

**ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES IN IMPLEMENTING CONSTITUENCY
DEVELOPMENT FUND PROJECTS IN DOWA SOUTH EAST AND
CENTRAL CONSTITUENCIES**

MSc THESIS IN TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT

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MZUZU UNIVERSITY

JANUARY, 2026

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MTCD07/16

BSc in ENVIRONMENTAL SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

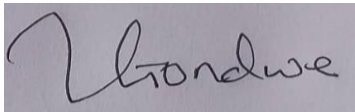
**A THESIS SUBMITTED TO THE FACULTY OF ENVIRONMENTAL
SCIENCES, DEPARTMENT OF AGRI-SCIENCES IN PARTIAL
FULFILFILMENT OF THE AWARD OF THE MASTER OF SCIENCE
DEGREE IN TRANSFORMATIVE COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

MZUZU UNIVERSITY

JANUARY, 2026

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this thesis titled, “**analysis of the challenges in the implementation of projects under the constituency development fund in Dowa south east and Dowa central constituencies**” has been written by me and is a record of my research work. All citations, references, and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted in fulfilment of the requirements for the award of the degree of **Master of Science (MSc) in Transformative Community Development** at Mzuzu University. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

A rectangular box containing a handwritten signature in dark ink. The signature appears to be 'V. Gondwe'.

Student name

04th January 2026

Date

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL

I, the undersigned, certify that this thesis is a result of the author's own work, and that to the best of my knowledge, it has not been submitted for any other academic qualification within the Mzuzu University or elsewhere. The thesis is acceptable in form and content, and that satisfactory knowledge of the field covered by the thesis was demonstrated by the candidate through an oral examination held on;



Crispin Mphande (PhD)

Supervisor

Date: **03rd January, 2026**

DEDICATION

This study is dedicated to the memory of my late parents, Ephraim and Edith Gondwe, whose lives were a reflection of hard work, prayer, love and massive support. Your encouragement and belief in the power of education always inspired me to strive for excellence. You instilled in me the values of resilience, determination and faith. Even though you are no longer with us, but your legacy lives on. Thank you for shaping the person that I am today. This accomplishment is in your honour.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS AND ACRONYMS

ADC	Area Development Committee
BoQ	Bill of Quantities
CDF	Constituency Development Fund
DC	District Commissioner
DDP	District Development Plan
FGD	Focus Group Discussion
GoM	Government of Malawi
IBS	International Budget Partnership
MP	Member of Parliament
PIC	Project Implementation Committee
PMC	Project Management Committee
T/A	Traditional Authority
UDC	Urban Development Committee
VDC	Village Development Committee

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ABSTRACT

There has been growing competition among the key players in the administration of CDF projects emanating from ineffective linkages between the decentralization policies, ineffective community participation due to lack of knowledge, persistent power struggles and conflicts of roles between the key players. The study therefore aimed at analyzing the challenges in the implementation of development projects under the CDF in Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies. The research design largely employed qualitative research method, key informant interviews and FGDs to be precise. The study discovered that, in most cases, MPs exert significant influence over project implementation procurement, project selection as well as prioritization and that key stakeholders are frequently sidelined. The study also noted that key players lack knowledge concerning CDF project implementation due to insufficient specialized training in CDF procedures, project management. The study discovered that despite the communities reporting irregularities in the implementation of CDF projects, there is minimal follow-up by the council, leading to a backlog of unresolved complaints resulting from the lack of grievance redress mechanisms. Based on the findings that the exert undue influence over project implementation, key stakeholders lack adequate training, the study therefore recommends that the role of the MP be re-evaluated, by reviewing constitutional laws that govern the MPs role, consultations with the local community as well as independent assessment by the civil society organizations, to ensure a more balanced approach to project implementation; specialized training be provided to the key players on CDF guidelines and project implementation; clear protocols for independent oversight be established in order to mitigate the undue influence of MPs on council officials and that a grievance redress mechanism should be integrated into the guidelines in order to address the complaints.

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

The study analyses the challenges in the implementation of the development projects under the Constituency Development Fund (CDF) in Dowa South East and Central Constituencies. CDF was introduced as decentralization mechanism with the intention of promoting community-led projects and addressing local social-economic need. However, the study has faced setbacks like political interference, lack of stakeholder coordination, inadequate technical capacity among local actors, weak accountability grievance redress mechanisms. The study therefore aims at identifying and analyzing the challenges and provide recommendations in order to enhance project implementation.

CDF are funding arrangements that channel money from the central government directly to electoral constituencies for local infrastructural projects (Zyl, 2010:1). In other words, these funding schemes are decentralization initiatives that transfer funds from the central government to each constituency for expenditure on development projects intended to address particular local needs (Tshangana, 2010:1). In Malawi, the projects broadly include water supply and sanitation; Road works and bridges; economic empowerment for women and youth; agricultural projects; social amenities (markets and bus shelters); educational and health infrastructure and equipment; school bursaries and sports and recreation facilities (GoM, 2022). The projects are supposed to be identified and implemented following a community needs assessment and based on their priorities which are also in line with the District Development Plan (Malawi government, 2022:2).

CDF implementation involves several stakeholders, including Members of Parliament (MP), Area Development Committees (ADCs)/Urban Development Committees (UDCs),

chiefs and District council officials. MPs are responsible for ensuring that projects are implemented as planned and that they are aligned with constituency needs. The council officials serve as controlling officers accountable for proper utilization of the fund (GoM, 2022), while councilors and ADCs mobilize local support and ensure accountability and transparency (Patel and Svasand, 2007). Chiefs play a traditional leadership role by linking the communities to the development process and fostering local participation (Ribot, 2002; Karlstrom, 1996).

Ideally, the actors are expected to collaboratively conduct annual meetings to prioritize and approve projects in line with the DDP (GoM, 2022). However, it has been observed that the roles of the stakeholders overlap, resulting in power struggles and competition for control of the fund. For instance, MPs have been noted to monopolize decision-making and link projects to themselves for political visibility and electoral advantage (Malik, 2019; O'neal, 2022). This has oftentimes worked against the principles of decentralization which primarily focuses on promoting effective implementation of service delivery to the general public (Banik and Chinsinga, 2016:98). Chiweza, (2021) notes that Malawi's decentralization process remains heavily politicized, with the MPs exercising undue influence over local governance structures and Chiweza (2023) further argues that weak institutional checks and limited community oversight continue to reinforce these governance challenges. Furthermore, Chirwa and Alfonso (2025) in the recent Afrobarometer report highlighted that many Malawians perceive the CDF as politically driven, benefiting the MPs more than the communities.

The selection of Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies is justified by their shared social, economic and political characteristics yet contrasting levels of CDF

performance. Both constituencies have experienced recurring cases of political dominance, weak institutional oversight as well as strained collaboration between the MPs and local governance structure. Additionally, Dowa district is among the pilot areas for decentralization initiatives in Malawi, making it a relevant context for examining the interplay between the local governance structures and political dynamics in CDF implementation. Hence, the constituencies provide deeper insights into how political influence, stakeholder dynamics and governance gaps affect the effectiveness of CDF implementation at constituency level.

1.2 Problem Statement

The Malawi Government, through the Ministry of Local Government, revised the CDF guidelines in 2022 in a bid to provide MPs and their constituent communities with the opportunity to make choices and implement projects that maximize their welfare in line with their needs and preferences (GoM, 2022). The revision was aimed at promoting community participation in decision making, effective monitoring and collaborative stakeholder engagement. The guidelines recognize the community, MP, ADC and the local Authority as key actors in the implementation of the projects. The ward councilors are also assigned project identification and monitoring responsibilities within the guidelines. Chiefs on the other hand, also take various roles in project implementation as they are considered as primary institutions of leadership (Chinsinga, 2006). Additionally, the chief's local knowledge and ability to mobilize local labor make them valuable development partners (Carlson and Seim, 2018). However, despite these reforms, implementation continues to face significant challenges. MPs often dominate in decision making, using CDF to gain

political credit and retain their seats (Malik, 2019; O’neil et al, 2022). The roles of councilors, ADCs and chiefs are frequently undermined leading to competition, conflicting interest as well as weak coordination (Chambers, 2013; Kutengule et al, 2004). This scenario has paralyzed project implementation, led to misallocation of resources, project delay. Ineffective monitoring of the projects has also been observed as a result of lack of transparency in information sharing and proper involvement of the community (Nyirenda and Kalyani 2023). Despite the existing literature on decentralization and local governance in Malawi (Chiweza, 2021; Chiweza 2023; Afrobarometer; 2025), there is limited research about power struggles among chiefs, councilors, MPs influence the implementation of CDF projects at constituency level. Gaps have been observed relating to the power struggles between MPs, chiefs and councilor in the implementation of CDF projects in Malawi particularly in Dowa south east and central constituencies provide compelling cases due to consistent reports about political interference, weak community participation and implementation inefficiencies. The study therefore aims at analyzing the challenges in the implementation of projects under the CDF in Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies focusing on stakeholder dynamics, governance gaps and accountability mechanisms.

1.3 Objectives

1.3.1 Main Objective

To analyze the challenges affecting the implementation of projects under the CDF in Dowa South East and Central Constituencies.

1.3.2 Specific Objectives

- Assess the competing roles of the MPs, Councilors and Traditional chiefs towards constituency development
- Analyze the challenges the community leaders face in the implementation of the CDF projects
- Examine the coping mechanisms of the local communities.

1.4. Research Questions

- What are the competing roles of the MPs, Councilors and Traditional chiefs towards constituency development
- What challenges do the community leaders face in the implementation of the CDF projects
- What are the coping mechanisms of the local communities?

