COMMUNITY RADIO AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN MALAWI

Thesis Submitted for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy at the University of Leicester

by

Peter Matthews Mhagama

Department of Media and Communication

University of Leicester

May 2015
DEDICATION

This Thesis is dedicated to my two daughters Alice and Patience
ABSTRACT

COMMUNITY RADIO AS A TOOL FOR DEVELOPMENT: A CASE STUDY OF COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN MALAWI

The thesis investigates community radio as a tool for development drawing on case studies of Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations in Malawi. The thesis employs communication for development and ‘another’ development theories to help understand the role of community radio in development. The research aims are firstly, to investigate the extent and ways in which community radio is used as a tool for development through audience participation; and secondly to examine the extent to which communication for development in community radio in Malawi takes the form of participatory communication. Using the case study approach (Yin, 2009), the thesis specifically examines the functions of participation in development through community radio; whether community radio can encourage development through enhancing capabilities and participation even when people do not own and manage the stations; how radio listening Clubs (RLCs) help to expand people’s capabilities; and how the programming of community radio in Malawi is influenced by the agendas of development agencies. Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation and Carpentier’s (2011) minimalist and maximalist versions of participation are adopted as criteria for evaluating the different levels of participation in and through community radio.

The findings show that community radio in Malawi firstly, affords ordinary people opportunities to participate in the media and in development projects and, secondly
informs people about development initiatives from development agencies. Although these functions overlap, the thesis finds that community radio stations in Malawi concentrate more on the latter. The programming of the stations is influenced by the agendas of development agents who sponsor programmes thereby reducing opportunities for participation. However, although people’s participation in the media is low or reduced, there are other ways in which through the media, people can benefit, enhance their capabilities and through which development agencies can reach their goals. The thesis argues that the radio stations fit well with an approach to development related to building capabilities (Sen, 1992) because they sometimes give people resources to enhance their capabilities and sometimes act as partners with development agencies and government, facilitating a variety of development goals. The thesis concludes that community radio in Malawi enables capabilities although very rarely through fully-fledged participation.

**Key words:** capabilities, community radio, development, Malawi, participation, radio listening clubs
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

My sincere thanks and gratitude should go, first of all, to my supervisors, Professor Peter Lunt and Dr Katie Moylan for their unwavering support and guidance to ensure the successful completion of this thesis. Their comments, feedback and suggestions were always timely, constructive, and value adding. Working under their supervision and guidance, in a friendly, warm and relaxed environment, gave me the confidence to forge ahead on this rather lonely and turbulent journey.

I would also like to thank the staff and management of both Nkhotakota and Mzimba Community radio stations for allowing me to conduct my research within their institutions. Special thanks should go to the station manager of Nkhotakota Community Radio station, Mr Alhaji Rasheed and his deputy Edward Kuwacha for their cooperation and assistance during the entire duration of my research. Mr James Kumwenda and Mr Mussolin Jere of Mzimba Community Radio station also deserve special mention for their cooperation. My gratitude will not be complete if I do not mention the listeners in all the radio listening clubs I visited during my research. Their responses have shaped the content of this thesis. I also acknowledge all the people I interacted with during the course of conducting my research. Phillip Chinkhokwe, Pascal Ng’ombe of Nkhotakota Community Radio station, Lyness Sanga of FVR, Maltida Yuma of MACRA and Emmanual Kondowe of UNESCO and others too numerous to mention are some of the people who provided important information for this research.
To my two daughters, Alice and Patience, each time I called to speak to you, you reminded me how much you missed me and I how much I missed you. At such a young age, the gap that my absence left in your lives is huge. You made me work hard so that I could finish in time and return to you. It is for this reason that I dedicate this thesis to you two.

I would also like to thank and express my appreciation to the Commonwealth Scholarship Commission for the award of the scholarship to study for my PhD. Without this award, maybe I would not have done a PhD.

To all my friends too numerous to mention, I sincerely thank you for your encouragement via emails, facebook and phone calls. It is your encouragement that gave me the urge to go on. My colleagues in the department of Media and Communication at the University of Leicester, I also thank you for being part of this experience.

Finally, my many thanks and appreciation go to God who makes everything possible. To Him be the glory.
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1: List of key informants and types of questions asked .................................................. 77
Table 2: The listening clubs where FGDs were conducted .......................................................... 83
Table 3: List of documents analyzed for this research ................................................................. 94
Table 4: Audience share of radio, TV, and newspapers in Nkhotakota District (Source: Nkhotakota SEP, 2010) ..................................................................................................................... 109
Table 5: Share of radio listenership in Nkhotakota (Source: MACRA website) ......................... 130
Table 6: Share of radio listenership in Mzimba (Source: MACRA website) ............................... 132
Table 7: Community radio station’s expenditure .......................................................................... 142
LIST OF FIGURES

FIGURE 1: MAP OF MALAWI .................................................................................................................. 12
FIGURE 2: LADDER OF PARTICIPATION (ARNSTEIN, 1969: 217)...................................................... 29
FIGURE 3: NKHOTAKOTA COMMUNITY RADIO STATION ................................................................. 127
FIGURE 4: SOME MEMBERS OF MPAMANTHA FARMERS CLUB TAKING NOTES ...................... 207
FIGURE 5: A DEMONSTRATION MAIZE GARDEN AT KASHATI FARMERS CLUB ..................... 212
FIGURE 6: PROGRAMMING OF NKHOTAKOTA COMMUNITY RADIO STATION .......................... 232
FIGURE 7: PROGRAMMING OF MZIMBA COMMUNITY RADIO STATION ...................................... 233
# TABLE OF CONTENTS

DEDICATION ........................................................................................................................................ ii

ABSTRACT .......................................................................................................................................... iii

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS .................................................................................................................... v

LIST OF TABLES ............................................................................................................................... vii

LIST OF FIGURES ............................................................................................................................. viii

TABLE OF CONTENTS ...................................................................................................................... ix

CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION ........................................................................................................ 1

1.1 Background to the Study ................................................................................................................... 1

1.2 Definitions of Community Radio .................................................................................................... 2

1.3 Relationship between Community Media and Development ......................................................... 6

1.4 Introduction of Community Broadcasting In Malawi ................................................................. 8

1.4.1 Country Profile ........................................................................................................................ 9

1.4.2 Brief History of Radio Broadcasting in Malawi ......................................................................... 12

1.4.3 Result of Opening up of the Airwaves: Broadcasting Policy in Malawi (1994 to Date) .... 15

1.5 How is the ‘Community’ Defined in Community Radio Broadcasting? ....................................... 18

1.6 Reason for Choosing the Topic ....................................................................................................... 21

1.7 Organization of the Thesis ............................................................................................................ 22

CHAPTER TWO: KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY RADIO ............................................. 24

2.0 Introduction ................................................................................................................................... 24

2.1 Ownership Issues and the Implications for Development ............................................................ 24

2.1.1 Participation in the Media and the Implications for Development .......................................... 27

2.1.2 Community Radio as Non-profit Entity .................................................................................... 31

2.2 Community Radio and Development .......................................................................................... 34
2.3 Case Studies of Community Radio in Malawi: Identifying the Communication Needs of Rural Communities in Malawi ................................................................. 36

2.3.1 Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) ........................................................................... 38

2.4 Community Radio as Farm Radio ........................................................................ 43

2.5 Research Aims and Objectives ........................................................................... 44

2.6 Chapter summary .............................................................................. 45

CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION ........................................... 47

3.0 Introduction ........................................................................................................ 47

3.1 Mainstreaming Participation in Development Discourses ................................ 50

3.2 Development Redefined ................................................................................... 54

3.3 Community Radio, Participatory Communication and Development ................ 57

3.4 Chapter Summary .............................................................................. 60

CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS .................................................................. 62

4.0. Introduction ....................................................................................................... 62

4.1 Methodological Considerations ......................................................................... 62

4.2 Case Study Design ........................................................................................... 64

4.2.1 Selection of the Cases .................................................................................. 66

4.3 Gaining Access ................................................................................................. 68

4.4 Participant Observation in the Community Radio Stations .............................. 72

4.5 Field Notes ........................................................................................................ 72

4.6 Interviews with Key Informants ......................................................................... 76

4.7 Participant Observation in the Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) ....................... 82

4.8 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs) ..................................................................... 87

4.8.1 Number of Focus Groups ............................................................................ 89

4.8.2 Composition of the Focus Groups ............................................................... 90
CHAPTER SIX: ROLE OF PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY RADIO .......................... 147

6.0 Introduction........................................................................................................................................147

6.1 Forms of Participation: Participation in the Media ............................................................................. 148

6.1.1 Content-related Participation: Individual Right to communicate and Listen to Programmes .................................................................................................................. 149

6.1.2 Content-related Participation: Participation in Programme Scheduling ........................................ 151

6.1.3 Content-related Participation: Participation through Programme Production ............................ 154

6.1.4 Content-related Participation: Interaction between Producers and Receivers of Messages .............. 157

6.1.5 Content-related Participation: Participation through Feedback on Programming ..................... 159

6.2 Participation in the Media: Structural Participation ........................................................................... 160

6.2.1 Structural Participation: Participation through Financial Contributions ..................................... 161

6.2.2 Structural Participation: Participation in the Management of the Radio Station ....................... 164

6.3 Participation through the Media ......................................................................................................... 167

6.3.1 Participation through Self-representation ...................................................................................... 168

6.3.2 Participation through Public Debate ............................................................................................. 173

6.4 Expanding Participation through the Combination of Community Radio and Mobile Phones .................................................................................................................. 176

6.4.1 Evidence of the Penetration of Mobile Phones in Rural Areas in Malawi .................................... 176

6.4.2 How Mobile Phones are Expanding Opportunities for Participation in the Media and Development ........................................................................................................... 178

6.4.3 Benefits of the Combination of Mobile Phones and Community Radio .................................... 181

6.5 Chapter Summary .............................................................................................................................. 183

CHAPTER SEVEN: RADIO LISTENING CLUBS (RLCs) AND HOW THEY HELP TO EXPAND PEOPLE’S CAPABILITIES ........................................................................................................... 186

7.0 Introduction ........................................................................................................................................ 186

7.1 Reasons for Establishing Radio Listening Clubs .............................................................................. 187
Appendix 7: Table of Sponsors ........................................................................................................................................ 340

Appendix 8: MAP OF NKHOTAKOTA DISTRICT SHOWING BOUNDARIES OF TAs ................................. 342
CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background to the Study

This research investigated the role of community radio in development using case studies of Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations in Malawi. The study seeks to contribute to the growing scholarship on community radio worldwide and its role in the development of local communities. I argue that community radio has potential to encourage development through enhancing capabilities (Sen, 1999) even when people are not fully participating in the activities of the radio. In view of this, the thesis also advances debates in the area of theories of participation regarding its (participation) relationship to development. It adds to these debates by showing that there are separate routes to community media having a role in development associated with different levels of participation (Arnstein, 1969; Carpentier, 2011). The thesis, therefore, questions the overemphasis on participation as a panacea of development challenges. What prompted this research are the many claims and assumptions that community radio is a tool for development (Berrigan, 1979; Rennie, 2006; Milan, 2009; Myers, 2011). For instance, the World Bank argues that community radio broadcasting helps poor people to share information in their own languages, encourages debate on community development issues, and helps community members to identify, and benefit from, more opportunities (The World Bank Group, 2004 cited in Panos, 2005: 20). Furthermore, the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) (1998) argues that community radio serves a catalytic role in bringing about positive change, building vibrant communities and mobilizing people to action by informing and giving a voice to the voiceless. Community
radio is also said to give opportunities to local community members to become “producers,
not merely receivers, of information and opinion and are able to articulate for themselves
their social vision and demands” (Bresnaham, 2007: 212-213; Gumucio-Dagron, 2001).
These are some of the ways in which community radio is linked to development. All this
can be achieved through both people’s direct involvement in community radio station
activities and through participation in practices and events organized by the station (such
as Radio Listening Clubs). This research, therefore, had as one of its objectives to
investigate how community radio stations in Malawi provide opportunities for
participation in the media and in development processes.

1.2 Definitions of Community Radio

Community radio has been defined in multiple ways by scholars and media institutions.
Tabing (2002: 9) defines community radio as “one that is operated in the community, for
the community, about the community and by the community”. Community radio,
therefore, is established to work for the benefit of the people in the community it is meant
to serve both through providing programmes and information services and through the
opportunity to participate in running the station and other activities. This definition
presents community radio as operating differently from mainstream media. The major
difference being that while commercial and public service models both treat listeners as
objects to be captured for advertisers or to be informed, community radio aspires to treat
its listeners as subjects and participants (Lewis & Booth, 1989). Another important aspect
of this definition is that stations are ideally owned, managed and operated by the
community to varying degrees. The community can be either geographical or a community
of interest (Mtinde et al., 1998). AMARC-Europe (1994: 4) defines a community radio station as “a non-profit station currently broadcasting, which offers a service to the community in which it is located, or to which it broadcasts, while promoting the participation of this community in the radio”. This definition emphasizes the idea that community radio is operated on a non-profit basis and offers opportunities for participation to the members of the community. Furthermore, the station is under an association, trust or foundation, and is aimed to serve and benefit that community (Fraser and Estrada, 2001: 3).

The research took cognizance of the fact that community radio is referred to by different terms in different regions of the world and as such is used to achieve specific functions depending on the circumstances which led to the establishment of this form of media in those regions of the world. The first community radio stations to be established were Radio Sutatenza in Columbia in 1947 and the Miners’ Radio in 1949 in Bolivia, both in Latin America (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001). These earliest models of community radio were known as ‘People’s Radio’ or ‘Popular Radio’ and became the voice of the voiceless and the poor and a tool for development (Tamminga, 1997). Landless peasants, urban shack dwellers, impoverished indigenous nations and trade unions used community radio to voice their concerns and to mobilize themselves in an attempt to alleviate their poverty (Mtinde et al., 1998: 15). According to Tamminga (1997) the difference in the naming between ‘community’ and ‘popular’ radio is not just semantic. Community radio means a social function limited to democratizing communication or a way of providing access to the public sphere (Savage, 1989), whereas popular radio “implies a project of social
emancipation, incorporating all social groups that are marginalized or excluded from power at a global level” (Mata, 1993: 59). From this distinction, we note that there is an overlap of the functions of community and popular radios because access to the public sphere is one way of giving voice to marginalized and excluded groups of people.

The Latin American experience raises important issues regarding ownership of community radio stations and how they can encourage participation. For instance, Radio Sutatenza was established by a Catholic priest meaning that its ownership was private. However, the members of the community participated in development projects that the founder priest initiated such as adult literacy campaigns. In contrast, the Miners’ Radios of Bolivia were established by the miners themselves through their civil society groups (Fraser and Estrada, 2001). They were “independent, self-sustained, self-managed and faithfully served the interests of their communities” (Gumucio-Dagron, 2001: 46-47). The implication of this is that community radio stations do not necessarily need to be owned, managed and operated by the community all the time for ordinary people to participate. However, in Chapters 5 and 6, I will argue that different ownership styles accord people opportunities to participate in different ways which can affect the way participation contributes to development. Two philosophies of community radio broadcasting can be identified here, one which is fully owned and run by members of the community - and the other which is a ‘donor’ station funded by a body outside the community which sets the aims and purposes of the station. Although both models encourage community participation, the latter does not include the community owning and producing media content. However, participation in community radio is not only in production of content and managing or running the
stations but can include participation in development activities initiated or mediated by the community radio itself or on behalf of government and NGOs. In other words, some development goals can be achieved through the participation of the intended beneficiaries and forms of participation are often facilitated by donors. As Bessette (2004) argues, participatory development communication is a powerful tool for facilitating human development by encouraging community participation in development projects through community radio. It can, therefore, easily be concluded that some forms of participation through community radio involve owning and managing the stations and other forms of participation in the media mean getting actively involved in station activities.

Moving on to some parts of Europe, Australia and North America, minority groups such as indigenous immigrant, refugee and black communities who were marginalized by mainstream media used community radio to fight for their rights (Mtinde et al., 1998: 15). Viewed from that angle, community radio is described as ‘alternative media’ in some societies such as South Africa during the apartheid era and in Bolivia in Latin America (Johnson, 1991; O’Connor, 1990). Alternative media are “those media that provide a different point of view from that usually expressed that cater to communities not well served by the mass media, or that expressly advocate social change” (Watz, 2005: 2). During the apartheid era in South Africa, community media emerged among the oppressed people as part of the struggle against apartheid (Mtinde et al., 1998). In Africa, community radio is a part of the democratization process that spread across the continent in the early 1990’s, especially in Southern Africa of which Malawi is part. The democratization process resulted in the deregulation and liberalization of broadcasting from
authoritarianism (i.e. apartheid, one party systems of governments) that strictly controlled the airwaves to much more participatory, democratized and liberalized broadcasting systems (Lingela, 2008: 124; Fraser and Estrada, 2001). What followed was the adoption of a three-tier broadcasting system comprised of public service, commercial and community broadcasting (Lingela, 2008). Therefore, while acknowledging the different roles that community radio played and continues to play in different parts of the world, it is worthwhile to recognize the fact that “conceptually, community radio has undergone some paradigm shifts” (Banda, 2003: 3). In the case of Malawi and many parts of Africa community radio has been appropriated for local developmental purposes (Myers, 2011), hence the need to investigate community radio in Malawi in relation to that function conceptually by drawing upon the idea by Rennie (2006) and others discussed above that community radio can promote or enhance development.

1.3 Relationship between Community Media and Development

Community radio has also been referred to as “a communicative tool that can be used to mobilize communities to support development initiatives, either those started by the government, the international aid agencies, or the local Non-Governmental Organizations (NGO’s)” (Banda, 2003: 125). In this definition, community radio is presented as part of communication for development. Communication for development is defined as:

the use of communication processes, techniques and the media to help people toward a full awareness of their situation and their options for change, to resolve conflicts, to work towards consensus, to help people plan for actions for change and sustainable development, to help people acquire the knowledge and skills they need to improve their condition and that of society, and to improve the effectiveness of institutions (Fraser and Estrada, 1998: 63).
This definition raises a key issue for this dissertation, which Lennie and Tacchi (2013: 4) also reflect on when they ask: “How might development initiatives use communication to improve practices, to learn, and to help achieve sustainable development through participation with people on the ground?” Fraser and Estrada’s (1998) definition of communication for development refers to a range of development initiatives and goals which can be achieved through community radio, one of them being providing information and another promoting development projects. Furthermore, “community radio stations have the potential to promote good governance, transparency and accountability and to have the capacity to mobilize the people to take ownership of the developmental destiny” (Lingela, 2008:126). This dissertation examines which of these different ways are relevant in the Malawian context. Lennie and Tacchi (2013: 4-5) observe that “C4D [communication for development] encompasses all forms and modes of communication, including community radio […], and the use of various combinations of new and traditional media in support of development activities”. In short, communication for development examines the different ways in which the media contribute to development. Hence this research investigates the different ways in which community radio supports development in Malawi, participation being one of them.

According to Rennie (2006: 146) “although the development project should ultimately aim to make itself unnecessary, community media as a driver of social change may not have the ability to foster social change in the absence of the project”. Rennie seems to suggest that a community radio’s impact on development is most felt when it is part of a development
project. Much as this is may be true, community radio has the potential to promote development in the absence of a project given that communication and the transfer of information play a fundamental role in development (Servaes et al., 2012; Lennie and Tacchi, 2013). For example, when community radio broadcasts programmes that address community problems and when it provides ordinary people with access to relevant and localized information, they can use that information to bring positive changes in their lives and communities. That is an aspect of development related to enhancing people’s capabilities as shall be discussed in Chapter 3. Nonetheless, Rennie (2006) raises an important point as to whether community radio’s impact is more effective when there is a development project involved or whether community radio can facilitate development in the absence of a project. Whichever the case, emphasis is placed on people and how they use community radio to participate in their own development and that of their communities in different ways (Lennie and Tacchi, 2013). The next section presents the history of community broadcasting in Malawi.

1.4 Introduction of Community Broadcasting In Malawi

This section discusses the history of the media system in Malawi and sets the scene for understanding how community radio emerged in a country whose broadcasting system was monopolized by state broadcasting operating in the guise of a public broadcaster. The section presents the country profile and then explains the historical background of radio broadcasting in the transition from a single party system to multi-party system of government. This demonstrates how the transition from autocracy to democracy between 1993 and 1994 in Malawi led to media liberalization which also led to increased media
pluralism. It also sheds light on how the wave of media liberalization and pluralism which accompanied political change brought in a three tier broadcasting system of which community radio was part. However, I will argue that during the transition the country failed to formulate clear policies to govern the broadcasting sector. The chapter explains how the lack of a clear broadcasting policy in Malawi caused (and still causes) misunderstandings about the role of community radio.

1.4.1 Country Profile

Malawi is a relatively small landlocked country in Southern Africa bordered by Mozambique to the East, South and West; Zambia to the North West; and Tanzania to the North East (see Fig. 1 below). It covers a total of 118,484 square kilometres of which 94,076 are arable land. Almost one third of the country is covered by Lake Malawi. According to the National Statistical Office (NSO) (2008) the country’s population is 13,077,160. Malawi is divided into three geographical and administrative regions namely: Northern, Central and Southern. There are 28 administrative districts in the country. The Northern Region has six administrative districts, and it accounts for about 13 per cent of the national population; the Central Region, has nine districts and has about 42 per cent; and the Southern Region, with 13 districts, is the most populated with about 45 per cent of the country’s population (NSO, 2008). Administratively, the districts are further subdivided into Traditional Authorities (TA’s)\(^1\) presided over by senior chiefs. The TA’s

---

\(^1\) Malawi is a democratic republic with two spheres of government: national and local. Malawi has a single tier of local government comprising four cities, 28 district councils, two municipal councils and one town council. Traditional Authorities (TAs), Members of Parliament (MPs) and interest group representatives
are composed of villages and these are the smallest administrative units which are presided over by village headmen/women (NSO, 2011).

serve as ex officio members (non-voting members of the councils)

Figure 1: Map of Malawi

Malawi’s economy is mainly based on agriculture and the majority of the people (85 percent) live in rural areas where poverty\(^2\) is endemic and the main source of income is subsistence farming (NSO, 2011). In terms of literacy rates, 74 per cent of the adult population is literate with male literacy rate being higher at 83 per cent than the female literacy rate at 65 percent (NSO, 2011: 44). Overall, literacy rates are higher in urban areas than in rural areas, 93 percent as compared to 71 percent and higher among males than females both in urban and rural areas (NSO, 2011: 44). The economic and literacy levels described above present a picture of a country in need of various interventions to address the many development challenges ordinary people face. According to Chirwa (2005: 8) it is against this background that Malawi adopted poverty alleviation as a development strategy in 1995, one year after the introduction of multi-party democracy in order to address such adverse human suffering.

