



Decentralisation and Development: The Malawian Experience

Mustafa K. Hussein*

Abstract

The reorientation of the local government system towards decentralisation has been at the centre stage in most developing countries, including Malawi, since the advent of multiparty democracy in the 1990s. The justification for the adoption of some form of decentralisation is to promote democratic governance and participatory approaches in development. The primary purpose in this article is to analyse the context within which decentralisation initiatives are undertaken in Malawi and to assess the extent to which decentralisation promotes participatory approaches in development. This paper is based primarily on documentary research and supplemented by interviews conducted with senior officials from local authorities and with selected members of the public.

Résumé

Le retour du gouvernement au système de décentralisation a été une priorité dans la plupart des pays en développement, dont le Malawi, depuis l'avènement du multipartisme dans les années 90. La justification de l'adoption de la décentralisation est la promotion de la gouvernance démocratique et l'introduction d'approches participatives au développement. Le principal objectif de cet article est d'analyser le contexte dans lequel les initiatives de décentralisation ont été prises au Malawi, mais également de voir dans quelle mesure la décentralisation promeut une approche participative au développement. Ce texte est basé sur des recherches documentaires, et complété par des interviews de responsables des autorités locales et de certains membres de la société civile.

* PhD Student, Politics and Governance Department, Rand Afrikaans University, Johannesburg, South Africa, and Lecturer in Public Administration, University of Malawi, Chancellor College, Zomba, Malawi.

Introduction

Most developing countries, including Malawi, have embarked on the political and administrative decentralisation of government and development structures, among others, to promote democratic governance and participatory approaches in development (Ikhide 1999:165; Tordoff 1994:555–80). Scholars have documented a wide range of political and socio-economic merits for adopting some form of decentralisation and participatory approaches (see Cook and Kothari, 2001:5; Mutizwa-Mangiza et al., 1996:79; Rondinelli et al. 1983:11-13). From the political perspective, decentralisation is considered a key strategy for promoting good governance, interpreted as greater pluralism, accountability, transparency, citizen participation and development (Crook 1994:340). Administratively, decentralisation is an important process that allows decongestion of the central government and reduces the workload to manageable proportions. The breaking-up of the workload promotes greater efficiency, coordination and effectiveness in public service delivery. Since decision-making powers are transferred from the centre to local institutions, decentralisation provides an opportunity for local involvement in decision-making and harnessing local knowledge, resources and expertise in the development process (Ikhide 1999:165; Mutizwa-Mangiza et al. 1996:79).

Malawi's decentralisation initiatives can be traced back to the colonial era. Yet this paper focusses on the decentralisation initiatives undertaken since independence in 1964. It is worth noting that the reorientation of the local governance system towards decentralisation (devolution) has been at the centre stage since the advent of the multiparty democracy in the 1990s. Among the steps taken to institutionalise the 'new' decentralised local governance system include the adoption of the Republic of Malawi Constitution Act No.7 of 1995, the passing of the Local Government Act No. 42 of 1998 and the Malawi Decentralisation Policy. However, there is a need for a comprehensive understanding of the context in which decentralisation initiatives are undertaken and the major outcomes of such initiatives. This is important as it provides a base for identifying viable strategies that ensure effective decentralisation and sustainable local development.

This article is divided into five major parts. It commences with clarification of three inter-linked concepts, namely, decentralisation, development and citizen participation. These concepts provide the theoretical framework for this analysis. The second part presents an overview of the outcome of decentralisation initiatives in selected countries

in Africa. This is followed by an analysis of the decentralisation initiatives undertaken in Malawi since independence in part three. The aim of this part is to determine the extent to which the decentralised structures promote citizen participation in local development and to highlight the major challenges and limitations faced. In the fourth part, the context of decentralisation and citizen participation in the multi-party dispensation is analysed and recommendations for effective promotion of popular participation in development are presented. Finally, the key issues drawn from the analysis are presented in the fifth part by way of conclusion.

Conceptual underpinnings: Decentralisation and development

Concepts such as decentralisation, development and citizen participation, which are pertinent to this analysis, reveal a variety of meaning and purposes since scholars in the social sciences define and interpret them in different ways (see Oyugi 2000:4; Ayee 1992:49, Sharma 2000:183). Therefore it is important to clarify these concepts right from the outset.

Decentralisation

Discourses in Development Studies show variations in the meaning, purpose and forms attributed to the concept of decentralisation. For instance, such concepts as *delegation*, *participation*, *divisionalisation*, *deconcentration* and *devolution* are associated with decentralisation (see Barle and Uys 2002:143; Kiggundu 2000:89; Wolman 1990:32; Rondinelli 1981:137). Despite the variations, there tends to be a common agreement that decentralisation is a generic concept for various forms of structural arrangements in government and organisations. As a process, decentralisation involves the transfer of authority and power to plan, make decisions and manage resources, from higher to lower levels of the organisational hierarchy, in order to facilitate efficient and effective service delivery (Smith 1985:1; Rondinelli 1981:137; Kiggundu 2000:89).

However, the two major forms of political and administrative decentralisation that have been adopted by most developing countries including Malawi are *deconcentration* and *devolution* (see Mahwood 1993:3; Tordoff 1994:555–80). On the one hand, deconcentration involves the transfer of workload and selected administrative or decision-making authority and responsibility from the headquarters to lower field-level officials within central government ministries or public agencies (Smith 1985:3; Kiggundu 2000:99; Sharma 1995:26). On the other hand, devolution involves the transfer of authority and power to local units of government, which operate in a quasi-autonomous manner outside the

direct administrative control and structure of the central government. It entails conferment of the necessary legal powers to discharge specified functions upon formally constituted local structures characterised by a measure of autonomy (Smith 1985:3; Kiggundu 2000:95). As will be shown in the subsequent analysis, the local governance system has been oriented towards devolution since the advent of multiparty democracy in the 1990s.

Development

The concept of development is elusive and difficult to define in standard terms since it is associated with a wide range of definitions and interpretations (see Oyugi 2000:4; Long 1977:3). For instance, most laissez-faire economists explain development in terms of economic growth and quantifiable indicators like increase in the gross national product or per capita income. On the other hand, welfare economists tend to emphasise organisational and structural transformation, and associate development with public welfare and the attainment of goals like rising net income, reduction of poverty, unemployment and social inequality. In the local context, most Malawians associate development with modernisation, acquisition of services, facilities and infrastructure including clean and safe water, education, health facilities, roads, and the degree of citizen participation in decision making at the local level.

In this regard, this analysis adopts a broader view of development that transcends economic views and mere material changes and includes human attitudes regarding a spirit of enhanced self-help, and citizen participation in the decision making process. Development is viewed as a process of social action in which citizens or local people at the district, area and village or grassroots levels organise, plan and take action in partnership with government to improve the political and socio-economic conditions of the locality (Sharma 2000:183). Thus the focus is largely placed on the state of social well-being and general quality of the citizens as reflected in the human life or non-economic indicators rather than quantitative aspects of economic growth and the state economy.