1.5 Justification

The study aimed at analyzing the challenges in the implementation of CDF projects. It also focused on analyzing the competing roles of the key players in the implementation of CDF projects and also examined key issues that had been contributing to the abuse of CDF. The study is very relevant as CDF projects in Malawi continue to face issue such as weak coordination, political interference and poor accountability which hinder service delivery despite the revisions to the CDF guidelines (GoM, 2022). Additionally, the existing studies on decentralization and local governance (Chiweza, 2021; Chiweza 2023; Afrobarometer; 2025) have not adequately examined how power struggles among the MPs, councilors and chiefs specifically affect CDF project success at constituency level. Lastly, the study

findings will provide practical insight to policy makers and local authorities for improving CDF implementation, enhancing transparency and strengthening community participation in development planning.

1.6 Thesis Outline

The thesis is organized into five chapters. Chapter one presents the background of the study, problem statement, objectives, research questions and the justification of the study. Chapter two reviews the relevant literature related to CDF projects focusing on theoretical and empirical studies on project implementation studies, stakeholder participation and governance frameworks. Chapter three outlines the research methodology, outlining the research design, study population, study site, data collection methods, data analysis, data management, credibility and trustworthiness of study as well as ethical consideration. Chapter four presents and discusses the research findings on the challenges affecting the implementation of CDF projects in the study area. Chapter five provides the conclusions and recommendations derived from the study findings.

1.7 Conclusion

This chapter has presented the introduction of the thesis by giving the introduction, problem statement as well as purpose of the study. It has also outlined the research questions, significance of the study as well as the justification of the study. The next chapter details the literature review for the study.

CHAPTER TWO: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Introduction

This chapter is in three parts. The first part provides an empirical review of the study. The second part reviews literature on the roles of MPs, Councilors and Chiefs in development activities. And lastly, it outlines theoretical review of the study.

2.2 Empirical Review

The empirical review presents a general trend in the implementation of CDF projects, examining literature on competing roles in project execution, the challenges faced by community leaders and coping mechanisms employed by the local communities.

2.2.1 Competing Roles in the Implementation of CDF projects

The implementation of CDF projects is inherently multi-stakeholder in nature, involving MPs, local government authorities, community leaders, and sectoral technical officers. While this multi-actor structure is intended to promote participatory development and enhance accountability, several empirical studies have shown that it often generates role ambiguity and competition, leading to inefficiencies in project delivery (Mawenya, 2018; Nyirenda and Chinsinga, 2020). The concept of role clarity is fundamental in public sector project management, as it determines the effectiveness of coordination, communication, and accountability among actors (Gidudu, 2019). When institutional mandates overlap, stakeholders tend to pursue divergent interests, creating administrative conflicts and eroding the collective responsibility necessary for successful project outcomes.

In many African countries implementing CDF or similar devolved funds, competition for control over resources and decision making has emerged as a major source of tension. For

instance, in Kenya, studies have reported that MPs often exercise disproportionate influence over CDF committees, using their positions to prioritize politically rewarding projects at the expense of community needs (Kimenyi, 2005; Wamugu and Ogola, 2017). Wamugu and Ogola 2017 further observed that project identification and prioritization frequently occurred without adequate consultation with community representatives or technical staff, resulting in projects that lacked sustainability or alignment with local development plans. Similarly, in Uganda, the integration of political and administrative functions within decentralized frameworks has been criticized for undermining professional independence and technical oversight (Kasozi, 2019).

In Zambia, Chileshe (2011) found that the dual roles of MPs, as legislators and informal managers, created governance challenges including delayed disbursements, weak monitoring, and politicization of project selection. The same pattern has been observed in Tanzania, where power struggles between councilors and MPs led to duplication of projects and strained working relationships with community leaders (Magesa, 2018). These examples demonstrate that CDF-type arrangements, while designed to promote local empowerment, can instead perpetuate political dominance and marginalize the voices of the local stakeholders if role boundaries are not clearly established.

In the Malawi context, the CDF was introduced to support decentralized development and strengthen the link between elected representatives and their constituencies (Chinsinga, 2011). However, several studies noted confusion and overlap mandates between MPs, district councils, and community structures (Malera, 2019; Mphande, 2022). Chinsinga (2011) observed that MPs often assume both supervisory and implementation functions, sidelining council officers and project management committees. This concentration of

authority in the hands of MPs has led to perceptions of the CDF as a personal or political tool rather than a constituency-driven development mechanism. Similarly, Nyirenda and Chinsinga (2020) emphasized that the weak institutional framework guiding CDF implementation has failed to delineate clear reporting and accountability mechanisms, thereby fostering mistrust and undermining collaboration among stakeholders.

In addition to these institutional formal overlaps, the CDF guidelines (MoG, 2022) specify roles for MPs and councillors, further shaping stakeholder interaction in project implementation. The MPs are mandated to familiarize with key priorities in the district development plan, convene quarterly meetings with ADC/UDC to identify and prioritize projects in the constituency, submit to the local authority prioritized projects and written request for funding and appraisal, provision of information, support and council in the implementation of CDF, facilitate project implementation with relevant ADC/UDC, Ensure that projects in the constituency are being implemented as planned in accordance with standard design and BoQ, conduct monitoring visits to each project with the council at least twice during the project implementation period, organize public meeting in collaboration with the ADC/UDC to account to the constituency members on CDF implementation. Councilors on the other hand are mandated to familiarize themselves with the key priorities of the district included in the DDP, working with the VDCs to identify specific village and community needs, attend all ADC meetings where proposals will be presented, and prioritized for CDF, Monitor the progress of CDF projects together with the respective MP.

Although these roles are clearly articulated for MPs and councillors, the guidelines remain silent on the responsibility of other key stakeholders like chiefs which further contributes

to role ambiguity. This lack of clarity reinforces contestations observed in CDF governance as both MPs and councillors can operate within overlapping mandates that intensify competition for influence and visibility within the constituency.

Empirical evidence further suggest that competition for visibility and political capital drives many of the conflicts observed in CDF implementation (Mphande, 2022). Community leaders, particularly chiefs and councilors, often find themselves caught in between aligning with the MPs for resource access and representing grassroots priorities. This situation diminishes their influence in decision making and limits genuine community participation. Technical officers, on the other hand, struggle to enforce professional standards or financial compliance when political actors override established procedures (Malera, 2019). Consequently, the absence of clear coordination structures leads to fragmented planning, delayed implementation, and in some cases abandonment of projects.

Despite these findings, there remains a limited body of research exploring how such role competition manifests at constituency level, particularly within Malawi's rural settings. Most existing studies discuss the issue from policy or national perspective, overlooking localized dynamics such as interpersonal relations among leaders, power hierarchies, and contextual social-political factors that shape project governance. This study therefore seeks to address this gap by analyzing how competing roles among the MPs, councilors, community leaders, and district officials influence the effective implementation of CDF projects in Dowa South East and Dowa Central Constituencies. The analysis will contribute to a deeper understanding of how institutional overlaps and power contestations affect coordination, accountability and project outcomes at local level.

2.2.2 Challenges Faced by Community Leaders in The implementation of CDF Projects

Community leaders, including councilors, ADCs, chiefs, and members of the project management committees, play a central role in facilitating the implementation of CDF projects. They are expected to mobilize communities, ensure accountability, and monitor progress. However, empirical evidence suggests that these leaders often face a myriad of challenges that hinder their effectiveness and compromise project outcomes. Such challenges are multifaceted, encompassing political, financial, institutional and social dimensions (Chinsinga, 2011; Malera, 2019).

One major challenge is political interference. Studies in Kenya and Uganda indicate that community leaders often operate under the pressure of MPs or higher authorities who influence project selection and resource allocation for political gain (Kimeny, 2005; Kasodzi, 2019). In Malawi, similar patterns emerge, where MPs may direct projects to areas that maximize their political visibility, leaving community leaders with limited autonomy to prioritize projects based on local needs (Nyirenda & Chinsinga, 2020; Mphande, 2022). Such interference compromises the ability of leaders to act impartially and undermines the principles of transparency and accountability.

Another challenge is limited capacity and resources. Many community leaders lack formal training in project management, financial administration, or technical aspects of construction and service delivery (Mawenya, 2018; Malera, 2019). This deficiency often results in delays, mismanagement of funds, or substandard project execution. For example, in Zambia, Chileshe (2011) reported that local leaders struggled to supervise contractors effectively due to inadequate technical skills, leading to abandonment or poor completion

of CDF funded initiatives. Similarly, studies in Tanzania highlight that insufficient training and support for local leaders constrain their ability to enforce quality standards or maintain proper records of project activities (Magesa, 2018).

Accountability and monitoring further complicate the role of community leaders. In many CDF contexts, reporting systems are weak, and leaders are often left without clear guidelines on how to track expenditures or monitor progress (Gidudu, 2019). In Malawi, Nyirenda and Chinsinga (2020) observed that community leaders sometimes receive minimal feedback from district offices or MPs regarding fund disbursement and project evaluation, leaving them unable to address irregularities or ensure compliance with project objectives. This situation can lead to mistrust within the community and reduce legitimacy of the leaders' role.

Social cultural pressures also present significant challenges. Community leaders are often caught between balancing competing interests within the constituency, including clan, ethnic, or geographic considerations (Chinsinga, 2011). Leaders may face pressure to favor certain groups or individuals in project decisions, which can fuel perceptions of nepotism, favoritism or inequity. Mphande (2022) notes that such pressures are particularly pronounced in rural constituencies like Dowa South East and Dowa Central. Where traditional authority structures intersect with political office. Leaders are therefore forced to navigate complex local dynamics that can compromise the equitable implementation of CDF projects.

Financial constraints and delays in fund disbursement constitute another significant challenge. Studies from Kenya, Uganda and Malawi show that project implementation

often suffers when funds are released late or in partial tranches (Kimenyi, 2005; Kasozi, 2019; Mphande, 2022). Community leaders are then expected to manage projects without adequate cash flow, which can lead to project stoppages, contractor disputes and reduced community confidence in the funds effectiveness.

In sum, literature demonstrates that community leaders face interrelated challenges that span political interference, inadequate skills, weak accountability systems, social pressures, and funding delays. While prior studies provide valuable insights, there is limited empirical evidence on how these challenges specifically affect CDF project implementation in Dowa South East and Dowa Central Constituencies. By focusing on these local contexts, this study aims to understand the nature and magnitude of the obstacles faced by community leaders and how these challenges influence project outcomes.