1.4.2 Brief History of Radio Broadcasting in Malawi

Malawi gained independence in July 1964 after being a British protectorate from 1891 when it was known as Nyasaland. After independence, Malawi was under the autocratic rule of Dr Hastings Kamuzu Banda and his Malawi Congress Party (MCP) from 1964 to 1994. The country embraced multiparty democracy in 1994 following a national

---

\(^2\) A household is considered poor if its annual per capita consumption expenditure is below the poverty line. The poverty line is a subsistence minimum expressed in Malawian Kwacha based on the cost-of-basic-needs methodology. It has two parts: minimum food expenditure based on the food requirements of individual and critical non-food consumption. Food needs are tied to the recommended daily calorie requirement. Non-food needs are estimated based on the expenditure patterns of households whose total expenditure is close to the minimum food expenditure. Individuals in households with consumption lower than the poverty line are labeled “poor” (NSO, 2009: 84).
referendum in 1993. Of particular significance during the transition from single-party rule to multi-party democracy in 1994 was the liberalization and opening up of the airwaves (Lingela, 2008). This was significant because the opening up of the airwaves saw the emergence of different private and community radio stations. Previously during the one party regime there was only one state controlled radio station, the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC). The MBC was established under the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) Act (1964) which vested all broadcasting powers in this station, implying that there was no provision for the establishment of other radio stations, let alone television³ (Manjawira and Mitunda, 2011). Article 19 (2006: 2)⁴ defines state broadcasting as being “controlled by the state and represents state interests. It is funded (at least in part) out of public money”. According to Panos (2005: 3) “in this system [single-party], control of information, like other means of power, was highly centralized”. Although the MBC Act (1964) was enacted, “there remain within the Malawian legal system a number of statutory provisions⁵, mainly carried over from government to government since the colonial period, that give the state powers which it can easily use to curtail pluralism and diversity in broadcasting” (Panos, 2005: 5). For example, the two governments that have since ruled Malawi in the multi-party era (United Democratic Front and Democratic Progressive Party) have both used MBC as a propaganda tool to advance

---

³ Malawi has had no television until 1999 when the first television station, Television Malawi (TVM) now MBC-TV, was established.

⁴ Article XIX is a global campaign for free expression. It is a human rights pioneer, which defends and promotes freedom of expression and freedom of information all over the world. It was established in 1987. See http://www.article19.org

⁵ According to Friedrich-Ebert-Stiftung, (2008), African Media Barometer: Malawi “Malawi does not have laws restricting freedom of expression. Most of the laws date back to the colonial era, when there was no plurality in the media industry. Most of the laws were never reviewed or repealed commensurate with the new political reality of multi-party democracy that has prevailed since 1994”.
their political agendas at the expense of dissenting views just as was the case under the single party rule. According to Panos (2005: 1)

the current broadcasting landscape in Malawi is a function of a number of related social, economic and political factors, including the country’s history of colonial and one-party rule which cultivated a political culture that was antithetical to pluralism; low levels of technology investment and development; and high levels of poverty that constrain the majority of people from having means to access radio and television broadcasts.

It is proper, therefore, to attribute the improvements in the broadcasting sector or media landscape in general to the political transition from single party to multi-party politics between 1993 and 1994. As Chirwa (2005) argues,

the political context to [this] is that of a country in transition from a closed society to an open one in which there [were] calls for popular participation in policy-making processes and other national issues. The politics of transition also opened up spaces for the emergence of new institutions of civil society, calling for transparency in matters of development policy and other state affairs.

To that effect, in 1995 the first democratically elected government of the United Democratic Front (UDF) led by Bakili Muluzi was compelled to bring about reforms in the media sector. For example, it liberalized the press and opened up the airwaves in line with the political atmosphere of the time and the calls from different sectors for such a need (Chirwa, 2005). In the next section, I examine the consequences of opening up the airwaves.
1.4.3 Result of Opening up of the Airwaves: Broadcasting Policy in Malawi (1994 to Date)

The constitution of the Republic of Malawi, adopted at the introduction of multiparty democracy in May 1995, was based “predominantly on liberal democratic principles that created room for a radical transformation of the broadcasting landscape” (Panos, 2005: 3). Therefore, several policy instruments were developed to allow for the regulation of broadcasting services. For example, the Communications Act (1998) provided direction for regulating both public and private media so that they served public interests (Government of Malawi (GoM), 1998). The Communications Act (1998) established the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) as an independent body to allow a level playing field in the practice of broadcasting. Further, MACRA issues licenses to broadcasters and manages the liberalization of the airwaves (GoM, 1998). As a result, the period spanning the early 1990s to date has seen an influx of media organizations in Malawi. For example, at the time of writing, there were 27 radio stations including community radio stations and four television channels broadcasting throughout the country. Similarly, tens of newspapers have graced the streets of Malawi since 1992, although most of them have since folded.

As the only radio station in Malawi during the period of single party rule, MBC was broadcasting from Blantyre in the Southern Region and had studios in the Central and Northern Regions, thereby covering virtually the whole country. As a result of opening up of the airwaves MBC introduced another channel at the same station, called MBC Radio 2 FM and named the original station MBC Radio 1 FM. MBC Radio 2 was more of a
commercially funded public broadcaster because of the volume of advertising it started accepting and broadcasting which was more than what was on Radio 1 FM (Manjawira and Mitunda, 2011). In 1995, the first private radio station, African Bible College (ABC) Radio was established in the capital Lilongwe by the American Baptist Church and a number of radio stations have followed suit. In 1998, Dzimwe was established as the first community radio station in the country (Banda, 2007). Since then a number of community radio stations have developed as a result of liberalization. At the time of writing (2014), there are four community radio stations, namely in Dzimwe, Nkhotakota, Mudzi Wathu, and Mzimba. In addition, Usisya and Chancellor College Community Radio stations have started broadcasting and eleven others had been granted licenses.

From the discussion above, “what seems to be lacking in the Communications Act, and therefore in Malawi’s broadcasting policy and regulatory regime are clear principles to govern the administration of the community radio broadcasting sector, which is mostly bunched together with private, and even commercial radio stations” (Banda, 2003: 137; see also Chirwa, 2005; Lingela, 2008). This is the case in most countries in Southern Africa except South Africa. “The region lacks policies for the promotion of comprehensive, in-depth and impartial news and information coverage – particularly at the local level” (Barker, 2001: 13). The Communication Sector Policy statement, which is the only policy document covering broadcasting in Malawi, defines community radio as “broadcasting services which serve a particular community and are not for profit” (Ministry of Information, n.d.). Worth noting here is the fact that the policy statement does not state the specific function of community radio. To illustrate the point further, the Malawi
Communications Act (1998), which is the major law governing broadcasting in the country, establishes a three tier broadcasting system. Section 47, Sub-section 1 states that:

The Authority may issue broadcasting licenses for radio and television broadcasting services of the following kinds-
(a) public broadcasting services;
(b) private broadcasting services; and
(c) community broadcasting services (GoM, 1998: 22).

The procedures for obtaining a community broadcasting licence will be outlined in Chapter 5. The Communications Act (1998) also does not state what function community radio stations might play in Malawi. However, Section 36, Sub-section 1 of the Act states that, “The Authority shall publish a schedule describing each kind of radio licence that may be issued under this section and the fees payable for each such licence” (GoM, 1998: 18). Therefore, one needs to go beyond the Communications Act itself and analyze the schedule which describes the licence conditions given to community radio stations and how they are to operate. According to Banda (2003: 137), “Malawi presents a country whose development of the community radio broadcasting sector has been slow as the development of policy and legislation to govern the sector”.

Therefore, although the liberalization of the airwaves was a welcome development in Southern Africa including Malawi, as it opened up markets to private enterprises, it all happened in what Barker (2001) describes as a ‘policy vacuum’. It can be argued, therefore, that while the Malawi’s Communications Act (1998) focused on economic policy (deregulation or opening up of the airwaves), which has had some success; there was a lack of clarity on social policy. In contrast in the United Kingdom (UK) there is a policy regarding community radio where the purpose for which community radio stations
are licensed is to deliver social gain (community benefit) (Ofcom, 2011). ‘Social gain’ is defined as “a service for underserved groups; the facilitation of discussion and the expression of opinion; the provision of education or training (to non-employees); and facilitating the better understanding of the particular community and the strengthening of links within it” (Ofcom, 2011). This thesis, therefore, examines how community radio stations in Malawi are managing their practices in the context of donor funding, deregulation and a relative policy vacuum on the public purpose of community radio.

1.5 How is the ‘Community’ Defined in Community Radio Broadcasting?

According to Mtimde et al. (1998: 12) “the term ‘community’ can either be defined as: a geographically based group of persons and/or a social group or sector of the public who have common or specific interests”. In Malawi, the Communication Sector Policy Statement defines a community as “a geographically founded community and a group of people in Malawi who have a specific common interest” (Ministry of Information, n.d.). To that effect, MACRA issues two types of community broadcasting licenses; geographical and community of interest. The difference is that in a geographical community, broadcasting serves people living in a particular geographic location while in a community of interest, the community served has a specific ascertainable common interest (Teer-Tomaselli, 2001). Although MACRA does not distinguish between geographical and community of interest, licenses for geographical community radio stations are given to a community covering a radius of 100 kilometers, while those of community of interest are primarily given to religious institutions for the broadcast of religious and other special
interest programmes that cover the whole country or a region of the country. In this dissertation, I am primarily concerned with geographical community radio stations not communities of interest. However, while referring to the Independent Broadcasting Association (IBA) Act (1997) of South Africa, Teer-Tomaselli (2001: 234) notes that the IBA’s definitions of community radio are “empirically slippy (sic), not to say tautologous since they propose that a community radio station is one which serves a particular community, while begging the question of what constitutes a community”. This is also the case in Malawi. For Chirwa (2005), in Malawi this confusion arises from the definition of ‘community radio’ as provided in the law itself. The definition centres on transmission coverage and content of broadcasted materials. Thus, a community radio “is supposed to cover a radius of not more than 100 kilometres, with a transmission capacity of not more than 300 watts, and limited to a particular geographical area” (Chirwa, 2005: 29). This is the definition that I use in this thesis although it is also problematic in the sense that the coverage of some stations goes beyond the 100 kilometre radius.

For purposes of this thesis, community radio stations are defined as “small scale decentralized broadcasting initiatives which are easily accessed by local people, actively encourage their participation in programming, and which include some element of community ownership or membership” (Myers, 2000: 90). This definition emphasizes involvement and participation of listeners in the activities of the radio station. In addition, community radio stations in Malawi have adopted a development agenda which is partly aimed at being achieved through the participation of marginalized people. Viewed from this perspective, community radio in Malawi is part of grassroots development
communication. Community radio in Malawi was established under certain conditions including deregulation and donor sponsorship. Many of the donors were development agencies with development agendas. Community radio, as part of communication for development, can therefore achieve development in a variety of ways including participation but also publicizing development initiatives, education, agricultural, health programmes, and so on. As Milan (2009: 600) argues,

...community media cover diverse topics, but often they embrace what can be called a ‘social mission’. For example, an educational focus characterizes many stations in Africa: health and child care programmes, farming tips, human and women’s rights, literacy classes. Their impact is more relevant when the programmes are created by the community for the community.

Here ‘participation’ of the local people is presented as an important aspect of the development process. Proponents of participatory communication argue that “without people’s participation, no project can be successful and last long enough to support social change” (Gumucio-Dagron, 2008: 70). Milan (2009: 600) further argues that:

When done by the community for the community, community media can contribute to development in two (main) ways:

- At the process level, as a channel of participation: Community media represent the voice of the voiceless, enabling citizens to raise their concerns; as open access media they represent an instrument for the existence of democracy.
- At the symbolic level, as a means of empowerment: Giving people the possibility to take initiative on the local scale, they show that change is possible.

In the process of development, Rennie (2006: 134) argues that “participatory media projects often rely upon and generate innovative relationships between the community and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development organizations, and other institutions”. This implies that there is often a development agenda behind the establishment of community radio. However, I will argue in Chapter 5 that the
involvement of NGOs in the operations of community radio stations is slowly and gradually diluting participation. It is further argued that many community radio stations tend to be located within a development project which employs participatory communication (Rennie, 2006). This reinforces the idea that community radio is sometimes used as part of the communication strategy of those development projects. Communication is a necessary component in development projects because it “enables expression, and dialog; raises awareness of social-structural problems; and fosters self-reflection among marginalized and disadvantaged populations” (Inagaki, 2007: 2). Therefore, development projects and goals are realized in a variety of ways through community radio including dissemination of information, educational programmes and through participation of local people in the development process.

1.6 Reason for Choosing the Topic

In view of the discussion above, this research firstly investigated the specific role that community radio stations play in Malawi. There are also a lot of grey areas in as far as community broadcasting is concerned which can affect the way community radio stations can play the developmental role. For example, is community radio still being used in a top-down manner? Secondly, donor funding and community ownership of community radio remain contested issues in studies of community radio. Therefore, how does donor funding influence the agenda of community radio and how does it affect its programming and management initiatives? The presence of development experts or donors in grassroots (bottom-up) participatory projects can lead to the hybridization of such projects. Is another
paradigm of development emerging from these practices and debates? What is the impact of that on participation and development? I investigated these issues on the ground by focusing on Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations in Malawi and in this thesis I provide insights to these questions.

1.7 Organization of the Thesis

This thesis is divided into ten chapters. Chapter Two reviews the literature on community radio, discusses the key characteristic features of community radio and how they are employed by community radio stations, and outlines the aims and objectives of the dissertation. Chapter Three gives the theoretical and critical framework, discusses participatory communication theory and the issue of development as defined by Sen (1999). It examines the different levels of participation and how participation in community radio can help to expand people’s capability. Chapter Four describes and justifies the methods of data collection and analysis used in the research; a case study approach in which a number of methods are used. Chapter Five presents an analysis of the context for understanding the circumstances in which the radio stations were established and the environment in which they are operating. This chapter examines further how issues of ownership and reliance on donor funding affect the performance of community radio stations. In Chapter 6, I discuss how community radio gives audiences an opportunity to participate in the media and in development projects. The chapter discusses different forms of participation and relates each form of participation to audience members’ accounts of their involvement in community radio activities. Chapter 7 continues the discussion on participation and analyzes how audiences participate through joining Radio Listening
Clubs (RLCs) and how this potentially expands people’s capabilities. Chapter 8 focuses on how the community radio stations support development through their programming which addresses a number of community development challenges and development programmes. Chapter 9 examines the evidence for the impact of community radio on development. Chapter 10 is the conclusion which sums up the findings and arguments presented in the thesis, presents the recommendations and directions for future research.
CHAPTER TWO: KEY CHARACTERISTICS OF COMMUNITY RADIO

2.0 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature on community radio. The review of the literature attempts to link different studies of community radio stations to identify commonalities and differences in practice and how these relate to community radio broadcasting in Malawi. More importantly, it will help to identify gaps in the study of community radio, some of which this dissertation addresses. The key characteristics of community radio that distinguish it from commercial and public radio are community ownership, participation and operating as a non-profit entity (AMARC, 1998; Mtilde et al., 1998; Fraser and Estrada, 2001). The chapter, therefore, reviews what can be learned from the academic literature about how these characteristics shape community radio in general and to begin to think through how community radio stations in Malawi have embedded these principles in their operations. Finally, the chapter gives the aims and objectives of this dissertation.

2.1 Ownership Issues and the Implications for Development

According to Tabing (2002:11) “community radio can be managed or controlled by one group, by combined groups, or of people such as women, children, farmers, fisher folk, ethnic groups, or senior citizens”. This implies that these specific groups of people participate in the daily running, in the management, programme production and financing of the station. For this reason community radio is part of participatory communication. Participatory communication refers to “community owned and operated media outlets established for the explicit purpose of facilitating community communication and
promoting local development initiatives” (Howley, 2010: 185). In practice, since not everyone in a community can participate, ownership and control of community radio stations is often undertaken by an association, trust or foundation (Fraser and Estrada, 2001). In some instances, “community radio can be owned by non-governmental organizations working in communities” (Mtinde et al., 1998: 15), by civil society organizations or the local government operating in the area (Rennie, 2006). Therefore, there are different degrees or forms of community radio ownership and not all community radio stations are wholly owned by the communities they are meant to serve. The community radio stations in Malawi that are the focus of this study were initiated by members of the community but relied upon donor funding to set them up. In lamenting ‘the growing pains of community radio in Africa’, da Costa (2012: 145) argues that “top down approaches to building community radio stations will at least best lead to the development of a sector whose incentives are distorted and whose purpose will ultimately move away from the accepted definition and understanding of ‘community radio’”. What da Costa is suggesting is that community radio stations which are established with donor funding should not be recognized as community radio or should not be allowed to operate under the banner of community radio. He is afraid that “at worst, the emerging model of community radio stations that routinely fail will continue to be replicated throughout the continent” (da Costa, 2012: 145). From the perspective of a normative view of community radio being established and managed ‘for the people by the people’, da Costa is right, because community radio is meant to empower marginalized groups of people by enabling them to have control over radio stations, content and operations. Receiving donations and financial assistance from NGOs or government potentially gives power to these outside agencies
and reduces the autonomy of the community. If the situation is not checked it can perpetuate ‘structural inequalities and power imbalance’ (Howley, 2010), in programming, ownership and control of community radio stations.

In this dissertation, the focus is on stations that serve local communities. These community radio stations are vulnerable because they are small and local. They are run and operated by a team of non-professional volunteers drawn from the community and who formulate programmes for the station depending on their knowledge of their community (Lunt and Livingstone, 2012). The programmes often focus on local concerns and issues and are broadcast in the local language “using indigenous knowledge and creative talents to meet the specific informational and cultural needs of the community” (Girard, 1992 cited in Tamminga, 1997: 14). Realising the ideals of autonomy and achieving adequate levels of funding is a common problem. Another reason why community ownership is considered necessary is that it is understood to be important to underpinning the process of democratizing the communication system. Different patterns of ownership can influence the extent to which members of the community can participate. In view of the foregone discussion, an important question to ask is whether community radio can meet development goals even though it does not meet the ideals of community media? In an attempt to answer this question, Servaes (2000) notes that a lot has changed since the concept of communication for development was introduced in the 1960’s when, in the context of development, community media were used in a top-down manner to support development initiatives. Servaes (2000: 85) argues that “for today’s change and
development strategies, the communication aims are to stimulate debate and ‘conscientization’ for participatory decision-making and action, and second, to help people acquire the new knowledge and skills they need”. This relates to the use of the media to expand people’s capabilities (Sen, 1992). Therefore, in this dissertation, a key research question is whether community radio can encourage development through expanding capabilities and participation even though stations are not fully owned and managed by the community members.

2.1.1 Participation in the Media and the Implications for Development

Another key characteristic feature of community radio is participation. Participation “comes in a variety of forms” (Zakus & Lysack, 2011: 7), and as a result it has proved difficult to define and implement in development initiatives. For that reason it has also been defined differently by different scholars. To that end, Carpentier (2011) classifies ordinary people’s involvement in the media into two interrelated forms, participation in the media and participation through the media. The difference between the two is that “participation in the media deals with participation in the production of media output (content-related participation) and in media organizational decision-making (structural participation)” (Carpentier, 2011: 68). On the other hand, “participation through the media deals with the opportunities for mediated participation in public debate and for self-representation in the variety of public spaces that characterize the social” (Carpentier, 2011: 67). These forms of participation will be discussed in detail in Chapter 6 where they will be used to determine the forms of participation as they apply in Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations.
Carpentier (2011) further distinguishes between minimalist and maximalist forms of participation. In the minimalist form of participation, “media professionals retain strong control over process and outcome, restricting participation to access and interaction, to the degree that one wonders whether the concept of participation is still appropriate” (Carpentier, 2011: 69). In this form, ‘participation’ can be lip service, a term aimed to mislead people with the promise of empowerment while reducing their agency at the same time. On the other hand, in the maximalist form, “the consensus-oriented models of democracy (and participation) emphasize the importance of dialogue and deliberation and focus on collective decision-making based on rational arguments a’ la Habermas in a public sphere” (Carpentier, 2011: 67-8). Carpentier’s distinction is a useful starting point. However, they represent the ends of a continuum of participation that can be located on Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of citizen participation.

On Arnstein’s ladder, citizen participation follows a continuum with non-participation at the bottom of the ladder, token participation in the middle and citizen power at the very top (Arnstein, 1969). Each of these categories has different levels of participation as shown in Figure 1 below.
“In ‘non-participation’ there is no participation and the aim is to “enable power holders to ‘educate’ or ‘cure’ the participants” (Arnstein, 1969: 127). Non-participation can be equated to Carpentier’s (2011) minimalist participation. ‘Token participation’ involves informing, consultation and placation. In this category, people’s views are sought but they are not involved in making final decisions. ‘Citizen power’ is the highest level of participation whereby members of the community are treated as equal partners and have full control over decision-making processes and resources (Arnstein, 1969). This relates to Carpentier’s (2011) maximalist participation. As Klees et al. (1986) argue, “for advocates
of grassroots development, participation has become the benchmark for measuring the effectiveness of grassroots processes” (cited in Tamminga, 1997: 94). I, therefore, use Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation as criteria for evaluating the different forms of participation in community media and the role of different levels of participation in development. Arnstein’s ladder provides us with useful criteria by which to describe and evaluate people’s participation in and through media and in development processes. This will help to determine the extent to which community radio contributes to development through different levels of participation in which people are involved through media.