Citizen participation

The term 'citizen participation' is a multidisciplinary one, and it falls into four major areas of democratic theory, namely, political behaviour, community development, citizen action and government initiated citizen action (Checkoway and Van Til 1978:60). Consequently, there are variations in terminology and definitions. For instance, terms like popular

participation, community involvement, public participation and citizen participation are often used. However, in this analysis the term 'citizen participation' is preferred because of its relevance to the Malawian context. In addition, there is common agreement that citizen participation entails an active process in which participants take initiative and action in purposeful activities in relation to a local institution or area of which they are citizens or legal residents (Langton 1978:16; Brynard 1996:133).

As will be elaborated further, citizen participation is critical to development since it enables local people to control and monitor resources and developmental activities. It serves as a means of monitoring abuse of the powers and ensuring transparency and accountability in resource utilisation (Clapper 1996:76). In addition, by participating in the various development committees, citizens provide the necessary input in form of labour, resources, information, feedback and advice required in the development process.

The relationship between decentralisation and development

Political and administrative decentralisation is considered as important for the promotion of citizen participation in governance and development. However, the relationship between the two tends to be unclear. Scholars suggest that much depends on the unique circumstances in individual situations (see Oyugi 2000:4; Long 1977:1-9). Although there seems to be an ambiguous linkage between decentralisation and development, it is commonly agreed that decentralised local governance contributes to development in terms of promoting participatory development strategies, and the production of policies that are adapted to local needs (see Sharma 2000:177; Crook 1994:340).

The involvement of citizens in development planning and implementation enables the formulation of realistic plans that are in line with local circumstances and conditions. Administratively, decentralisation is considered as a key strategy that provides solutions to overloaded and over-centralised agencies (Boeninger 1992:268; Ikhida 1999:165). The decongestion of the workload at the centre promotes cost-effectiveness and greater coordination and efficiency in public resource utilisation, service delivery and local development. For instance, by giving local institutions the power to make some decisions without constantly referring to the top levels, delays are minimised and responsiveness in development or project management is enhanced since decisions are flexible and adjusted to respond to circumstances on the ground. In addition, decentralisation is regarded as a means of facilitating the even distribution

of resources and minimising development regional inequalities (Omiya 2000: 197, Sharma 2000:178; Mukandala 2000:120; Mutizwa and Conyers 1996:78). For instance, as an economic intervention, the decentralisation process entails establishing or decentralising small-scale projects close to the grassroots.

Decentralisation and participatory approaches in development are not without their critiques. Although a wide range of political, administrative and socio-economic merits are attributed to decentralisation and participatory approaches, a number of scholars have raised criticisms relating to their technical, theoretical and conceptual limitations (see Cooke and Kothari 2001:1-6; Kiggundu 2000:103; Smith 1985:5). For instance, Smith (1985:5) states that decentralisation appears to be parochial and separatist as it threatens the unity of the general will, reinforces narrow sectional interests especially and encourages development inequalities, among others, due to its emphasis on local autonomy.

There are a number of critiques relating to the quality, validity, ethics and operations of participatory approaches. These approaches to development are methodologically considered to be parochial (see Cooke and Kothari 2001:1-6). For instance, it is argued that participatory strategies generate poor standards and practice and lead to the abuse or exploitation of the people involved. Cleaver (2001:36) argues that despite claims that participatory approaches to development improve efficiency and effectiveness, and promote processes of democratisation and empowerment, there is little evidence about the effectiveness of participation in ensuring sustainable development and material improvement among poor and marginalised people.

There is debate over a number of issues including the use terminology like 'community participation', the objective of participation as to whether it is a means or an end, and the applicability and the appropriateness of the techniques and tools (Cook and Kothari 2001:7-10). For instance, it is argued that the term 'community' masks power relations, biases in interests and needs based on ethnicity, age and class. It is also suggested that in practice participatory approaches simply mask continued centralisation in the name of decentralisation.

However, the detailed rehearsal of the limitations of decentralisation and participatory approaches to development is beyond the scope of this analysis. As indicated in the introduction, the main purpose of this analysis is to highlight the decentralisation and development experience of Malawi, unravel the major challenges, and move beyond simple identification of the limitations to the analysis of fundamental contextual issues.

Decentralisation in Africa – Overview

The idea of nation building and planning for development became buzzwords in most African countries at the dawn of independence. The quest for appropriate planning resulted in the establishment of decentralisation (deconcentration) in the form of a network of development committees, which operated in every administrative unit in the field and were linked to the parent committee or a government ministry at the centre (Oyugi 2000:xii-xiii). The development committees were established at the district level and the periphery in many countries such as Tanzania, Kenya, Lesotho, Tanzania, Botswana, and Zambia (see Kiggundu 2000:111–14; Mukandala 2000:122). From the 1960s to 1980s decentralisation initiatives were undertaken in the context of nation building. Thereafter they accompanied the introduction of Structural Adjustment Programmes (SAPs). During the introduction of SAPs, a relatively strong deconcentration programme called the district focus for rural development was introduced under donor initiative in countries like Kenya and Malawi in order to strengthen citizen participation in decision-making.

The wave of democratisation and globalisation experienced since the demise of the Cold War in the 1980s has propelled African countries to adopt political and administrative decentralisation (devolution) and such policies as the deregulation of economic activities, reduction of central government's participation in economic production, delegation of responsibilities for the provision of some services and infrastructure to sub-national institutions such as district councils, community based groups and non-government organisations (UNDP 2000:95).

It is of note that countries tend to adopt selective interpretations of decentralisation and adjusted decentralisation policies to suit the prevailing ideologies of development. However, the underlying assumption for adopting some form of decentralisation is that it promotes citizen participation in decision-making and it is considered a right and part of political democracy. Decentralisation is viewed as an important strategy that enables citizens to express their real development needs and engenders sustainable development and grassroots commitment to political and development activities. In this regard, most developing countries in Africa including Malawi have reinvigorated local structures and set up a system of committees at the local level.

At this stage, it is important to have an overview of how well decentralisation initiatives in African countries have performed and facilitated participatory approaches to development. The outcomes of various forms of decentralisation have tended to be unsatisfactory in most

developing countries. Apparently, the promotion of merits of decentralisation, and in particular, citizen participation in development, reveals a gap between theory and practice. Oyugi (2000:xiii) states that the development committees that were set up in the 1960s and survived up to the 1980s functioned as appendages of the central agencies and they were not autonomous entities. The committees were used as instruments of the central authority to control the behaviour of the citizen in the development process. In short the decentralised structures failed to effectively involve the citizens in decision-making matters relating to development in most African countries.¹

The results of a centralised economy system and development planning adopted from the 1960s–1980s have been disappointing in most developing countries. This situation has provided strong justifications for the adoption of some form of decentralisation, and in particular, devolution, with the hope to promote participatory development strategies, to improve efficiency and effectiveness in development planning and administration, and to implement egalitarian policies (Mutizwa-Mangiza and Conyers, 2000:78). However, the outcome of such decentralisation initiative tends to be unsatisfactory. For instance, Kiggundu (2000:111) states that public management at the local level remains centralised in most developing countries despite the pronouncements by politicians and pressures from international donor agencies in favour of decentralisation.