2.2.3 Coping Mechanisms Adopted by Community Leaders

Community leaders involved in the implementation of CDF projects often develop coping strategies to mitigate the strategies arising from political interference, limited resources, and overlapping roles. These mechanisms are essential for sustaining projects progress, ensuring accountability and maintaining trust within the community (Mphande, 2022).

One commonly adopted mechanism is collaborative engagement with multiple stakeholders. Leaders often form alliances with other local authorities, chiefs and technical officers to collectively negotiate with MPs or district councils regarding project prioritization and resource allocation (Bardach, 1997; Chileshe, 2011). This collective approach allows community leaders to assert their influence, advocate for equitable resource distribution and minimize unilateral political interference. Such collaboration also

promotes transparency and reduces risk of projects being hijacked for personal or political interest.

Another key mechanism is leveraging formal institutional structures. The community leaders frequently rely on Project Management Committees (PMCs) or local development planning frameworks to document community needs, monitor project progress and provide evidence of compliance with guidelines (Ofori, 2013) by adhering strictly to these procedural instruments, leaders can protect their decisions from arbitrary interference and justify actions when contested. For instance, in Kenya and Malawi, PMCs are empowered to provide written reports on project progress, enabling leaders to demonstrate accountability to both community members and higher authorities (Kairu & Ngugi, 2014; Mphande, 2022).

Capacity building and knowledge acquisition is another coping strategy. Community leaders increasingly seek training in financial management, project monitoring and participatory planning to enhance their competence and reduce dependency on MPs or external actors (Yalegama et al., 2016). Leaders who are well versed in CDF guidelines and project management practices are better positioned to manage contractor performance, oversee budgetary utilization and resolve disputes efficiently. In Zambia and Tanzania, studies indicate that leaders with project management training were more effective at ensuring quality standards and meeting timelines (Chileshe, 2011; Magesa 2018).

Community mobilization and sensitization also serve as an important coping mechanism. Leaders engage local residents in planning, monitoring and evaluation of projects, creating

a sense of ownership and share responsibility (Davids et al., 2005) Active involvement of the beneficiaries ensures that the community members can hold leaders and contractors accountable, thereby mitigating the risks associated with political manipulation and mismanagement. In Malawi, Nyirenda and Chinsinga (2020) note that leaders who successfully mobilize communities are more likely to achieve compliance with project schedules and standards.

Some leaders adopt informal negotiation and lobbying strategies to navigate political pressures. This may involve negotiating timelines, reallocating resources, or seeking support from sympathetic MPs, councilors or district officers to safeguard community priorities (Bardach, 1977). While these informal mechanisms may not always align with formal guidelines. They are often necessary to maintain project continuity in contexts where bureaucratic delays or political interference are common.

Lastly, leaders often employ prioritization and phased implementation and cope with financial constraints. When project funds are released in tranches or delayed, leaders strategically sequence activities to ensure critical components are completed first. This reduces the risks of project abandonment, maintains community confidence and maximizes the utility of limited resources (Ofori, 2013; Yalegama et al., 2016).

Overall, these coping mechanisms highlight the adaptive strategies employed by community leaders to navigate complex project environments. They demonstrate the interplay between formal institutional structures, technical competence, community engagement and political negotiation in sustaining CDF project implementation. Understanding these mechanisms is crucial for designing interventions that strengthen

leadership capacity and enhance the effectiveness of decentralized development programs in Dowa South East and Dowa Central Constituencies.

2.3 Theoretical Review

A number of theories may be linked to implementation of CDF projects such as ladder of participation, project management, stakeholder theory, and others.

2.3.1 Theory of Ladder of Participation

This theory states that there are different levels of participation ranging from manipulation through consultation to genuine participation (Arnstein, 1969). These levels indicate that community participation' projects may take different forms in different stages of the project cycle. Despite the time difference between projects the nature and extent of participation for the majority of local communities in both project is generally limited to information giving, consultation and contribution (Mwangi, 2005). Local communities are generally not actively involved in decision making, planning, monitoring and evaluation processes. However, stakeholders can exercise participation at different levels from non-participation (passive participation) to citizen power (active participation) based on this theory. The theory basically promotes stakeholder participation in CDF projects as well.

While many constituencies accord unequal weight, participation at different stages on CDF project life cycle, the theory emphasizes on holistic participation in all the project stages. Nelson and Wright (1995) believe that the extent of empowerment and achievement of the local population is more limited in 'participation as a means' than it is in 'participation as an end' Arnstein's ladder of participation theory recognizes that there are different levels of participation in any project management process (Arnstein, 1969). Only through genuine

participation do we have the levels of participation in which citizens have a considerable measure of control. However, the community may not always desire increased control because it leads to failure of community-based projects. The ladder presents that at the bottom, there is more control and manipulation and this does not engage community members. As management changes up the ladder it accommodates more views from the community members and engages them. The total citizen or community member control is achieved at the top of the ladder and at this level projects are likely to succeed (Mwaiko & Derrick, 2015). This theory will be useful in determining the level of community participation in the implementation of CDF projects in the study.

The theory of ladder of participation is an important basis for examining the quality and authenticity of community engagement in CDF projects in Malawi. It enables us to analyze whether the communities are empowered with the current participatory approaches or it's just a façade for top-down decision making. The theory places much emphasis on power dynamics and citizens agency which enables us to clearly explore about the disconnection between policy intent as well as the actual community involvement in CDF project implementation. In Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies, participation has often been limited to consultation and contribution stages, with minimal community influence on planning and decision making. The theory is therefore relevant as it helps assess whether the current participation mechanisms in these constituencies reflect genuine empowerment or remains at the lower levels of the ladder of participation.

2.3.2 Stakeholder Theory

Stakeholder refers to anybody who can affect or is affected by an organization (Fassin, 2008). As CDF projects engage several stakeholders this study will also be based on the

stakeholder theory. The stakeholder theory is a theory of organizational management and business ethics that addresses morals and values in managing an organization (Harrison, 2015; Stieb, 2009). It identifies and models the groups which are stakeholders of a project, and both describes and recommends methods by which management can give due regard to the interests of those groups. In short, it attempts to address the "principle of who or what really counts (Freeman, 1984). It is an instrumental theory of the CDF projects, integrating both the resource-based view as well as the market-based view, and adding a socio-political dimension. This view of the firm is used to define the specific stakeholders of a CDF project for stakeholder identification as well as examine the conditions under which these parties should be treated as stakeholders. The importance of stakeholders from a strategy development and service planning perspective is well acknowledged (Ackermann & Eden, 2001). Power, urgency and legitimacy of claims are the attributes that define CDF project stakeholders. Power and urgency must be attended to if managers are to serve the legal and moral interests of legitimate stakeholders. Stakeholder theory thus contains methods for identifying and managing stakeholders (Yee-Chin, 2004). The CDF guidelines recognize the community, MPs, ADCs and local authority as the key stakeholders in the implementation of CDF projects. The VDCs, PIC, ward councilors perform roles which are aimed at reinforcing community ownership and accountability of the funds (GoM, 2022).

The stakeholder theory, is very essential for analyzing the CDF project implementation in Malawi as it provides a basis for understanding the competing roles, interests and influence of various actors in local development. It also enlightens us on the importance of project planning and accountability. However the theory is limited on how political interference

and power struggles can be addressed. In Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies, CDF project implementation has often been influenced by competing interest among the MPs, councilors and community structures leading to tensions and weak coordination. Therefore, the theory is relevant as it helps to analyze how these power dynamics and role overlaps affect transparency, accountability and overall success of the CDF projects in both constituencies.

2.3.3 Theory of Project Implementation

Project implementation is defined as a series of steps taken by responsible organizational agents to plan change process in order to elicit compliance needed to install changes (Andrews, 2011; Lehner, 2004; Nutt, 1996). Project managers employ project implementation theory to make planned changes in organizations by creating environments in which changes can survive. Slevin and Pinto (1987) argues that it is usually difficult and complex to successfully implement a project. The project manager has to devote more time and energy on human, financial, and technical variables as the key to the realization of project implementation (Sara, Sakataka & Oteki, 2016). It is further argued that it is apparent that a number of determinants are capable of affecting project implementation and these include among others: escalation of project cost due to inflation; difficulty in paying contractors due to bureaucracy in government institutions; contractors performing below standards and expectations; frequent changes in government; increase in the scope of the project; change in pre-contract consultants such as architects; ineffective project finance arrangement; reorganization of the parastatals change in the original design; indiscriminate award of contracts; projects and contracts determined on political considerations; and insufficient working capital (Sarah et al., 2016).

The project implementation theory emphasizes several critical success factors in project implementation one of which is that there should be top management support. Schultz and Slevin (1975) note that management support for a project or any form of implementation is of great importance in distinguishing between their ultimate success or failure. Project management may be considered as not only dependent on top management for authority, direction and support, but ultimately the conduit for implementing top management plans, or goals for the organization (Igwe, 2018; Fenn, 2013; Beck, 1993). Another critical success factor is the project schedule plan (a detailed plan of the required stages of the implementation process). Pinto and Slevin (1989) draw parallels between the stages of the implementation process. The need for the client consultant has also been found to be increasingly important in attempting to successfully implement a project.

In the context of CDF projects in Malawi, the theory is very important as it explains why most projects do not meet the intended goal. The theory highlighted the political interference, weak management as well as lack of management support which are evident in CDF project implementation where timelines are poorly enforced and that community priorities are often overridden by MPs. In Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies, projects have affected delays, poor workmanship and poor workmanships resulting from poor coordination among key stakeholders as well as inadequate oversight from relevant authorities. The theory is thus relevant as it helps to explain the managerial and institutional weaknesses affecting CDF implementation in these constituencies and underscores the need for stronger leadership, planning and accountability mechanisms to enhance project success.

In as much as the theory of project implementation enlightens us about the basis for project success, the theory does not fully capture the political dynamics and power struggles observed in the administration of CDF in Malawi. Decisions are mostly made based on political motivation than systematic planning or technical needs.