In donor funded or operated community radio stations, participation is to varying degrees, influenced by donors. Although this has potential of encouraging community engagement and development, people’s participation is potentially reduced and some commentators question whether participation in such contexts is genuine (Bessette, 2004). The inclusion of the middle category of tokenism on Arnstein’s ladder of participation directs our attention to the idea that community radio can encourage participation at different levels. The question addressed in this dissertation is whether there are separate routes to community media having a role in development associated with different levels of participation. As such the impact of community radio on development can also be influenced by the level of participation they offer ordinary people which may fall anywhere on Arnstein’s ladder of participation or Carpentier’s dichotomy. It can be argued that some forms of participation cannot promote meaningful development. This raises the question of whether full-blown engagement in community radio is needed for development. In this thesis, I analyze participation in and through the media on the
understanding that there might be different levels of participation each of which has potential implications for development. I shall return to the discussion of these forms and levels of participation in chapter 6.

The discussion above reveals deep rooted power relations inherent in the implementation of participation in general, and participation in the media in particular. According to Lennie and Tacchi (2013: 147), “issues of power are an inevitable aspect of participatory approaches to development, C4D\(^6\) and evaluation”. To reduce power inequalities, it “requires specific attention to not only the knowledge, institutions, and best practice of professionals, but also the knowledge, institutions, and best practice of communities” (Eversole, 2012: 31). This is the challenge which community radio as a participatory medium has to address to achieve a power equilibrium or ‘citizen power’ (Arnstein, 1969).

The other challenge for community radio is how to be truly participatory and how to make communication multi-directional (maximalist) (Carpentier, 2011), that is, from development agents to the local people and vice versa. My dissertation addresses these issues and demonstrates how community radio meets both the needs of development agencies and the communities they serve or are part of.

### 2.1.2 Community Radio as Non-profit Entity

By design community radio is “fully controlled by non-profit entity and carried on for non-profitable purposes” (Fraser and Estrada, 2001: 27), implying that it is not supposed to concentrate on profit making at the expense of serving community interests. Although

\(^6\) C4D stands for ‘communication for development’. 
they are non-profit making, community radio stations need funding and use a number of different streams of income: “donations, grants, membership fees, sponsorship and advertising, or any combination of these” (Fraser and Estrada, 2001: 27). According to Fairbairn (2009: 61) “being non-profit does not mean that you have to be poor”, rather it means that while the profit made by commercial media benefits individuals or investors, the “profit made by community media is returned into service provision or used for the benefit of the community” (Fairbairn, 2009: 61; Mtinde et al., 1998). Theoretically, this is done to guarantee the independence of community radio stations and protect them from undue influence that donors may exert on the stations in the name of sponsoring programmes. However, in practice most community radio stations have remained poor and those that are not poor, to a larger extent, certainly in the context of Malawi, depend on sponsored programmes by NGOs in their quest for sustainability.

2.1.2.1 Effects of Donor Funding and Sponsorship on Programming

President of Developing Radio Partners\(^7\), William Siemering, argued that “although the extent of dependence on donors varies widely around the world, almost everywhere the distortion that can result from donor dominance is a real cause for concern” (cited in Myers, 2011: 21). Such concerns arise out of the need to protect community radio’s ‘community-ness’ and the avoidance of top-down imposition of programme content. The major issue identified in the literature as a potential problem arising from donor funding or control over programme content is that donors influence the agenda of the radio stations in

---

\(^7\) “Developing Radio Partners (DRP) is a US-based non-profit media development organization that works with local radio in developing countries, providing them with the skills they need to bring reliable information to those who need it most” (www.developingradiopartners.org).
a way that is incompatible with the aims of the stations. The reality of needing to be financially secure, either through local advertising, donations, or donor funding, is in tension with the model of community radio stations that is run and owned by community members in the community interest. When donors influence the agenda of a community radio station, the station can potentially lose its independence and community control (Manyozo, 2009; Myers, 2011).

Faced with the dilemma of choosing between accepting external funding and operating without it to protect community interests, community radio stations tend to choose the former because of the income it generates which is used to run the station. For example, Myers (2011: 20) reports that “in Nepal there are about 150 community radio stations, and, on average they cover 60 to 70 percent of their operational costs from sponsored radio programmes supported by NGOs and some other government local agencies”. A term best used to describe this practice is ‘NGO-ification’ of community radio (Manyozo, 2009). ‘NGO-ification’ of community radio is a situation in which:

radio stations become so dependent on the sponsorship of programmes by NGOs that their daily schedules contain almost no talk programmes of their own creation, but are dominated by the ‘woman’s hour’, ‘farmer’s hour’, ‘governance hour’, etc, commissioned by the local and international NGOs and CSOs on which they depend financially (Gilberds and Myers, 2012: 81).

This can compromise the identity of community radio stations and their purpose to the community. The quest for sustainability or operational costs by community radio stations can culminate in having more sponsored programmes than locally produced ones on the programme schedules.
While acknowledging that outside sponsorship can influence or in some cases dominate programme schedules, William Siemering contends that “it would take a lot of outside programming for a station to lose its community-ness” (cited in Myers, 2011: 21). None of the literature reviewed provides a cut-off point for a community radio station to lose its ‘community-ness’ due to sponsored programmes. However, the evidence provided above points to the possibility of that situation happening, and it is clearly a challenge to community radio stations to accept funding support and retain their values.

Another aspect of the need for stations to attract funds is their development of audiences. Lopez Vigil (1992) argues that if community radio is to be sustainable, “it must be able to compete against commercial and state interests and win, not because of some vague political commitment to the marginalised classes but because of better radio programming, radio that is entertaining and informative all the while encouraging participatory initiatives” (cited in Tamminga, 1997: 90). In other words it must copy some characteristics of commercial radio such as attracting advertising to make more income. However, Myers (2011: 21) warns that such a move will make it “more difficult to differentiate a commercial broadcaster from a community one”. This clearly remains a contentious issue in community radio practice.

2.2 Community Radio and Development
As noted in Chapter One, community radio stations are used to achieve different objectives in the communities where they are located. According to Myers (2011: 13) “community radio can often be a catalyst or a rallying point for the community for development, such as the provision of electricity, building of community school, or neighbourhood clean-up efforts”. Myers cites some examples of successful community radio projects which have supported community development. For instance, in Uganda, Mega FM carries radio campaigns about the importance of Voluntary Counseling and Testing for HIV/AIDS and it is reported that this has boosted attendance at the local clinic. In Mali, Radio Fanaka Fana broadcasts a programme about using compost manure to improve agricultural productivity which was so popular that people outside the broadcast range erected homemade antennas to listen to the programme (Myers, 2011: 13-14). These examples present community radio as a vehicle for facilitating development projects sometimes enabling community development and also self-development. In these cases, community radio is also presented as operating in a top-down manner by disseminating development information.

However, other community radio stations involve the public directly in running radio stations, for example, the Mahaweli Community Radio station (MCR) in Sri Lanka involves ordinary people in the planning, recording, and editing of programmes. The production team carries out audience surveys first to study the social structure, demographics, economic levels and agricultural activities of a particular village and then they record activities in which everyone participates (Fisher, 1990: 21). The materials recorded include dramas performed by the villagers, traditional music and interviews with
local experts (Fisher, 1990). In short, Fisher sees MCR as a good example of a successful community radio for development because of its ability to identify “with the listeners, involving them in programme planning, and production, and encouraging participation in development” (Fisher, 1990: 22). Similarly in Malawi, Manyozo (2012: 173) reports that Dzimwe community radio became “Southern Africa’s first rural community radio station to be run by women”. It was aimed at “empowering the rural woman by giving her a medium and voice through which she could articulate without fear or repression or favour, issues that concern her” (MAMWA, 2001: 1-2). The two models of community broadcasting provided above reinforce the idea that there are different roles that community radio plays in development. For example, it can be a means of achieving development goals or a means of enabling development and autonomy amongst the people through their participation in radio activities, although, as we can see in some of these examples, there is often an overlap between these two in practice.

2.3 Case Studies of Community Radio in Malawi: Identifying the Communication Needs of Rural Communities in Malawi

Sturges and Chimseu (1996) conducted a study to identify the communication needs in the villages of Malawi. They note that rural communities relied on rural extension workers, mass media, and, to a limited extent, print-based services as their sources of information. They also note that all of these communication systems operate in a top-down manner which makes them ineffective (Sturges and Chimseu, 1996). Three major findings emerged from Sturges and Chimseu’s (1996) study, first, that rural people in Malawi needed information on agriculture; health, family planning, hygiene, water supply, education and
literacy, credit and loans, and religious matters. Secondly, that word-of-mouth communication by official representatives in community meetings was considered to be the most effective and useful mode of communication (Sturges and Chimseu, 1996: 9). This emphasizes the importance of oral communication in development strategies among the indigenous communities (Schramm, 1979). A third and significant finding of this study is that one group suggested ‘communal radio’ as a useful solution to their communication challenges (Sturges and Chimseu, 1996). It must be noted that this study was done two years before the first community radio station was established in Malawi, and it was conducted in the same area where the first community radio station, Dzimwe, was established. This is significant because people felt the need for the decentralization of communication channels so that they could get information on the issues they consider important. In Chapter 8, I examine these issues as they apply in how Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations are used to disseminate information on agriculture; health including safe motherhood; education; and credit and loans.

When Dzimwe was established in 1998 as the first community radio station in Malawi, it adopted the use of Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) as one way of encouraging people’s participation in development projects including community radio itself. Other community radio stations followed suit. According to da Costa (2012: 136) “it is easy to see why community radio has become such a strategy of choice over the years for those wishing to address poverty at grassroots level: it can reach communities that other forms of broadcasting or media cannot”. Furthermore, it has “the potential of leaping the illiteracy barrier in conveying rural development messages to village audiences” (Rogers et al.,
Community radio is, therefore, portrayed as a medium for a strategy to help alleviate poverty by broadcasting relevant development information to people excluded by mainstream media. It can be argued, therefore, that in adopting the use of RLCs, the management of Dzimwe considered them as a viable means of engaging people in local development discourses necessary to uplift their livelihoods. The next section explains the concept of the RLCs, its origin and how it operates in the context of community radio stations in Malawi.

2.3.1 Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs)

A Radio Listening Club (RLC) is defined as “a community based group organized by community members themselves and uses radio programmes to facilitate development discourse within their own community” (Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU), 2000; Chirwa et al., 2000). The concept of RLCs in Malawi is not a brainchild of community radio stations but dates back to 1966 when they were called farmers’ forum listening groups (Mackie, 1971). The origins of radio forums more generally can be traced further back to Canada during the Second World War in 1940 (Lewis and Booth, 1989) where they were called farm forums. The radio forums of Canada were “organized community-based radio structures to facilitate local people’s participation in ongoing or impeding rural development projects” (Flor, 1995 cited in Manyozo 2012: 30). From Canada radio forums spread to India in 1949 and then Africa particularly in Ghana between 1964 and 1965 where they aimed at educating adults and stimulating village self-help efforts (Berrigan, 1979: 22). Since then RLCs spread to other countries like Malawi in 1966, Tanzania in 1967 and Senegal in 1969. These countries adopted their own models of implementation.
depending on their needs. For example, in Tanzania, between 1977 and 1978 Audio Cassette Listening Forums (ACLF), using audio cassette recorders, provided a development programme that enabled women to recognize the importance of their role (Berrigan, 1979: 48).

In Malawi, since independence in 1964, the MBC Radio acted as a communication tool in agricultural and rural development to compensate for the many logistical, financial, staffing and transport constraints in the Ministry of Natural Resources’ Extension Service Department with regards to “teaching Malawi’s farmers better agricultural methods” (Mackie, 1971: 106). The Extension Service model is a “system of ‘extending’ new technology from the research plots of agricultural universities out to farmers through district extension agents” (White, 2009: 13). It was “an integral part of the modernization paradigm which hoped to raise productivity in developing countries by rapid transfer of technology from the First to the Third worlds” (White, 2009: 13). It is reported that the introduction of the farmers’ forum listening group project in July 1966, was cost-effective and proved to be an effective rural development communication strategy in the sense that it increased farmers’ knowledge and also provided a link between farmers and agricultural service providers (Mackie, 1971: 108).

In recent years, in Malawi, the Development Broadcasting Unit (DBU) of the MBC, a public broadcaster, reintroduced RLCs under the Ndizathu Zomwe (Our Own) Project. The DBU is “a new structure within MBC, established in 1999 to liaise with the station’s Programmes Department to effectively engage in development programming through
participatory communication activities, to promote national dialogue and development issues” (Sisya, 2003 cited in Manyozo, 2005: 4). The project (Ndizathu Zomwe) was jointly implemented by the MBC and the Radio for Development (RfD)\(^8\) of the UK, with support from the British Government’s Department for International Development (DFID)\(^9\). Its aim was “to facilitate people’s participation at all levels of development efforts to identify and implement appropriate and sustainable policies, programmes, and technologies to reduce poverty and improve people’s livelihoods” (Chirwa, 2005: 34). The DBU initially established fifteen RLCs across the country, which later increased to more than thirty. Although this number is too small for the whole country, it was reported that the DBU has “promoted a sense of ownership of the national airwaves as it enables communities to determine programme content through their chosen discourse, as evidently, the day and time of broadcast were decided by the communities themselves” (Chirwa et al., 2000, cited in Manyozo, 2005: 6).

Therefore, community radio stations in Malawi have adopted this format because it is a perceived success story. For instance, Dzimwe community radio station started broadcasting in 1998 “with funding from UNESCO and technical support from the Malawi Media Women’s Association (MAMWA)” (Manyozo, 2012: 173). This group was composed of Malawian women working in the print and electronic media. In 1994, MAMWA initiated a project called Development Through Radio (DTR) and set up twelve

\(^8\) RfD now named Media For Development (MFD) was established as a private production company in the mid 1990s in the UK. Its primary communication tool was radio broadcasting of educational programmes produced and researched in collaboration with African broadcasters (MFD, n.d.).  

\(^9\) DFID was established in 1997 to lead the UK’s work to end extreme poverty by creating jobs, unlocking the potential of girls and women and helping to save lives when humanitarian emergencies hit in 28 countries across Africa, Asia and the Middle East (www.gov.uk).
RLCs while the staff at Dzimwe itself established three other clubs bringing the total to fifteen (Chirwa, 2005: 35). The idea behind the RLCs was to engage members in “participatory production of programmes based on development discourses among the network of radio listening clubs” (Manyozo, 2012: 144). Other community radio stations which were established later have also adopted the same initiative of setting up RLCs.

However, Chirwa (2005: 38) found “no evidence that the RLC or any established associations influence the nature, structure and contents of the programmes aired on the community radios”. This is one drawback associated with RLCs that were set up by Dzimwe. While they were supposed to be a forum for producing radio programmes, their role extended to allowing members to listen to a radio programme, discussing it and then deciding the course of action to take. This militates against the participatory ethos on which community radio is established. This thesis, therefore, investigates how RLCs have transformed into a forum where marginalized people express their views, feed into radio programming to better serve their interests, and more importantly to participate in public life. In this thesis we will ask how RLCs facilitate and expand ordinary people’s capabilities and their engagement in media.

Following Chirwa’s (2005) study, Panos10 (2011) conducted another study to assess the impact of RLCs set up by Dzimwe community radio station in Mangochi district in Malawi. The aim of the study was to establish if the Radio Listening Methodology has had

---

10 Panos Southern Africa (PSAf) has been instrumental in using media to advance social development in Southern Africa by empowering marginalized, vulnerable and poor, mostly rural communities. Panos uses Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) methodology to achieve this.
any intended and unintended impact on households and communities that were involved. The term impact here is used to mean proving that the RLCs are increasing the knowledge as well as the material gain of participants (Manyozo, 2009). It is important to note at this stage that when Dzimwe community radio station was being established in 1998, its RLCs were composed of women only because they were considered to be voiceless, marginalized and exploited economically more than men (Panos, 2011). Therefore, the station was established with an aim of empowering women economically as well as socially. However, it was later realized that it was not appropriate and equitable to exclude men from the clubs. As such RLCs which were inclusive of boys, girls, women and men were also established (Panos, 2011). The exact date when this happened is, however, not given. The study found that women acquired broadcasting skills since they were able to record programmes using modern recorders; critical information about health was disseminated in the RLCs; and women were empowered to speak out in public and to participate without fear of reprisals from politicians or husbands (Panos, 2011: 7). From Chirwa’s (2005) study which found that RLCs had no influence on “the nature, structure and contents of the programmes aired on the station”, here we note that members of RLCs are taking on a more active role. Members of the clubs especially women are also empowered to participate in programme production, are sensitized to relevant community development issues, and able to express their views without fear. The women also reported to have benefited from the RLCs by accessing loans from micro-credit lending institutions.

However, it is not clear from Panos’ (2011) study how participating in RLCs could result in a person getting a loan from lending organizations. According to Wilson (1963 cited in
Ekong & Sokoya, 1982: 221) “the poor rural people will tend to support and participate in those community programmes that will benefit them personally”. This implies that there are different reasons why people participate in development projects, among them is personal gain. Cornwall (2008: 277) argues that “sometimes this happens by default: those who participate are those who come to public meetings, where they may be divided up according to sex, sometimes age”. In a study conducted in the same area to examine youth participation in RLCs, Mchakulu (2007) found that ‘personal self-sufficiency’ was the major reason why youth joined RLCs. This thesis, therefore, also examines how participation in RLCs enables the members to have access to various benefits which non-members do not have.

2.4 Community Radio as Farm Radio

In Malawi, just like in many African countries, community radio is used to disseminate agricultural news to farmers especially in rural areas. In that role, they are known as Farm Radio. Farm Radio is “a branch of journalism that specifically centres on subject matter experts and communicators who rely on radio programming to disseminate technical agricultural knowledge to farming communities” (SADC-CCD, 2006 cited in Manyozo, 2009: 6). In Malawi, this is implemented by Farm Radio-Malawi (FRM) “an indigenous, self-existent, non-partisan, and non-profit organization whose main goal is to promote radio as a key medium of communication in agriculture and rural development” (Farm Radio-Malawi, 2011). The organization was established in December 2009 after successfully implementing action research, a radio-based food security programme started
in 2007 (Farm Radio-Malawi, 2011). The problem with this kind of broadcasting is that “broadcasters have tended to produce top-down programmes, consisting of advice from experts living within the vicinity of the stations” (AFRRI, 2008 cited in Manyozo, 2009: 9). However, this dissertation will argue that some NGOs such as Farmers Voice Radio (FVR) are engaging farmers in participatory programme production by recording their farming experiences and incorporating their voices in agricultural programmes. According to Manyozo (2005) programmes created by communities attract high listener figures and that community-produced radio programmes motivate communities to take development action. According to Wood (2011) there is some evidence to suggest that individuals are changed more by discussion of campaign messages than by the direct experience of the campaign message. In this research, this is achieved by the discussions that take place in listening clubs. This is another potential area of expanding people’s capabilities. Therefore, this dissertation, examines how RLCs are helping to expand people’s capabilities by providing them with opportunities to listen to radio programmes and discussing their contents to influence one another to bring about behaviour change.

2.5 Research Aims and Objectives

In view of the discussion above, this research aimed to investigate, firstly, the extent and ways in which community radio stations in Malawi are used as a tool for development through the participation of the people; and secondly to examine whether communication for development in community radio in Malawi takes the form of participatory communication or reflects top-down agendas. To achieve the above aims the following research questions were formulated and investigated:
• What is the role of participation in development through community radio?

• Can community radio play a role in encouraging development through enhancing capabilities and participation even when people are not owning and managing the stations?

• How do Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) help to expand ordinary people’s capabilities?

• How is the programming of community radio influenced by the development agenda through the activities of NGO’s and other development agents in Malawi?

2.6 Chapter summary

This chapter has examined the key characteristics of community radio and reviewed some studies on community radio stations. This has helped to identify some gaps in the study of community radio some of which this dissertation addresses. Overall, the review of the literature reveals that there are different patterns of ownership of community radio stations. Patterns of ownership potentially influence the role of community radio in communication for development and community participation. The impact of community radio can be influenced by the level of participation available to people which can fall anywhere along the continuum of participation. The review also indicates that community radio stations depend on donor funding to meet their operational costs. This usually affects the operations of community radio stations in the sense that the programming of community radio stations is dictated by the agendas of the sponsoring organizations. These arguments were illustrated with examples from across the world before focusing on how community
radio in Malawi reflects these themes and establishing research questions for this thesis.

The next chapter presents the theoretical framework on which this research is based.
CHAPTER THREE: DEVELOPMENT AND PARTICIPATION

3.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the ‘another’ development and communication for development theories on which this study is based. Fraser and Estrada (1998) argue that communication for development came into being in the 1960s and that although it has proved its importance and impact in development, its role is not appreciated to the extent that it is included in development projects just as a routine. The reason for this is that “most projects were very much in line with the dominant modernization framework to development, with decisions being taken by governments and development agencies for the people rather than by the people” (Servaes, 2000: 85). In other words, there was a lack of grassroots participation in the modernization paradigm which dominated intellectual thinking around 1945-1965 (Servaes, 1995: 40), and this lack of participation was blamed by scholars and development agents for the failure of most development projects (Melkote, 1991). It was, therefore, imperative to redefine development communication. One such definition is that communication is “the systematic utilization of communication channels and techniques to increase people’s participation in development and to inform, motivate, and train rural populations mainly at the grassroots” (Waisbord, 2000: 17), hence participatory or ‘another’ development theory. Therefore, this research employs the communication for development and ‘another’ development theory to help understand community radio as a tool for development. As such, the study of community radio cannot be delinked from the development process. Therefore, the chapter also links communication for development theory to development discourses.
The ‘another’ development paradigm has been defined as “need-oriented, endogenous, self-reliant, ecologically sound and based on participatory democracy and structural transformations” (Servaes, 1996: 32). The theory focuses on community participation in development projects defining participation as a process of empowering people to participate in identifying development problems or designing development programmes (Melkote, 1991). The focus on communication for development and ‘another’ development theories is based on a critique of traditional development theory, which defined development as modernization and focused primarily on economic growth only. Development was defined as “a fundamental proposition that people in traditional societies should adopt the characteristics of modern societies in order to modernize their social, political and economic institutions” (Foster-Carter, 1985: 13). This is what was known as the modernization paradigm or dominant model of development (Lerner, 1958). Thus development was thought to start with a nucleus of mobile, change-accepting personalities followed by the effects of the interaction of urbanization, literacy, industrialization, higher per capita income and political participation (Lerner, 1958). In this model the media are viewed as agents of modernization in the sense that once urbanization occurs, literacy rates would also increase because of exposure to information. The understanding was that the mass media could potentially speed up and ease the long slow transformation that was necessary for economic growth and the mobilization of human resources (Melkote and Steeves, 2001). However, the modernization paradigm has been heavily criticized for not allowing people’s participation at the grassroots. In this understanding, there was “no room for marginalized communities to set their own development agenda or participate in the
development process except as passive and pliant recipients of development messages” (Tamminga, 1997: 27).