In most Anglophone countries in Africa, local government structures are facing problems such as the lack of local autonomy, high dependence on central government policy, shortage of financial resources and poor administrative capacity (Oyugi 2000:12; Kiggundu 2000:112). In Ghana (Nkrumah 2000:65), Uganda (Makara 2000:86), Zambia (Chikulo 2000:46) and Kenya (Omiya 2000:202) decentralisation has been neither a major process of good governance and development nor has it facilitated citizen participation, accountability and transparency, due to centralist tendency and interference in issues of local institutions by central government officials, among other factors. In Zimbabwe, Botswana, Lesotho and Tanzania as elsewhere, decentralisation is facing challenges due to the inability of local structures to function without guidance from the centre and to make binding decisions (Munro 1995:107–40; Oyugi 2000:12; Tordoff 1994:558). Aril (2000:121–43) states that despite the introduction of political and institutional reforms aimed at increasing political decentralisation and introducing democratic local government, the performance of local councils in Zimbabwe and Tanzania has not been responsive due to central government control over local planning and

local councils' limited financial autonomy. In some instances, decentralisation has promoted regional inequalities, in that financially better-off localities such as cities and towns have prospered while the development of rural areas has tended to lag behind.

It can be deduced from the above analysis that decentralisation initiatives have neither promoted democratic governance nor have they led to viable participatory approaches to development. The various decentralised strategies have failed to actualise genuine participation due to *inter-alia*, centralised systems that allow minimal citizen participation and regulate local institutions heavily. Clearly, the success of decentralisation initiatives depends upon a number of internal and external factors, which according to Kiggundu (2000:102) include age and size, nature of tasks, technology, internal management and administrative capacity, and socio-political and economic factors. This confirms the view that there is no automatic relationship between decentralisation and development and much depends on the unique circumstances obtaining in a particular country. In this regard, the following section presents the experience and situation in Malawi.

Decentralisation and development in Malawi

The need for active citizen participation in the socio-economic development and nation building was recognised by the Banda regime at the dawn of independence. This was manifested by the creation of district development committees (DDCs) and other local institutions to provide for decentralised planning in January 1965 (Miller 1970:130). The DDCs became operational as from September 1966 with the responsibility, among other matters, to foster dialogue between government and ordinary people in the villages through their representatives; to promote government's development policies at the local level; and to coordinate the various stages of decision-making and project management (Miller 1970:130). The agriculture sector envisaged citizen participation in development as reflected in the Malawi Development Policy (DEVPOL) of 1971–1980 and 1987–1996 (UNDP 2000:54; World Bank 1992:3). The agricultural policy was hinged on integrated rural regional policy and extension policy while the social mobilisation policy was aimed at promoting citizen participation in self-help projects and community development at the local level (Simukonda 1997:18). In principal, development at the local level required a collective effort of various institutions including the district councils, DDCs and the department of community development.

However, although citizen participation in the development process was adopted in principle, the participatory strategies were highly manipulated and politicised such that the local people hardly played any role in governance and development processes (Simukonda 1997:8). In principle DDCs operated independent of the local authorities and this resulted in competition for resources and duplication of development activities (Miller 1970:130). Over the years, both the DDC and local authorities played a very insignificant role in local governance and community development due to 'the politics of intimidation and repression', which characterised one-party rule (Apthorpe et al. 1995:8).

The political environment was characterised by party supremacy, intimidation, centralisation and politicisation of the local structures and denial of human rights and basic freedoms of association, speech and dress (Otanez 1995:51; Apthorpe et al. 1995:11). For instance, at the local government level, the passing of section 50 of the Local Government District Council Act No.22: 02 of 1965 repealed and undermined the autonomy and decision-making powers of district councils. The central government stripped district councils of their functions, reduced grants, withdrew some services like road maintenance and controlled staff appointments, promotion, discipline and dismissals (Kaunda 1998:52; Simukonda 1999:67).

Government initiatives and the 1993 district focus structures

The situational analysis of Malawi carried out in 1993 highlighted the need for effective decentralisation and citizen participation in development activities. It was clear that the absence of effective structures at the lower levels of government hindered the process of development and poverty alleviation efforts (MDDPM 1995:10). As a result, the Malawi Congress Party (MCP) government adopted a selective decentralisation policy that was formalised in the *district focus* development policy in November 1993. This marked the beginning of the process of reinvigorating local structures and citizen participation in development and local governance (MDDPM 1995:10).

The district focus strategy entailed creating and strengthening institutional structures through a transfer of decision-making and authority and financial control over development funds to the district level (MLGDP, 1999:2). The strategy was first introduced in six pilot districts and later replicated in other districts albeit with varying progress. In order to promote

effectiveness, democratic governance and development, the district focus strategy undertook the following (MDDPM 1995:11):

- strengthening the decision-making and coordinating roles of DDCs;
- introduction of sub-national planning structures;
- establishment of the District Development Fund (DDF); and
- strengthening of participatory structures at the local level.

As indicated, the DDC was in principle the key local structure established to promote local development. Although the committee underwent reorganisation several times since its inception in 1965, its operations were reviewed during the implementation of the district focus strategy in order to make it more representative and reflect the views of the local people. The major change in the composition of the committee was the exclusion of the Clerk of the district council and heads of departments of line ministries operating at the district level. The new membership of the DDC included the district commissioner as a chairperson, members of Parliament in the district, chairpersons of political parties operating in the district and represented in the parliament; representatives of non-governmental organisations and chairpersons of all local authorities; traditional chiefs and co-opted members of the private sector (DDPH 1998:9).

The reorganisation of area and village development committees was also undertaken in order to further improve governance and enhance grassroots participation in the project management cycle. The district focus strategy largely involved 'deconcentration' or administrative delegation of authority and power to institutions that were part of the central government bureaucratic structure rather than devolution of powers to local government institutions.

Decentralisation initiatives in the multiparty dispensation

The introduction of a multiparty system of government in Malawi in June 1994 resulted in the reorientation of the form of decentralisation from administrative decentralisation (deconcentration) to political decentralisation (devolution). During the six-year period (1995–2000), the DDC was the key institution that provided local representation and political leadership at the district level since local government elections were not conducted until November 2000. The representatives (councillors) who had been elected during the one-party rule and were essentially from the Malawi Congress Party (opposition members) ceased to function.

A number of steps have been taken to institute a new decentralised local governance system including the adoption of the new Republic of Malawi Constitution (as amended) Act No. 6 and 7 of 1995 on May 18th 1995, the passing of the Local Government Act No.42 of 1989 and Malawi Decentralisation Policy. The Constitution (as amended) Act No. 7 of 1995 envisages political and administrative decentralisation by providing in Chapter XIV for the creation of local government authorities whose responsibilities include the promotion of participatory approaches in development. Section 146 (3) of the Constitution states that issues of local policy are to be decided at the local level under the supervision of local government authorities called district assemblies.