Based on the three theories, a number of factors inherent to CDF-funded projects can be identified as affecting project implementation. These factors include escalation of project costs, bureaucracy that hinders payment of contractors, frequent change in the constituency's leadership of both the legislator and the CDF committees, project schedule plan, community consultation and involvement in project implementation, and that the CDF-funded project committees are composed of professional members with capacity in terms of skills and resources for troubleshooting during project implementation. As such, it may be hypothesized that there could be a number of challenges that affect the successful completion of CDF in Malawi. These perspectives provides a framework for interpreting the study findings elaborating why issues such as weak stakeholder coordination, limited community participation and political interference continue to hinder CDF performance. Additionally, they also link the observed challenges in Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies to broader systematic and theoretical explanation of project implementation challenges.

2.4 Theoretical Framework

The study is anchored on Arnsteins ladder of participation, stakeholder theory and the theory of project implementation, which together provide integrated foundation for examining how CDF projects are managed. Arnsteins ladder of participation guides the analysis of the quality and depth of community involvement, helping to determine whether

participation in Dowa South East and Dowa Central Constituencies reflects genuine empowerment or remains at lower levels such as consultations and information sharing. Stakeholder theory complements this by explaining the roles, interests, power relations potential conflicts among the key actors- MPs, councilors, community structures and council officials. This is particularly for understanding the competing roles and accountability gaps that shape how CDF decisions are implemented.

The theory of project implementation further explains the managerial, institutional and operational factors that influence project performance such as political interference, weak coordination, delays and limited oversight. It provides a framework for understanding why CDF projects often face implementation challenges despite clear guidelines. Together, the three theories help to interpret the study findings by linking issues such as limited participation, role conflicts and weak management to broader theoretical explanations, while also informing the assessment of the coping mechanisms stakeholders adopt to navigate these constraints.

2.5 Conclusion

This chapter has presented a review of literature relevant to the concept under study. The chapter presented the empirical review section which outlined literature for the competing roles, challenges faced by community leaders as well as their coping mechanisms associated with the implementation of CDF projects. The section also outlined the theoretical review and framework of the study. The next chapter outlines the methodology for the study.

CHAPTER THREE: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction

This chapter details the methodology employed in the study. It also defines and rationalizes the Research design, target Population, sample and sampling method, sample location, data collection and analysis that were employed in an attempt to answer the research questions.

3.1 Research Design and Approach

The study adopted a descriptive case study design within a qualitative research approach. A case study approach was deemed appropriate because it allows an in-depth investigation of how CDF projects are implemented, the challenges encountered and the mechanisms of handling complaints and feedback within specific constituencies.

The qualitative approach was employed to capture rich narratives, experiences and perceptions of the participants as noted by Cohen et al., (2007) who emphasized that qualitative data is associated with participants' views and lived experiences. Woods also highlights that qualitative research focuses on understanding the way life is lived and how events unfold in daily context.

Additionally, the study was guided by a phenomenological research perspective which emphasizes understanding the social phenomena within their contextual and historical background (Tracy, 2013). This perspective helped the study interpret community perceptions of the CDF, its application and its impact on local development.

3.2 Study Population

The study benefited from key informants who were purposively selected. These included MPs, ward councilors, ADC, traditional authorities and government officials. The study

targeted 48 respondents, out of whom 41 participated in the study. The summary of the respondents is shown in table 1 below:

Table 1 Summary of study population

Category of Respondents	Potential number of Respondents	Actual number of Respondents
Members of Parliament	2	2
Ward councilors	5	4
Traditional Authorities	3	3
Government officers	3	2
ADC members	5(35)	5(30)
Total # of Respondents	48	41

The difference between the potential and actual respondents was due to unavailability of some respondents as well as the achieved saturation, where additional responses were unlikely to provide new insights. The respondents were selected based on their involvement and knowledge regarding CDF implementation, ensuring that the study captures diverse and relevant perspectives aligned with research objectives.

3.3 Study site

For the purpose of this study targeted population from Traditional Authorities (T/As) Mponela, Dzoole and Nkukula. According to the 2018 Population and Housing Census, the area under T/A's Mponela, Dzoole and Nkukula had a population of 50,551, 98,609 and 122,604 people respectively (NSO, 2018).

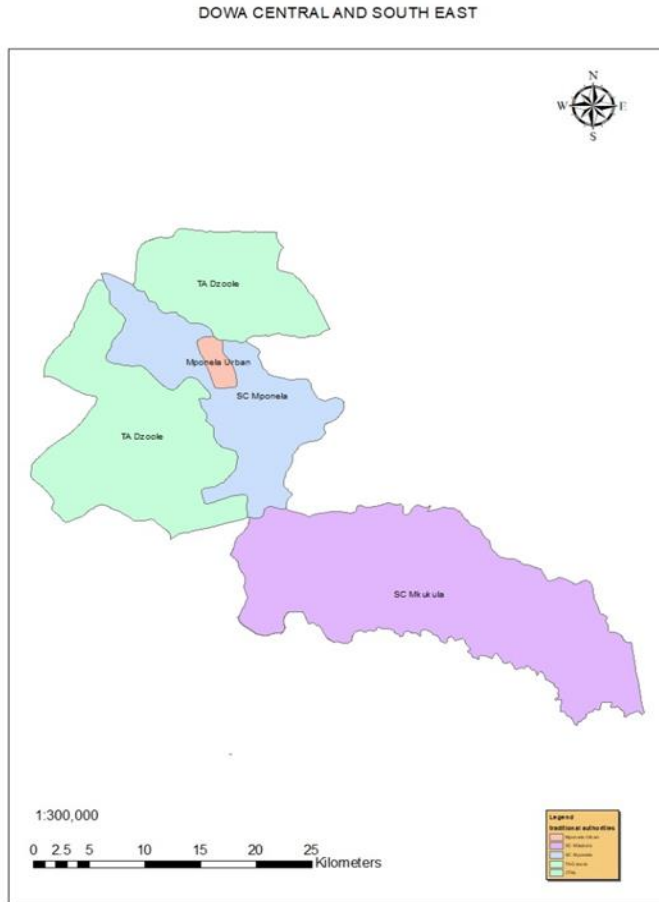


Figure 1: Map of the study area

Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies were selected because they provide a representative context of examining the implementation of CDF projects in Malawi's rural districts. Dowa is among the pioneering districts for decentralization initiatives in Malawi, as such, both constituencies have a history of CDF project implementation, with multiple across sectors such as health, education, and water making it suitable for studying practical experience of stakeholders directly involved in project execution.

Additionally these sites reflect typical challenges faced in decentralized development, including overlapping roles among MPs, councillors and community structures, as well as political influence and coordination gaps. Furthermore, the choice of the constituencies is

justified by their shared social, economic and political characteristics yet contrasting levels of CDF performance. Selecting these sites, hence, allowed the study to capture localized dynamics, such as interpersonal relations among leaders, power hierarchies and coping mechanisms employed by stakeholders, which may not be observable in urban or more centrally administered constituencies.

3.4 Data Collection Methods

The study employed data collection methods in accordance with the requirements of qualitative research. Thus, the study used key informant interviews with MPs, councilor, government officials and chiefs and focus group discussions with ADCs to gather comprehensive and detailed information from the respondents. Prior to the main data collection, a pilot study was conducted with informants from Lilongwe district council and a focus group discussion with chitukula ADC members to test and refine the data collection tools.

3.4.1 Key Informant Interviews

Interviews are very paramount in collecting qualitative data. Berg (1998) defines an interview as a “conversation with purpose”. Merriam (1988) clarifies that the main importance of an interview is to discover what is “in and on someone else’s mind”. In other words, interviews enable the researcher to collect information about people’s opinions, beliefs, feelings they possess about certain situations. When conducting a qualitative study, Open-ended and semi structured questions as opposed to structured and closed ended questions are used for probing in qualitative study (Fraenkel and Warren, 2000; Ary et al, 2010; Babbie, 2010).

During the study, in-depth interviews with government officials, T/A's, councilors, MPs and also with the key informants were conducted. The interviews were scheduled so as to get the experience and opinions of the participants on the knowledge of the key implementers and their implications CDF projects, challenges faced but also the complaints and feedback handling mechanisms. In order to get rich information and also understand different perspectives of the participants on CFD, the participants were asked the same set of questions derived from the study's research questions. However, there were some variations in the arrangements depending on the responses from the participants.

Interviews were conducted with aid of interview guides. Bryman (2012) defines an interview guide as a compilation of questions and issues to be covered during an interview. Interview guides are very necessary when attempting topics or subject areas where the interviewer has got the freedom to explore, probe and ask questions that will clarify the phenomenon being studied (Rossman and Rallis, 2003). This enables the researcher to be able to get the necessary information.

The main challenge faced when conducting the study was that the participants frequently digressing from the area under study. This partially attributed to the fact that the study was conducted as the 2025 tripartite elections were close. The challenge was overcome by use of probing questions so as to maintain focus of the interview.

3.4.2 Focus Group Discussions (FGD)

FGDs were also used for collecting data. Krueger (1998) defines FGD as a hasty evaluation, semi structured data collection method whereby participants are purposively chosen in order to deliberate on issues and concerns based on a compilation of key themes prepared by the researcher. This method is very ideal when there is need of investigating a

certain situation, topic or phenomena where discussion with a group of people with different opinions will be paramount in generating the desired data or outcomes (Cohen et al., 2007). The researcher managed to conduct 5 FGDs from Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies which comprises of T/As Dzoole, Nkukula and Mponela. Participants of the FGDs were purposively drawn from ADCs in the respective areas.

To ensure the freedom of interaction of the participants and also enable them to share their experiences with the moderator of the FGD, each FGD had on average 6 members. This was done considering the sensitivity of the study but also the characteristics of the participants. However, the researcher faced challenges in the identification of FGD participants who are rich in information regarding CDF since the method of identifying potential participants individually is at times time consuming and labor intensive (Kitzingers, 1994). This challenge was addressed by involving the Chairperson of the ADCs who assisted in the selection of members of the ADCs who were in a position to answer questions concerning CDF.