The policy of development through modernization was also criticized as it applied a process through which problems were identified and solutions offered at top levels of government and by development agencies followed by a top-down flow of information from government or development agencies to local communities. In recent years, however, it is recommended that “people who are objects of policy need to be involved in the definition, design, and execution of the development process” (Melkote, 1991: 191). This is where participatory or ‘another’ development theory which emphasizes grassroots participation in development projects comes in. The link between participation and development can be established on the understanding that:

C4D rests on the premise that successful sustainable development calls for the conscious and active participation of the intended beneficiaries at every stage of the development process; for in the final analysis, development cannot take place without changes in attitudes and behaviour among all people concerned (Servaes, 2008: 212).

Therefore, communication with intended beneficiaries raises people’s awareness to their problems resulting into change of attitude and behavior. Servaes (2008: 212) further argues that “participation involves the more equitable sharing of both political and economic power, which often decreases the advantage of certain groups”. In relation to the media, “community radio highlights people’s ability to alter and rearrange existing media structures to better suit their needs” (Howley, 2010: 69). This is made possible because community radio allows non-professionals to participate in media production, management, and planning of the communication systems (Servaes, 1996).
3.1 Mainstreaming Participation in Development Discourses

Tandon (2008) traces the origin of the modernization paradigm and shows how and when the term ‘participation’ was included in development discourses. Tandon (2008) sees the period after the Second World War and the independence of the colonies of Asia, Africa, and Latin America as the beginning of the process of development and of discourses of development. The then American president Harry S. Truman propounded the dominant philosophy of development. Its main goals were to develop all newly liberated colonies to be like America, and that only those who had ‘arrived’ at development “had the expertise, knowledge and tools to give those who aspired to develop” (Tandon, 2008: 286). This is what created the binaries of developed and developing, centre and periphery nations in the post war period (Tandon, 2008). Thus, the American model which later came to be known as the Western model of development was considered as the most desirable for developing countries to adopt and led to dependency theory. Dependency theory “viewed the world as a single system and found ‘imperial centres’, notably the United States, which controlled the flow of goods, services, and capital between themselves and nations on the periphery of the system” (Stevenson, 1988: 6). However, it was not long before people began to feel disillusioned with this kind of approach to development due to such problems as “inappropriateness, local ownership, and wastage of resources” (Tandon, 2008: 288). Apart from being hegemonic, this approach to development subjected would-be beneficiaries to dependency and robbed them of their right to control and use local and indigenous resources for their own advancement. These external strategies and interventions
inculcated a belief in the locals that development cannot be achieved by the use of their resources but that development comes from the West. Consequently, “for the majority of the peoples of the periphery, dependent development yields not a better life and a brighter future but intensified exploitation and greater misery” (Sweezy, 1981 cited in Servaes, 1999: 34). It was also generally believed that economic development of the periphery “was shaped to strengthen the dominance of the centre nations and to maintain the peripheral nations’ position of dependence” (Stevenson, 1988: 6). This approach to development is also likened to “a virus which insidiously penetrates a culture to progressively breakdown values and beliefs that are not concordant with the values of development” (Rahnema, 1988 cited in Tamminga, 1997: 12). Hence, calls for bottom-up, people-led participatory development became the order of the day in the late 1960’s and early 1970’s (Tandon, 2008) and this necessitated a redefinition or a change of approach to development.

Following these debates, the Dag Hammarskjöld Foundation released a report in 1975 entitled ‘What Now? Another Development’ (Carpentier, 2011). According to Servaes (1999: 78-9) the phrase ‘Another development’ indicates “the ambition to develop another type of development grounded in the focus on the people’s basic needs (such as eradication of poverty), self-reliance, ecological sensitivity, sustainability and participation”. This points to the idea that development that focuses on human freedom and capabilities is more empowering and meaningful and accords individuals more personal freedom than any other notion of development but particularly the colonial legacy of postwar dependency approaches. According to Carpentier (2011: 50), the Dag Hammarskjold Report views the former approaches to development as “reductionist and top-down, and more supportive of
transnational capital than development and poverty reduction”. Instead the report emphasizes another development characterized by a diversity of approaches including multiplicity, empowerment and autonomous development approaches. All these approaches share one thing in common, which is that development should “focus on the needs of the lower echelons” of the social system (Potter et al., 2008 cited in Carpentier, 2011: 50). This is where the issue of grassroots participation was introduced, both as a means and an end to the process of development. As a means, participation can become a tool for achieving development, and as an end, participation can enhance societal equity, empowerment, transparency and social justice (Carpentier, 2011). Therefore, “the introduction of […] the notion of participation in the development process can be viewed as a strategy to counter the reduced agency of developing countries and their populations, and to increase the focus on their empowerment” (Carpentier, 2011: 48).

The focus on participation had been adopted by the policy community so that by the late 1980s the term ‘participation’ was mainstream in large-scale development programmes. This resulted in most government development programmes scaling up participation (Tandon, 2008). By early 1990s, many international agencies like SIDA, the World Bank, USAID had mainstreamed participation and empowerment in the development projects that they were implementing worldwide (Tandon, 2008; Inagaki, 2007).

Here emphasis shifted from the broader levels of participation in developing societies to participation in setting of development projects, where it is aimed at empowering people, capturing the indigenous knowledge and ensuring the sustainability and efficiency of the interventions (Hickey & Mohan, 2004 cited in Carpentier, 2011: 51).
Thus participation requires a higher level of people’s involvement in development projects. “Here individuals are active in development programmes and processes; they contribute ideas, take initiatives, articulate their needs and problems and assert their autonomy” (Ascroft and Masilela, 1989 in Melkote, 1991: 237). In the media, people should be involved in the production process, management, and planning of the communication systems. Ordinary people actively participate in decision-making processes within communication enterprises and in the formulation of communication policies and plans (Servaes, 1996).

Relating these theoretical debates about development and participation is not straightforward. However, the way the concept of participation is applied by many development communication projects sometimes contradicts participatory theories on which this study is based. According to Eversole (2012: 7) the term participation “has proven difficult not only to define but to practically initiate and sustain”. While Lyndon et al. (2011: 644) see participation as shifting the power of rural development from the planners top-down view to the rural subjects’ active role in all stages of a project’s life, Vasoo (1991: 2) argues that the implementation of participation is always faced with a dilemma, that is, “the choice between trading off participatory democracy against the expertise of technocrats in decision-making, and vice-versa”. However, according to Craig and Porter (1997: 230) the present reality is that “development agencies are widely adopting project management techniques that appear on the surface to be ‘bottom–up’ and participatory, but are in fact new forms of top–down direction and control”. Does this mean that we are reverting to the old modernization paradigm or are we seeing the creation
of a new paradigm that is integrating top-down and participatory approaches? This is one of the issues that this research addresses.

3.2 Development Redefined

The inclusion of the term ‘participation’ in development discourse shifts the emphasis from an understanding of development as economic growth to that of development as expanding and facilitating human freedom and capabilities (Sen, 1992, Nussbaum, 2011). According to Stevenson (1988) the 1980’s definition of development included a concept of ‘development news’. Development news is defined as “that which promoted development, everything from literacy and personal hygiene to agricultural practices and family planning” (Stevenson, 1988: 13). For Stevenson (1988) development means the outcome of improved well-being such as literacy, hygiene, food availability and having smaller families as a result of information addressing these issues. For Stevenson (1998) development means the outcome of improved well-being such as literacy, hygiene, food availability and having smaller families as a result of information addressing these issues. This relates to what Sen (1992) describes as the Capability Approach (see also Nussbaum, 2011). According to Nussbaum (2011: 15)

The Capabilities Approach can be provisionally defined as an approach to comparative quality-of-life assessment and to theorizing about basic social justice. It holds that the key question to ask, when comparing societies and assessing them for their basic decency or justice is, ‘What is each person able to do and to be?’ In other words, the approach takes each person as an end, asking not just about the total or average well-being but about the opportunities available to each person.

This definition recognizes that people in different societies are at different levels of development and that they have different needs for them to live the kind of life they want
to live. Therefore, the approach emphasizes the need to create a conducive environment for people to meet their needs by themselves at whatever level of development they are. In addition to people using their God-given talents and skills for their own advancement, government as a key player in creating the conducive environment, should create opportunities for people to exercise agency in all spheres of life to allow for wider freedom and choice. As Nussbaum (2011: 19) further argues, by capabilities, what is meant is “not just the abilities residing in a person but also the freedoms or opportunities created by a combination of personal abilities and the political, social, and economic environment”. Government, therefore, should also play a part in formulating laws and policies aimed at encouraging individuals to achieve a better life and not suppressing, oppressing and repressing them.

According to these two key theorists, the Capabilities Approach is concerned with “entrenched social justice and inequality, especially capability failures that are a result of discrimination or marginalization” (Nussbaum, 2011: 19; Sen, 1999). However, the two theorists differ on some aspects of the approach, for example, Nussbaum’s (2011: 19) points out that her version of the approach includes additional elements such as ‘human dignity, the threshold and political liberalism’. Furthermore, while Sen (1992) focuses on quality of life issues, singling out some capabilities as more important than others, for example, ‘health, education, political participation, nondiscrimination on the basis of race, religion, and gender’; Nussbaum (2011: 71) focuses on the idea of capabilities as “the core of an account of minimal social justice and constitutional law”. Finally, Sen (1999) refers
to capabilities (‘what a person is able to do and to be’) as ‘substantive freedoms’, however, Nussbaum (2011: 70) thinks that Sen (1999) is assuming that all capabilities were ‘valuable zones of freedom’ and that the ‘overall social task might be to maximize freedom’. For her, we must distinguish between innate abilities and learned abilities and she calls them ‘combined capabilities’ both of which society has to promote.

It is, therefore, clear from the discussion above the capabilities can be promoted or achieved in a number of ways involving different players including the media. In this thesis, I employ Amartya Sen’s (1999) approach in which development is viewed as “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (p. 3). I use this approach on the basis that there are some capabilities which can be enhanced through community radio and others which are beyond the realms of community radio and can be achieved through government or political machinations. Sen’s (1999) approach fits in well with the capabilities which community radio can help to expand based on the understanding that “the key idea of the capability approach is that social arrangements should aim to expand people’s capabilities – their freedom to promote or achieve what they value doing or being” (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009: 31). This is the meaning of development that is adopted in this research which aims to investigate the role of community radio in the process of expanding people’s capabilities.
3.3 Community Radio, Participatory Communication and Development

Participatory media projects are seen to “encourage individuals and groups to recognize their capacity to intervene in and redefine power relations within (and sometimes beyond) the local community” (Rodriguez, 2001 cited in Howley, 2010: 19). Participatory development projects such as community radio employ a participatory approach to decision making processes and enable marginalized people to define their own development path through the identification and implementation of projects that are initiated by them. Rennie (2006: 134) sees participatory communication projects as “often small-scale, seeing specific bottom-up solutions as being more effective than general macro policies”. Tapping into local knowledge is viewed as a necessary course of action if a development project is to be successful. It is what makes participatory communication projects unique (Howley, 2010). Participatory communication is defined as “that type of communication in which all the interlocutors are free and have equal access to the means to express their viewpoints, feelings and experiences” (Bordenave, 1994: 43). This reinforces the view that ordinary people have long years of experience which, if utilized, can bring about meaningful development to them (Freire, 1983). Therefore, providing opportunities to participate in decision making enables ordinary people to express their knowledge about how they view the world and development. “Rather than view themselves as somehow deficient or lacking in their ability to effect social change, communities could, through participatory methods, reassert and reclaim their capacity to transform their daily lives” (Howley, 2010: 184). Participatory communication gives the local community a right to freely share or exchange information and to reach a consensus on what they want to do or to be done and how to do it. Freire (1983: 76) cautions that
“this is not the privilege of some few men (and women), but the right of all people to individually and collectively speak their world”. This relates to Habermas’ (1962) radical democracy in which “matters of importance to citizens should be decided by the citizens themselves under conditions where all have the same right to speak and be heard” (Aldridge, 2007: 17). Participatory communication is, thus, a reciprocal process involving the marginalised groups who are trying to renegotiate their situation with the development agents. Key components of the participatory model of communication can be summarised as follows:

The process and content of communication is owned by community; communication gives a voice to previously unheard community members; communities become their own change agents; the communication process is characterized by debate and negotiation on issues that affect community; emphasis is placed on outcomes that go beyond individual behaviour to widely recognized social needs (Figueroa et al., 2002).

Community radio, as a participatory medium attempts to address the issues raised above. It addresses “the fundamental imbalance between elites and marginalized sectors of the population like women, indigenous peoples and the poor by allowing listeners an opportunity to shape the medium to meet their own specific needs and breakdown the monopolies of knowledge and power that marginalize them politically, economically and socially” (Tamminga, 1997: 3). This view was also expressed by Freire (1970) who strongly believed that individuals, no matter who they are, have the capacity and ability to think critically, make decisions, and plan for social change in order to bring about their own development and potentially the transformation of the whole society. Just as dialogue
dissocializes students from passivity in the classroom so does participatory communication among individual members of the community (Freire, 1970).

Advances in information and communication technologies (ICTs) provide opportunities for community radio to expand resources with which ordinary people can participate. The advantage of using new ICTs “relates to proliferating of information sources, and the ability of those traditionally positioned as receivers of development messages, to engage, ask questions, and create messages themselves” (Tacchi, 2011: 654). One such communication technology that comes to mind is the mobile phone. As Myers (2008: 27) argues, “the recent explosion in mobile phone ownership and the ever increasing reach of GSM networks has been a significant advantage for radio in Africa”. Ordinary people can use mobile phones to phone the local radio station to express their opinions and grievances and seek clarification on issues from local leaders through phone-in programmes. This enables ordinary people to have access to information and opportunities to use media technologies to initiate dialogue on issues that affect them and the community at large and to participate in community development. As Carpentier (2011: 97) argues,

societal groups who are misrepresented, disadvantaged, stigmatized or even repressed can benefit especially from using the channels of communication opened by community and alternative media, strengthening their internal identity, manifesting this identity to the outside world, and thus supporting social change and/or development.

As such, the combination of community radio and mobile phones can help to expand the resources for marginalized people to access and exchange crucial information necessary for their own development. The research reported in this thesis also investigated the extent
to which people use mobile phones to voice their concerns through community radio in Malawi.

3.4 Chapter Summary

This chapter has discussed communication for development and ‘another’ development theories on which this dissertation is based. The chapter has demonstrated how communication for development in the modernization paradigm followed a top-down development approach up to the current situation when the understanding and utilization of communication for development is to stimulate debate and ‘conscientization’ for participatory decision-making and action. This is where the link between participation and development is established. The chapter also traced the origin of the concept of ‘participation’ and when it was introduced in development discourses and how this shifted the understanding of development as economic growth as understood in the modernization paradigm to that of facilitating and expanding human freedom and capabilities. ‘Another’ development theory works on the principle that the development agenda should not be defined by powerful elite. Instead, for meaningful development to take place, local people need to define their own needs and development goals, and then participate in the implementation of the development process (Servaes, 1996). In short, participatory research aims at empowering the marginalized, the poor and the disenfranchised. Since the mass media were considered ‘manipulative’, ‘conscious domineering’, and ‘harmful’ to collective interests, community radio is thought to express the alternative, the inverse, the opposite (Servaes, 1996: 166). Hence this research on community radio as a tool for development. This dissertation has adopted the meaning of the term ‘development’ as
human freedom and capabilities, and it is going to be measured by how much community radio is able to facilitate and expand ordinary people’s capability to achieve the life they value through their participation in radio activities and development projects. The next chapter gives a detailed discussion of how data for this research was collected and analyzed.
CHAPTER FOUR: RESEARCH METHODS

4.0. Introduction

The previous chapter examined the communication for development and the ‘another’ development theories on which the present research is based. These theories informed the choice of the research questions that this dissertation addresses especially by examining the different ways in which community radio is used as a tool for development in Malawi. In order to understand the various ways through which community radio promotes development, the case study approach was chosen as a method that could adequately address the main issue under investigation. This chapter, therefore, provides a detailed discussion of the rationale for adopting the case study method and the approach to data collection, analysis and use.

4.1 Methodological Considerations

This section discusses the rationale for choosing the case study as the main method of data collection for this research. Then I will explain how I proceeded to collect data. The main research questions that this dissertation addresses are: (a) what is the role of participation in development through community radio? (b) Can community radio play a role in encouraging development through enhancing capabilities and participation even when audiences do not own and manage the stations? (c) How do Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) help to expand ordinary people’s capabilities? (d) How is the programming of community radio influenced by development agendas through the activities of NGO’s and other development agents in Malawi? To address all these research questions adequately, the
study required data from a variety of sources including interviews with station managers and radio practitioners, listeners of the radio stations, community leaders and leaders of NGOs and the regulatory body. The interviews were supplemented by the analysis of relevant policy documents, participant observations and focus groups discussions (FGDs) conducted with members of Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs). According to Yin (2012: 18) “you would use the case study method because you wanted to understand a real-life phenomenon in depth”. Yin defines a case study as “an empirical inquiry that investigates a contemporary phenomenon in depth and within its real-life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident” (Yin, 2009: 18). In this research the objects investigated were two community radio stations in Malawi. According to Rosenberg and Yates (2007: 448) when studying a phenomenon of interest and the research questions it raises, “the case study researcher selects the methodological position most suited to answer the particular research questions”. Typically, in case study research, as the research is conducted in context and the phenomena to be investigated are complex, a variety of data collection techniques are used to adequately address the research questions under consideration. This is the rationale for the choice of the case study method to investigate community radio. A key challenge in case study research using a variety of methods is to integrate data drawn from the application of different methods. I therefore, combined different sources of data to provide a multimodal data set which I then analysed.
4.2 Case Study Design

In case study research, Yin (2009: 98) identifies six sources for collecting data, namely, “documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant-observation, and physical artifacts”. Yin (2012: 10) further argues that researchers “may use these six in any combination, as well as related sources such as focus groups (a variant of interviews), depending on what is available and relevant for studying your case(s)”. One feature of case study research is that, as well as choosing a variety of research methods, these take place over a period of time. In the present research, given that access was best achieved through contacts with station managers and radio practitioners, it was decided to begin with semi-structured interviews with these individuals in the two selected community radio stations as part of the process of gaining access to the stations and establishing a relationship between the researcher and those working in the stations. This was supplemented with background analysis of documents and information gathered about the stations to provide the context for the interviews and subsequent research in the field. In addition to interviews, the researcher spent a full week in the radio stations making observations and acting as a participant observer. When this phase of research was completed, in order to examine audience participation, the researcher travelled into the field to observe listening clubs and to conduct FGDs with listeners of the radio stations. These were supplemented by interviews with selected community leaders. This research, therefore, used a multi-method or mixed method approach to data collection. A detailed discussion of these methods is presented below; however, I will first explain how the cases were identified.
In designing a case study it is recommended that researchers follow three major steps (Yin, 2012). Step one involves defining the ‘case’ because it is the main unit of analysis in a case study (Yin, 2012: 6). A ‘case’ is “a bounded entity (a person, organization, behavioural condition, event, or other social phenomena), but the boundary between the case and its contextual conditions - in both spatial and temporal dimensions - may be blurred” (Yin, 2012: 6). As previously stated, the case study in this research is on community radio as a tool for development including through enabling people’s participation. The objects of study are the two community radio stations chosen as the location and context of the empirical research.

The second step is deciding “whether the case study will consist of a single or multiple cases” (Yin, 2012: 7). The researcher needs to choose whether to keep the cases holistic or to have embedded sub-cases within an overall holistic case (Yin, 2012: 7). Multiple-case studies according to Stewart (2012: 69) involve “investigations of a particular phenomenon (or group of phenomena) at a number of different sites. He adds that “this does not preclude a multiple-case study from being conducted within one organization” (Stewart, 2012: 69). Likewise, a multiple case study can be investigated in one organization (for example, looking at different departments within the organization as objects of study) or the same phenomenon can be investigated in another organization at the same time. According to Yin (2012: 7) “if you were limited to a single organization, you would have an embedded, single-case study. If you studied two or more organizations in the same manner, you would have an embedded, multiple-case study”. In this research I, therefore, adopted an embedded multiple-case study because I investigated one phenomenon in two
community radio stations, Nkhotakota and Mzimba. The advantage of a two-case study design is that there is a “possibility of direct replication. Analytic conclusions independently arising from two cases, as with two experiments, will be more powerful than those coming from a single case (or single experiment) alone” (Yin, 2009: 61).

4.2.1 Selection of the Cases

At the time of this research, there were four local community radio stations in Malawi located in different parts of the country, and these are: Dzimwe community radio station, located in Mangochi district in the southern region of the country; Nkhotakota and Mudzi Wathu community radio stations in Nkhotakota and Mchinji districts respectively, both in the central region of the country, and; Mzimba community radio in Mzimba district in the northern region of the country. The sampling or selection of the radio stations was based on the developmental issues that each station addresses because in the context of Malawi development is the main agenda that frames the activities of community radio stations. Therefore, two community radio stations were chosen in accordance with the following considerations: Dzimwe community radio station mainly focuses on “empowering the rural woman by giving her a medium and a voice through which she could articulate without fear or repression or favour issues that concern her” (MAMWA, 2001: 1-2). This station was excluded as it had a limited focus on development issues. In the central region, the focus of Mudzi Wathu community radio station on development issues is narrow as its main aim is to reach a lot of people in Mchinji district “with messages promoting abstinence and being faithful in the fight against HIV/AIDS” (AMARC-Africa, n.d.). On
the other hand, Nkhotakota community radio station focuses on a wider range of development issues such as community health, agriculture, education, HIV/AIDS, sanitation, human rights and environment (Nkhotakota Community Radio Policy Document, n.d.). Nkhotakota was, therefore, selected in order to enable the study of how the station encourages people’s participation in various development projects. Similarly, Mzimba community radio station was chosen because at the time of the research, it was the only community radio station in the northern region with a focus on a number of development issues such as HIV/AIDS, education, agriculture, construction of roads and school blocks, and communication infrastructure, among others. It was also the most recent to be established in the region and in the country. I, therefore, felt it of potential value to examine the various ways in which both stations promote development including participation, comparing one more established station and one more recently founded, allowing a comparative element in the research (Yin, 2009). The idea is to try and understand patterns as they manifest across the two community radio stations (Stewart, 2012).