Similarly, the Local Government Act of 1998 provides for decentralised local governance and development. Section 3 requires district assemblies to promote democratic principles, accountability, transparency and participation of the people in decision-making and development process. Among the policy objectives to be attained by the decentralisation process, as highlighted in the Malawi Decentralisation Policy (MDP) (2000:2) include:

- to create democratic environment and institutions of governance and development, at the local level which will facilitate the participation of the grassroots in decision-making;
- to promote accountability and good governance at the local level in order to help government reduce poverty;
- to establish strong local institutions that embrace participatory democracy, and
- to strengthen and deepen democracy by bringing the services and decision-making closer to the public and improve governance by achieving accountability and transparency.

The above provisions envisage a new status and increased role for the decentralised local government system. The decentralisation process aims at bringing the government closer to the community, facilitate bottom-up development planning and give greater attention to the needs of the local people. Section 14 (2&3) of the Local Government Act No. 42 of 1998 provides for the creation of district assemblies and other committees at area, ward and village levels in order to enhance citizen participation in development and governance. The following analysis focuses on the key structures at the district and sub-district level that are highlighted by the District Development Handbook (DDPH) and the Malawi District Development Planning Manual.

District Assemblies

As already noted, the 1995 Constitution, the Local Government Act No.42 of 1998 and the Malawi Decentralisation Policy provides for the establishment of 'local government authorities' which are called district assemblies. The district assembly is a local institution at the district level, which has been formed by integrating two parallel structures of district governance, namely, the district administration and the district councils (DANIDA 1998:8). Currently, there are 28 district assemblies in the country under a single tier system. City, municipal and town assemblies are regarded as district assemblies in their own right. There are 3 city assemblies, 1 municipal assembly and 8 town assemblies. This analysis is however biased towards the district assemblies found in all administrative centers of the country. The average population in each district is around 500,000 inhabitants while wards within districts have an average population of 10,000 people (DANIDA 1998:24). The district assemblies became operational following the local polls held on 21 November 2000.

According to section 5 (1) of the Local Government Act of 1998, the composition of district assemblies includes: councillors elected from each ward; a district commissioner who is responsible for the day to day running of administrative activities and heads the district assembly secretariat; traditional chiefs and members of parliament as ex-officio members; and five appointed members to represent special interest groups. Also, representatives from 'interest groups' are included as members of district assemblies in order to widen representation and promote popular participation in the political and development processes.

The key functions of district assemblies that are highlighted in section 6 of the Local Government Act of 1998 include the consolidation and promotion of democratic institutions and citizen participation in development, and passing of by-laws that foster good governance. In addition, the second schedule of the Local Government Act of 1998 requires district assemblies to deliver services like education and clinical health services, environmental protection, control of nuisances, roads construction and maintenance, among other public amenities. Clearly, the responsibility assigned to district assemblies relating to local governance and development is enormous and challenging.

District Development Fund (DDF)

The district development fund (DDF) is a structure that was established in 1994 to support the implementation of the district focus strategy and

enhance local participation in the allocation of development funds (MDDF 1997:1). The DDF pools funds for development activities from government and donors into a bank account for the district. Interviews with senior district assembly officials² showed that the Directors of Finance, and Planning and Development play a role in ensuring that funds are properly managed while the elected members of the district assembly decide which projects are to be funded. The DDF represents a new approach to funding as it involves local representatives in the decision making process and promotes local participation, transparency and accountability (UNDP 2000:114).

Village Development Committee (VDC)

The Village Development Committee (VDC) is the lowest structure at the district level that represents a group of villages or a village depending on size of the village (DDPH 1998:8; MDDPM 1995:17). The functions of the committee include conducting meetings for the identification of community needs and initiation of self-help projects, soliciting funds for community based projects; supervising the implementation of projects, mobilising community resources for local participation, and coordinating and communicating with the area development committee (ADC) regarding the local development needs (DDPH 1998:8; MDDPM 1995:10). The prescribed membership of the VDC includes the group village headman/woman who acts as the chairperson; vice-chairperson; secretary; vice-secretary; treasurer; vice treasurer; ten members elected from various villages within the VDC (DDPH 1998:6). However, interviews with senior government officials revealed that VDCs existed on paper only in most districts.

Area Development Committee (ADC)

The ADC is a representative body of all VDCs under the leadership of the traditional chief. The membership of the committee includes (DDPH 1998:18):

- 1 one female and one male member elected from each VDC;
- 2 ward councillors;
- 3 representatives of political parties that are in Parliament;
- 4 members of Parliament;
- 5 representatives of religious faiths;
- 6 representatives of youth and women groups in the area;
- 7 representatives of business community; and
- 8 chairperson of area executive committee.

Although in principle each traditional chief is supposed to have one ADC, in geographically vast areas one traditional chief may have more than one ADC. For instance, it was observed during the time of fieldwork that in Zomba district there were nine ADCs against seven traditional chiefs.

Among the key functions of the committee include:

1. holding monthly meetings in collaboration with VDCs;
2. raising funds and mobilising community resources for projects;
3. reviewing and integrating projects from VDCs; and
4. submitting the proposed development projects to the area executive committee (AEC), and the district executive committee (DEC).

The AEC and the DEC are committees composed of field officers at the area and district level respectively. The AEC is composed of field workers at the sub-district level while departmental heads of line ministries such as agriculture, commerce and industry, community services, education, forestry, health environment, human resources constitute the DEC (MDPPM 1995:22). These committees are charged with the task of evaluating the proposals from the community before submission to the district assembly (DDPH 1998:10).

Limitations

The promotion of genuine participatory development strategies through a network of committees highlighted above faces a number of challenges. The major factors that constrain effective citizen participation in development, which are further elaborated in part four of this analysis, include centralisation, bureaucratic controls, filtration of local inputs, and the prescription of membership for ADCs and VDCs.

Although the aim of the new local governance system is to ensure a bottom-up approach and to decentralise control and decision-making powers over development activities, in practice the ultimate control remains with the centre (MDPPM 1995:10). The role of the central government, according to the legal instruments like the Constitution and the Local Government Act of 1998, is to set guidelines and supervise local institutions. However, in practice the centre tends to exert the ultimate power and control over local affairs including the actual drawing up of plans for the local institutions (DANIDA 1998:22; UNDP 2000:119). Musukwa (2001:1) reports that elected councillors complain about the central government's continued grip on district assemblies and attempts to force its will on matters supposed to be decided at the local level. The undermining of local autonomy is confirmed by a number of provisions

in the Local Government Act of 1998 that ensure central government's unlimited authority over the affairs of district assemblies like finance and human resources. According to section 4 (2) of the Local Government Act of 1998, the power to declare any local government area to be an assembly rests with the minister for Local Government. Sections 57 and 58 state that the minister is required to approve any external financial assistance to the district assembly. Attempts to increase local autonomy of district assemblies in the recruitment and selection of their staff were thwarted by reinstating the Local Government Service Commission as the recruiting agency for middle-level and senior officers (DANIDA 1998:23).

