to strengthen communities and enhance better living for communities (Hewson, 1957). Development is a phenomenon that impacts the entire globe, so it shouldn't be limited to just third-world nations. A nation's economic development is influenced by its acts and those of other countries and groups. Therefore, the development process requires teamwork and

coordination between various countries and groups to accomplish economic growth. This calls for an awareness of the interconnectedness of different economies and cultures worldwide (Slim, 1995). In addition, development aims to move the social system upward (Myrdal, 1974). The United Kingdom National Occupational Standards describes community development as a process that addresses power structures to bring the desired end of inclusion, justice, and equality (Purcell, 2012). Community development can be defined as a process where community members are supported to identify and take collective action on issues that matter to them. Community members are empowered to impact their community (Smart, 2007). However, it's important to note that development is a complex and interdependent system, and the effectiveness of community development methods depends on the capacity of all countries to implement them rather than solely relying on economic growth (Amadei, 2015).

2.5.2.1 Principles and Concepts of Community Development

The principles and concepts of community development may be traced back to November 1957, when the United Nations Economic and Social Council suggested guiding principles that international organizations can follow. These essential elements are very relevant as they recognize the role played by local community development. The community garden project considers the principles valuable from planning to completion. This is because they are community and people-centered. The following is the summary of the ten guiding principles:

1. Activities must be performed in response to the community's fundamental requirements; the initial initiatives should be begun in response to the people's expressed demands.
2. While unconnected efforts in each substantive sector can result in local gains, comprehensive and balanced community development needs concerted activity and the construction of multi-purpose programs.
3. Community development attempts to promote and improve people's engagement in community affairs, revitalize current forms of local government, and transition to effective local administration when it still needs to be implemented.
4. Identifying, encouraging, and developing local leaders should be a priority.
5. Greater dependence on women and youth engagement in community projects revitalizes development programs, establishes them broadly, and ensures long-term expansion.

6. Community self-help programs require intensive and comprehensive government aid to be genuinely effective.
7. Adoption of consistent policies, specific administrative arrangements, recruitment and training of personnel, mobilization of local and national resources, and organization of research, experimentation, and evaluation
8. The resources of voluntary, non-governmental organizations should be fully utilized in community development programs at the local, national, and international levels.
9. Economic and social improvement at the local level demands national-scale development (UN, 1957).

In the community development field, various approaches are used by different sectors to implement projects. One such approach is community-driven development (CDD), which is currently being promoted by programs from the World Bank in Malawi that emphasize local participation and capacity building based on CDD principles. Some local organizations in Malawi have adopted these principles to identify community priorities and work with local governments and other institutions to solve local problems.

Community development includes four essential elements: A planned program for the whole community, integrated specialties, encouragement, and technical assistance (Langworthy, 1964). Despite the development definition being implicit by many scholars and literature, there is a common thread of society, political systems, economy, and government (Lieshout et al., 2010). Community development must pay close attention to the strategy and techniques it intends to employ and the time frame for achieving its objectives. A plan for village reform, for example, must decide whether it is more effective to bring in community development workers from outside or to use indigenous workers; in allocating resources, community development planners must decide whether to take a comprehensive approach and deal with a wide range of community problems concurrently or adopt a selective process by tackling one or a few issues at a time (RCDS, 1971).

2.5.3 Community Development in Africa

Community development in Africa can be traced to the 1950s. In a broad sense, the goal was to involve people in a community in educating themselves to improve their lives through health, agriculture, civic education, and mass literacy schemes. The same era also had African nationalism. African nationalism's ideology and implementation are among the colonial era's most long-lasting impacts (Smyth, 2004). Community development is complex and is interpreted differently by many scholars. Kamba (2009) explains a long history of rural communities suffering because of African governments and leaders. He argues that a policy implementation gap results in high infant mortality and low life expectancy when basic needs are inaccessible. The complex relationship between colonialism, African nationalism, and development has shaped the economic, social, and political landscape of African countries. While colonialism brought exploitation and domination, it also laid the foundation for modern infrastructure in Africa. However, development has been used as a tool of colonialism and imperialism, rather than benefiting the African countries they were implemented in. African nationalism emerged as a response to colonialism, seeking to promote self-rule and control over resources, and development became a key tool for achieving this goal. Yet, the legacy of underdevelopment and dependency on European powers has hindered African countries' ability to implement effective development policies and neglected marginalized groups such as rural dwellers. Understanding this history is crucial for promoting sustainable development policies that prioritize the needs of local people (Kamba, 2009).

It is essential in any discussion of community development in Africa to highlight Southern Africa Development Community (SADC). Formed in 1992, SADC promotes sustainable and equitable economic growth and socio-economic development in the region. Sixteen member states including Malawi constitute this development community intending to have systems that enable good governance and security, among others (Moyo, 2020).

SADC has come up with Agenda 2063, a key document where seven aspirations have been highlighted for all member countries to follow:



Figure 10: Agenda 2063 SADC Agenda 2063 document

It is also important to highlight China as the largest investor and trading partner. China and Malawi formally established diplomatic relations on December 28, 2007. China has been providing financial aid, infrastructure development, and technical assistance to Malawi, which has greatly benefited the country in terms of economic growth and development. In recent years, China has been Malawi's top investor, with Chinese companies investing in various sectors of the Malawian economy, such as mining, agriculture, and energy. This has created employment opportunities and helped improve Malawians' living standards (Chinese Embassy in Malawi,2020).

China works together with other countries and overcomes obstacles such as political differences, regionalism, and ideologies. This collaboration leads to advantages such as free trade, which enables China to export its products to African nations. As a result of this trade,

China helps build infrastructure in Africa. A study conducted in 2020 suggests that although Africa has a 10 percent intra-trade rate, 80 percent of its trade is conducted offshore. To take full advantage of intercontinental trade, there is a need for better physical infrastructure like roads and railways (Ding et al., 2020).