The third step in case study design according to Yin (2012: 9) is “deciding whether or not to use theory to help complete your essential methodological steps, such as developing your research question(s), selecting your case(s), refining your case study design, or defining the relevant data to be collected”. This is significant because case study research “benefits from the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis” (Yin, 2009: 18; see also Rosenberg and Yates, 2007). As previously discussed this research employs the ‘another’ development theory and communication for
development theories which informed the formulation of the research aims and objectives presented earlier. Therefore, theory and theme identification was an inevitable consideration in designing this research and defining what data to collect. The research questions, interview questions and FGD question schedules were developed based on communication for development, ‘another development’ and development theories and from the key characteristic features of community radio. According to Yin (2012: 9) “a case study that starts with some theoretical propositions or theory will be easier to implement than one having no propositions”. This is the case because the theoretical propositions help to collect data thematically which in turn facilitates analysis (Dey, 1993).

Below is a detailed discussion of each method used as part of the case study, starting with how I gained access to the radio stations. The discussion also includes the personal experiences and challenges I faced as a researcher.

4.3 Gaining Access

Among the problems researchers face when they want to conduct in-depth qualitative case study research into organizations is gaining access (Patton, 2002) which can be more daunting when the research topic is sensitive (Okumus, 2007). Gummesson (2000) notes that there is not much academic literature on problems faced by researchers when gaining access because many researchers neglect to write about these problems and treat them as ‘tactical’ issues. However, if access is not properly gained and guaranteed, it can affect the quality and quantity of the data generated. One strategy to enable access is the use of a gatekeeper who is either known to the researcher or has a responsibility for the public facing activities of the organization or context. Therefore, before I travelled to Nkhotakota,
I phoned a friend who works with Nkhotakota district hospital and asked him to alert the radio station about my visit. On Sunday, 28 October 2012 I arrived in Nkhotakota district, and identified the exact location of the station. The next day, on Monday, 29 October 2012, I went to the radio station and, because my gatekeeper had informed them in advance of the purpose of my visit, they were expecting me. I had asked my gatekeeper to inform the station manager that I was conducting an academic research on community radio stations and that I would be visiting the station for this purpose. Therefore on arrival, I presented myself at the reception desk and asked for permission to meet the station manager. Instead of the station manager, I met his deputy who is also the programmes manager. He welcomed me warmly and explained that the station manager was away that day visiting listening clubs, but that I was free to discuss anything with him in the absence of the manager. I introduced myself and explained the purpose of my visit to him. I told him that I had come from the University of Leicester and that I was conducting academic research on two community radio stations, Nkhotakota and Mzimba. I showed him my identity card and the letter of introduction to confirm this information. I then sought permission to observe programme production, presentation, and the daily management in the station. I also requested permission to observe and interact with and conduct and record interviews with radio practitioners in the course of my visit. I further explained to him that I had a consent form which participants were required to sign as an indication of their willingness to participate in the study. They were also to indicate on the form whether they would like a summary of the results to be sent to them once the research was completed. The deputy station manager signed the consent form and gave me permission to conduct my research. He then took me around the station from one department to another showing me the
facilities and introducing me to the other staff members in their respective departments and asking them to cooperate with me as I was conducting my research. In short, I had good initial access to the station.

Gaining access to Mzimba community radio station was initially less straightforward. Upon arrival at Mzimba district headquarters on 8 November 2012, I met my former student who is a police officer at Mzimba Police Station and after explaining to him the purpose of my visit, he volunteered to act as my gatekeeper to the radio station. Therefore, we arrived at the station without prior notice. The gatekeeper introduced me to the programmes manager because the station coordinator and manager were away. The programmes manager asked me to leave my letter of introduction and identity card so that he could show them to the station manager upon his return the following day. Unlike at Nkhotakota where I also did not find the station manager, here I was told to wait for the station manager who was to grant me permission to start my research. Because I was introduced by a policeman, it later transpired that they suspected that I was also a policeman and that I had come to investigate them despite the fact that they had seen my ID card and the letter of introduction explaining the purpose of my research. This was revealed to me later by the programmes manager during visits to the listening clubs. According to Laurila (1997) “organizations are dynamic and complex places and outsiders are not always welcome, particularly those asking what may be perceived as sensitive and awkward questions about firms and managerial actions” (cited in Okumus, 2007: 9). This was the case in the second station and for two days no one cooperated with me. When I
asked to meet the station manager after he had returned, I was left sitting in the reception area for about 2 hours as he was reported to be in a meeting. I had a feeling that I was on the agenda of that meeting because afterwards the programme manager interrogated me further to establish my identity. When he was convinced of my identity he went to convince the others and then I was allowed to start my research although with limited access. Lee (1993: 120) observes that “fieldworkers are the kinds of people who can put up with constant and dedicated hard work, loneliness, powerlessness and confusion, and, quite possibly, some suffering at the hands of those being studied”. I endured all this during the period I was left at the reception and entire duration of my research at the station.

According to Coleman (1996) the reason why organizations deny some researchers’ access is because “academics fail to provide answers about what, how, and why they will carry out a specific study and whether this study will be any value to the managers themselves and to the company” (cited in Okumus, 2007). However, although I had clearly explained this to them, the reason why I was given less positive reception at this station was that I was suspected of being a spy after being introduced to the radio station by a policeman. I later discovered that this suspicion arose as a result of events in 2007 when the media regulator MACRA closed down the radio station for giving airtime to members of opposition political parties who were critical of the ruling party at that time. After MACRA had investigated the issue, it was found that the radio station had flouted some conditions of its license so they shut it down to be reopened in 2010. These access problems led to some restrictions as I was not given freedom of movement in order to observe everything and interview anyone I wished. I was also not able to access the
station’s policy documents. Nevertheless I was able to make some observations, to conduct unstructured interviews with the station manager, the programmes manager, and the Public Relations Office of the local police station, to participate in one phone-in programme, and to conduct two FGDs with listeners of the station. I was, therefore, able to collect all the relevant data that I needed.

4.4 Participant Observation in the Community Radio Stations

Participant observation is defined as “a qualitative research technique that provides the opportunity to study people in real-life situations” (Berger, 2000: 161). Participant observation is conducted in one of these two roles:

(a) Participant as observer, where the researcher participates with the group being observed and is a functioning part of the group. As such, the person is an ‘insider’ enjoying a close understanding of the context and the process while performing the added role of an observer and recorder. (b) Observer as participant, in which the observer is a neutral outsider who has been given the privilege of participating for the purpose of making observations and recording them (Berger, 2000: 162).

In this research participant observation was done at two levels, firstly in the radio station and secondly in the listening clubs of these community radio stations. In this section, I discuss participant observation in the radio stations. I started observing the everyday practice in the radio station the same day I was given permission by the deputy station manager at Nkhotakota community radio station. As Mason (2004: 87) notes, in participant observation researchers are “variously involved in observing, participating, interrogating, listening, communicating as well as a range of other forms of being, doing and thinking”. As such, I interacted with staff by joining them in their working day. While I was observing what goes on in the radio stations, I also questioned and listened to what the
radio practitioners were saying in their respective departments. By sitting in the radio station, I assumed the role of ‘observer as participant’. In contrast, when I participated in the listening clubs, I played the role of ‘participant as observer’.

According to Deacon et al. (2007: 250) participant observation is an approach to research “in which the participation is necessary, and is intended to generate more information and data than would be possible without participation”. This strategy was meant to complement the interviews I conducted with radio practitioners and the FGDs in the listening clubs. Through this strategy, I aimed to gain an understanding of the context in which community radio operates, of the working practices in the stations and the production process and how ordinary people are involved. I was also able to understand the levels of interactions that exist between station staff and listeners and the perceptions that listeners have about their radio station, in addition to understanding how ordinary people use the station to achieve specific needs or purposes.

Both radio stations are run by a team of volunteers who combine roles as radio reporters and presenters. Therefore, in Nkhotakota community radio station, I interacted with and questioned the head of the Marketing and Multi-Media department, the head of the News and Current Affairs department, the head of Production department, and the head of Programmes department. Through this interaction, I also aimed to gain understanding of the perspective of station workers. As part of observation I visited the broadcasting studio to observe the type of equipment that they use and how phone-in programmes were produced. As part of participant observation, upon visiting each department, the head of
that department welcomed me and started by explaining to me their responsibilities, what they do in their department, and showing me the equipment or facilities that they have and what they are used for. Then I would allow them to continue doing what they were doing. While this was happening, I was recording in a diary everything that each of them said and made notes of my observations. The questions I asked as part of the participant observation were based on what I saw and as requests for further information or clarification about what they were explaining to me at the time.

In participant observation the observer “participates in the daily life of the people under study, either openly in the role of researcher or covertly in some guised role, observing things that happen, listening to what is said and questioning persons, over a length of time” (Becker and Geer, 1957: 28). In this research, I participated openly, a situation which made it possible for me to probe for information, explanations and detail in relation to my research objectives. On the fourth day, I decided to stay outside the station at a distance of about 20 metres just to observe how visitors (members of the community) to the station were welcomed and what they had come to do. On their way out, I talked to some of them to find out the purpose of their visit to the station and how they had been assisted. Being a small community radio station\(^{11}\), this exercise (participant observation) lasted only for a week, from Monday, 29 October to Friday, 2 November 2012. Everything that I was able to observe and what participants told me were recorded in a diary which contained my field notes.

\(^{11}\) More details about the size of the station and number of staff members together with their roles will be given in Chapter 5.
4.5 Field Notes

According to Spradley (1979) field notes can be categorized into three types; the condensed account (verbatim), the expanded account recorded after each field session and a fieldwork journal of experiences, ideas, mistakes, and problems that arise during the course of observation. I included all these types of notes. The verbatim accounts included recordings of what the radio practitioners were explaining to me and their answers to the questions I asked. The expanded account involved the notes I was writing in the diary about anything I was able to observe based on my research aims and objectives. The third category was based on what I observed in the listening clubs which included my experiences, reflections on the FGDs and debriefing notes written after meetings with the radio practitioners who accompanied me to the clubs. According to Yin (2009: 63) “mixed methods research forces the methods to share the same research questions, to collect complementary data, and to conduct counterpart analyses”. Therefore, participant observation was intended to complement the other data collection techniques through interviews, FGDs and analysis of policy documents. The field notes were, therefore, used as data alongside those from these other sources.

At Mzimba community radio station, my original idea was to follow the same plan used at Nkhotakota. However, due to the poor reception I received there, I changed my plan. After the initial skepticism at the station I was able to conduct participant observation although for a shorter time of two days on 10-11 November 2012. I also participated in the studio during one phone-in programme. I recorded all observations in a diary.
4.6 Interviews with Key Informants

Another data collection technique used in this research was semi-structured face-to-face interviews. Semi-structured interviews “are generally organized around a set of predetermined open-ended questions, with other questions emerging from the dialogue between interviewer and interviewee/s (DiCocco-Bloom and Crabtree, 2006: 315). As a data collection technique, the semi-structured interview “involves a number of phases, including development of the interview guide, conducting the interview, and analyzing the interview data” (Rubin and Rubin, 2005 cited in Baumbusch, 2010: 255). Therefore, before going out to conduct these interviews, I had already prepared a question guide for each of the key informants. According to DiCocco and Crabtree (2006: 316) semi-structured interviews “are able to inform a wide range of research questions”, hence for each of the key informants, the interview guide was divided into key themes which were based on the aims and objectives of the research and depending on the role or position of the key informant (see Table 1 below). Key informants are crucial sources of information in case study research because “such persons provide the case study investigator with insights into the matter and also can initiate access to corroboratory or contrary sources of evidence” (Yin, 2009: 107). Therefore, these interviews were intended to gain more insights on the aims and objectives of the research as Baumbusch (2010) argues that developing an interview guide is crucial to collecting data that will address the aims and objectives of the study.
Table 1: List of Key Informants and Types of Questions Asked

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>INTERVIEWEE</th>
<th>ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>TYPES OF QUESTIONS ASKED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Projects Manager</td>
<td>MACRA</td>
<td>Policy and regulatory issues on community radio broadcasting in Malawi, licensing, monitoring, functions, development agenda and impact of community radio stations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Station Managers</td>
<td>Mzimba and Nkhotakota CRS</td>
<td>Administrative and operational issues, i.e. establishment of the stations and ownership issues, staffing, financing, community participation including participation in RLCs, development/changes brought about by the stations, and challenges faced</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Manager</td>
<td>Nkhotakota and Mzimba CRS</td>
<td>Programme production, types of programmes and their impact</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rep. of District Commissioner</td>
<td>Nkhotakota District Council</td>
<td>Working relationship with Nkhotakota community radio station, forms of assistance given to the station, ownership issues</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NASO Director</td>
<td>Nkhotakota AIDS Support Organization</td>
<td>How NGOs use community radio stations to implement their programmes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Former MP</td>
<td>Nkhotakota Central Constituency</td>
<td>Role in establishment of Nkhotakota community radio station being a politician</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Executive Secretary</td>
<td>UNESCO-Malawi</td>
<td>Donor assistance in establishing community radio stations, conditions attached if any, role of UNESCO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Police PRO</td>
<td>Mzimba Police PRO</td>
<td>How the working relationship between Mzimba community radio station and the local police station is helping to curbing crime in the district</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Projects manager</td>
<td>Farmers Voice Radio</td>
<td>How NGOs use community radio to implement their programmes, specific role played by FVR</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Interviews with key informants were conducted at three levels or three different times, before fieldwork, during fieldwork in the radio stations and after fieldwork. Before going
to community radio stations, I conducted a semi-structured interview with the Projects Manager from the regulatory body, MACRA. The interview covered the issues presented in the table above. These questions were developed based on the objectives of this research and also on the consideration that MACRA is a regulatory body and therefore, plays a major role not only in licensing community radio stations but also keeps a lot of valuable information on the operations of these stations. The aim of this interview was to gain insight into regulatory and policy issues regarding community radio stations and their impact in Malawi. The interview was recorded and later transcribed.

The second set of interviews was conducted during my visit to the radio stations. The first radio station I visited was Nkhotakota where I conducted semi-structured interviews with the deputy station manager during the same week I was conducting participant observation. Since station managers make important decisions with regard to what audiences listen to, are aware of the station’s broadcasting philosophy and know how their programmes are received by the audience, the aim of the interview was to gain insight into the operations of the station, its impact on development in corroboration with or contrast to listeners’ views. According to Baumbusch (2010) a semi-structured interview guide typically has a few broad guiding questions. Although I had a set of guiding questions to ask the deputy station manager (see Appendix 1), some questions were based on what I had observed within those few days so that he could shed more light on them. In a way, this interview was part of both participant observation and a stand alone data source. One advantage of semi-structured interviews is that the “guiding questions are supported by prompts, or probes, which are sub-questions that encourage the participant to expand upon and answer
or redirect them to the main topic if they get sidetracked” (Ryan et al., 2009 cited in Baumbusch, 2010). Therefore, since I was in frequent contact with him, I was able to probe and cross-check more information with him which emerged throughout the week of conducting participant observation. The questions I asked were based on the characteristic features of community radio stations which are participation, ownership and community radio as a non-profit entity (see Table 1 above and Appendix 1).

After conducting FGDs in the listening clubs, I also conducted semi-structured interviews with the Director of Administration of Nkhotakota District Council who was representing the District Commissioner (DC) and also the Programme’s Officer of Nkhotakota AIDS Support Organization (NASO). The idea to interview the representative of the DC arose because the district council shares ownership of the radio station with the community and it is also represented in the Board of Trustees of the radio station. The aim of the interview was to find out how the council uses and supports the community radio station. The director of NASO was chosen because NASO was mentioned frequently in the FGDs as a local NGO which helps to spread messages about the dangers of HIV and AIDS using the community radio station. Therefore, the aim of the interview was to gain more of how the NGO operates in the community using community radio as its preferred strategy of reaching out to its target group.

A third set of interviews was conducted after the fieldwork in the stations and the listening Clubs. This time I had an unstructured interview with a former Member of Parliament (MP) for the area where Nkhotakota community radio station is located. The former MP
was mentioned by the deputy station manager and the participants in the listening clubs as an influential person in the establishment of the station. According to Lofland and Lofland (1995) unstructured interviewing is a ‘guided conversation’ that can be used in qualitative research and seeks to discover the interviewee’s experience of a particular topic or situation. These interviews are conducted “in conjunction with the collection of observational data” (DiCocco and Crabtree, 2006: 315). Therefore, the interview with the former MP solicited information from him about his role in the establishment of Nkhotakota community radio station to corroborate the information already established through an interview with the station manager and from field work. Another semi-structured interview was conducted with the Projects Officer of Farmers Voice Radio (FVR). FVR was chosen because it was frequently mentioned by participants in the FGDs of both stations as an NGO which is helping farmers adopt modern methods of farming in the communities where there are community radio stations. This interview aimed to find out how NGOs and other development agencies are using community radio to implement their development programmes in the communities. Finally, I interviewed a representative from UNESCO-Malawi Office because it sponsored the setting up of Nkhotakota community radio station by buying equipment and training staff. The aim of the interview was to understand UNESCO’s policy with regard to establishment of community radio stations and what influence, if any, they have on the operations of the stations they help to establish. Since “a semi-structured interview involves a set of open-ended questions that allow for spontaneous and in-depth responses” (Ryan et al., 2009 cited in Baumbusch, 2010), interview schedules with specific types of open-ended questions for these groups of people were formulated to confirm and verify information already established but also to
seek more information from them. Permission from all these key informants was sought verbally. I booked an appointment with these individuals through their administrative assistants, and time was arranged to meet each of them. Upon meeting them, I introduced myself and the purpose of my visit and permission was granted verbally in each case to proceed with the interview. All the interviews were recorded and later transcribed verbatim.

Finally, at Mzimba community radio station, I conducted unstructured interviews with the programmes manager, the station manager and the Public Relations Officer (PRO) of the local police station using open-ended questionnaires on 13 and 14 November 2012. These interviews solicited views from these people on their role in or connection with the community radio stations, and their experience of working with community radio stations based on how the station is encouraging participation of ordinary people and how it is helping to enhance people’s capabilities. The unstructured interviews were again used here for the same reason of allowing interviewees to expand on their responses through probing them. The police PRO was selected for interviews because the local police station has a working relationship with the radio station and has a radio programme on security issues in the community. The aim was to find out how the radio programme on security issues is helping address security issues in the community. These types of interviews provide room to probe for more detail and clarity, and control the discussion to ensure that it remains within the boundaries of the discussion (Harding et al., 1996). All the interviews were recorded, transcribed and analyzed in the same way as the other interviews. Each interview
transcript was treated and analyzed individually through manual reading to extract themes emerging from them and corroborating them with data from other sources.

4.7 Participant Observation in the Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs)

After conducting participant observation and semi-structured interviews in the radio stations, I travelled to the field to observe RLCs. This sequence of data collection was done in order to get an in-depth understanding of the various ways in which community radio stations encourage their listeners to participate in media and in development. Then FGDs followed so as to get an account from the participants of the importance of the radio stations for them and their communities and also how they were engaged in station activities and various development projects. The purpose of conducting participant observation in the RLCs was to gain a deeper understanding of the kinds of activities that club members engage in which are facilitated by the community radio station. This helped to address the issues regarding how community radio promotes development through people’s participation and how RLCs are helping to expand their capabilities. Therefore, at Nkhotakota with the help and guidance of the station manager and his deputy, we identified RLCs working with the radio station where I could observe their activities and thereafter conduct FGDs with them. A total of six radio listening clubs were identified (see Table 2 below).
Table 2: The Listening Clubs where FGDs were Conducted

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>CLUB NAME</th>
<th>TYPE</th>
<th>ACTIVITIES</th>
<th>LOCATION</th>
<th>OCCUPATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Vinkhande</td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>• HIV/AIDS awareness</td>
<td>T.A. Malengachanzi</td>
<td>Village farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Four Boys</td>
<td>RLC</td>
<td>• Promoting sanitation</td>
<td>T.A. Mphonde</td>
<td>Village farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Kashati</td>
<td>Farmers Club</td>
<td>• Farming</td>
<td>T.A Malengachanzi</td>
<td>Village farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Mpamantha</td>
<td>Farmers Club</td>
<td>• Farming                         • HIV/AIDS awareness</td>
<td>T.A. Mphonde</td>
<td>Village farmers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Msambaimfa</td>
<td>Youth Club</td>
<td>• Promoting behaviour change</td>
<td>T.A. Malengachanzi</td>
<td>Youth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Lozi</td>
<td>Youth Club</td>
<td>• HIV/AIDS awareness                         • Peer education</td>
<td>T.A. Mphonde</td>
<td>Youth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

These RLCs were chosen because of the different nature of their activities resulting from each of them being established to listen to designated programmes and/or to fulfill a designated purpose. Therefore, the sampling of the clubs was purposeful in order to gain a deeper understanding of their activities as the club members were likely to give specific information about how beneficial participation in club activities can be. For example, Vinkhande is an HIV/AIDS club which listens to HIV/AIDS programmes on Nkhotakota community radio station and its members commit to disseminating information derived from the listening club to others. Mpamantha is an agricultural club whose members listen
to agricultural programmes with the intention that members will implement the messages imparted to them through the radio in their farming. The choice of these RLCs was based on two factors; firstly, the nature of the clubs and their functions, and secondly, their geographical location, as shown above.