In addition, various government ministries tend to decentralise (deconcentrate) their functions independently, depending on their understanding of what the decentralisation process means to them. The uncoordinated and fragmented decentralisation of functions has resulted in a waste of resources and duplication of efforts (see Kamanga et al. 2000:56–57). Currently there is no legal framework covering sector devolution plans and therefore no meaningful devolution has taken place as envisaged by the Local Government Act of 1998 and the Malawi Decentralisation Policy. The practice in most district assemblies shows that line ministries continue to forward local inputs and project proposals from the public to particular ministries for consideration for possible funding.

The development planning system and organisational structure is highly bureaucratic and characterised by stringent controls and delays in project funding, communication and feedback problems to local structures. The development plans proposed at grassroots are subject to review and filtration in the institutional matrix, especially the DEC and AEC. Although the rationale for the screening is to harmonise local demands and plans with national policies, the end product of the screening process does not always reflect the actual local needs. (UNDP 2000:115). The bureaucrats or participatory facilitators tend to override legitimate submissions and local decision-making process. According to the MDPPM (1995:12) it takes years before requests by the citizens at the village level are implemented in most cases.

On the political dimension, the traditional chiefs who chair the ADC and VDC assume their position through heredity. This implies that undemocratically elected leaders direct the key grassroots structures that are critical for the promotion of democratic governance and participatory development strategies. According to Apthorpe (1995:27) the local elite

including the traditional leaders and members of Parliament can easily manipulate the ADCs and the VDCs. The prescription of membership of the grassroots structures clearly places emphasis on representation of the citizen interest. In addition, the VDC, which in practice is an aggregate of several villages, does not go deeper into the lowest level of the village head. This situation limits the degree of participation and involvement of the community in the decision-making machinery.

The lack of awareness and capacity among the local people and the absence of the VDCs in most areas also constrain effective local participation in development. During interviews it was indicated that only a few members of the VDCs were active and that most members were not even aware of their responsibilities due to inadequate training programmes (MLGDP 1999:3). During conversations with village people it became clear that most citizens were not even aware that ADCs and VDCs are actually in existence in their locality. As indicated, in most districts committee at sub district level exist on paper only. During interviews with some residents in the six selected districts, it was noted that a few people who are aware of the existence of VDCs and ADC in their area, viewed the committees as arms of government and primarily accountable to the top echelons of the administrative structure rather than the local citizens. In committees where a degree of citizen participation has increased, the administrators tend to define the context in which participation takes place. The development planning system does not adequately take into account the basic principles of democratic governance since it tends to ignore participation and empowerment of the 'voiceless' in decision-making (MDPPM 1995:10).

The Local Government Act of 1998 does not provide details regarding the functions of VDCs and ADCs, and therefore their activities have no legal basis. The members are not empowered to make binding decisions about development. In this regard, citizen participation through governmental structures tends to be symbolic or a façade. Citizens largely rely on elected representatives rather than direct involvement at the grassroots level since membership is prescribed and avenues for participation tend to be restricted and ineffective. In addition, there is no legal framework and clear linkages between the operations of civil society and community based organisations and the local government structures at the district and sub-district levels.

It can be deduced from the above analysis that the attainment of the decentralisation policy objectives, and in particular, the promotion of participatory approaches to development, remains a daunting challenge.

However, decentralisation initiatives have generated enthusiasm and great expectation among the local people to take part in decision making particularly in proposing solutions to their developmental needs. The decentralisation process has also raised awareness about bottom-up approach in development especially in districts that have developed socio-economic profiles. Thus local institutions like VDCs and ADCs hold great potential in initiating projects and mobilising labour for implementation and maintenance of various projects. However, the prevailing conditions at the local level militate against the effective promotion of participatory approaches in governance and in development as shown in the following analysis.

The context of decentralisation and citizen participation in development

In order to understand some of the obstacles to participatory development, it is useful to consider the context of decentralisation and citizen participation in Malawi. The process of attaining decentralisation policy objectives, including the promotion of participatory approaches to development by local institutions such as district assemblies, ADCs and VDCs, largely depends on what is happening within the local government sector and at the national level. The degree to which citizens feel obliged to participate in local government affairs is affected by numerous factors. The following analysis focuses on the political and socio-economic factors, elite dominance, and administrative and financial factors.

Political factors

The existence of many political parties in the multiparty dispensation represented the flourishing of pluralism and political diversity in Malawi. However, there is a trend of a culture of antagonism, lack of political tolerance and mutual respect among political opponents. The political intolerance is evident at the national level through elections results, which are often polarised along regional and ethnic lines, and in the use of inflammatory language, tension and political violence especially during political rallies and election campaigns (see Kayambazinthu and Moyo 2001: 87-102; Somanje 2001:4). Although Malawi has a multiplicity of actors in the political arena, the situation has not genuinely translated into a democratic state. This manifested the shaky legitimacy of results of most elections, which are often challenged by allegations of a lack of freedom and fairness, rigging and violence. A case in point is the 1999 presidential and parliamentary elections that ushered in the United Democratic Front (UDF) government into a second term amidst protest (Ngubane 1999:22).

The political environment, which is characterised by intolerance for diversity of opinions, electoral manipulation, partisan violence and confrontational tactics renders existing local institutions ineffective in their task to promote citizen participation in the political process (Somanje 2001:4). During interviews, some villagers indicated that they were unwilling to contribute to self-help projects initiated by a rival political party. Thus development activities and projects tend to be highly politicised in certain areas. This implies that local knowledge does not always determine the planning process and outcome. The local needs are often structured by local perception of dominant political interests and what government agencies in question are able to deliver. Thus, local needs tend to be manipulated and as such local aspirations are constrained by political and institutional contexts.

Political pluralism breeds intense and unmanageable conflicts if it is not accompanied by attitudes of political tolerance and mutual respect especially in multi-ethnic societies (Bratton and Liatto-Katundu 1994:555). Citizen participation in development cannot survive in the absence of political tolerance. Therefore, there is a need to stabilise the nascent democracy and cultivate a democratic ethos in order to effectively promote genuine citizen participation in development. The political leadership has to engage all mechanisms that nurture a stable local democracy and consensus building through inter-party discussions and training workshops, among others.

Socio-economic factors

The promotion of citizen participation in development tends to be hampered by several factors including the lack of effective civic education, illiteracy and poverty, which culminate in a tendency towards apathy (Gama 2000:3). Malawi has the 4th lowest GDP per capita (estimated at US\$586 per annum) in the world and the poverty analysis and profile indicates that 65.3 percent of the population is poor and lives below the poverty line and 28.2 percent of the total population are living in dire poverty (MPRSP 2002:5). Most people lack economic empowerment and depend on government handouts and material gains in return for political allegiance.