3.5 Data analysis

The study largely employed qualitative content analysis to interpret and make sense of the collected data. Content analysis is a research method that is used for producing replicable and effective insinuations generated from the data to their context (Krippendorf, 1980). The approach was deemed appropriate for the study as it allowed the researcher to systematically analyze transcripts and documents to identify emerging patterns and themes related to the implementation of CDF.

All interview recordings data were listened to several times to enhance familiarization with the data before being transcribed verbatim. The transcripts were then carefully reviewed,

coded and categorized into recurring ideas, concepts as well as key phrases. Based on the study objectives, preliminary codes were developed while additional codes emerged in the course of data analysis. Using these themes, the data was organized and summarized to facilitate clear interpretation.

In a similar manner, documentary data was also examined and categorized according to related topics and issues. The data collected from the interviews and FGDs was then merged with the data from other sources so as to identify converging and diverging perspectives, ensuring credibility and depth in findings.

Given that qualitative content analysis involves large volumes of data, data analysis was conducted as the data was being collected. Much as some numerical figures may be present in the interpretation of the data, they do not have implications on the results as the results are totally dependent on the information gotten from the participants during the interviews (Fraenkel and Wallen, 2000).

3.6 Data Management

Data management is very important when conducting research. It involves the organization and storage of the collected data in order to avoid loss or destruction. To enable easy access and safety of the collected data, the data was properly marked and saved in one folder in the researcher's computer. The data was also stored in the researcher's flash disk, uploaded to the researchers email address as to avoid loss of the data. Some of the data was printed and the hard copies were safely kept in a folder.

3.7 Credibility and trustworthiness of study

In research, credibility and trustworthiness are terms associated with the reliability and satisfactoriness of the collected data (Cohen et al., 2007). Reference to this study, credibility

and trustworthiness was attained by triangulation, peer reviews, piloting as well as the use of verbatim quotes where necessary.

3.7.1 Peer Reviews

Peer Review is another way of attaining credibility trustworthiness of study. It entails subjecting your study to experts in the field under study for them to critically scrutinize the research methods and results (Boone, 2007). To ensure credibility and trustworthiness of the study, critical friends and scholars were used to critique and validate the research methods and findings.

3.7.2 Use of Verbatim quotes

Verbatim quotes are also used to ensure credibility and trustworthiness of study. The researcher uses reviews of the research participants regarding policies and practices by clearly expressing their feelings and beliefs on how they have been impacted or their perceptions towards the phenomenon under study (Corden and Sainsbury, 2006). In this study, in order to reinforce the significant of the views of the participants of the study, the researcher used the participants' verbatim quotes.

3.8 Ethical Consideration

Firstly, consent was obtained from Mzuzu University in order to gain access to the participants. This served as evidence that this research was being conducted for academic purposes. The researcher made sure to show these letters to each participant and she also produced her identity card before starting every interview in order to put up a front of transparency and credibility.

Secondly, the participants were then informed that study is part of the obligations for a Master of Science in Transformative Community Development program at Mzuzu

University. The participants were also clearly informed that participating in the study was not mandatory and that they had a right to refuse to answer the questions and also end the interview at any time.

Thirdly, the participants were assured that the information obtained and the particulars of the participants will be kept confidential and anonymous. This was important that research participants were assured of their privacy and this is achieved by keeping the information and participants confidential.

3.9 Conclusion

This chapter has outlined the research design, sample and sampling method. It has also outlined the study site, data collection methods, data analysis and data management. It has also presented the credibility and trust worthiness of study and the ethical consideration. The next chapter presents the discussion of results for the study.

CHAPTER FOUR: RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the discussion of the results based on the objectives of the study. The first part presents the characteristics of the respondents. Second part presents the analysis of the competing roles of the MP, councillor and the chiefs. Third part presents the challenges during the implementation of the CDF projects and lastly the coping mechanisms.

4.2 Roles of Key Players in the Implementation of CDF projects

4.2.1 Area Development Committee

The study discovered that there are disparities in roles being played by the ADCs, some ADCs are more active than others. The major role being played by the ADC is the identification of projects to be implemented under the CDF. These ADCs meet every month to discuss about the projects which are needed in their wards. When they produce the list of the projects, they prioritize the projects based on the relevance of the project at that particular time. Additionally, the study revealed that not all the ADCs in the constituencies have had the chance of identifying and prioritizing projects earmarked for CDF. These ADC are passive participants, observers in other words, in the implementation of CDF projects in the constituencies.

One key informant narrated that:

“In Some areas, the ADCs are actively involved in project identification and prioritization and they submit to the MP who submits their requests to the council.

However, in some constituencies, they often learn of the projects after the

implementation of the projects, if at all they hear of the projects.” [KII, councillor1 at Dowa South East constituency]

This is contrary to the CDF guidelines (GoM, 2022) which recognizes ADCs as key players in the implementation of the projects. Their roles are not just limited to project identification but rather prioritization, day-to-day monitoring of the projects and orientation of PIC members on project management. As we can note from the data above, much as the ADCs are capable of identifying and prioritizing projects in their area, passive participation of the ADC is also noticeable which defeats the purpose of decentralization which empowers the community to make decisions and participate in development projects within their area. Jegero et al. (2014) also noted that despite the introduction of decentralization with the intention like empowering local authorities and improving participation of the citizenry, there has been reluctance by the central government to relinquish some powers and responsibilities. Additionally, according to Chesinya and Wanyoike (2016), it was hoped that CDF and devolvement of funds would enhance people's participation in decision making processes, promote good governance and promote transparency and accountability. However, the ADCs are just receivers and passive participants of projects that have been planned to be executed in the constituencies by the MP.

Overall, the findings highlight that in as much as the ADCs are mandated to identify projects, prioritize and monitor the projects, their participation remains inconsistent across the constituencies. Active is observed in some area, but many ADCs are passive participants with limited or no control over project decisions. This, in turn, weakens the

objection of decentralization and community empowerment envisioned under the CDF framework.

4.2.2 Councilors

The study revealed that there were some discrepancies in the roles of the councilors from ward to ward in the implementation of CDF projects. In some wards the councilors play a major role in the identification and prioritization of the project. The councilors and ADCs regularly meet in order to discuss issues pertaining to the development of their communities. In as much as the CDF guidelines (MoG, 2022) does not recognize councilors as key players in the implementation of the CDF projects, the guidelines stipulate that their roles include familiarization with key priorities in the DDP, project identification, prioritization and monitoring.

One of the chiefs mentioned that:

“The ADC and councilor work together in the identification of the projects” [KII, chief2 at Dowa Central constituency]

The study also discovered that while some councilors had responsibilities in the implementation of CDF in their wards, the case was different in other wards which is contrary to the CDF guidelines (2022) which highlights that the councilors are responsible for project identification and prioritization as well as monitoring in collaboration with the MP. The researcher discovered that some of the councilors were not involved in the implementation of the CDF projects 5 years after they were ushered in to power.

One of the councilors highlighted this during the interviews:

"Since I became councilor, I have observed that CDF is not being implemented in a way that it should, based on my understanding. As a councilor for this ward, I do not participate." [KII, councillor4 at Dowa South East Constituency]

The findings, therefore, exposes the inconsistencies in the roles played by the councilors across different wards in the implementation of CDF projects. Whilst some wards demonstrated active collaboration between the councilor and ADC, some councilors were excluded in the CDF processes. This gap suggest discrepancy against policy and practice potentially undermining the intended community driven development approach of CDF. This may also reflect the difference in local political dynamics, capacity as well as awareness of the CDF guidelines. This finding clearly highlights the need to enforce CDF frameworks and capacity building initiatives in order to enhance the effectiveness of the councilor in CDF project implementation.

4.2.3 Members of Parliament

The study revealed that the MP poised a number of roles in the implementation of CDF. The study discovered variations in the roles played by the MPs in constituencies. In some constituencies, the MP is involved in the identification of the projects. Before the beginning of the financial year, the MP, together with the ADCs meet in order to address issues regarding the projects which are to be implemented in the constituencies.

Below is a response from one of the MPs during the interviews:

"I participate in the identification and selection of the projects to be implemented in our area."[KII, MP1 at Dowa Central constituency]

The study also disclosed that the MPs had oversight responsibilities. They take the leading role and at times they are regarded as the most powerful in the implementation of CDF projects in the constituencies. The MPs play a major role in the procurement and delivery of materials for the projects which is contrary to the CDF guidelines (2022) as MPs are not allowed to handle CDF cash or procurement issues. They also monitor the progress of the CDF projects being implemented in the project which is in line with the guidelines. The respondents below narrate their experiences.

A MP stated that:

“I support the implementation and monitoring of the projects and procurement of items. Mostly, taking the leading role in as far as implementation is concerned.”

[KII, MP2 at Dowa South East constituency]

Another MP Said that

“I monitor very closely to make sure that everything is done correctly.”[KII, MP1,

Dowa Central constituency]

Chiweza (2010) noted that there is generally a lot of resentment towards CDF emanating from the power and influence that the MP have over the administration of CDF projects in the constituencies. This is perceived by communities, chiefs, councilors and other actors as not promoting participatory decentralized decision making but only serving the needs and partisan interests of the MP and loyal members and not the entire community. Chiweza (2010) further highlights that the CDF in a manner in which it is currently being operationalized is creating a power center for one dominant actor to consolidate and showcase his/her status and influence at the local level.

The study's findings therefore highlights that whilst the MPs are regarded as key stakeholders in the CDF guidelines with oversight and monitoring responsibilities, the study discovered that most MPs are involved in project identification, procurement and delivery of materials, roles explicitly restricted in the guidelines. This overreach has led to the centralized powers around the MPs, undermining the principles of participatory and decentralized development. Other key actors like councilors, ADCs and communities may at times be sidelined by these practices and this fosters perception of politicization as well as favoritism in project implementation.