Although China claims beneficial influence in Malawi and other African nations, some individuals express concerns. According to Daly et al. (2020), China does not usually consult with the recipient country to determine its needs before delivering aid. This results in the neglect of other important needs that must be met in the recipient country. Moreover, the donated items are often not required, cannot be used, or cannot meet local regulations. China's aid arrives unexpectedly and with little communication, causing confusion among the recipient country's agencies and increasing their administrative workload in handling the aid.

Chinese industrial construction has also resulted in a negative impact. This affects Lilongwe City's most vulnerable populations, including low-income women and older people. These groups are frequently forced to move to other parts of the city or rural areas. They face new challenges, such as needing more basic services, job opportunities, and social services. Three Chinese factories are a few kilometers from Mgwai village and the COTN offices. They manufacture toilet paper, iron sheets, and plastic water storage tanks. There is toxic waste being produced daily and harming the people and the environment. The surrounding community has yet to do much to challenge the Chinese company to find better options in dealing with their toxic waste.

2.5.4 Community Development in Malawi

The Malawi government and NGOs start numerous initiatives across communities in Malawi to respond to different needs. Given this, literature on community development is essential to this paper. Focusing on local development concepts and the implementation of projects in community settings can enhance the value of the community garden project.

Many international organizations' project initiatives in local communities have failed to continue after three to five years in Malawi. The challenge has been that locals are not involved at the beginning of projects and must be included in decision-making. These NGO projects are a setback since they are mostly forced on people. The other challenge has been the focus on training NGO staff rather than community development committees. Community development can be defined as a process where community members are supported to identify and take collective action on issues that matter to them. Community members are empowered to impact their community (Smart, 2007). Community development looks at people as experts in their lives. This is important as community development programs are being implemented. Community development addresses power structures and inequalities in many ways (Home, 1981).

The community garden project will use the self-help approach to avoid some of the other NGOs' mistakes. The local community should own it and continue benefiting from it. This research paper uses the principles of participatory development because it emphasizes the importance of engaging with the local community and their needs to promote sustainable development. This aligns with the focus on community participation in the research paper's project of community gardens, where local people are involved in decision-making and implementation to promote sustainable agriculture and food security. This system has many advantages. When people are included in decisions and every action required to see the desired outcome, the project or program has a higher chance of succeeding (Long, 1973).

The history of community development in Malawi is essential for the project. It shows that there have been many community development initiatives to learn from. Community development in Malawi can be detected way back in the colonial era. Three community development phases can be pointed out. In the first phase, colonizers had all the say in how things were supposed to be done. In the second phase, people were encouraged to be self-

sufficient, but in reality, this was during the one-party era, where the government closely monitored everything. The last step is current, reflecting people's dependence on the government and other stakeholders. This way of thinking can be attributed to how people perceive democracy (Chisinga, 2008).

Kishindo (2003) explains that three types of community projects can be identified in Malawi: Community-led projects that do not require outside funding, community-led projects that require external aid, and centrally specified projects that necessitate participation from the local community. One of the implementing goals of community garden project is to work together with the community and leave it in the hands of the community garden committee to make decisions and strategize in the coming years. In addition, a community development policy can be traced back to 1965, after Malawi gained independence. Then, Malawi adopted the United Nations' conception of community development to develop rural areas (Kishindo, p380). The government has achieved progress in developing local communities, and one notable example of this is the establishment of the Malawi Social Action Fund (MASAF). This fund was created to cater to the needs of communities that have been directly requested by the government. Consequently, some communities have benefited from the construction of infrastructure such as roads and bridges. This initiative has had a positive impact on the development of local communities (Kishindo, 2001).

2.5.5 Critics of Community Development

Despite efforts and initiated projects using community development principles, there are critics of community development. Robyn (2012) argues that participation in community development is challenging to achieve in terms of work involving both communities and development organizations. Emerging literature shows that communities have different knowledge from formal development organizations. This creates a gap that must be bridged for the two parties to work together. Eversole highlights that participation has primarily

evolved in one direction: groups must be willing to enter the territory of others and learn to play by their rules. Actual participatory development teaches, engages, and empowers communities and organizations that deal with them to see and do things differently (Eversole, 2012).

Various foreign and local NGOs work in Malawi in urban slums and rural regions. These organizations approach their task in different and diverse ways. Providing gifts such as blankets, soap, mosquito nets, and food is the most prevalent and highly criticized practice by civil society organizations and middle-class citizens on social media platforms. These one-time contributions can occasionally generate misunderstanding, leading some people to lie about the size of their homes to get more products. Similarly, opponents contend that NGOs do not empower local communities but instead foster a culture of reliance. For example, one NGO may contribute to a community, followed by another organization launching a project that necessitates the physical participation of community members. Despite the second project's benefits, locals are less enthusiastic about participating because they expect NGOs to make direct donations rather than requiring local contributions.

Some people contend that community development is founded on values. However, others argue that the involvement of local power and regulations can complicate matters within a community setting. This can result in a community needing help to agree on issues that will shape its future (Cavaye, 2001). The community garden project will likely face some implementation challenges. The Mgwayi community is predominantly the Chewa tribe. Chewas believe men to have more authority than women. This might hinder women from participating in decisions that will benefit the project.

Empowerment can be a challenge in community development. The dilemma is that sometimes empowering people by sharing power can work or not (Schuftan, 1996). This is because empowerment is not a one-time thing but a process that takes time for people to

understand (1996). Community development disrupts the lives of people in countries by changing their development patterns to a different one viewed as superior (Mitchison, 1967). Local communities are endangered in highly organized market economies by community development. This happens by making it a method that promises results with small outside resources (de Vries, 1960). For example, many people in Malawi's rural communities are not able to read and write. This creates a barrier when chiefs or local communities need help to read important documents like government policies. Politicians commonly take advantage of situations like this and promise illusory community development to get people's votes.