In this regard, a high proportion of the citizens is politically naïve partly due to the political background against which they have emerged, which was characterised by centralised and authoritarian rule, community manipulation and oppression (Simukonda 1997:8). The low level of education and the parlous economic standing of a large number of citizens and representatives negatively affects genuine participation in the development process. For instance, Sukali (2000:11) points out that most

local people failed to understand the importance of the role of councillors after their absence for six years since the abolition of district councils from December 1995 to November 2000. Consequently, only 14 percent of the eligible voters actually participated in the local government elections.

Interviews with senior district assembly officials revealed that most councillors have poor educational backgrounds and face problems in trying to understand policy issues relating to finances. The local leaders are unable to communicate their vision in a way that reaches and motivates local people (Musukwa 2000:2). The situation hampers development efforts and representative government since most councillors are unable to clearly articulate and aggregate the diverse needs of the people and develop plans.

The attitudes and perceptions of the local people towards politics and their representatives are often negative. The politicians are perceived to be preoccupied with self-enrichment, and their political rhetoric is seen not to match delivery. Most citizens interviewed seemed reluctant to get involved in the political process out of frustration induced by the rising cost of living and economic decline, which robs them of their peace of mind and desire to participate effectively. The implementation of SAPs through economic liberalisation, privatisation, and in particular, the rationalisation of public expenditure has resulted in untold suffering among the poor (see Chinsinga 2002: 31; Anders 2002: 55).

An educated and well-informed citizenry is a critical precondition for the effective promotion of democratic governance and citizen participation in development processes (Bratton and Liatto-Katundu 1994:545). The community needs motivation and a thorough understanding of the political system, civil rights and responsibilities of the various levels of government in order to participate intelligently in local issues. There is a need for all stakeholders and training institutions to coordinate their activities and devise a comprehensive civic education programme for the general public, politicians and public officials. The representatives should provide tangible outcomes in terms of roads, bridges, schools, clinics and affordable quality services to encourage the grassroots to participate in local development.

Elite dominance

The prescription of membership for grassroots structures clearly places emphasis on representation, which restricts the extent to which local people take part in decision-making (UNDP 2000:60). The well being of the local communities often revolves around the power wielded by a few key individuals. Apthorpe et al. (1995:27) consider that the local elite easily

manipulated the ADCs and VDCs. Thus, elitisms leads to participatory decisions that reinforce the interest of the already powerful. For instance, in Nkhata Bay a traditional leader decided that a postal agency should be located near his house despite an alternative location suggested by the community (UNDP 2000:18). The result of local government elections of November 21 2000 based on a simple majority has led to the dominance of a single party in most districts. Although the electoral results indicate growing popularity and substantial gains by the ruling party, the situation poses a threat to meaningful pluralistic local politics and democratic participation since it ensures dominance of political interests at the local level (DANIDA 1998:8). The general public is allowed to attend and participate in the district assembly meetings; however, the lack of knowledge and information regarding district assembly affairs hampers public attendance and local contributions to issues of local development. In addition, the representation in terms of number of seats for such groups as women, youth, disabled and the minorities is not specifically guaranteed (DANIDA 1998:23). This implies that decision-making powers lie in the hands of the elites or a few key individuals.

Unless participatory approaches take into account the relative bargaining power of the key actors or stakeholders at the grassroots level, they are in danger of merely providing opportunities for the more powerful. The challenge that remains is that of finding mechanisms to reduce political dominance and ensure genuine involvement of the grassroots in decision-making on most substantive developmental issues. The key considerations should include strengthening the bottom-up approach, promoting financial autonomy at the local level; introducing more direct contact with the community, and further subdividing the villages or wards into 'cells' or subunits for development planning. These steps may help promote accountability and transparency systems that are oriented towards local people rather than the centre; and restructure the basis of power of local elites through equitable distribution of land and wealth in the rural economy.

Administrative factors

The legacy of the shortage of qualified staff is still experienced in most rural district assemblies partly due to inappropriate and inadequate training programmes, inadequate qualifications among the serving officials especially in the financial management and accounting, and numerous vacant positions (UNDP 2000:126). Interviews with senior officials confirmed that the quality and quantity of manpower is very poor both at

the central and local levels, which constrains the effective promotion of participatory development strategies. The administrative capacity of most district assemblies is insufficient to ensure the effective discharge of the enormous obligations devolved upon them (UNDP 2000:126). Among the critical vacancies that exist in the top posts include the positions of the director of planning and development, director of finance and data clerk. During the time of this research out of twenty-seven districts one did not have a district commissioner; eleven did not have directors of planning and development; thirteen did not have directors of finance; one did not have a director of administration; and fourteen did not have data clerks. The directors play a central role in the attainment of the decentralisation policy objectives and in particular, the management of funds and the promotion of local development. The absence of directors of finance and planning and development greatly contribute to ineffective local governance and promotion of participatory approaches to development (see Chinsinga et. al. 2001:45-48). The shortage of skills in planning and development has resulted in problems in developing viable district plans (UNDP 2000:126; Nhlane 2001:1). Musukwa (2001:2), points out that most district assemblies operate without plans and that they simply follow directions from donors.

The promotion of effective citizen participation in development by district assemblies requires appropriate management styles and adequate numbers of highly qualified personnel. There is a great need for intensive capacity-building programmes to ensure that human resource positions in district assemblies are commensurate with the enormous responsibilities assigned to them. Therefore, it is important that adequate and appropriate training programmes oriented towards decentralised systems should be designed and offered to the public, councillors, and district and extension staff after a thorough training-needs analysis to facilitate effective management of democratic participatory approaches.

Financial factors

Currently, decentralisation initiatives are pursued in the context of a centralised financial system. The National Local Government Finance Committee (NLGFC) was established in line with Section 149 of the Constitution to oversee all financial transactions of district assemblies in the country. The NLGFC obtains funds earmarked for assemblies from the Ministry of Finance, and government policy provides that 5 percent of the net national revenue should be transferred to district assemblies as unconditional grants and that 25 percent of this amount is be committed

to development activities (Chilungo 2003:4). In addition, conditional grants are to be transferred to district assemblies to cater for various sectors like education and health, among others.

Despite the existence of four major sources for district assembly finances, namely, central government transfers, locally generated revenue, donor aid and loan and overdrafts, most district assemblies are characterised by chronic financial problems. This is due to, among others, the narrow resource base for locally generated revenue, lengthy budgetary processes, legislative financial controls, lack of effective accounting systems, and inability to access loans (Kaluwa et al. 1998:22). The shortage of finance is exacerbated by the lack of effective information systems or data bases, inadequate and inappropriate skills and techniques for efficient revenue mobilisation and utilisation, the prevalence of corrupt practices, the misallocation of funds in some district assemblies, and erratic and unpredictable disbursement of grants (Mzembe 2001:1; Kaluwa et al. 1998:22). During the time of study, district assemblies had not received any conditional grants. In addition, some donors by-pass the official structures at the district level like the DDF and deal directly with communities. This practice encourages duplication of projects and activities in the district and further denies the district assemblies a chance to efficiently coordinate the much-needed development funds. The district assemblies find it difficult to produce tangible development outputs in form of roads, schools, bridges and health centers. Consequently, most district assemblies are unable to meet the demands of the citizens.