4.2.4 Chiefs

The study discovered that the chiefs play a major role in the identification of projects in the constituencies even though the CDF guidelines (MoG, 2022) are silent about their roles during the implementation of CDF projects. This is in line with Carlson and Seim, 2018 who similarly highlighted chiefs in Malawi play a vital role in local development, allocation of resources and mobilizing resources for development projects. However, there were some discrepancies in the way the chiefs were performing their duties. In some instances, the chiefs were working together with the ADCs in the identification of the projects where as in some instances, the chiefs were directly reporting to the MPs the projects they would like to be implemented in their areas. Both Banik (2008) and Ubink (2007) agree that chiefs are generally more responsive than other local leaders, including elected members. Consequently, they are able to identify the projects together with the ADC or directly present the projects to MP.

FGD responded highlighted that:

“The chiefs go directly to the MP to present their requests, whereas they are supposed to report to the ADC and which in turn presents the list of prioritized projects to the MP.” [FGD 1, Participant 3 at Dowa Central constituency]

One MP also stated that:

“Identification of projects is done by VDC in consultation with chiefs and they submit the list to area development committees.” [KII, MP1 at Dowa Central constituency]

The study also revealed that the chiefs play a major role in resource mobilization. They mobilize their subjects to help in the supply of relevant materials, which cannot be purchased in shops, to the project sites. Swindler (2013) echoed the same sentiments that Malawian chiefs are important actors in local development, allocating resources and mobilizing contributions to development projects. This is done to ensure that the benefiting community contributes to the implementation of the project as outlined in the CDF guidelines (MoG, 2022). The materials may include quarry, sand, bricks and also water.

One key informant highlighted this during interviews:

“The chiefs play a major role in mobilizing the community to aid in supplying resources required for the project because the fund is only intended for the procurement of materials which can only be bought in stores.” [KII, councillor2 and Dowa Central constituency]

Although the CDF guidelines do not clearly assign CDF project implementation roles to chiefs, the study discovered the influential and practical roles chiefs continue to play in

local development. Apart from project identification, chiefs collaborate with ADCs to lead in the mobilization of community resources. However, the inconsistent approaches observed where some of the chiefs bypass the ADC and report directly to the MPs suggests a need for clearer operational frameworks to avoid undermining the decentralized participatory decision making. As such the chief's involvement in CDF project implementation must be integrated within formal structures to promote accountability, equity and transparency.

4.3 Challenges Stakeholders Face in the Implementation of CDF Projects

4.3.1 Understanding of the CDF Guidelines

For the implementation of CDF projects to be successful across the constituency, all players involved in the implementation are supposed to clearly understand the set CDF guidelines. However, the study revealed that much as CDF was established in the country over a decade ago, a lot of people are still not fully aware of the guidelines. For instance, most members of the ADC, who have been serving as representatives of the communities on all issues in relation to development for almost 5 years, are still unable explain about guidelines.

FGD participant stated that:

“We are not aware of the CDF guidelines as such we are not conversant with the procedures which are to be followed during the implementation of the projects.”

[FGD5, participant 1 at Dowa South East constituency]

The study discovered that, some of the chiefs, could ably elucidate about the guidelines and the role the guidelines play in the implementation of the CDF. One of the chiefs was

able to explain that the guidelines were set as a guide for them to follow as they are implementing CDF projects in the area.

Another FGD participant mentioned that:

“We understand them in a way that they describe which projects are to be funded by CDF or not. Because there was an instance here where people had requested iron sheets for a church building and the MP bought iron sheets with funding from CDF and we said that expenditure is not allowed under CDF and the iron sheets were supposed to be returned. We see that the guidelines, gives us a direction on how the money is supposed to be used.” [FGD4, participant 5 at Dowa South East constituency]

The CDF guidelines state that expenditure on Mosques and churches is not allowed to use funding from CDF (MoG, 2022). The chief was able to illustrate that the CDF is limited to funding certain projects as stipulated in the guidelines. The study unraveled that key implementers of the project did not have adequate information regarding CDF which in turn impacts the successful implementation of the project. Tanui et al (2015) narrates that identifying and addressing the training needs of the people involved is crucial for the successful implementation of any project. Key implementers must receive training that aligns with the CDF project implementation objectives to ensure effective execution. Stakeholders involved in the implementation of the projects must be trained in accordance with the objectives of the projects in question. If the training is not done, then members act from a point of ignorance and guess work and the result is therefore dubious (Tanui, 2015).

The findings, therefore, indicate that lack of awareness and training among key players significantly hinder CDF implementation. Despite the fund being operational for over a decade, many ADC representatives remain unfamiliar with CDF leading to gaps in oversight and compliance. The inconsistencies in knowledge level affects the quality and legitimacy of project implementation, Tanui (2025) emphasizes on the need for specific training so as build the capacity of the project implementers. Because without this, project implementation becomes ad hoc and prone to mismanagement, ultimately undermining the goals of CDF.

4.3.2 Adherence to CDF guidelines

The study discovered that the set guidelines were not being followed. As ADCs, they were mostly involved with the identification, prioritization and implementation of the projects whenever need arises in their respective constituencies. It was observed that after the need has been presented, the ADCs rarely take part in the implementation of the projects. In other words, another team takes up the implementation and monitoring of the projects. The verbatim quote below gives an elaboration concerning what happens in his/her area:

“No, we are just like ‘akalambula bwalo’. We only identify projects, for example if there is need for a bridge because children are failing to cross the river for them to go to school or when we have funeral and they are failing to carry the remains to the other side of the river, we then request the bridge. But then we cannot follow up on the project up to the completion of the works.” [FGD3, participant 2 at Dowa Central constituency]

Another respondent from another FGD stated that the main reason they do not participate in the implementation of CDF projects is that they do not have power in the formation of the PICs. As ADCs, there were supposed to have representation in the project committees to ensure smooth implementation of the projects, but that has not been the case in most of the wards in the constituencies.

“When we look at the guidelines, the way CDF is supposed to be implemented, that is not how it is being implemented here because as ADC we do not have the powers in the formation of project committees” [FGD5, participant 2 at Dowa South East constituency]

Additionally, the study revealed that adhering to procurement guidelines within the constituencies was a challenge during the project implementation. The CDF guidelines (2022) assign the DC/CEO of the local authority as the principal duty-bearer for procurement. The local authority produces a list of registered suppliers, which is made available to the ADC. The PIC then obtains quotations, initiates the procurement process, completes evaluation forms, and submits them to the local authority through the ADC. However, the researcher observed that MPs often handle procurement and material delivery, contrary to the stated procedures. This makes it difficult for the community leaders to monitor the procurement process as the MP is in charge of the same.

A participant in one of the FGDs elaborated on this issue in their area.

“The project committee is supposed to be implementing the project in our community. But in this area, all materials are purchased by the MP himself. S/He

just brings the materials at the project site.” [FGD1, participant 2 at Dowa Central constituency]

Nyirenda and Kalyani (2023) outlined that community participation in government funded projects is both a right and empowerment process in the development process, however community members are mostly locked out in main stream CDF project management at the funds management and procurement levels which contravenes both the law and the spirit of the CDF guidelines which aimed at addressing inequalities in development and funding projects with immediate social economic impacts on the livelihoods of the people through the participatory process. Neglection of the CDF guidelines not only go against the goal of fairness and equity but rather renders the other stakeholders powerless, depriving them of opportunities to make decisions that directly impact their lives and wellbeing.

The study findings strongly support existing literature which highlights the marginalization of community structures such as the ADCs. While the guidelines emphasize a participatory and transparent process, the practice is often dominated by MPs, this undermines the legal framework and the intended empowerment of the local communities. The lack of involvement in forming the project committees and procurement processes reflects a systemic issue where power is concentrated in the hands of political actors, therefore compromising the transparency, accountability and community ownership.

4.3.3 Project Appraisal

The data collected revealed that a most projects are not appraised by council before starting. This is contrary to the CDF guidelines (2022) which highlights that the local authorities

are responsible for appraising projects prior to commencement of the projects. The observation was also noted as a major finding in the 2021 report of the Auditor General on local councils. Most of the times the council is notified of the projects when the projects are at an advanced stage. As a result, many projects are not subjected to proper scrutiny or budgeting.

The absence of project screening has also contributed to the construction of sub-standard projects. The council's key informants highlighted that at times they just receive invoices for payment when the works are about to be completed which leads to inadequate monitoring and quality control.

A key informant from Dowa DC highlighted that:

“According to my experience we just see requests for funding. Some projects at an advanced stage, expressing that they have engaged ABCD to do the work and here is the request for the payment. And possibly the project hasn’t been appraised.”

[KII, DC1]

Another key informant from the council also highlighted that:

“Partly it’s the same issue of identification and appraisal of the projects. If the projects were not appraised, where do we base on when we are making the payments? Because when we appraise, we are supposed to come up with the standards in order to ensure that the project is implemented according to the standards” [KII, DC2]

On February 7th, 2022, The Daily Times reported that council officials often find themselves overpowered by MPs who use their political influence to dictate how the CDF should be implemented. As a result, even though these officials are familiar with the proper guidelines, they may choose to comply with the MPs' directives in order to safeguard their jobs.

Overall, the study findings supports the growing concern that project appraisal, which is a critical step in ensuring quality and accountability, is mostly bypassed in CDF implementation. Both the study and external reports reveal that many projects begin without proper evaluation and budget scrutiny. This has led to the construction of substandard structures and compromised financial oversight. Knowledgeable officials are often sidelined or at times feel compelled to comply with MPs' directives to protect their positions, effectively undermining the institutional checks and balances intended by the CDF framework. This continues to hinder effective project implementation and public trust.

4.3.4 Political Interference

The study exposed political interference as one of the challenges during the implementation of CDF projects. The ADCs always select the priority projects when deciding on which project to implement at their various areas. They present them to the MPs with the hope of being helped. The CDF guidelines outline that after the costing of the projects, the new projects shall be further reprioritized by the ADCs and MP and submitted to the council through the MP (GoM, 2022). Unfortunately, the study revealed that the MPs meet with the political development committee to decide about the project to be implemented.