2.6 Community Gardens

The desire for people to connect with nature, food, and community has caused community gardens to be recognized in developed economies. Community gardens differ from private gardens because they are public gardens in terms of ownership and access. They are recognized globally but vary according to the needs of an area (Ferris et al., 2001). Community gardens are plots of land used for growing food by people from different families, typically urban dwellers with limited access to their land (Okvat, Zautra 2011).

Bodies of literature on community gardens show many benefits across the globe. Community gardens can be used in activism and as a social work tool (Nettle, 2014). Youth living in Lawrence, Massachusetts, where there is poor soil and air quality, benefit from community gardens by enjoying recreational spaces (Shepard, 2012). Community and home gardens are promising methods of encouraging healthy behaviors. They represent everyday landscapes that connect people to nature, necessitate active and sustained participation by participants, and allow participants to interact with others both directly and indirectly, gaining knowledge about ecological systems, food growing and preparation, and, more broadly, health and wellness. Furthermore, such connections have been shown to support social and psychological processes such as positive aesthetic experiences, neighborhood attachment, and

collective efficacy (Litt et al., 2011). Community gardens in Gambia serve small-scale farmers by producing food despite the limited availability of water (IFAD climate action report, 2019).

A study was done to discover the meaning of growing food in community gardens in South African townships. Lucke and colleagues (2019) explain that the townships were formed due to the effects of apartheid. Major setbacks have been a lack of jobs, quality education, and access to nutritious food (2019). When the research was conducted, participants expressed satisfaction with community gardens. According to Lucke et al.'s (2019) study, individuals who had access to economic opportunities, education, and high-quality nutritious food from farming experienced positive psychological effects. The study findings indicated that economic prosperity, knowledge, and access to healthy food are essential factors that contribute to positive psychological well-being. This demonstrates that community gardening can be used to achieve many desired outcomes. This way of gardening can also be adapted across the globe. The effectiveness of community gardens is transformational for both individuals and communities. Studies in different US urban settings suggest that gardeners eat healthier than non-gardeners. For example, gardeners in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, consumed more vegetables such as dark leafy greens, eggplant, and tomatoes and fewer milk products, citrus fruits, sweet foods, and drinks than non-gardeners. Individuals in community gardening households consumed fruits and vegetables 1.4 more times per day than those in non-community gardening households. They were 3.5 times more likely to consume fruits and vegetables five or more times per day (Litt et al., 2011).

Despite community gardens' successes, there are setbacks and challenges when implementing them. In a study conducted by Diaz, et al. (2018) on barriers to success in community gardens, data collected showed a wide range of obstacles. An example is the

interpersonal issues seen in cultural insensitivity, inability to deal with conflicts, and lack of cooperation among garden members. Community gardens have barriers from all fronts. This ranges from limited resources to challenges in planning and management. There are also issues with external factors such as vandalism and theft (Diaz, et al., 2018).

In light of poverty in Malawi and its effects, community gardens can be one of the many ways communities can venture in and bring about nutritious food and self-reliance. Organizations such as the Slow Food Foundation and Masterpeace are implementing community gardens in Malawi. These organizations are working with rural communities to grow all kinds of vegetables. Community garden groups are taught not to use pesticides or fertilizers but to nurture the environment by being traditional cultivators (Masterpeace.org).

Malawi and the NGOs' leadership have developed policies and a strategic plan. There have been initiatives and donations to help reduce poverty, but the struggle and need are still here. This thesis project aims to allocate resources toward establishing community gardens to benefit the community involved.

2.6.1 Community Gardens in Malawi

Community gardening is a concept that has been introduced previously in Malawi. Many lives are benefiting from these initiatives by different organizations. The following are community gardens highlighted from other parts of Malawi.

2.6.1.1 Masterpeace Community Gardens

The Chikwawa area in southern Malawi has been experiencing food insecurity, resulting in a food supply constraint. To address this issue, Masterpeace Malawi has launched a community gardening initiative to increase food production and enhance food security. This project encourages residents to produce vegetables such as tomatoes and other crops in great demand that can be cultivated readily in the local environment. So far, the group has developed 20 community gardens, and this program has benefited 120 households. These

families are given seeds, equipment, and instruction to assist them in growing vegetables in their gardens. As a result, the community gardens provide fresh and healthy food to families and generate possibilities.

Masterpace has come up with a participatory approach to the way of gardening. This method involves including the community in all process aspects, from planning and preparation to harvesting and marketing. The organization collaborates closely with the villagers to ensure the project's success and that everyone in the community feels the advantages of the community gardens. This methodology has been beneficial in encouraging community engagement and assuring the project's long-term survival. In addition, it assists in improving food security, providing households with a consistent source of fresh and healthy food, and generating chances for revenue production. Masterpiece Malawi's pioneering model approach demonstrates how community gardening may be a viable solution to food insecurity and poverty.



Figure 11: Masterpiece Community Garden

2.6.1.2 Nchenachena Garden

The Slow Food Foundation launched this garden initiative due to the harmful consequences of farming's widespread use of hybrid seeds and chemical fertilizers. The organization recognized the value of maintaining and encouraging traditional farming practices handed down from generation to generation. Traditional methods are frequently more sustainable and adapted to the local environment, resulting in healthier soil and crops.

This garden, located in northern Malawi, is managed by 20 women dedicated to cultivating a broad range of vegetables using traditional methods. The ladies collaborate to develop the land, plant seeds, and harvest crops while employing natural techniques to improve the soil and keep pests away.

In addition to cultivating crops, the women make compost from organic waste, which improves soil fertility and reduces the need for artificial fertilizers. Due to this initiative, the women can share their traditional agricultural skills and practices with the local community. This has contributed to ensuring that these vital skills and techniques are handed down to the younger generations.