It is critical that the financial management systems be updated through computerised and modern accounting systems, effective inter-governmental transfer procedures, internal and external financial controls and auditing, effective supervision and engagement of well-trained revenue collectors and financial managers to ensure the prudent management of public financial resources.

Conclusion

There are high expectations among policymakers and enlightened citizens for an increased public role in development and governance. As observed by Phiri (2000:8), the citizens are looking forward to genuinely taking part in the decision making process on matters that concern their welfare. The basic elements of good governance that were absent in Malawi during the single-party rule, especially democratic popular participation in development, are to be actualised through the decentralisation process. In the multiparty dispensation, effective decentralisation and citizen participation

in governance and development is expected to reinforce democratic ideals, legitimise democratic institutions, and give a sense of ownership of the development projects and lawmaking process to the citizens.

The promotion of citizen participation in development is the key role of the Malawi local government as outlined in the Local Government Act No. 42 and the Malawi Decentralisation Policy. However, the development efforts of district assemblies are constrained by many factors, which include political intolerance, elite dominance, inadequate and inappropriate trained personnel, shortage of finances, and lack of civic knowledge and empowerment. In communities where a degree of citizen participation occurs, administrators and politicians initiate and define the environment in which participation takes place. What is considered to be citizen participation in development is in most cases mere consultation during public meetings addressed by public officials, politicians and traditional leaders.

The decentralisation process places the district assembly in a central position, with little clarification on how non-governmental organisations and community-based institutions below the VDCs are integrated into the local governance system. The linkages between lower level committees and the district assembly are vague especially on the functions of ward assemblies, which have yet to be established. There is a need for a clear legal framework, which defines the role and linkages of the key actors at the local level like members of Parliament, councillors, traditional chiefs and community based organisations. The incorporation of the traditional chiefs in the local structures must be reviewed if democratic governance and participatory strategies are to be enhanced. While traditional leaders can continue playing a role, the political leadership of local institutions of development should remain with elected people. Clearly, there is a pressing need for a thorough review and institutionalisation of viable structures that are in line with pluralism, democratic governance and legal provisions. It is important that local institutions are oriented towards participatory and direct forms of democracy and citizen participation by broadening membership and creating broad based community groups. In sum, the political, socio-economic, administrative and financial factors prevailing at the local level that militate against decentralisation efforts and participatory approaches to development should be addressed pragmatically through such measures as capacity building, civic education and training and development programmes at all levels in order to promote effective citizen participation in development.

Notes

1. Countries like Kenya, Lesotho, Tanzania, Zambia and Botswana have experienced failures in promoting popular participation in development through development committees – see Oyugi (2000:xiii).
2. Fieldwork covered five districts, namely, Zomba, Machinga, Chiradzulo, Blantyre and Thyolo district assemblies.

Bibliography

- Anders, G., 2002, 'Freedom and Insecurity: Civil Servants between Support Networks, the Free Market and Civil Service Reform', in Englund, H., ed., *A Democracy of Chameleons, Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, Blantyre, CLAIM.
- Apthorpe, R., Chiviya, E. and Kaunda, G., 1995, *Report on Decentralisation in Malawi: Local Governance and Development*, Lilongwe, UNDP/Ministry of Local Government and Rural Development.
- Aril, S., 2000, 'Democratic local government and responsiveness: lessons from Zimbabwe and Tanzania', in Tukumbi, Lumumba Kasongo, eds., *Dynamics and Policy Implications of Global Reforms at the End of Second Millennium*, Leiden, Brill.
- Ayee, J. R.A., 1992, 'Decentralisation and effective government: the case of Ghana's district assembly', *Africa Insight*, Vol. 22, No. 1, pp. 49-56.
- Barle, D.G., & Uys, F.M., 2002, 'Macro perspective on intergovernmental relations in respect of local political structures', *Journal of Public Administration*, Vol. 37, No. 2, pp. 140-63.
- Boeninger, E., 1992, 'Governance and Development: Issues and Constraints', Proceedings of the World Bank Annual Conference on Development Economics, April 25-26, in *The World Bank Economic Review*, Washington.
- Bratton, M. and Liatto-Katundu, B., 1994, 'A Focus Group Assessment of Political Attitudes in Zambia', *African Affairs*, Vol. 93, pp. 535-64.
- Brynard, D.J., 1996, 'Planning Participatory Approach', in Bekker, K. ed., *Citizen Participation in Local Government*, Pretoria, J.L. van Schaik.
- Burns, D., Hambleton, R., Hogget, P., 1994, *The Politics of Decentralisation: Revitalising Local Democracy*, London, Macmillan Press Ltd.
- Cameron, R., 2002, 'Local Government: Quo Vadis?', *Journal of Public Administration*, Vol.37, No.4, pp. 475-91.
- Checkoway, B. and Van Til, J., 1978, 'What Do We Know about Citizen Participation? A Selected Review of Research', in Langton, ed., *Citizen Participation in America*, Lexington, D.C. Heath and Company.
- Chikulo, B. C., 2000, 'Decentralisation for Good governance and Development: the Zambian experience', in United Nations (UN), *Decentralisation and Citizen Participation in Africa*, RDD Vol. 21, No.1, pp. 26-47, Spring 2000, Nagoya, Japan.