In other words, the selection of the projects is largely dependent on the needs of the political development committee. The researcher noted that the forum usually bases their choice depending on their needs and not that of the local communities. In the end, the projects which are being implemented are those which will help the politicians to gain political mileage other than meeting the needs of the locals. Murray (2011) elaborated that the legislators target is usually gaining support for their re-election.

A participant explained what is happening in her constituencies:

“As we already complained, considering that the MP is the one who go to collect the CDF money, when you send the list of projects to the MP, he agrees with his fellow politicians that they should go and help with the projects without regard of the local community’s needs.” [FGD2, participant 4 at Dowa Central constituency]

The study also discovered that in other areas, the inclusion of the politicians in the PICs greatly affected the performance of the PICs. It was noted that from the FGDs that were conducted that the members of the ADCs do not fully participate in the PICs because of the presence of the politicians as they are the ones who usually take the leading role.

A key informant highlighted that:

“But also, the ones in the project committees are politicians, followers of the MP. So it is impossible for the ADC to perform their duties.” [KII, Chief3 at Dowa Central constituency]

Chiweza (2010), also discovered little or no community involvement in selection and implementation of CDF projects. S/he further highlighted that CDF decisions made are not

usually emanating from the community priorities already expressed in the VAP or even DDP. Decisions for the projects are mostly influenced by the political representatives present in the project committees.

The study therefore reinforces concerns about political interference in CDF project implementation particularly in the selection and prioritization of the projects. While the CDF guidelines (2022) recommend a participatory process involving the ADCs and the MPs, in reality most decisions are made by the political actors through the project political development committees. The presence of politicians in PICs further marginalizes the community representatives like ADC members, weakening accountability and community ownership. Overall, the finding support the argument that political captures of CDF process undermines the funds objective of addressing local development priorities through inclusive and transparent mechanism.

4.3.5 Lack of participation

The study revealed that lack of participation by both the ADCs and the Councilor has been a challenge in the constituencies. It was noted that some of the councilors have never participated in CDF projects in the constituencies since they were ushered into power. On the other hand, the ADC are not able to monitor projects that are being implemented as they are informed that there exist another committee whose role is to monitor the works.

Below is a reaction for one of the councilors interviewed:

“... I have observed that CDF is not being implemented in a way that it should, based on my understanding. As a councilor, I do not participate.” [KII, councillor4 at Dowa South East constituency]

One FGD responded concurred with the councilors point by indicating that:

“We do not participate because as ADC, we can visit a project being implemented with funding from CDF they tell us a committee was already formed by the MP.”

[FGD1, participant1 at Dowa Central constituency]

The study unveiled that the ADCs are passive participants in the implementation of the projects because fear. They might not be aware of the kind of projects that are going to be implemented in their constituencies, but would sign the application forms. In other words, they would rather have a project they do not need than no project at all. This in turn affects the level of their participation in the project as they are not aware of the particulars of the project. Otieno (2017) elaborates that community participation in project identification as well as their involvement in implementation and sustainability activities fosters a sense of ownership. The lack of adequate community participation can be a key reason why some CDF-funded projects fail to succeed and become underutilized or abandoned.

Participants in the FGDs highlighted the following:

“It seems like people are afraid that they might lose something important if they say no to the MP, as such they just receive a project they did not want to be implemented in their area.” [FGD4, participant3 at Dowa South East constituency]

“Most of the times they tell us that we are doing certain development work at a particular area, not the project originating from us as is supposed to happen. Most of the time what happens is that they just notify the chair that they are supposed to meet for them to sign a particular thing, something that they’ve already produced without our knowledge.” [FGD5, participant 4 at Dowa South East constituency]

Chesiyna and Wanyoike (2016) observed that community participation is one of the factors that influence project implementation and sustainability. The level of community support determines whether a project becomes established, how quickly and successfully it consolidates and how it responds and adopts to meet the changing needs of the community. Participation of the ADCs and other stakeholders in the implementation of the projects will reinforce community ownership and accountability of the funds GoM, (2022).

Overall, the finding of the study strongly support existing research which emphasizes on the role of communities in successful implementation and sustainability of CDF projects. Despite their mandated roles, ADCs and councilors are sidelined or excluded in CDF projects. ADC members are either misinformed or pressured into approving project they neither initiated nor fully understand even though they are supposed to provide oversight. Without genuine participation, the CDF projects risks being imposed rather than owned, leading to poor implementation outcomes, underutilization or even abandonment.

4.3.6 Transparency and Accountability

The study exposed transparency and accountability as part of the key challenges affecting the implementation of CDF projects. The CDF guidelines (MoG, 2022) highlights that the PIC members responsible for keeping records and reporting on the progress of the project once at least once every month to the community, ADC and MP. This is supposed to be done to ensure accountability and transparency of the management of the funds. Contrary to the stipulated guidelines, it was noted that, the PIC, ADC, community and MP rarely meet for updates regarding the progress of the projects. The Auditor General's report for

local councils 2021, also highlighted lack of records as one of its findings which negatively affects transparency and accountability of the fund.

One of the FGDs respondent stated that:

“We do not meet as a team to be updated on the progress of the project” [FGD2, participant1 at Dowa Central constituency]

Another one said:

“We do not have access to the project records as such we are not aware of the expenditures of the project” [FGD3, participant 2 at Dowa Central constituency]

Chesiyna and Wanyoike (2016) outlined that doubts have been raised as to whether CDF has met its stated objectives. S/he further clarified that there is indeed lack of transparency and accountability in the allocation of the funds for development projects, it is not clear how decisions are arrived at, on what developments to be implemented and the formation of development committees that are the center of decision making are characterized by political patronage. Additionally, while there are several rules that govern the utilization of CDF to ensure transparency and accountability, decisions over the utilization of the funds are supposed to be mainly by the community (Chesiyna and Wanyoike (2016)). However, this has not been the case.

The study therefore discovered that findings align closely with previous research and reports highlight the lack of transparency and accountability in implementation of CDF projects. Communities are often left in the dark concerning project expenditures and progress, as meetings and financial disclosures rarely occur. The failure to engage

communities in decision making and financial reporting violates the CDF guidelines, weakens trust, ownership and oversight, ultimately compromising the funds effectiveness and impact.

4.4 Coping Mechanisms of the Community Leaders to Navigate the Challenges

4.4.1 Collective Problem Solving

The study discovered that whenever the communities face the challenges during the implementation of the CDF projects within the constituencies, they mobilize themselves and organize regular meeting with the chiefs and council members so as to share their observation with the leaders. Collective problem solving is essential in navigating these challenges as it fosters collaboration and shared ownership of the solutions. According to Cao (2023), collective problem-solving refers to the process of addressing challenges or finding solutions through the collaborative efforts of a group of individuals. It is very paramount as it enables diverse perspectives, stronger team dynamics, better decision making but also empowers the individuals to voice out their concerns.

Respondent in one FGD highlighted that:

“Whenever we face these challenges, we invite our leaders and officers from the council to present the issues to them so that they may assist us in addressing them”

[FGD1, participant 4 at Dowa Central constituency]

The study also discovered that whenever they presented their grievances to the council or the chiefs, they just note the concerns but not much is done to follow up and resolve the complaints presented. There is no system in place which is aimed at addressing these challenges which result in having a backlog of unresolved complaints.

“It takes forever for our complaints to be addressed whenever we present them to our leaders” [FGD5, participant 5 at Dowa South East constituency]

A councilor also highlighted that:

“We are never satisfied with the response from the council because when we complain we expect things to change but they never change. Because it’s like we just talk about the same thing” [FGD2, participant 4 at Dowa Central constituency]

Generally, the study supports the notion by Cao (2023) that collective problem solving is a valuable tool in CDF project implementation. In as much as the communities demonstrate the initiative by organizing meetings with chiefs and council officials, the approach is undermined by lack of a structured response mechanism. The gap highlights a major weakness in the accountability and feedback loop within the CDF system. While the community is ready for engagement regarding problem solving, institutional response remains insufficient.

4.4.2 Passive Adaptation

The study revealed that at times the communities just observe the progress and challenges in the implementation of the projects. This is usually the case because they feel helpless that their grievances are not being addressed. As such they just channel the energy to the next election hoping to elect a new legislator with the hope that the MP will be able to address their concerns. Hansson 2011 refers such behavior or action as passive coping, which involve avoiding and withdrawing from the source of worry or distress.

Two FGD respondents highlighted the following:

“There is nothing we can do we just observe and accept whatever comes our way.”

[FGD1, participant 2 at Dowa Central constituency]

*“Our power to change is in our vote, if things are not progressing as planned, we just wait for the next election to exercise our right”*FGD4, participant1 at [Dowa South East constituency]

The finding of the study therefore aligns with Hansson (2011) concept of passive adaptation where individuals respond to persistent challenges by withdrawing or avoiding direct confrontational. When the communities feel ignored or powerless resulting from unaddressed grievances, they resort to passive observation rather than active engagements. This usually leads to the communities deferring their hopes for change to the future elections, viewing the ballot as their remaining source of influence. In as much as this reflects resilience, it underscores a breakdown in participatory governance and accountability mechanisms.

4.5 Conclusion

Chapter presented the discussion of the results of the study. It focused on characteristics of the respondents, analysis of the competing roles of the MP, councillor and the chiefs and the challenges during the implementation of the CDF projects and lastly the coping mechanisms. The next chapter will outline conclusions and recommendations derived from the study.

CHAPTER FIVE: CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the key research findings from the study and the recommendations.

5.2 Conclusions

This section integrates the key findings of the study by scrutinizing the implications of the roles of the stakeholders, governance challenges and community responses regarding the implementation of CDF projects in Dowa South East and Central constituencies. It connects the insights to broader theoretical framework whilst highlighting the need for policy reforms.