2.6.1.3 Lura Community Garden

The Slow Food Foundation's Lura community garden is a unique and creative project focused on promoting the health and well-being of individuals who visit the Lura Health Center in Rumphi district, the northern part of Malawi. The garden was designed to provide fresh, nutritious vegetables to those needing a healthy diet. It is managed by ten hardworking men and women who cultivate a wide range of locally grown veggies.

This garden not only gives patients access to fresh and healthful food, but it also contributes to the nutritional value of the meals they receive. In addition, the garden benefits vulnerable youngsters and HIV patients who get patient meals at the health facility.

CHAPTER 3

3.1 Methodology

This methodology chapter is an integral part of the grant project proposal since it defines the strategy and techniques that will be used to attain the intended result. The methodology will show the action plan, the steps in achieving the goals, and the resources needed. The community garden project aims to establish a sustainable and inclusive environment for community members to gather to grow food and promote community. The project's ultimate objective is to effectively implement a community garden that satisfies the requirements and expectations of the community members in the Mgwai community and adds to their general welfare. The project will be assessed and evaluated by getting feedback from community members through focus groups.

Malawi has been the target of attention from NGOs and Civil Society Organizations (CSOs) worldwide to curb poverty and food insecurity. Most of the support is in the form of projects with policies and recommendations from those initiating them and the Malawi government and its people who are the beneficiaries. This has brought complexities in implementation, social-economic sustainability, empowerment, and cultural norms. Development in different parts of Malawi has been perceived through different lenses. Most people in the country live in rural communities. Therefore, many circles have argued about and discussed community development and local participation. One of the debates has been whether projects should be community or donor-driven. The arguments are split into two camps.

On the one hand, funders initiate and execute programs without the recipients' engagement. Even though the projects have been completed, ownership is the major problem.

The opposite extreme has been locally driven project efforts that require more resources to make the project notion a reality.

The grant project proposal incorporates community engagement, such as recruiting volunteers and forming community groups to administer and maintain the garden. This is critical to ensuring that the community feels ownership and responsibility for the garden and stays in a healthy and inclusive environment for many years.

The grant project proposal must take into account several factors. One crucial aspect is creating a detailed project plan outlining the necessary steps for establishing the garden. This includes identifying a suitable location, designing the garden layout, procuring essential resources, and developing a sustainable maintenance plan. All these elements must be considered and explained in the proposal to ensure that the project is well-planned and executed efficiently.

3.2 Methods of Inquiry

This study will use a participatory action research approach. It promotes research in a community and partnership arrangement (Blumenthal et al., 2013). “When subjects of social experiments play an active part in the research by giving feedback to researchers through their actions and opinions, the action research is usually called participatory action research (PAR).” (Castellanet & Jordan, 2002). It challenges research traditions in both environmental and social sciences (Kinson, 2007).

3.3 Participatory Action Research and Community Development

It is important to note that participatory action research brings people together for the common good. This allows a problem or issue to be addressed. PAR involves the community from the beginning to the end of the research (Henry, 1996). According to Ottosson (2003), PAR is seen as a strategy and procedure for investigating social concerns rather than refining

management approaches and concepts. This is because PAR focuses on empowering communities, organizations, or groups to actively participate in the research process and collaborate to identify answers to the social issues they confront. PAR is often a collaborative and participatory procedure, with the researcher and study participants engaging in discourse to understand the problem and choose effective ways to address it. On the other hand, traditional management techniques and philosophies frequently use a top-down approach in which people in authority make decisions without input from the impacted parties. PAR promotes a bottom-up approach in which the people most affected by social issues have a say in the research process and decision-making.

In participatory action research, the external researcher must provide the community with research alternatives within the local researchers' capabilities and capacities. These possibilities may include traditional research methodologies and a variety of non-traditional tactics. Participatory action research distinguishes itself by the utilization of community gatherings and interaction. Participatory action research's utilization of discourse and collaborative nature is empowering and community-building (Henry, 1996).

Anyanwu(1988) explains that involvement is critical in participatory research. Community members are given the opportunity and freedom to examine their reality. Consequently, the community immediately benefits from the study that expresses their concerns and begins searching for answers. He continued to clarify that the research method demands active engagement and some crucial characteristics from the researcher. These include the capacity to manage interpersonal relationships, the combination of intellectual insight and skill with respect for the viewpoints and resources of the community, and a grasp of the primary causes of social challenges. Influential researchers must also be able to organize debates and collaborate with the community to develop long-term answers. Researchers influence the community because they are seen as experts in their fields, and their

findings and recommendations can significantly impact various aspects of society. They are often consulted by policymakers, organizations, and businesses to provide insights and guidance on issues related to their areas of expertise. Importantly, this method acknowledges the community's power to create and analyze information.

3.3 Project Design and Implementation

The proposed community garden award intends to offer Mgowayi village households access to fresh and healthy food and allow community members to join together and work toward a shared goal. In addition, this project will fund the establishment of a community garden administered and maintained by Mgowayi village members.

The garden will not only offer the people of Mgowayi village access to fresh and healthy food, but it will also allow them to acquire new skills, such as gardening and food production, which they can then utilize to enhance their livelihoods. In addition, the garden will also provide an area for community people to gather, create relationships, and work toward a shared purpose.

Partnering with Children of the Nations (COTN) is an ideal choice for this initiative, as they have been working with the community for over 15 years and have a proven track record of enhancing community health and well-being. Through their experience, resources, and knowledge, COTN can provide invaluable assistance in implementing the community garden project. Empowering the community and giving them agency is critical to community-based research. To ensure community ownership of the garden project, COTN can work with community leaders to create a participatory approach that involves community members in every aspect of the project. This includes training and engaging community members as volunteers, forming community groups responsible for maintaining the garden, and creating a sustainable plan that ensures the garden's longevity. Through this approach, the community

can take ownership of the garden and make it a success with the help of COTN's resources and expertise.