- Chilungo, A., 2003, 'Challenges Facing Local Government Finance and Administration', unpublished paper presented, University of Malawi, Chancellor College.
- Chinsinga, B., and Dzimadzi, 2001, *Impact Assessment Study on the Process of Decentralisation in Malawi*, Lilongwe, Decentralisation Secretariat.
- Chinsinga, B., 2002, 'The Politics of Poverty Alleviation in Malawi: A Critical Review', in Englund, H., ed., *A Democracy of Chameleons, Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, Blantyre, CLAIM.
- Clapper, V.A., 1996, 'Advantages and Disadvantages of Citizen Participation', in Bekker, K., ed., *Citizen Participation in local government*, Pretoria, J.L. van Schaik.
- Cleaver, F., 2001, 'Institutions, Agency and the Limitations of Participatory Approaches to Development', in Cooke, B., and Kothari, U., eds., *Participation, The New Tyranny*, London, Zed Books.
- Cooke, B., and Kothari, U., 2001, 'The Case for Participation as Tyranny' in Cooke, B., and Kothari, U., eds., *Participation, The New Tyranny*, London, Zed Books.
- Crook, R.C., 1994, 'Four Years of the Ghana District Assemblies in Operation, Decentralisation, Democratisation and Administrative Performance', *Public Administration and Development*, Vol. 14, pp. 339-64.
- Danish International Development Agency (DANIDA), 1998, *Review of the Decentralisation Process within the Danish Supported Programmes in Malawi*, Danida Reference No. 104.P3 Mal, November, Lilongwe.
- Gama, K., 2000, 'Voter Apathy characterises by-elections', *UDF News*, 27-03 May 2000.
- Goldenhuis, A. J., 1996, 'Analysing Democracy for Local Government', in Bekker, K. (ed.), *Citizen Participation in local government*, Pretoria, J.L. van Schaik.
- Ikhide, S., 1999, 'Local Government Finance and Accountability: A Case Study of Selected Local Government Areas in Nigeria', in Olowu, D. et al., eds., *Governance and Democratisation in West Africa.*, Dakar, Senegal, CODESRIA.
- Kaluwa, B. & Kawonga, A.J.C., 1998, *The Potential for Urban Local Authorities Economic Development within the Context of Structural Adjustments Programs – The Case of Malawi*, Zomba, The Municipal Development for Eastern and Southern Africa Report.
- Kaunda, J.M., 1998, 'The State and Society: the Case of Malawi', *Journal of Commonwealth and Comparative Politics*, Vol. 36, pp. 48–67.
- Kayambazinthu, E., and Moyo, F., 2002, 'Hate Speech in the New Malawi', in Englund, H., ed., *A Democracy of Chameleons, Politics and Culture in the New Malawi*, Blantyre, CLAIM.
- Kiggundu, M.N., 2000, 'Decentralisation', in Mukandala, R. ed., *African Public Administration*, Harare, African Association of Political Science.
- Langton, S., 1978, *Citizen Participation in America*, Lexington, DC Heath and Company.
- Local Government (District Council) Ordinance of 1953, Government Press, Zomba.

- Long, N., 1977, *An Introduction to the Sociology of Rural Development*, London, Tavistock Publications.
- Makara, S., 2000, 'Decentralisation and Citizen Participation in Africa, Uganda Experience, Decentralisation and Citizen Participation in Africa', *Regional Development Dialogue*, Vol. 21, No. 1, pp. 73–92 Nagoya, Japan.
- Malawi (Republic), 2000, *Decentralisation Policy (MDP)*, Lilongwe.
- Malawi (Republic), 2002, *MPSRP, Malawi Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper, Final Draft*, Lilongwe.
- Malawi (Republic), 1999, *DDPH: District Development Planning Handbook*, March.
- Malawi (Republic), 1995, *MDDPM: Malawi District Development Planning Manual*. Ministry of Local Government, November.
- Malawi (Republic), 1995, *The Constitution of the Republic of Malawi, as amended No. 7 of 1995*, Zomba, Government Press.
- Malawi (Republic), *The Local Government Act, No. 42 of 1998*, Zomba, Government Press.
- Malawi (Republic), 1997, *MDDF – Malawi District Development Fund Financial Manual*, Lilongwe.
- Malawi (Republic), 1999, *LGDMP – Local Governance and Development Management Programme*, Draft Annual Report, Lilongwe.
- Mawhood, P., ed., 1993, *Local Government in the Third World*, Pretoria, Africa Institute of South Africa.
- Miller, R.A., 1970, 'District Development Committees in Malawi: A Case Study in Rural Development', *Journal of Administration Overseas*, 9,2.
- Munro, W.A., 1995, 'Building the Post Colonial State: Villagization and Resource Management in Zimbabwe', *Politics and Society*, Vol. 23, No. 1, pp. 107–40.
- Musukwa, H., 2001, 'Assemblies Lack Plans', *The Nation*, 30 October.
- Mzembe, D., 2001, 'Financial Woes Rocks Assemblies', *The Weekend Nation*, N5 (24).
- Ngubane, S., 1999, 'Malawi's Post Election Woes', *ACCORD Conflict Trends*, Issue, 4.
- Nhlane, S., 2001, 'How Far Malawi? Traversing the Democratic and Human Rights Path', *The Nation*, 5 June.
- Nkrumah, S.A., 2000, 'Decentralisation and Citizen Participation in Africa: The Ghanaian Experience', in United Nations (UN), *Decentralisation and citizen participation in Africa*. RDD Vol. 21, No.1: 53–67 Spring 2000, Nagoya, Japan.
- Omiya, P.J., 2000, 'Citizen Participation in Kenya', in United Nations (UN), *Decentralisation and citizen participation in Africa, Regional Development Dialogue* (RDD Vol. 21, No.1: 194-212, Spring 2000, Nagoya, Japan.
- Otanez, M., 1995, 'Labour and Democratisation in Malawi', MA unpublished paper, Institute of Social Studies, The Hague, December.
- Oyugi, W.O., 2000, 'Decentralisation for good governance and Development', in United Nations (UN), *Decentralisation and Citizen Participation in Africa*.

- Regional Development Dialogue* (RDD Vol. 21, No.1, pp. 3–22, Spring 2000, Nagoya, Japan.
- Phiri, D.D., 2000, 'Decentralisation and Corruption'; *The Nation*, 9 September.
- Rondinelli, D.A., 1981, 'Government Decentralisation: Theory and Practice in Developing Countries', *International Review of Administrative Sciences*, vol. 47.
- Rondinelli, D.A., and Cheema, G.S., 1983, *Decentralisation and Development: Policy Implementation in Developing Countries*, London, Sage.
- Sharma, K., 2000, 'Popular Participation in Botswana', in United Nations (UN), *Decentralisation and Citizen Participation in Africa, Regional Development Dialogue*, Vol. 21, No.1, pp. 177–91 (Spring), Nagoya, Japan.
- Sharma, K.C., 1995, 'Critical Issues in Local Government Management and Development Related to Central-local Government Relations in Botswana: Lessons of Relevance for Restructuring of Local Government in Post-apartheid South Africa', in Reddy, P.S., ed., *Perspectives on Local Government Management and Development in Africa*, Pinetown, Kohler Carton and Print.
- Simukonda, P., 1997, 'A Case of Legitimate Corruption? The Malawi Policy Context of Regional Equity', Unpublished paper, presented at Southern African Universities Social Science Conference (SAUSSC) November 30–December 5.
- Smith, B.C., 1985, *Decentralisation: The Territorial Dimension of the State*, London, Allen Unwin.
- Somanje, H., 2001, 'Democracy at the Crossroads', *Malawi News*, December 2–8.
- Sukali, E., 2000, 'Civil Society Targets Apathy and Null Votes', *The Nation*, 8 August.
- Tordoff, W.A., 1994, 'Decentralisation: Comparative Experience in Commonwealth Africa', *Journal of Modern African Studies*, 32 (4), pp. 555–80.
- UNDP, 2000, *Decentralised Governance in Malawi*, Lilongwe, April.
- Wolman, H., 1990, 'Decentralisation: What It Is and Why We Should Care', in Bennett, R, J. ed., *Decentralisation Local Government, and Markets*, Oxford, Clarendon Press.
- World Bank, 1992, *Local Government Project in Malawi*, Washington DC.