The study examined the roles of key stakeholders in implementing CDF projects in the Dowa South East and Dowa Central constituencies. The study discovered that, in many cases, MPs exert significant influence over project implementation. For instance, the study discovered that the MPs were forming their development committees, procuring and delivering materials to the projects as well as managing the projects in isolation which is centrally to the prescribed CDF (2022). Findings from the FGDs with ADCs and key informant interviews indicated that this concentration of power has led to growing resentment towards the CDF among community members, chiefs, and other local actors who are often involved. Key stakeholders in both implementation and decision-making are frequently sidelined, resulting in MPs prioritizing strategically located projects that benefit their re-election prospects rather than addressing the broader needs of the community.

The study identified several challenges in the implementation of CDF projects. In as much as the guidelines are periodically updated to address the challenges, much change has not been noted on the ground. Most of the key players are unfamiliar with these CDF guidelines, making it difficult for them to recognize when projects are not progressing as they should. This lack of knowledge stems largely from insufficient specialized training in CDF procedures, project management, and implementation. As a result, the fund is often mismanaged and fails to serve communities as intended. Additionally, council officials are frequently overshadowed by MPs, which hinders their ability to effectively and independently fulfill their accountability roles within the framework of CDF guidelines.

In examining coping mechanisms, the study discovered that communities often hold meetings with chiefs and council officials to ensure their concerns are voiced. However, despite reporting irregularities in the implementation of CDF projects, there is minimal follow-up by the council, leading to a backlog of unresolved complaints. As a result, communities frequently find themselves adapting to the existing system and waiting for the next election to express their dissatisfaction by voting for a new MP. Unfortunately, the CDF guidelines do not have grievance redress mechanisms within the project framework; they only outline disciplinary measures for public officers in cases of abuse of office.

The findings of this study revealed a critical disconnect between the theoretical underpinnings of participatory governance and the reality on the ground. The aim of CDF is to decentralize development decision-making and promote local ownership. However, the study highlighted pattern of centralization, limited community participation as well as weak accountability. This aligns with critics from participatory governance and

decentralization theories which warn that without genuine power sharing local development initiatives risk being co-opted by politicians. Additionally, limited stakeholder training and lack of grievance redress mechanism highlight the failure to operationalize empowerment and accountability frameworks within the CDF structure. Policy reform is thus required to institutionalize stakeholder capacity building, boost transparency and introduce formal channels of community feedback.

5.3 Recommendations

Firstly, the study recommends that the role of the MP be re-evaluated by government to ensure a more balanced approach to project implementation in order to enhance a transparent criterion for project selection and strengthen oversight to ensure that projects benefit the entire constituency rather than being used solely for electoral advantage. The re-evaluation should be done by reviewing the constitution laws that govern MPs role in project implementation, consultations with local communities as well as independent assessments by civil society organizations.

Secondly, the study recommends that specialized training on CDF guidelines and implementation be provided to key actors such as MPs, council officials and community leaders to improve understanding and reduce mismanagement. The training should be offered by government agencies as well as NGOs as part of capacity building program.

Thirdly, the study also recommends that clear protocols for independent oversight be established in order to mitigate the undue influence of MPs on council officials. The civil society should be empowered to monitor the progress and implementation of the CDF projects.

Lastly, the study recommends that a grievance redress mechanism should be integrated into CDF guidelines in order to ensure that complaints raised by the communities during project implementation and progress regarding the resolutions are properly recorded and tracked.

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APPENDICES

Appendix 1: Interview Guide for IDI/FGD with Chiefs/ADC

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Tabitha Gondwe, student at Mzuzu University and I would like to talk to you about the challenges in the implementation of Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Specifically, I want to know who the key players in the implementation of the CDF projects, their roles, the challenges in the implementation of the projects but also the coping mechanisms.

Age.....Gender.....Literacy level.....

1. Who are the key players in the implementation of the CDF projects?

- a) What is your understanding about CDF?
- b) How beneficial is CDF to the community?
- c) Apart from you, who else is involved in the implementation of CDF?
- d) Who is the proprietor of CDF in your area?

2. What are the roles of the key players?

- a) What are your roles as a committee?
- b) What are the roles of the following in the implementation of CDF
 - i. The District Commissioner
 - ii. MP
 - iii. Chiefs
- c) Describe how these roles have affected the progress and implementation of the CDF projects
- d) Who monitors and evaluates the progress of the projects and how?

3. What challenges do the community leaders face in the implementation of the CDF projects?

- a) Describe your working relationship with the other parties involved in the implementation of CDF projects.
- b) How are CDF projects implemented in your community?
- c) Who decides about which project is to be started in your area?
- d) What challenges do you face during the implementation of CDF projects?
- e) How often do you meet with the MP, councilor, chiefs and the communities regarding CDF? What do you discuss?
- f) How is the CDF account managed?

4. What are the coping mechanisms of the local communities?

- a) Have you ever had problems/complaints in regard to CDF in your community? If yes give examples.
- b) How do you manage such complaints as chiefs/ADC?
- c) Do you report such cases to anyone? Explain.
- d) What are the responses you get when you report?
- e) How do you react to such responses?

5. Is there anything more you would like to add?

Thank you for your time

Appendix 2: Interview guide for IDIs with Dowa District Council Officials

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Tabitha Gondwe, student at Mzuzu University and I would like to talk to you about the challenges in the implementation of Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Specifically, I want to know who the key players in the implementation of the CDF projects, their roles, the challenges in the implementation of the projects but also the coping mechanisms.

Age.....Gender.....

6. Who are the key players in the implementation of the CDF projects?

- e) What is your understanding about CDF?
- f) How is it beneficial to the community?
- g) Apart from you, who else is involved in the implementation of CDF?

7. What are the competing roles of the key players?

- e) What are your roles?
- f) What are the roles of
 - iv. The Chief
 - v. MP
 - vi. Area Development Committee (ADC)
 - vii. Councilor
- g) Describe how the competing roles have affected the progress and implementation of the CDF projects
- h) Who monitors and evaluates the progress of the projects and how?

8. What challenges do the community leaders face in the implementation of the CDF projects?

- g) Describe your working relationship with the other parties involved in the implementation of CDF project?
- h) How do you communicate with MPs, Councilors, Chiefs and ADC in regards to CDF?
- i) How does the MP, Councilor, ADC and Chief implement CDF projects in their areas of designation?
- j) What are the challenges you have been experiencing in the implementation of CDF projects?

9. What are the coping mechanisms of the local communities?

- f) Have you ever received complaints in regard to CDF? If yes give examples.
- g) How do you handle such complaints?
- h) How does the community react to such responses?

10. Is there anything more you would like to add?

Thank you for your time

Appendix 3: Interview Guides for IDIs with MPs and Councilors

I want to thank you for taking the time to meet with me today. My name is Tabitha Gondwe, student at Mzuzu University and I would like to talk to you about the challenges in the implementation of Constituency Development Fund (CDF). Specifically, I want to know who the key players in the implementation of the CDF projects, their roles, the challenges in the implementation of the projects but also the coping mechanisms.

11. Who are the key players in the implementation of the CDF projects?

- h) What is your understanding about CDF?
- i) How is it beneficial to the community?
- j) Apart from you, who else is involved in the implementation of CDF?

12. What are the competing roles of the key players?

- i) What are your roles?
- j) What are the roles of
 - viii. The District Commissioner
 - ix. Chiefs
 - x. Area Development Committee
 - xi. Councilor/MP
- k) Who monitors and evaluates the progress of the projects and how?

13. What challenges do the community leaders face in the implementation of the CDF projects?

- k) Describe your working relationship with the community leaders in regards to CDF?
- l) How do you communicate with leaders in regards to CDF?
- m) How are CDF projects implemented?
- n) How helpful are community leaders during the implementation of CDF projects?
- o) What problems do you face with community leaders during the implementation of CDF projects?

14. What are the coping mechanisms of the local communities?

- i) Do you ever receive community complaints concerning CDF projects? If yes give example.
- j) How do you handle such complaints?
- k) How does the community respond to the way complaints are handled?

15. Is there anything more you would like to add?

Thank you for your time

Appendix 4: Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee Approval

	MZUZU UNIVERSITY DIRECTORATE OF RESEARCH	Mzuzu University Private Bag 201 Luwingu Mzuzu 2 M.A.S.W.I TEL: 01 320 722 FAX: 01 320 646
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MZUZU UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE (MZUNIREC)

Ref No: MZUNIREC/DOR/25/131 **15/12/2025**

Tabitha Gondwe,
Mzuzu University,
P/Bag 201,
Luwingu,
Mzuzu.

Email:

Dear Tabitha,

RESEARCH ETHICS AND REGULATORY APPROVAL AND PERMIT FOR PROTOCOL REF NO. MZUNIREC/DOR/25/131: ANALYSIS OF THE CHALLENGES ON THE IMPLEMENTATION OF CDF FUNDS ON COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT IN DOWA SOUTH EAST AND DOWA CENTRAL CONSTITUENCIES

Having satisfied all the relevant ethical and regulatory requirements, I am pleased to inform you that the above referred research protocol has officially been approved. You are now permitted to proceed with its implementation. Should there be any amendments to the approved protocol in the course of implementing it, you shall be required to seek approval of such amendments before implementation of the same.

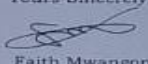
This approval is valid for one year from the date of issuance of this approval. If the study goes beyond one year, an annual approval for continuation shall be required to be sought from the Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee (MZUNIREC) in a format that is available at the Secretariat. Once the study is finalised, you are required to furnish the Committee with a final report of the study.

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The Committee reserves the right to carry out compliance inspection of this approved protocol at any time as may be deemed by it. As such, you are expected to properly maintain all study documents including consent forms.

Wishing you a successful implementation of your study.

Yours Sincerely,


Faith Mwangonde
Research Ethics Administrator
FOR : MZUNIREC CHAIRPERSON

MZUZU UNIVERSITY
RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE
15 DEC 2025
PRIVATE BAG 201 LUWINGA
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Mzuzu University Research Ethics Committee
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Appendix 5: Clearance Letter