In terms of the nature of the clubs and their function, I was careful not to choose clubs that performed the same functions. For example, I chose two agricultural clubs, two health clubs and two youth clubs that performed multiple functions including HIV/AIDS awareness, farming, and behaviour change awareness, among others. The choice of these clubs was influenced by my research objective of investigating how ordinary people participate in development projects through community radio. On geographical location, the clubs were chosen based on ease of access as some places could not easily be accessed by a car and on the basis that they were located in different Traditional Authorities (TAs) or Senior Chiefs. I visited clubs in the jurisdiction of TA Malengachanzi and TA Mphonde (see Appendix 8 for map of Nkhotakota district).

Members of the RLCs selected were notified of my visit through announcements on the radio station. During the week of visiting the RLCs, the radio station carried announcements informing members of a particular club to gather at their usual meeting place on a particular day and time when they were going to meet me. On the day of my visit, reminders and follow-ups were made through a phone call to the chairperson of each club to confirm the meeting. I provided the fees to buy airtime for making the calls. This method was chosen in order to observe what goes on in the RLCs, the programmes that are
listened, how club members use the information they get from the radio programme, what sort of issues are discussed after listening to the programme, how the discussion is conducted, and what happens afterwards in order to get an insight of this kind of institution. However, this method of recruiting participants is potentially problematic in the sense that it can arouse the curiosity of the people about what to expect. Consequently, participant observation can affect or influence participants’ behaviour and responses. For instance, my visit to Mpamantha Farmers Club attracted about fifty members while at Four Boys Listening Club about thirty members turned up when the actual membership of the clubs is between 15-25 people. My presence, therefore, meant that the members were not having their usual listening club activity. This means that I was not observing the RLC in its usual operation but rather meeting members of the club to see how they conduct their club meetings and to have a FGD but in the context of a RLC.

I visited the RLCs in Nkhotakota from 2 to 7 November 2012. Since participant observation takes place over a relatively long time (Becker and Geer, 1957), my visit to the RLCs cannot be described as participant observation because I was there only during those times when the listeners gather to listen to a radio programme and discuss its content. However, the visit to the RLCs and the FGDs I conducted provided an opportunity to talk to club members about the radio station and the clubs. On each visit to the RLCs, I was accompanied by a radio practitioner who was also the one who introduced me to the club members. This person also sought permission from them on my behalf, to observe what goes on in the RLCs and then conduct FGDs. Although there were a few more people in the groups than usual, this did not affect the study as the purpose was to observe the
context of the RLCs and to hold discussions with RLC members. In addition to the FGDs, on some occasions, I was able to observe the activities of RLC members. I observed the activities of two farmers clubs, Mpamantha and Kashati. This was the case because the time that was scheduled for me to visit these clubs coincided with the time when the club members usually meet to listen to their designated programmes. This was deliberately done during the time of identifying the clubs to be visited. I was, therefore, able to participate in the RLCs by sitting down with the members of the clubs and listening to their designated radio programmes, and thereafter engaged in discussions of the programmes’ content with them. The observation took place where the members usually meet, for example, at Mpamantha it took place on the premises of a primary school, and at Kashati, the meeting took place at the demonstration garden of the Club.

During the observation, I recorded in a diary what was going on, the name of the programme being listened to, the content of the programme, what club members were doing, what happened after listening to a particular programme, the discussions that followed and the decisions that were taken. Therefore, through observation I had an account of the activities that follow after listening to the radio programmes in trying to implement the decisions taken after discussion of the programme content and how that has potential to expand their capabilities (the results of the RLC visits are presented in Chapter 7 for more details). Throughout this process, I kept a record of field notes which I was able to go through during a debriefing meeting with the radio practitioner who accompanied me to the RLCs.
4.8 Focus Group Discussions (FGDs)

Focus group discussions (FGD’s) with listeners of Nkhotakota community radio station were conducted after observing what happens in the RLCs. This enabled me to seek more clarification on some of the things I had observed and also to probe on what the station managers had said and what I had gathered from observing in the radio stations and some programmes I listened to. A focus group discussion is “a free-form discussion by a group of people, led by a moderator, designed to obtain information about some topic” (Berger, 2000: 122). It involves “bringing a group or, more often, a series of groups, of subjects to discuss an issue in the presence of a moderator who ensures that the discussion remains on the issue at hand, while eliciting a wide range of opinions on the issue” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1996: 80). The moderator also has to “monitor a complex social interaction, encourage contributions, and manage disruption, diversion, and other problematic group dynamics” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1996: 82). In this case I was the moderator and the members of the RLCs formed the discussion groups. The FGD was chosen as method because, according to Rabiee (2004: 656), “the type and range of data generated through the social interaction of the group are often deeper and richer than those obtained from one-to-one interviews”. The group is ‘focused’ because it involves a collective activity, for example, debating a set of questions on a topical issue (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999).

For the FGDs a schedule containing different questions arranged thematically relating to the aim and objectives of this research was used (see Appendix 2: FGDs with the Listeners). Among the themes covered by the questions included: purpose of community
radio in the community; impact of community radio stations on the listeners and the community; levels of participation available to them; programming of community radio stations and how it addresses community development challenges; and the role of NGOs and government. The advantage of FGD over other forms of group interview is that it allows more interaction. “Instead of asking questions of each person in turn, focus group researchers encourage participants to talk to one another: asking questions, exchanging anecdotes, and commenting on each others’ experiences and points of view” (Kitzinger and Barbour, 1999: 4). In this case, I was interested in the various ways in which community radio promotes development including through people’s participation and the various ways in which the RLCs can help to expand people’s capabilities. On each day I conducted one FGD except on 3 November 2012 when I conducted two FGDs, one in the morning at Four Boys RLC and another in the afternoon at Kashati Farmers Club. On average each discussion lasted about 45 minutes. The reason for conducting one FGD per day was to allow time for me to listen through the discussion and to review how the discussions went to feed into practice in the following groups. As Krueger (1998: 12) advises, “care must be exercised in scheduling the focus groups. Only a limited number should be conducted in one day, and a reasonable amount of time should be allowed between focus groups”. He further recommends two focus groups per day as being ‘reasonable’ and that more than that may lead to ‘analytical risks’ (Krueger, 1998: 13). Therefore, any subsequent discussion I conducted was an improvement on the previous one because I was able to make necessary adjustments in the course of asking questions. I was also able to have enough time for a debriefing meeting with the radio practitioners who accompanied me to a particular RLC. The debriefing meeting took place during lunch
at a restaurant which I paid for it as an incentive. Sometimes it took place at the radio station after coming from the fieldwork. In Nkhotakota, the discussions were conducted in Chichewa, a language commonly spoken by the people there, while in Mzimba the discussions were conducted in Tumbuka, again a language spoken by the people there. All the discussions were recorded, and then later transcribed for analysis using thematic qualitative analysis.

4.8.1 Number of Focus Groups

Deciding on the number of FGDs to conduct and the number of people to form a focus group is a crucial issue of this method. Livingstone and Lunt (1996: 83) provide a rule of thumb which is that “for any given category of people discussing a particular topic there are only so many stories to be told”. This view is shared by Holliman (2005: 6) who argues that “as a general principle, researchers should be flexible about their sample size, continuing to sample at least until they are confident that continued data generation will not further inform their analyses”. That is why, a total of six FGDs were conducted for Nkhotakota and two for Mzimba community radio stations. The justification for this is that after three to five FGDs the subsequent groups had nothing new to say apart from merely repeating what was said in the previous groups, a situation Krueger (1998) describes as ‘theoretical saturation’. Krueger argues that “in this form of research [focus group], the quality of the study is not dependent on the size of the sample. The intent is to achieve ‘theoretical saturation’, which is akin to redundancy” (Krueger, 1998: 72). Therefore, although I only conducted two FGDs at Mzimba community radio station, I observed that
the same kind of stories that I had heard at Nkhotakota community radio station were being repeated thereby compensating for the two FGDs. In fact, Krueger (1998: 72) recommends conducting “three or four focus groups for a particular audience and then decide if additional groups (or cases) should be added to the study”. (The reasons why I conducted only two FGDs at Mzimba community radio station will be discussed later in the chapter). It was easy to organise the focus groups since both radio stations have RLCs whose members meet regularly to listen to different radio programmes and thereafter engage in discussion of the content of the programme. According to Krueger (1998: 71) “In focus group research, the strategy is to use ‘purposeful’ sampling, whereby the researcher selects participants based on the purpose of the study”. That is why I purposefully targeted the RLCs of the two radio stations as focus groups.

4.8.2 Composition of the Focus Groups

In terms of group composition, although there are differing views with some critics arguing that “participants should not know each other, thus encouraging more honest and spontaneous expression of views and a wider range of responses” (Rabiee, 2004: 656), others support the “use of pre-existing groups, as acquaintances could relate to each other’s comments and may be more able to challenge one another” (Kitzinger, 1994 cited in Rabiee, 2005: 656). However, there is consensus on homogeneity, where “generally speaking, the more homogenous the membership of the group, in terms of social background, level of education, knowledge and experience, the more confident individual group members are likely to be in voicing their views” (Sim, 1998: 348). The RLCs I
identified for this research were composed of homogenous members. They were mainly village farmers with no or little education.

4.8.3 Size of the Focus Group

Since “group size is also important in determining quality of the resulting discussion” (Livingstone and Lunt, 1996: 82), there have also been a range of propositions or suggestions with regards to the number of participants in the focus group. For example, Hansen et al. (1998) recommend a range of six and ten, Morgan (1997) suggests a group of 15 to 20, whereas Livingstone and Lunt (1996) posit that groups of 6 to 10 participants work best. However, in this research, the number of people in the FGDs varied with each club. I had planned to have about 10 to 15 people in a group but in most cases the number of people exceeded the maximum number I wanted. For example, I could start with 8 people but by the end of the discussion there were more than twenty people. I had the largest group at Mpamantha Farmers Club where more than 50 people turned up making it look more like a community meeting than an FGD. Some of the people who turned up were not even club members. They simply walked in or came and sat down without being invited and it was difficult to send them away. However, this did not affect the discussion because it was mostly the club members who were actively involved in answering my questions. The other people were bystanders and spectators, and their presence in a way encouraged the real members to speak up. The big attendance by the people might have been triggered by the radio announcements that were made about my visit.
4.8.4 Focus Group Discussions at Mzimba Community Radio Station

At Mzimba community radio station, the situation was a bit different from that of Nkhotakota. Mzimba community radio station does not have RLCs as such. What they have are farmers clubs established by Farmers Voice Radio (FVR) which partnered with Mzimba community radio to offer agricultural programmes to farmers. (More details about FVR will be provided in Chapter 7). The programme manager identified two farmers clubs where I was to conduct FGDs. The clubs are Chinombotchaya and Njatose Farmers Clubs. These clubs were identified because they were the most active clubs and because of their location it was easy to visit them. Unlike at Nkhotakota here I did not have much influence on the choice of the clubs and the number because I was told it was only possible to visit two clubs. Again here, I did not have a chance to participate in listening to the radio programmes and attending the discussions held because the times chosen for visiting did not correspond with the time when they listen to their designated programmes. As such FGDs were only conducted with these two clubs on 12 and 13 November 2012 respectively using a schedule of questions. The discussions were recorded and later transcribed. My visits to these clubs were arranged by the programme manager through a phone call to the chairperson of each club who informed the members about the meeting.

4.9 Document Analysis

Another data collection method was document analysis. The method of document analysis refers to “an integrated and conceptually informed method, procedure, and technique for locating, identifying, retrieving, analysing documents for their relevance, significance, and
meaning” (Altheide, 1996: 2). There are three classes of documents relevant to researchers and these are ‘primary’, ‘secondary’, and ‘auxiliary’ documents (Altheide, 1996: 2). Primary documents are objects of study, for example, newspapers, magazines, TV newscasts, diaries, or archaeological artefacts. Secondary documents are records about primary documents and other objects of research, for example, field notes, published reports about primary documents and other accounts. Finally, auxiliary documents are those which supplement a research project or some other practical undertaking but which are neither the main focus of investigation nor the primary source of data for understanding the topic (Altheide, 1996). For this research, I analysed all three types of documents, and these are presented in the table below.
Table 3: List of Documents Analyzed for this Research

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NAME OF DOCUMENT</th>
<th>SOURCE</th>
<th>REASON FOR ANALYSIS</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Malawi Communications Act (1998)</td>
<td>MACRA</td>
<td>To review the regulatory framework of community radio broadcasting in Malawi</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Communications Sector Policy Plan (n.d)</td>
<td>MACRA</td>
<td>To review country’s policy on community radio broadcasting</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Licence conditions of community radio stations</td>
<td>MACRA</td>
<td>To review conditions under which CRS operate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Nkhotakota CRS Policy Document</td>
<td>Nkhotakota CRS</td>
<td>To understand the mission and vision of the station.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Programme Schedule</td>
<td>Nkhotakota CRS</td>
<td>To review programming of the station and relevance in addressing community challenges</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemonics Report on Indoor Residential Spraying (IRS)</td>
<td>Chemonics International</td>
<td>To understand how NGOs use community radio to implement their programmes.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Socio Economic Profiles of Mzimba and Nkhotakota Districts</td>
<td>Mzimba and Nkhotakota District Councils</td>
<td>To understand demographic trends and relate them to the importance of establishing CRS in the communities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fieldwork Report/Field Notes</td>
<td>Fieldwork</td>
<td>To complement other data sources</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The documents were identified based on their relevance to the objectives of the research and accessibility. According to Altheide (1996: 29) documents are analysed by identifying themes, frames and discourses. In this research, documents were analyzed by identifying themes relevant to my research objectives and the themes were juxtaposed with themes.
identified from the other data sources. This was the case because documents “provide other specific details to corroborate information from other sources” (Yin, 2009: 103). Themes are “the recurring topical theses that run through a lot of reports. I was able to cross-check some information provided in the face-to-face interviews by referring to the documents mentioned above.

4.10 How Data were Analyzed

The data analysis strategy adopted by this research is thematic analysis. This is an approach to analysis of data generated from mixed methods used by case study research (Hesse-Biber, 2010; Stewart, 2012). Thematic analysis was used to analyze the FGD and interview transcripts. The same thematic analysis was used when analyzing documents and field notes which contained the observations. The decision to take a mixed-method approach to the stages of data collection and analysis is based on the need to answer the research questions in such a way as to achieve validity of the results. As Yin (2009: 11) argues, “any case study finding or conclusion is likely to be more convincing and accurate if it is based on several different sources of information, following a corroboratory mode”.

In this section, I present the strategy I adopted in analyzing and interpreting the data.

In case study research, Yin (2009) recommends relying on theoretical propositions as a preferred strategy to data analysis. The rationale for this is that “the original objectives and design of the case study presumably were based on such propositions, which in turn reflected a set of research questions, reviews of the literature, and new hypothesis or
propositions” (Yin, 2009: 130). As previously indicated, in this research I used ‘another’ development, communication for development and development theories which guided the design of the case study and formulation of the research objectives. Similarly, Krueger (1998: 21) reminds researchers to reflect on the objectives of the research because they provide “guidance on themes, areas of comparison, and the overall focus of the analysis”. Furthermore, Hesse-Biber (2010: 73) argues that analysis involves “the deconstruction of data into various component parts”. Since the interview guides for unstructured interviews and FGDs were informed by theoretical considerations and main themes of the research (Krueger, 1998), in analyzing the data, I proceeded by going back to my research objectives and the interview schedules to identify the main themes recurring from there. I listed down all the major themes and coded them into different categories. In other words, each theme was a code and a category for analysis. According to Hesse-Biber (2010: 191) “to code means to take a segment of text and give it a ‘name’ or sometimes a number”. After that I conducted a manual reading of the interview transcripts each at a time beginning with the transcript of the station managers and ending with the others. In other words, when analyzing the data I followed the order I used when collecting the data. Hesse-Biber (2010: 190) further argues that “as we begin to transcribe the interview, we also begin to analyze and interpret our data. That is we write down any ideas that come to mind (‘memoing’) and note the themes that we find particularly important”. In view of that, as I was reading through the interview transcripts I was able to identify more themes and subthemes which I also coded manually. Coding “develops higher-level codes (themes) and uses the process of memoing to locate larger meanings related to the research problem” (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 94). The aim of coding data thematically (thematic coding)
was “to find larger themes or significant patterns of meaning in the data by grouping, comparing, and contrasting various codes” (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 94). It also helped me “to focus attention on certain data and to ignore other data” (Yin, 2009: 130). As Yin (2009: 173) further argues, “the case study encompasses the other methods, and your completed case study report would incorporate the reporting of the data from these other methods”. Therefore, the same process was repeated in analyzing focus group transcripts, field notes and documents. Then sections of text from the different data sources were sifted, lifted and organized or classified under the relevant code or theme. According to Livingstone and Lunt (1996: 94) “the evolving practice among many researchers has been informed by literary criticism, whereby the researcher becomes immersed in the material, resulting in a thematically ordered account supported by material quoted from transcripts”, and that is how I proceeded with my data analysis.

In effect, this is similar to open coding employed in grounded theory which acts as ‘both theory and method’ (Hesse-Biber, 2010). In grounded theory, researchers analyze data by developing “progressively more abstract conceptual categories to synthesize, to explain and to understand” (Charmaz, 1995: 28). Therefore, quotes to go along with the coded data were also identified from the transcripts and put under relevant themes and sub-themes to explain and understand the patterns of meaning generated in the data in relation to the research questions and themes. I quote these materials at length in the chapters where I discuss the findings of this dissertation. The major themes of my research included participation and development, patterns of ownership of community radio stations, influence of donor funding on the operations of community radio stations, RLCs and how
they expand people’ capabilities, and how the programming of community radio addresses community development challenges. For example, on ‘Participation and Development’, I came up with sub-themes such as: participation in the media; participation through the media; levels of participation; significance of each level of participation; and effectiveness of each level of participation in facilitating development.

The final activity was to interpret the results. Interpretation involves “meaning making and theory building” (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 73). It is further argued that the research problem should dictate “whether researchers should write up results separately and then combine them into a general conclusion or whether they should integrate the results in an ongoing process” (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 73). In this dissertation, I integrated the data. According to Yin (2009: 116), “the most important advantage presented by using multiple sources of evidence is the development of converging lines of enquiry, a process of triangulation and corroboration”. For example, based on Yin’s (2009) suggestions, it was possible to cross-check information given in the interview with the station manager, say on how ordinary people participate in the media, with information obtained from the policy documents on what they say about community radio and participation, and then support or contest this with quotations of what the listeners said in the FGDs about how they participate. This helped to combine, synthesize and aggregate analyses from different data sources under relevant themes and subthemes. The aggregation and synthesis of data is made possible when “components are explicitly related to each other within a single study and in such a way as to be mutually illuminating, thereby producing findings that are greater than the
sum of parts” (Wooley, 2009: 7). This was a rigorous process which took me about two months to do.

Finally, researchers need to decide how best to present their findings (Hesse-Biber, 2010). In making this important decision, Hesse-Biber (2010: 199) argues that “the research problem should also determine how you present your research findings (analysis) and overall conclusions (interpretation)”. She further argues that “the writing process should be tightly linked to the research question(s) of the study” (Hesse-Biber, 2010: 199). Based on these arguments, in this dissertation each research question was addressed in a separate chapter.

The major themes and sub-themes identified through coding of the data guided in shaping the structure of each chapter. The chapters were arranged in such a way as to build a coherent argument emanating from the findings addressing the research questions. The findings presented in this dissertation are a result of several attempts at rewriting, revisions, omissions and reorganization. In explaining and reporting the data, this being a two-case study, there will “be no separate chapters or sections devoted to the individual cases” (Yin, 2009: 136). Rather, comparisons between the two cases will automatically emerge in the discussion and will be explained. According to Stewart (2012: 73) “the key stage of multi-case analysis is the comparison between cases, or cross-case analysis”. It is further noted that in such kind of a report, “each chapter or section would be devoted to a separate cross-case issue, and the information from the individual cases
would be dispersed throughout each chapter or section” (Yin, 2009: 172). This is the format that the presentation of findings will follow.

4.11 Determining Validity

According to Kvale (1996: 241) “validity is ascertained by examining the sources of invalidity. The stronger the falsification attempts a proposition has survived the more valid, the trustworthier the knowledge”. In this research, validity was achieved by the use of various sources of data which complemented each other. The cross-referencing and verification of the participants’ responses with other sources of information which I did during the analysis of data was an attempt at ‘falsifying’ which helped achieve validity. In effect, validity takes the form of interrogating the findings of the mixed methods: what is missing? (Kvale,1996). Therefore, validity can be achieved not only by employing multiple sources of data but also having the right methods that can address the research questions, and the present study took this into consideration. Moreover, Livingstone and Lunt (1996: 92) argue that “qualitative methods compensate for their lack of reliability with greater validity”. In addition, Kvale (1996: 241) identifies three criteria for determining validity in both qualitative and quantitative approaches to mixed methods: ‘validity as craftsmanship’, ‘validity as communication’ and thirdly, ‘pragmatic validity as action’. Kvale (1996) explains that validity as craftsmanship involves how well the different segments of the research fit together and correspond with the research questions. In my study, this has been achieved by employing theoretical propositions to inform the research questions which also informed the use of multiple sources of data. The analysis of data was also informed by the same theoretical propositions and by linking them to the
research questions. Validity as communication and pragmatic validity deal with how well the research translates to and finds legitimacy in the community of experts (Kvale, 1996). While validity as craftsmanship involves the researcher carefully choosing his or her research design, the latter two types of validity have to do with reviewing the completed research study by external experts in the field.