Approval Meetings

I had to engage two critical people to get approval to write a grant project proposal for a community garden.

COTN Country Director

The Country Director for Children of the Nations (COTN) is a senior executive directing operations and activities. Their responsibility includes ensuring that all COTN projects fit the organization's service standards and that these standards are maintained throughout the implementation phase. The standard practice is permission approval before any project can progress.

Chief Moyo, Leader of Mgwayi Village

In Smith et al.'s 1997 book *Nurtured by Knowledge: Learning to Do Participatory Action Research*, they discuss how individuals who collaborate to overcome challenges and find solutions can enhance their complexity, empathy, sense of community, and ability to promote social equality. In addition, through participatory action research, these individuals can give rise to optimistic visions of the future and strengthen their dedication to living purposeful lives.

I scheduled a meeting with Chief Moyo from Mgwayi and developed open-ended questions to guide our discussion (see Appendix). The meeting took almost an hour and was conducted in the Chewa language. I recorded the session and later transcribed the chief's responses and explanations. The conversation revolved around community gardens, the partnership between the Mgwayi community and COTN, challenges, and possible solutions.

Chief Mgowi Roles and Duties

The chief highlighted the following as some of his roles and responsibilities:

- Appointing persons to participate in community development activities
- Chairing meetings to address critical community concerns
- Preserving cultural norms and traditions
- Mediating disagreements among community members.

Mgowi Community Challenges

Chief Moyo explained that there are many challenges that the community is currently facing.

However, he pointed out the three major ones:

1. He stated that poverty is a source of concern in his community. Every day, men and women travel to Lilongwe for everyday work. Building middle-class houses, working as security guards, and working as housemaids for the working class are all examples of casual labor. Besides a few lucky individuals, many community members are desperate to feed their families, and life is complicated.
2. Water scarcity, he pointed out, is another challenge. Women rely on river water and shallow wells dug in riverbanks. It gets worse during dry seasons when wells and boreholes dry up. As a result, there has been a discussion with community members that harvesting rainwater will address water security issues.
3. He also explained that the sickness and death of productive community members have been devastating. This is a result of HIV/AIDS, Malaria, and Cholera. In addition, the Mgowi population has many older people and orphans needing care and support.

COTN relationship with the Mgowi Village

Chief Moyo recalls vividly when COTN staff met with him in his village to discuss needs assessments and a potential long-term partnership. He believes that this organization is vested in the well-being of the people. However, unfortunately, he said, “It appears the government does not care about us.” There have been non-governmental organizations

(NGOs) to assist with pig farming, bridge construction, and microfinance company, but all efforts have been futile. He initially thought COTN was like any other organization, but there has been a great relationship and true partnership.

Community Gardens Project

The chief has heard of community gardens and microfinance organizations that farm and sell produce. "In the nearby village, a group of women raise goats and sell them in the city," he noted. He went on to say that this concept has been introduced previously in his community. He has formed committees investigating education, farming, and the village security unit. The farming committee has advocated for the villagers to grow other nutritious crops besides maize. "It is in my heart to ensure that every family in my community has enough food." He remarked. He gave the go-ahead to collaborate with the farming committee and strategize how to proceed with this project.

Grant Proposal Writing

The project aims to make a long-term and sustainable impact in Mgwayi village by empowering residents to actively participate in addressing food scarcity issues. Villagers will take charge of the community gardens and make decisions that benefit people and the environment. I looked for a grant-funded community garden funding source online. This task entailed reviewing application criteria and requirements. U.S. Embassy Public Diplomacy, Small Grant Program, was the most appropriate grant.

Project Tools

The program methods and design guide the program activities. Chiefs and local leaders will be involved in every step of the process to achieve the goals of the Mgwayi community gardens. Our project's technique and procedure will rely on participatory action research to achieve the desired results. I have known the Mgwayi community since 2008 and have participated in several projects. These years have provided valuable experience working

with rural communities and developing meaningful relationships. Because of the existing working relationship between COTN and the Mgwayi community, the community garden project has a higher chance of success. The most significant impediment to establishing this garden is the possibility that the grant will not be funded.

CHAPTER 4

4.1 Grant Proposal Background Information

This proposal for the community gardens project is considering the US embassy in Malawi's public diplomacy small grants program as a possible source of funding. The embassy provides small grants like these to strengthen and advance the already existing mutual relationship between Malawi and the United States of America.

. The community garden project has the potential to improve the quality of life for marginalized and disadvantaged groups, such as people with disabilities, albinism, and those who face social stigma or persecution. This initiative is in line with the grant's objective of empowering vulnerable populations and may be eligible for funding because it supports orphaned children. Additionally, a youth entrepreneurship component that will be added once the gardens are established will create economic prospects and equip orphaned children with essential skills, making it a convincing proposal for grant evaluation.

The fiscal year 2023 budget is \$100,000. The minimum reward is \$5,000, while the maximum is \$100,000. Grant applications must be submitted by June 30th, 2023. The community garden proposal will be submitted when the grant application opens in 2023.

U.S. Embassy Public Diplomacy Public Grants Program Proposal

Project Narrative

Severe socioeconomic difficulties have created an upsurge in orphan care in Malawi. HIV/AIDS, malaria, environmental challenges, and a lack of access to education are the four crucial factors contributing to this need. This has resulted in the establishment of orphanages and foster care organizations, which bring in newborns and children to get the care they require, whether short- or long-term. However, the deaths of both or single parents due to the crucial difficulties have left a void that the Malawian government cannot fill on its own.

In 2016, the Malawi government and UNICEF conducted a feasibility assessment of the Malawian orphan care concept. According to the findings, children are best cared for in a family situation. As a result, a child learns cultural values and develops a sense of familial identity. This is consistent with Malawi's policy on orphans and vulnerable children, which advocates institutionalizing children as a last choice. Malawi's Ministry of Gender, Children, Disability, and Social Welfare is the government branch that collaborates with partners and stakeholders to develop and execute policies.

The government and stakeholders advocate that a guardian or biological parent should care for destitute children. This is after a feasibility study was done on the model of orphan care by UNICEF, and a reintegration framework was designed. This framework is a guide to be followed by childcare institutions in Malawi. The framework has four steps when reintegrating a child:

1. Assessment and decision-making about the suitability of the child and family for reintegration.
2. Community and extended family being prepared for reintegration.
3. Direct support towards reunification by implementing agencies, restoring trust, and rebuilding relationships through extensive follow-up support to the child and family.

4. Restoring trust and rebuilding relationships through work with the broader community.

4.2 Problem Statement

Children of the Nations (COTN) is a reputable childcare facility that has adopted the reintegration strategy and structure. This policy addresses the challenges children face when they return to their communities. Assessments have revealed that children's requirements must be identified and addressed before fully reintegrating into society. One of the most severe issues that communities confront is a lack of food and nourishment. This problem worsens because guardians and family members struggle to feed themselves, let alone the children in their care. In light of these obstacles, childcare institutes such as COTN have stepped in to assist and reduce some difficulties.

COTN's village partnership program helps ease some of these social challenges. The partnership involves local authorities and community groups to identify their needs best and be part of the solutions to the challenges faced. Food and hygiene are the top two challenges in Mgwayi village. The COTN database shows that the Mgwayi community has benefited from meal packages distributed over the years and the WASH (Water, Sanitation, and Hygiene) training program that has equipped the community with strategies to address hygiene challenges. This community education campaign emphasizes the significance of maintaining good hygiene practices. The program aims to provide individuals with the information and skills to address personal and communal hygiene concerns. The purpose is to promote a healthy and safe community environment by lowering illness frequency and improving living quality.

Community gardens have been identified as a more lasting solution to help meet the community's food and nutrition needs than meal package handouts. The key objective of these gardens is to provide resilience to food insecurity, causing a burden due to climate

change, among other factors. In addition, this project would allow the Mgwayi community to use traditional skills such as crop rotation and composting and learn new techniques to produce farm crops all year round.

These gardens will be transformational as the community actively participate and benefit from their work. This project will empower the community and enable them to make decisions that promote flourishing and wellness. One of the key benefits of the community garden project is the involvement of orphaned children. The garden will be located at Big Johns School, a primary school belonging to COTN. This allows easy access for children to participate in planting and growing activities. This location also creates opportunities to integrate the garden into the school's curriculum and play activities. Children can learn about sustainable agriculture, which is an important life skill that will benefit them in the future. The idea is to involve children in the project, so they can learn and become gardeners themselves. This investment in the next generation of community leaders will help sustain the garden and the community's commitment to it.

4.3 Goals and Objectives

The project aims to create a sustainable and lifelong impact in Mgwayi village by empowering locals to actively participate in curbing food scarcity issues. Villagers will take ownership of the community gardens and make decisions to help people and the environment.

The project has the following objectives:

1. To work with local leaders and identify land for community gardens
2. To offer permaculture training to community garden committee members and bring awareness of nutritional values.
3. To promote community participation and provide timely support

Strategic Objective 1: Chiefs and local leaders identify land for community gardens.

Intermediate Result 1.1: Formation of community garden committee within the first month of the project.

Intermediate Result 1.2: Assessment of suitable land for gardening and list of tools and resources needed.

Strategic Objective 2: Offer permaculture training to community garden committee members and bring awareness of nutritional values.

Intermediate Result 2.1: Selected committee members demonstrate confidence and can teach others.

Intermediate Result 2.2: Frequent meetings for updates and smooth coordination

Strategic Objective 3: Promote community participation and offer timely support

Intermediate Result 3.1: Volunteer sign-ups to commit to garden duties and updates from the committee every fortnight.

Intermediate Result 3.2: Monthly feedback and evaluation from the committee to community members.

4.4 Project Activities

The following are the program activities aligned with the program methods and design. To achieve the objectives of the community gardens in the Mgwayi community, chiefs and local leaders will be involved in every step. We are confident that the method and design of our project will bring the needed results.

Objective 1: Work with local leaders to identify land for a community garden incorporating permaculture design principles.

Methods:

- Establish leadership roles, involvement, and commitment.
- Identify and secure a physical gardening space that is suitable for permaculture design.

- Coordinate a training and development schedule to teach community members about permaculture gardening principles.
- Select participants by the village chief and VPP coordinator to form a community garden committee that is responsible for overseeing the implementation of permaculture design principles.

Objective 2: Offer community garden committees training on food security and permaculture farming methods to improve their knowledge and skills in sustainable agriculture.

Methods:

- Recruit ten committee members from Mgwayi village to participate in the permaculture training.
- Coordinate with the Slow Food Foundation to provide training modules and resources that cover food security and permaculture farming methods.
- Launch a two-week training program that includes sessions on permaculture principles, sustainable farming practices, and food security. The training will also include site visitations to high-functioning permaculture gardens to help participants better understand how these methods work in practice.

Objective 3: Promote community participation in the community garden by facilitating volunteer opportunities and gathering feedback from the community to ensure the garden meets their needs.

Methods:

- Coordinate volunteer sign-up sheets to encourage community members to get involved in the community garden.

- allocate and describe gardening work to ensure that everyone knows what needs to be done and how they can contribute.
- Ensure safe handling of gardening tools by providing proper training and ensuring that all necessary safety measures are in place.
- Strategize creative ways of mobilizing resources for future use, such as fundraising events or partnerships with local businesses.