4.12 Ethical Considerations

I obtained ethical clearance from the department’s Ethics Committee in 2012 before going for fieldwork. The plan was to conduct the research with adults only and to have the names of the participants remain anonymous, and so the research did not raise any ethical issues. During the fieldwork, all the participants in the research were informed about the aim of the research. I sought the participants’ permission to conduct research and all the participants signed the consent form to indicate their willingness to participate in the study. The station managers gave their permission to have the names of the stations mentioned in the dissertation but I assured them that the names of all participants will remain anonymous. The names of the RLCs, although posing no ethical issues, have also remained anonymous except in this chapter where I have mentioned them to indicate which clubs I visited. However, I have anonymized what was said in each of the clubs in the subsequent chapters. The representatives of the NGOs and other institutions also gave permission to have the names of the NGOs mentioned but I have anonymized the names of those people whom I interviewed by simply referring to their positions.
However, in the course of conducting the research, some ethical issues arose, such as participants giving sensitive information and sometimes mentioning names of people including politicians who were connected to the radio stations in a positive and negative way. Any such sensitive information has either been anonymized or left out depending on how it relates to the objectives of the research.

4.13 Chapter summary

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the case study research and the multi-method approach used to gather data and the rationale for choosing them. It has also discussed how data were analyzed using thematic analysis. The qualitative methods adopted by this study provide a measure for validity and were meant to complement each other and were well-suited in addressing the research questions posed by the study. Since analysis of data is also linked to the methods and research questions, the presentation of the findings in the subsequent chapters is based on the research questions of this study. The chapters are arranged in such a way as to build a coherent argument for understanding the various ways in which community radio facilitates development, participation being one of them. Chapter 5 provides a context for understanding the establishment of community radio stations in Malawi. It also examines how donor funding in the establishment of community radio stations has potential to influence the agendas of the radio stations.
CHAPTER FIVE: CONTEXT FOR UNDERSTANDING THE ESTABLISHMENT OF COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS IN MALAWI

5.0 Introduction

This chapter presents the broader context for understanding the establishment of community radio stations in Malawi and the purpose they were required to fulfil in the communities when they were being conceived of. According to Howley (2010: 3) “working under the rubric of political economy, scholars have demonstrated how methods of financing, organizational structures, and the regulatory environment in which media institutions operate have important and far-reaching consequences on media behaviours and performance”. This chapter, therefore, specifically seeks to establish the extent to which issues of community ownership, donor funding and participatory decision-making processes affect and shape the operations of the two community radio stations. The chapter also covers station staffing and listenership figures of the radio stations. This will establish the context for understanding how the stations operate and facilitate development. The chapter draws on the range of data collected for this dissertation including observations, policy documents and interviews.

5.1 Brief Background to the Political Economy of the Media

Analysis of the political economy of the media examines how political and economic power influence media behaviour and performance (Graham, 2007). There are many ways of applying political economy to the study of media. McChesney (2000: 109) identifies two ways, firstly, an examination of “how media and communication systems and content
reinforce, challenge or influence existing class and social relations”, and secondly, “how ownership, support mechanisms (e.g. advertising) and government policies influence media behavior and content”. The media can influence existing class and social relations in the sense that the ruling elite are also the decision-makers with regard to media content (Thomsen, 2005: 113). The issue of power and ownership is, therefore, part of the domain of the ruling elite. This is exemplified by the fact that it is mostly the elite classes whose voices and activities are heard and reported in the media because they either own or have direct access to the media organizations. According to Tomaselli (2003: 145) “owners of capital […] use media to further their own class interests to secure and enhance their personal strategic positions in the socio-economic order”. Consequently, the voices of the poor rural masses are not heard in the mainstream media (Ogundimu, 2003) resulting in their marginalization, exclusion and disenfranchisement in sharing information, having a voice in public life and influencing the agendas of media policy makers. Furthermore, because “the media agenda is controlled by distinct corporate interests rather than by the public, or special groups representing them” (Ogundimu, 2003: 224), mainstream media does not promote civil society and the democratic rights of the general public but of a few powerful elites. In other words, the media is sometimes used as an instrument of power to maintain the status quo. This is where community radio comes in as an alternative to mainstream media that engages non-elites in media in a variety of ways.

The same power problems manifest in advertising and how it influences media content. As commercial media is concerned with making profits, its programming is geared towards satisfying the elite in order to attract advertisers who bring in money (Barker, 2001). This
commercialization has not spared public service broadcasting. “Faced with rising costs and decreasing government subsidies, or the stopping of subsidies altogether, the intensification of commercialization has become an imperative for public broadcasters throughout the [sub-Saharan] region” (Barker, 2001: 19). For example, at Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC), “an increased commercial imperative and reliance on sponsored programmes has led to a reduction of programming oriented towards the poor and rural dwellers” (Barker, 2001: 19). Consequently, programming on mainstream media tends to address the needs of the affluent people to a large extent disregarding the communication needs of the ordinary listeners who need informational and educational programming.

Therefore, an examination of the political economy of community radio in terms of how they are owned, structured and operated is important. As Howley (2010: 4) argues,

by providing local populations with access to the means of communication, community media offer a modest, but vitally important corrective to the unprecedented concentration of media ownership that undermines local cultural expression, privatizes the channels of public communication, and otherwise threatens the prospects for democratic self-governance.

In community radio, this varies somewhat from station to station whereby ordinary people participate to different degrees in the daily running of the station, depending on who owns it. For those stations which are fully owned and operated by the community, ordinary people participate at all levels such as planning, management, programme production and financing (Girard, 2001). This has far-reaching implications on the station’s performance which further impacts on how they contribute to development. It is against this background that this chapter examines how Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations reflect
the key concerns of political economy such as ownership, funding and participatory
decision-making. I will firstly describe the socio-economic profiles of Nkhotakota and
Mzimba districts to give an overview of the location of the districts in relation to other
districts, their population, local governance, people’s living conditions, communication
challenges, and media use. This information sets the scene for understanding the
environment in which community radio stations operate and how they address the
communication and development needs of the areas.

5.2 Socio-economic Profile of Nkhotakota and Mzimba Districts

Nkhotakota is one of nine administrative districts in the central region located on the west
coast of Lake Malawi. Nkhotakota district borders Nkhta Bay District to the North,
Mzimba District to the Northwest, Kasungu District to the West, Ntchisi District to the
Southwest and Salima District to the South (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 1). It also shares an
international boundary with Mozambique to the East (Refer to Fig. 1: Map of Malawi).
The district is located 200 kilometres North West of Lilongwe, the capital city of Malawi.
Mzimba is one of six administrative districts located in the northern region of the country.
It is the largest district council in Malawi in terms of geographical coverage (Mzimba
Socio-economic Profile (SEP)\textsuperscript{12} (2008: 1). It is bordered by Rumphi district to the north,
Nkhata Bay district to the east, Kasungu district to the south, Nkhotakota district to the
southeast, and Zambia to the west. Its headquarters is situated about 250 kilometres north

\textsuperscript{12} The District Socio Economic Profile (SEP) is an important document which serves as the benchmark for
the preparation of the District Development Plan (DDP). It attempts to provide a proper and clear
understanding of the social, economic, political and physical conditions of each district. It is used as a guide
for development of projects in the District (Republic of Malawi, 2008).
of Lilongwe, the Capital City and about 100 kilometres to the south west of Mzuzu City (Mzimba SEP, 2008: 1). Mzuzu City is the administrative headquarters of the northern region of Malawi.

According to the Malawi Population and Housing Census of 2008 the population of Nkhotakota district is 303,659 while that of Mzimba is 724,873 people (NSO, 2008). Nkhotakota district has six TAs (Senior Chiefs) whereas Mzimba district has ten TAs. These TAs are supervised by their District Commissioners (DC). The structure of the traditional leaders is arranged in such a way that each TA has group village-heads and each group village-head looks after village heads. These traditional leaders “wield certain powers and perform basic functions related to traditional issues” (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 12). The Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS)\(^\text{13}\) shows that 73% of the total population of Nkhotakota earns its income through non-formal employment especially in the agriculture sector (NSO, 2012). Being a lakeshore district, most of the men in Nkhotakota earn their income from the fishing industry. In contrast, in Mzimba district, the major economic activity is agriculture, with tobacco as the major cash crop and maize as the main food crop grown by subsistence farmers. The main sources of income are crop production at 44.4 per cent and livestock production at 14.6 per cent (Mzimba SEP, 2008). In both districts paid employment is limited to the civil service, NGOs, Statutory

\(^{13}\)“The Welfare Monitoring Survey (WMS) is part of the concerted effort by National Statistical Office (NSO) to provide relevant information for monitoring the welfare status of the people of Malawi. The survey is designed to collect the minimum amount of information necessary for the identification and classification of vulnerable groups of households within the society. It is the latest in a series of instruments that have been developed to provide policy-makers with household and community level information for policy formulation and evaluation. The survey started in 2005” (NSO, 2012: ii).
Companies and Private Companies where opportunities for employment are very limited (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 49). It is further indicated that 32.1 percent of the population of Nkhotakota lives in poverty with 11.2 percent of that (32.1 percent) living in ultra-poverty. In Mzimba, 60.9 per cent of the population lives in poverty with 31.9 per cent of that (60.9 percent) living in ultra-poverty (NSO, 2012: 208). Poverty is measured by the total annual per capita consumption of food and non-food components reported by a household where “the population that has a total consumption below MK37, 002 (£80.00) is deemed poor and the population with total consumption less than MK22, 956 (£44.00) is considered ultra-poor” (NSO, 2012: 204).

The illiteracy rate for Nkhotakota district is at 15.1 per cent while that of Mzimba is at 16.3 per cent (NSO, 2012: 23). The illiteracy rate among men in Nkhotakota is 7.4 per cent while that for women is 16.7 per cent. In Mzimba, the illiteracy rate among men is at 18.6 while that for women is 19.2 per cent (NSO, 2011: 48). This indicates that women emerge the highest on the illiteracy scale not only in the country but also the study areas.

5.2.1 Media Landscape

In terms of media usage the table below summarizes how people consume different media in Nkhotakota.
Table 4: Audience Share of Radio, TV, and Newspapers in Nkhotakota District  
(Source: Nkhotakota SEP, 2010)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>MEDIA CONSUMPTION</th>
<th>NUMBER OF PEOPLE</th>
<th>PROPORTION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Radio Listenership</td>
<td>285 950</td>
<td>95%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TV Viewership</td>
<td>210 750</td>
<td>70%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Newspaper Readership</td>
<td>90 300</td>
<td>30%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The radio listenership figure in the table represents the number of people who listen to different radio stations that can be received in Nkhotakota district. A full list of the radio stations and their listenership figures will be presented later in this chapter. The media consumption figures for Mzimba district were not available. The only free television channel that beams to both Nkhotakota and Mzimba districts is the national public broadcaster MBCTV although other stations can be viewed on Digital Satellite Television (DSTV); these channels require subscriptions. The newspaper readership figure is for those newspapers that have a national readership as there are no local newspapers in the district. These estimates reveal that the majority of people have access to a radio making it the major source of information for the illiterate people in the district. This confirms Girard’s (2001) assertion about radio being the most important medium in Africa because of illiteracy and unavailability of newspapers due to distribution problems. Internet services are available at the district headquarters and Dwangwa, a major town in Nkhotakota district (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 137).

5.2.2 Telecommunication Infrastructure

In terms of telecommunication infrastructure,
Telephone, fax, radio and e-mail are the telecommunication services which Nkhotakota district has. Telephone services include ground lines by Malawi Telecommunication Ltd. (MTL) and mobile lines by Telecom Networks Malawi (TNM) and Celtel [now Airtel]. The district has 2 automatic telephone exchanges…The two exchanges have a combined total of 826 telephone subscribers shared among private telephones (487), private bureaus (102), institutional telephones (181) and public call booths (32). Some of these lines are also used for faxes (30) and e-mails (18). Some of the telephone lines are connected outside the cable network through radio (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 140-1).

The figures presented above indicate that very few people have access to the landlines because there are no landlines in the rural areas due to poor road infrastructure. As Berrigan (1979: 7) observes, in developing countries “most people live in rural areas where transport of people and commodities is slow and difficult, cutting off access to markets, to social and cultural centres”. In Nkhotakota district most service providers including telephone services are limited to places where there are good roads leaving most of the rural areas unattended to (Republic of Malawi, 2010). As a result, it takes a long time for essential services and improvements like education and health to extend to the rural areas where the majority of the population lives (Berrigan, 1979). In the areas where this research was conducted, messages are sent through people on bicycles or foot and sometimes by post (Republic of Malawi, 2010).

In terms of the proliferation of mobile phones, on the national level,

there are more households with mobile phones than with landlines. 36 percent of households reported having a mobile phone while only less than one percent of households reported having a landline telephone. Urban areas have registered having the highest proportion of household with mobile phones at 73 percent than in rural areas at 30 percent (NSO, 2011: 123).

In Nkhotakota alone, ownership of mobile phones rose from 2.1 percent in 2005 to 44.9 per cent in 2011. In Mzimba ownership of mobile phones rose from 0.4 per cent in 2005 to
35.5 per cent in 2011 (NSO, 2011: 124). This is a substantial increase signifying the importance of mobile phones not only in Nkhotakota and Mzimba districts but the whole country. For people in the rural areas with little access to landlines, the mobile phone has removed a big barrier to communication.

In summary, the socio-economic profile, media landscape and the telecommunication infrastructure of the two districts presented above gives an impression of a situation where there is limited access to crucial information that might enhance ordinary people’s living standards. In this context, the establishment of a community radio station in both districts had the potential to compensate for the poor communication infrastructure. In these districts of Malawi, people rely on the radio more than any other type of media for information; for example, 95 percent of the population of Nkhotakota. This is significant for this research because, as Berrigan (1979: 7) argues, “communications media can be the cheapest and swiftest method of reaching rural communities and of providing some expertise where none has existed”. The impact of the radio stations on the socio-economic situation presented above will be discussed in subsequent chapters. Below I discuss the procedures for obtaining a broadcasting license in Malawi after which I will describe how the two radio stations in this research obtained their licenses.

5.3 Procedures for Obtaining a Broadcasting License from MACRA

The Malawi Communications Act (1998) establishes the Malawi Communications Regulatory Authority (MACRA) for the purpose of performing the functions assigned to it
under the Act (GoM, 1998: 5). MACRA’s main broadcasting-related functions which are presented in Section 5 (2) are:

(k) to regulate broadcasting services through-
   (i) licensing of providers of broadcasting services;
   (ii) providing advice to the Minister on regulations or policies;
   (iii) monitoring the activities of licensees to ensure compliance with the terms and conditions of their license and applicable regulation and related activities (GoM, 1998: 7).

The licence specifies the area in which the station might operate, the technology to be used and the area of coverage including conditions and obligations under which the licensee is to operate (GoM, 1998).

The Communications Act (1998) provides two procedures for applying for a broadcasting license. First, a potential broadcaster may apply for a broadcasting license to MACRA on an ad hoc basis, explaining the sort of service he/she would offer. Second, MACRA advertises in the government gazette and newspapers inviting interested individuals, groups and organizations to apply for a broadcasting license for a particular area depending on demand for broadcasting services in that area. Here we note that applying for a community radio license is not an easy or straightforward process, especially for ordinary people in the rural areas. This is the case because most of them are not well educated and therefore, not conversant with the procedures for obtaining a license. It, therefore, requires the initiative of educated and influential individuals to initiate the process. There is also a restriction regarding who is supposed to apply for a broadcasting license. The restriction states that “No broadcasting license shall be issued to any association, party, movement, organization, body or alliance which is of a party-political nature” (GoM, 1998: 23). After
an evaluation process MACRA releases names of successful bidders (GoM, 1998). At the time Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations were obtaining a license, MACRA was following the first procedure. MACRA projects manager confirmed this in an interview conducted for this project:

The four community radio stations [Dzimwe, Nkhotakota, Mzimba, and Mudzi Wathu] were licensed during the period when we had the walk-in licenses, when someone would simply walk in and apply for a license but right now we do advertise, so although there is a donor behind it there is still a community that fronts it... The donor just gives financial and technical support in the bid document which they give us (interview, 10 October 2012).

Currently MACRA uses the second procedure of advertising. However, what is problematic in the way MACRA operates is the inclusion in the Communications Act (1998) of a clause which states that, “The Minister, on the advice of the Authority, may from time to time make regulations governing the provision of broadcasting services” (GoM, 1998: 26). The minister being referred to here is the Minister of Information under whose jurisdiction MACRA falls. At that time the former MP for Nkhotakota Central Constituency and who assisted Nkhotakota community radio station to obtain a license was heading that portfolio as shall be discussed below. Furthermore, the Act empowers the same minister to appoint the director-general of MACRA, albeit on the recommendation of MACRA (GoM, 1998: 8). The lack of a public nomination process in the appointment process makes MACRA’s independence questionable. It has the potential of making the minister abuse these powers. According to Limpitlaw (2012: 180) “MACRA does not meet international best practice standards in regard to appointment requirements for independent bodies and institutional independence”. The involvement of a minister in the affairs of MACRA makes it a semi-autonomous statutory corporation and therefore susceptible to
political manipulation. The involvement of the politician (MP/Minister) in the establishment of community radio and its implications on participation is discussed below.

5.4 Establishment of Nkhotakota Community Radio Station and the Controversy Surrounding it

The process of establishing Nkhotakota community radio station started in 2001 by the then Member of Parliament (MP) for Nkhotakota Central Constituency where the radio station was ultimately located. At that time, the former MP also happened to be the Minister of Information in the then ruling United Democratic Front (UDF) government. The UDF was the first democratically elected government in 1994 after 30 years of single party dictatorship. The UDF ruled from 1994 to 2004 when it lost elections to the Democratic Progressive Party (DPP). In an interview conducted for this research, the former MP claimed that his role was “to organize the people in Nkhotakota to form an entity that could manage and drive the establishment of a community radio station” (interview, 9 February 2013). The former MP, therefore, set up a community committee to oversee the entire process of establishing a community radio station. However, he stated in the interview that he continued to work in the background to ensure the granting of a broadcasting license using his influence as Minister of Information. This situation begs the question of who is legitimately entitled to initiate the establishment of a community radio station. Commenting on the definition of community radio which includes an element of community ownership, Banda (2006: 3) argues that, “while recognizing the central role of the community in ‘owning’ community media initiatives, this definition opens up possibilities for a motivator to set up a community radio project and seek to introduce into
it notions of community ownership, management and programming”. This observation implies that although one of the important dimensions of community media is ownership by members of the community, it recognizes that communities will not always be in a position to initiate and that this, therefore, justifies the involvement of every citizen, including politicians, in the establishment of community radio stations. The key issue is whether this involvement influences participation by community members in the management and content production of the station; issues of who established the station are not significant in and of themselves. Banda (2006: 3) further argues that “this definitional elasticity recognizes the place of enterprising individuals who are sufficiently motivated to initiate small-scale, community-located media initiatives”. However, Fraser and Estrada (2001: 1) argue that “internal cohesion and community consciousness” are necessary prerequisites for a community to start its own radio station. In the case of Malawi, ‘community consciousness’ starts with an individual who has to convince others to share his/her vision or aspiration before ‘internal cohesion’ is established.

The involvement of agents and agencies in the establishment of community radio stations becomes a potential problem when there is continuing controller interference by these agents in the management of the station and the production of content. This is a widely acknowledged issue beyond Malawi. For example, the manager of the UNESCO/DANIDA Tambuli Project in the Phillipines and his team agreed that politicians needed to participate in operating the radio station arguing that,

certain politicians may publicly manifest a desire to keep their hands off the project, while some may volunteer resources and heavy personal involvement. However, even among those who ostentatiously adopt a hands-off policy, they
could have lackeys in key positions in the station – perhaps as a generous benefactor, an intellectual, or a domineering station manager (Louie Tabing, cited in Fraser and Estrada, 2001: 50).

In the case of Nkhotakota community radio station, a politician set up a committee to oversee the establishment of the community radio station and also influenced the granting of a license while the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) came in to fund the station through purchase of equipment.

Therefore, a process which started in 2001 culminated into MACRA granting a broadcasting license to Nkhotakota community radio station which started broadcasting on 23 November 2003 (interview with deputy station manager, 31 October 2012). The station received a grant of US$20,000 from UNESCO's International Programme for the Development of Communication (IPDC) (UNESCO-IPDC, 2007). The grant was for the purchase of equipment and capacity building as explained by the deputy station manager below:

UNESCO bought equipment for us, UNESCO funded the training of the volunteers who worked at the radio station; they hired technical experts from the Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC) to train us in various aspects like programme production and broadcasting since broadcasting was new to us (interview, 31 October 2012).

UNESCO has a long tradition of funding and supporting development of community media in developing countries. For example, the acting deputy Executive Secretary for Malawi National Commission for UNESCO explained that their policy aims at “supporting grassroots organizations to establish community radio stations as instruments for development, democracy and dialogue” (interview, 3 September 2013). He also explained that the only condition attached is that the community radio stations should be located in
an area where it can serve marginalized communities and be managed by the community itself not an individual. This falls within UNESCO’s broader communication policy, for instance, UNESCO’s IPDC has been involved in “the promotion of media independence and pluralism, development of community media, radio and television organizations, modernization of national and regional news agencies, and training of media professionals”\(^\text{14}\). According to Fraser and Estrada (2001: 8) “UNESCO launched an initiative to support community radio in 1980”. To date, the IPDC “has mobilized some $90 million for over 1000 projects in 139 developing countries” (cited in Milan, 2009: 600). UNESCO’s assistance comes in the form of supplying and setting up equipment and training of local people on how to use the equipment (Fraser and Estrada, 2001). It is worth acknowledging that “UNESCO is now far from being alone in promoting community radio. A wide range of international development agencies and national and international NGOs are involved in many parts of the world” (Fraser and Estrada, 2001: 11).

Therefore, there is a dual aspect in which community radio stations can be established in Malawi. The first aspect is that influential people in the community initiate the idea. The second aspect is that since the members of the community cannot afford the cost of the equipment needed for broadcasting, they turn to NGOs for assistance in that regard. However, as shall be argued later (after discussing how Mzimba community radio station was established), it turns out that the involvement of these influential people and NGOs affects the way members of the community participate.