Figure 12: Project Timeline

Timeline for Program Activities							
Result	Activities	Timeframe (in months)				Place	Responsible Partner
		0-1	2-3	4-10	11-12		
Preliminaries	Meeting with Chiefs, COTN					COTN Offices	COTN and Chiefs
	Meeting with slow food					COTN Offices	COTN and Chiefs
	Village					Mgwayi	Committee
Strategic Objective 1: Chiefs and local leaders	Formation of community					Mgwayi	Chiefs
Strategic Objective 2: Permaculture training	Frequent meetings for					Mgwayi	COTN
Strategic Objective 3: Promote community participation and offer	Volunteer daily sign-ups and daily					Mgwayi	COTN, Chiefs, and Committee

Timeline for Program Activities							
Result	Activities	Timeframe (in months)				Place	Responsible Partner
		0-1	2-3	4-10	11-12		
Monitoring & Evaluation						Mgwayi	COTN

Key Personnel

A team has been assembled to provide expertise and necessary skills to successfully launch the project in Mgwayi village.

4.5 Relevant Experience

Pike Ngwira: Administrator

- Proven strategic development and administrative oversight of impactful entrepreneurship projects and initiatives.
- Demonstrated organizational leadership and ability to mobilize resources.
- Experienced in designing and facilitating entrepreneurial support for underserved communities.
- Effective community builder of entrepreneurs and innovators
- Proficient partner liaison with valuable business industry contacts

Chikondi Chisale: Consultant and Technical Specialist

- Demonstrated delivery of Strategic Marketing programs
- Proven track record of successfully strengthening market-based capacities and practices.
- Experienced in strategy, budgeting, monitoring, and evaluation of interventions.
- Proficient at designing sustainable impact approaches for underserved people.
- Proven strategic development and administrative oversight of projects and initiatives

Henderson Nyirongo: Development Manager

- Over eight years as Business Development Manager, Project Manager, and Education Professional
- Proficient in curriculum development, evaluating performance, and productivity
- Demonstrated ability in general management and administration
- Impactful qualitative and quantitative research design

4.6 Summary of Expertise

Figure 13: Summary of Expertise

Areas of Expertise/Experience	Pike Ngwira	Chikondi Chisale	Henderson Nyirongo
Needs assessment	✓	✓	✓
Structuring of Project	✓	✓	
Community development	✓		✓
Training and Resource Mobilization	✓	✓	✓
Project execution	✓	✓	✓
Monitoring and Evaluation		✓	✓

Program Schedule

Partners	Involvement
Slow Food Foundation	Provision of training space, & Training
COTN	Fundraising and leadership support

4.7 Monitoring and Evaluation

Continuous monitoring and evaluation will be carried out to track progress toward the goals. After completing the activities on the schedule and gathering the necessary information, community garden stakeholders will assess the desired benefits and expectations through the focus groups. A team will be assigned to the project to track deviations and devise solutions to problems. COTN has established a project communication plan to ensure successful monitoring.

Aside from ongoing monitoring, COTN will hold quarterly review meetings to gather information from project participants. COTN officers will also prepare monthly reports.

4.8 Sustainability plans

COTN recognizes that funding is essential to sustain the community garden project in Mgwai. As such, we will apply for additional grants as needed. However, we also recognize the importance of community ownership of the project. To achieve this, program coordinators and the community gardens committee will maintain open lines of communication to track progress and challenges. Additionally, permaculture training is critical to the project's success. The training participants will gain valuable skills and knowledge that they can share with others in the community, allowing for the development of similar farming skills. Permaculture is a sustainable and holistic approach to farming that integrates ecology, agriculture, and social systems principles to create self-sustaining ecosystems. The Mgwai community can create a self-sustaining community garden that promotes food security and resilience by adopting permaculture principles.

4.9 Project Budget (One Year)

Category	Expense	Amount
Staffing	Project Coordinator	\$1,200
Garden Committee	Stipend	\$3,000
Infrastructure and Equipment	Metal Roofing and Gutters	\$2,500
Infrastructure and Equipment	Storage Tanks	\$1,000
Infrastructure and Equipment	Water-efficient Drip Irrigation System	\$1,500
Infrastructure and Equipment	Shade Structure/Potting Area	\$1,000
Infrastructure and Equipment	Gardening and Maintenance Tools and Equipment	\$2,000
Supplies	Perennial Seedlings/Seeds	\$1,000
Supplies	Soil Amendments	\$500
Supplies	Compost	\$300
Supplies	Mulch	\$200
Training and Education	Permaculture Training Courses or Workshops	\$2,000
Training and Education	Educational Materials and Resources	\$500
Training and Education	Field Trip to Permaculture Site	\$1,500

Category	Expense	Amount
Administrative Expenses	Office Supplies	\$300
Children's Spaces	Design and Construction	\$5,000
Children's Spaces	Safety Features	\$1,000
Women Volunteers	Stipend	\$3,500
Total	-	\$26,500

CHAPTER 5

5.1 Discussion

This paper's central concept was the community garden grant proposal. The ideas underlying this came from sustainable community theories put into practice. The Mgwayi community gardens provide several advantages to the community. As more gardens are replicated, the primary purpose of the community gardens will be to offer nutritional meals for reintegrated children, their guardians, and the whole community.

1. Obstacles to Community Garden Implementation in Mgwayi Village: There are various possible barriers to community garden implementation in Mgwayi Village, including:

-Lack of accessible land for planting: Community gardens necessitate available space. However, some villagers or the chief may decide to sell land and give in to the pressures of the middle-class offering money to buy land.

-Financial constraints: Creating and maintaining a communal garden necessitates the purchase of seeds, soil, water, and equipment.

-Lack of information and abilities: Some community members may need more knowledge and skills to cultivate vegetables and manage a garden, making the project more difficult.

The following techniques can be considered to overcome these obstacles:

-Developing a fundraising strategy to access garden resources, like asking for second-hand tools from well-wishers.

-To enhance community involvement in maintaining a community garden, free training, and support can be provided to members. However, offering a stipend to garden leaders from the community may increase their commitment and investment in the garden's future.

Additionally, incentivizing female participation by compensating women in leadership roles could promote greater gender equity.

-Encouraging the community to be involved in the planning and execution processes. The garden will be an incentive for the community not to sell their land, as they see the direct benefits.

2. Improving Mgwayi's Food Security and Nutrition:

Community gardens may improve Mgwayi's food security and nutrition in a variety of ways, including:

-Community gardens allow people to grow food, improving access to fresh and healthful products. In addition, the gardens will allow residents to cultivate products they could not find or afford in local markets.

-Reducing food expenditures: Community members can cut food prices and free up financial resources for other needs by cultivating their food.

The following measures can be performed to actualize this potential:

-Encourage the community to cultivate diverse crops well-suited to their local environment and circumstances.

-Give community members continuous instruction and support on the best cooking techniques and garden management.

-Encourage community members to share their garden products with others in the village to promote access to fresh and nutritious food.

3. Best Practices for Sustainable Land Use:

-Protecting the local environment and fostering local ecosystems and biodiversity are important goals of sustainable land use. The following are some recommended practices for sustainable land use in a community garden setting:

-Organic and sustainable producing practices include the use of compost and other natural fertilizers, the avoidance of pesticides, and the use of drought-resistant crops.

- Encouraging the community to employ native and perennial plants in their gardens can benefit local ecosystems and biodiversity.
- Water conservation methods, such as rainwater gathering and drought-tolerant crops, can assist in reducing water use and enhancing sustainability.
- Getting the community involved in the garden's maintenance and management can ensure its long-term viability.

4. Social Cohesion and Communal Development:

- The project promotes social cohesion and community development through community gardens. This entails bringing community members together to work toward a common goal, which could encourage the creation of relations and the development of a feeling of community. The program also aims to enhance leadership abilities by providing community leaders with quarterly refresher training. Furthermore, this project wants community members to develop a solid connection to their land and work together to achieve a common goal. If each member provides adequate support and commitment, the result can be increased community connection and engagement, resulting in beneficial effects.

5. The vision of the community gardens is to have a mix of community engagement, relationships with local groups, and local government and other stakeholders assistance.

- Community Involvement: Community people will be encouraged to take an active role in the garden's maintenance to achieve both short and long-term intended results.
- Non-profits and corporations based in Lilongwe City will be approached to help the garden by donating materials, funds, and volunteers.
- Local governments will be asked for assistance to help community gardens by providing financing and other resources. In addition, it can be beneficial to have laws that encourage the expansion of community gardens amidst gentrification in the city.

-Private Sector Contribution: Private enterprises may help community gardens by donating finances, resources, and experience.

5.1.1 Limitations

This grant project proposal depends heavily on grant approval. This might hinder the implementation of the gardens. Therefore, there is a need to come up with an alternative if the proposal still needs to be funded.

There is also a need to study other critical areas such as culture and the environment, women's gender roles, and land grabs. This research was limited to focus on community garden projects and related literature. There is a need to further research on questions like:

- What are the local and Malawi government initiatives on issues surrounding ecosystems, such as soil quality and biodiversity?
- How do projects affect women's empowerment and gender equality in Malawi communities?
- What legal and political structures exist in Malawi to preserve local communities from land grabs?

5.2 Recommendations

The Malawi government has an Act to provide for the rights and obligations of Non-Governmental Organizations in Malawi, to promote the development and values of a strong independent civil society, and to provide for the establishment, functions, and powers of the Non-Governmental Organizations Board of Malawi, as well as to provide for the public's right to access information about registered organizations and to provide for matters incidental to these provisions (NGO board website). However, more needs to be done to help locals on the ground improve their livelihoods. In

addition, there is room for NGOs to learn from one another and share knowledge about what works and what does not. NGOs can also work together in grey areas to promote social justice, human rights, and cultural norms.

A specific strategy for managing and preserving Mgwayi's community gardens must be established to guarantee long-term sustainability. This may be done by forming community project groups that can engage the assistance of local government and other stakeholders. In addition, the community can ensure that the gardens continue to serve future generations by working together.

5.3 Conclusion

This study intended to partner with the Mgwayi community in Lilongwe to build community gardens that provide several life benefits. A grant project proposal was drafted to help address food difficulties they regularly confront. The initiative aimed to raise community awareness of the significance of caring for orphans and the disadvantaged. This endeavor is simply one technique to improve nutritional benefits. Mgwayi is one of the Malawian communities suffering from poverty, inequality, and economic hardship.

The thesis project examined local financing sources for training, education development, and maintenance, as well as the literature on community gardens in Malawi and community engagement. The goal was to implement community training on building community gardens and supplying healthful fresh meals in Mgwayi. In addition, community members can access permaculture information and participate in first-hand implementation by developing community gardens.

I look forward to seeing the significant impact this community training and garden development project will have in Mgwayi. I look forward to measuring its success in terms of enhanced access to education, improved health outcomes, and strengthened community

participation. This project will act as a platform for more community-driven projects and the growth of the community garden projects outside Mgwayi.

Appendix

Interview questions for Mgwayi Chief

- How long have you been chief of this village, and what are your roles?
- How many households does the village have, and what is the current population?
- What are the biggest challenges the community is currently facing?
- How do NGOs know about the challenges?
- What has been the experience of working with the COTN organization, particularly in mitigating some challenges? What has been the impact?
- What do you think are the complications of working with NGOs like COTN?
- Do you understand what community gardens are? What do you think will be the impact?
- Does the community have a village piece of land where to put the community gardens?
- What crops do the people in the village like to grow?

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