5.5 Establishment of Mzimba Community Radio Station and the Problems it Faced

Mzimba community radio station was established in 2006 by the Mzimba Volunteers Association (MZIVA). The aim of MZIVA was to initiate various development projects in the district relating to education, health, road networks, and HIV/AIDS (interview with programme manager, 10 November 2012). The programme manager further explained to me that MZIVA was formed in 2000 with that objective and was composed of retired civil servants, members of the religious community and business people residing in the district. The community radio station was prioritized in order to provide a communication tool in all development endeavours in the district (interview with programmes manager, 10 November 2012). Therefore, Mzimba community radio station was established to enhance the development strategy of development projects in the district, as the programmes manager explains:

Members of MZIVA saw that there was poor communication in this area and secondly development activities were lacking in this region. So the members of MZIVA thought of initiating something that would help improve the situation. That is how the idea of a community radio station was conceived. The plan of MZIVA was that the community radio should be a mouth piece of the people within this area and the whole region so that development information could easily spread in this area. So the radio station was seen as a better communication tool to initiate development activities in this area before embarking on other projects (interview with programmes manager, 10 November 2012).

According to Villalobos (1992) community radio “is an effective response, that arises from and is born in the same place where we live, our own response to the lack of communication that the large scale information flows produce, that gives us everything at the macro level but that eliminate the micro” (cited in Bresnahan, 2007: 319). Mzimba community radio station was established out of that spirit. From the interview excerpt above, two functions of the community radio can be identified. First, they wanted to use
the community radio as a mouthpiece to bring to the attention of government all the development challenges faced in the area. Second, Mzimba community radio was to be part of communication for development through which development information relating to health, education, road infrastructure, and HIV/AIDS is shared between development agents and the people in the district. Some concerned members of the community felt a strong sense of civic responsibility and were engaged in this project to help their fellow and less fortunate citizens. Their strategy was to solicit funds from various well wishers in Diaspora and use that money to initiate development projects in the communities and then use community radio to disseminate information to the people. The programmes manager further explained that:

The members of the MZIVA had their own donors because some of them had lived in other countries such as USA, UK, Australia, Japan, etc, and had friends there who were willing to sponsor development activities initiated by MZIVA. So the radio station was a first phase of achieving those development plans. Basically the radio station was to address communication problems that were there by spreading development news in the area (interview, 10 November 2012).

Mzimba community radio station, therefore, adopted a bottom-up communication approach to development since the idea to start this project was conceived out of the needs of the community by the people of the community who wanted to do something for themselves. This is unlike Nkhotakota community radio station which was started by a politician and at first people failed to relate to it because they thought the station was meant to advance the political interest of politicians.
According to the programme manager, initially the association raised its own funds from well wishers resident outside the country to obtain a license. Later they wrote a proposal which was sent to different NGOs. Fortunately, the Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa (OSISA)\textsuperscript{15} responded favourably and signed a 3-year contract to provide funding for the station. In the 3-year programme which at first was to run from 2006 to 2009, an action plan was drawn for three main areas: capacity building; purchase and maintenance of radio equipment and constructing an extra studio; and moving the transmitter from where the radio station is located to a higher ground to extend reception (interview with programme manager, 10 November 2012).

However, as Myers (2008: 22) argues, “be it big or small, what is most challenging for any radio station is what comes next, in other words producing good quality content, managing, paying and retaining staff, maintaining the premises, studio and broadcast equipment and paying monthly rent and fuel bills”. Soon after its establishment in 2006, Mzimba community radio was on air for only a few months before it experienced its own share of challenges and controversies, which led to its temporary closure in February 2007. The station manager explained that firstly, the challenges were technical in nature, some parts of the equipment malfunctioned due to damage caused by lightning and had to be repaired. Secondly, some disputes erupted within MZIVA which led to the closure of the station for almost 2 years up until July 2009 when the radio station came back on air again.

The initial agreement with OSISA was to fund the operations of the radio station from

\textsuperscript{15} The Open Society Initiative for Southern Africa promotes the rule of law, democracy building, human rights, education, public health, independent media, and access to information. The initiative supports activities in Southern African countries (http://www.osisa.org).
2006-2009. After the disturbance the agreement was renewed to run from 2009 to 2012. However, full operation started in 2010. At the time of this research, it had just operated for two years and some months since reopening (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012).

The cause of the disputes had to do with misunderstandings about how the community radio station was to be managed; for example, the station manager explained that:

> This is a community radio station. It was born out of the spirit that it should be owned but the community, controlled by the community, and managed by the community. But it transpired among the grouping [MZIVA] that there were some elements who felt that they could operate it as if they own it, hence the conflict (interview, 13 November 2012).

He further explained that these disgruntled people confiscated some equipment and took over the operations of the radio station. They wanted to run it as if it was their own private radio station with the aim of making some profits from it, hence the conflict (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012). The situation forced OSISA to detain some equipment which had been sent to South Africa for repairs until the disagreements were settled. The situation was against the grant agreement that was signed between OSISA and the station. The agreement stated that “Mziva would facilitate the formation of the MCR station and allow the Mzimba community to own the station” (Chikoko, 2007).

Further problems followed during the run up to the 2009 presidential and parliamentary elections when the radio station broadcast special programmes that were highly critical of and castigated the then ruling Democratic Progressive Party (DPP) and its leadership.

> You know it was a campaign period that time and they were holding open forum discussions where opposition party members were featured openly criticizing the...
government. They were not balanced. You know, in the media you have to be balanced where both sides are featured but they were focusing on one side. So it was more political than the theme of the community radio. As a community radio you don’t have to be political but rather concentrate on community issues. For instance, one leader of an opposition party in the area [name withheld] was featured live for one hour castigating [the former president]. Oh no, the situation was bad (interview with programmes manager, 10 November 2012).

This situation forced MACRA to shut down the radio station. “It was like flouting the license conditions that is why the licensing authority had to intervene to stop it” (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012). MACRA might have applied Section 9.6 of the license conditions under ‘Live Broadcasts’ to revoke the license of the station. Sub-section 9.6.3 states that, “the authority shall restrict the Licensee from live broadcasts if the Licensee broadcasts hate speech whether live or recorded” (GoM, 2008). If the station was airing live broadcasts in which opposition party members were castigating the ruling party, then MACRA was justified to revoke the license because that was tantamount to promoting hate speech. The radio station came back on air again in July 2010 after OSISA’s donor - (AMARC) requested that the station be run by a professional manager under their supervision (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012).

5.6 Need for Community Consultation when Establishing Community Radio Stations

The discussion above points to the need for members of the community to be involved at every stage of the process. According to Jallov (2005), for a community radio station to be sustainable, it is important for members of the community to feel like they own the station and are part of it and that it represents their community. For this to happen, Jallov (2005) further argues, “the station must be based in a community association or committee, work towards the broadcast must be started much before the actual broadcast and the local
people must take over the different tasks in its production” (cited in Kapanen, 2007: 13).
This ensures that the community radio station is “embedded in the everyday lived experience of so-called ordinary people” (Howley, 2010: 4). However, as discussed above, in the establishment of both stations, community consultation was not considered an important aspect in the planning process. For example, the participants in Nkhotakota reported that they were surprised to wake up one day to find that there was a community radio station broadcasting to them. The participants said:

We were not consulted, we just discovered one day that at Nkhotakota there is a radio station transmitting to us and we became proud of the development since with the radio you are able to know many things (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

The lack of consultation and community engagement had some implications for participation in the early days. At first people thought that the station was a political propaganda tool meant to serve the political interests of the MP and the ruling party to which he belonged at that time. It took a lot of time and some community sensitization for people to understand that the station was meant to serve them. The marketing manager explained this point in one FGD when he was clarifying a point to the members:

I should admit that the introduction of this radio station is associated with politics simply because the then MP was the one who introduced it, so people are brainwashed to think that this is a political radio station. Since by then the MP was a member of UDF, therefore, members of other political parties could shun away from the radio station (FGD 6, 6 November 2012).

The lack of community involvement led to misunderstandings and confusion about the ownership and the purpose of the radio station. The initiators of the community radio station assumed to have better knowledge of the community and its development
challenges, needs and solutions. For that reason they also assumed that ordinary people would easily accept the station since they shared the same language, beliefs and culture, so it was felt not necessary to consult them. To return to Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation, this form of community engagement falls at the level of non-participation where people’s involvement is neglected or is absent. It thus represents a top-down approach to development rather than a participatory approach.

A similar pattern of a lack of community involvement can be observed in the establishment of Mzimba community radio station. A group calling itself MZIVA initiated the idea to establish the radio station, wrote a proposal for funding, applied for a license, and started operating the radio station without community consultation. That may also explain why some people within the association wanted to run the station as a commercial entity because the embedding of the radio station in the community was not part of the planning and establishment of the station in the initial stages. Secondly, the nature of donor-funded projects, of which Mzimba community radio station is, compounded the problem of lack of community participation in favour of planning goals. This may reinforce the view held by some scholars, for example, Tamminga (1997: 12) who sees participation as “a window-dressing that obscures the fact that the goals and objectives of development are still determined according to the criteria of external agencies and not the local population”. To exemplify the point, Manyozo (2009: 9) observes that:

Sourcing and purchasing broadcasting transmitters and equipment, transportation for broadcasters to make programmes in the communities, paying staff and volunteers, construction of buildings to house the stations, honouring electricity and water bills, as well as training staffers have largely depended on donor funding.
In the case of Mzimba community radio station, OSISA funded it by buying equipment and setting up the station. Manyozo (2009: 9) sees the consequence of donor-driven community broadcasting as “the lack of sufficient canvassing of grassroots support during conceptualization of such projects”. In the context of Mzimba community radio station, there was not much at the planning and design stages of the project requiring community involvement. There was also little community input at station policy level.

Although the establishment of both stations, for different reasons was not emergent from community activity but rather the result of a combination of community leaders, politicians and development agency interventions, nevertheless, this does not rule out community engagement with the stations once established. For example, if the location of the station affords access and engagement this might generate a sense of community ownership and engagement once the station is established. Fraser and Estrada (2001) recommend the consideration of the following social factors in choosing the location of a community radio infrastructure: proximity of the studio to the centre of the population, that is, the location of the station should easily be accessible to all, and it should incur low or no rental charges. Both Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations meet the above criteria. For instance, both radio stations are located at their district headquarters which are easily accessible by many people in the districts. Nkhotakota community radio station is located within the premises of Nkhotakota District Council where the DC’s Office\textsuperscript{16} is. Mzimba community radio station is housed in a building which was the administration block of the

\textsuperscript{16} District Commissioners (DCs) in Malawi are senior administrators in a district who manage district finances. They advise the district council and head up the district executive committee (Cammack \textit{et al.}, 2007).
old Mzimba District Hospital. Both radio stations are occupying the buildings free of charge. For instance, at Nkhotakota it was explained that “The building they are in belongs to the council. The council accepted to have that radio. So they have the blessing of the council. They are not renting the building, they are there for free” (interview with representative of the DC, 7 November 2012). For Mzimba community radio station, the station manager explained that following the construction of a new district hospital by the government, the old building became dysfunctional. When a license for the community radio station was granted, members of MZIVA approached the District Commissioner to seek permission to use the building for the radio station which he granted for free. It is noted here that in both Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations, the DC of each district played an important role in allocating a building to house the radio stations. As Berrigan (1979: 26) argues,

> where the purpose of community media is to encourage local initiatives, and to stimulate self help, support needs to be given. This may mean financial support, and it will almost certainly mean moral support. This implies that there must be involvement of local officials, so that they do not feel ‘cut out’ or threatened, and so that they can use their offices to assist the community where needed, with skills and financial resources.

In Malawi, the district councils are responsible for implementing development projects at the district level. Therefore, by partnering with community radio stations, which are also engaged in promoting development issues through their programming and activities, they can together effectively bring about development at community level. The strong ties existing between Nkhotakota community radio station and the local council provides a different kind of arrangement for understanding ownership of community radio which is neither top-down nor bottom-up. It shows that a local council and members of the community can share ownership of the community radio station for effective development.
In this arrangement, Nkhotakota district council has been assisting the radio station with transport where needed and looking for sponsors for the station, while the radio station has been broadcasting development programmes produced jointly by the council and the radio station.

Figure 3: Nkhotakota Community Radio Station
When it comes to area of coverage, all community radio stations in Malawi are licensed to cover an area of 100 kilometre radius, but due to the strength of their antennas they broadcast beyond their prescribed areas. For example, Nkhotakota community radio station broadcasts on 101.9 FM, and covers the whole district and parts of some neighbouring districts like Ntchisi, Kasungu, Nkhata Bay, Salima and Mzimba. On the other hand, Mzimba community radio station covers the entire Mzimba district and also the neighbouring districts of Kasungu, northern Nkhotakota, Rumphi, and Nkhata Bay. I confirmed this during a phone-in programme in which I participated where people from these areas made phone calls to the radio station. What can be noted here is that both stations broadcast beyond their designated areas of coverage as a result of the strength of their antennas. Station managers consider this to be an advantage because they are able to reach out to many people. However, according to Fraser and Estrada (2001: 51) “a broadcast pattern that covers too wide a physical area complicates the operations of a community radio and may make it difficult to concentrate on the immediate community that is served”. Community participation also becomes difficult to achieve and implement as Fraser and Estrada (2001: 51) further argue, “given that community radio depends to a large extent on volunteer participation, a large target area may result in workloads that are difficult to maintain”. Some people in some areas might not be served adequately. This situation exposes the problematic area in studies of community radio about the definition of ‘community’. The two stations under consideration are serving areas that cannot be called a community.
5.7 Listenership and Audience Size

According to Fraser and Estrada (2001) in order to establish a community radio’s standing in society in relation to other media, it is important to have some quantitative data to determine the number of people who listen to it, the programmes they listen to and when, compared to other radio stations. However, they acknowledge that getting this kind of information is beyond the capacity of community radio stations, not only in terms of the mechanisms and tools required to measure the audience, but also because of the complicated nature of communities. In view of this, therefore, both Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations rely on figures from surveys done by other institutions as the basis of their listenership figures and popularity. This is consistent with Fraser and Estrada’s (2001: 63) argument that “however difficult it may be to arrange, surveys by outsiders from time to time are important to be able to gauge the way a community radio is functioning and the standing it enjoys among its audience”. For example, the tables below show the number of radio stations that can be received in Nkhotakota and Mzimba and their listenership figures are based on a survey that was conducted by MACRA in 2012 and whose results were released on 9 September 2013.
Table 5: Share of Radio Listenership in Nkhotakota (Source: MACRA Website)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>NAME OF STATION</th>
<th>TYPE OF STATION</th>
<th>LISTENERSHIP (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MBC Radio 1</td>
<td>Public Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MIJ</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MBC Radio 2</td>
<td>Public Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>41</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ZBS</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Radio Maria</td>
<td>Community of Interest (National)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Capital FM</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Nkhotakota</td>
<td>Community Radio</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Power 101 FM</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Radio Islam</td>
<td>Community of Interest (National)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transworld Radio</td>
<td>Community of Interest (National)</td>
<td>14</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Channel for All Nations</td>
<td>Community of Interest (National)</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>SDA</td>
<td>Community of Interest (National)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

With a listenership of 52 per cent Nkhotakota community radio is the second most widely listened to radio station in the district after ZBS. “As it has often been said, 'information is power' and without the best possible understanding of how community radio interacts with its target communities, the sector and individual stations within it may well be 'flying blind' and, as a result, not delivering services to best effect” (Hallett, 2012: 378). From the listenership figures above, it is clear that Nkhotakota community radio station enjoys a good standing in its community (52 %) and can build on this listenership to properly...
deliver social gain. More importantly, the listenership figures above can help community radio meet development goals by delivering the audience for policy makers who can plan how to effectively include community radio as part of their communication strategy in community development projects. The listenership figure also explains why many NGOs in the area are using the radio station to disseminate their development messages because it reaches out to a lot of people who would otherwise continue being victims of marginalization due to lack of communication and information. Therefore, NGOs can also benefit from the listenership figures above to effectively plan for their activities in the communities using community radio as part of their development strategies.

On the other hand, Mzimba community radio station’s listenership in the district is at 33 percent as shown below.
Table 6: Share of Radio Listenership in Mzimba (Source: MACRA Website)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>RADIO STATION</th>
<th>TYPE OF STATION</th>
<th>LISTENERSHIP (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>MBC Radio 1</td>
<td>Public Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>MIJ FM</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MBC Radio 2</td>
<td>Public Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>47</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>ZBS</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Joy Radio</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Capital FM</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Star FM</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Power 101 FM</td>
<td>Private Broadcaster (National)</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Mzimba</td>
<td>Community Radio</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Transworld Radio</td>
<td>Community of Interest (National)</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Radio Tigabane</td>
<td>Community of Interest (Regional)</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Radio Maria</td>
<td>Community of Interest (National)</td>
<td>27</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Although Mzimba Community Radio station comes fourth in the district, it has managed to surpass the national broadcasters despite being on air for just 3 years. The ownership wrangles that characterized its establishment might have affected its listenership in the sense that some listeners might have completely stopped listening to it or are not aware of its reopening. Nevertheless, it is a source of information for a good section of the population in the district going by the listenership figures.

These listenership figures are significant for this research because they help to determine the level of impact that each station has in the area it serves. It is also significant to note...
that community radio stations are established in communities where people are already served by other radio stations, especially national broadcasters. During the course of conducting my research, I observed that some people were switching between the community radio station for local content and then to the national broadcasters for entertainment and national news. Therefore, to change people’s mindset and influence them to start listening to the community radio station is not easy. It demands a lot of effort in sensitization and mobilization which may consume a lot of time and money. To borrow from the famous phrase, the situation can be likened to ‘preaching to the already converted’. The listenership figures in the tables above underscore the importance and relevance of community radio stations in rural areas and that these two community radio stations have established themselves as an important part of the media diet of their communities. In the sense of community as audience the stations are a success.

5.8 Staffing of the Community Radio Stations

According to Howley (2010: 4) “community media operate with relatively small paid staffs, relying instead on volunteers to perform the tasks and functions associated with media production and distribution”. This aspect makes community radio differ from both commercial and public service radio (Lunt and Livingstone, 2012). At the time of the research, Nkhotakota had a team of twelve volunteers, ten men and two women, whereas Mzimba community radio station had ten men and ten women. In addition, both stations have two security guards and one office assistant each who are paid monthly. Lewis and Booth (1989) see the presence of volunteers in community radio not as a cost saving mechanism but rather as a means of ensuring community representation in the daily
operation of the station. The volunteers of these stations are drawn from their communities. Most of them have not been in formal employment before. The majority of the volunteers are school leavers with a Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE equivalent of a GSCE). Nkhotakota community radio station has five departments, Production, Programmes, News and Current Affairs, Marketing, and Administration. Mzimba community radio station has the following departments, Programmes, Newsroom, and Marketing. As these are small radio stations, they are basically one-man departments except the newsroom where a number of reporters work. Unlike Nkhotakota, Mzimba community radio station has news correspondents in some strategic places in its area of coverage to ensure that they are covering news from a wide geographical area. The correspondents are paid honoraria for each story that they send.

Ananthakrishnan (1994: 117) views voluntary involvement of community members both as a strength and a weakness, “a strength because highly motivated people without any expectations of monetary reward produce programmes involving the community thereby attracting listeners from the community [...] , and a weakness because the absence of paid employment results in a high turnover of people”. Both stations experience the problem of staff turnover especially among the women and that explains the gender disparity at Nkhotakota community radio station where there are only 2 women. According to the station manager there are many reasons for this. Firstly, when female members of staff get married they relocate to other areas with their husbands. Some of them leave in search for jobs in the media houses located in the urban areas, and others find no value in working as volunteers and so they decide to just stop working. This affects programme sustainability.
in the sense that some programmes end with the hosts when they leave. For example, when I asked members of one FGD about what they would want their radio station to improve on, they said:

They have well-established programmes but the main problem is that sometimes you discover that an announcer has not reported for work, and then his programme is not broadcast. For example, people may be waiting for ‘What’s in the newspapers’ and the responsible announcer has not come for duties and the programme is not broadcast; this affects us listeners (FGD 6, 6 November 2012).

Although absenteeism was mentioned as the cause of the disappearance of some programmes, the real problem is staff turnover. In such situations community radio stations fill the gap with musical interludes.

5.8.1 Staff Training

According to Manyozo (2009: 11), “most broadcasters have not undergone any specific training in issues of development broadcasting, save for the general audio production in-house training arranged by the broadcasting institutions themselves”. As already stated, UNESCO hired staff from MBC Radio to offer in-house training to ten members of staff at the inception of Nkhotakota community radio station as part of the assistance package given to the station. Apart from those who were trained at the beginning, the rest are provided in-house training by the old staff members. However, “in the absence of such funding, as is the case with numerous rural and community broadcasters, training has been unavailable, and in-station training arrangements usually contribute to poorly trained staffers and poor programming (DCFRN, 2003 cited in Manyozo, 2009: 9). For example, on the second day of my research on 30 October 2012, there was a briefing given by the station manager and the programme manager for three new volunteers who had just joined
the radio station. I asked for permission to attend the briefing but I was not allowed on the pretext that I might disturb the concentration of the new recruits. Participants in one FGD reported that:

The radio should be employing people who have the expertise in radio broadcasting. Some of the people who are recruited at this radio station do not have the expertise and as such they lose touch with the listeners (FGD 6, 6 November 2012).

This response gives an idea that some people conceive a community radio station as one which is community based aimed at serving them and not as a station in which they have to participate. The lack of community mobilization and consultation which characterized the establishment of both stations might have served to make some people feel ignorant about this fact. Lennie and Tacchi (2013: 12) emphasize the importance of recognizing that some “participatory processes can serve to exclude people unless special efforts are made to include them”. As such staff training is an important aspect of community radio broadcasting and requires attaching great importance to it to avoid scenarios where listeners know about the broadcasters’ ineptitude. It can be a sure way of losing listeners to other radio stations. It is also important that this training extends to training members of the community about how they can participate in the activities of the radio station to avoid incidences where ordinary people exclude themselves or feel that they are being strategically excluded (Cornwall, 2008).

5.9 Financing Community Radio Stations and the Role of NGOs
The two radio stations studied in this dissertation are typical of community media which, at the initial stage are commonly funded by donors (Rennie, 2006; Myers, 2008; Manyozo, 2009). When the donors pull out community radio stations become innovative, devising a variety of income generating activities including attracting sponsors in order to survive. According to da Costa (2012: 135) “development agencies and international non-governmental organizations (INGOs) see community radio as a conduit for messages aimed at educating on life skills, fostering behaviour change, empowering the grassroots and helping eradicate poverty”. This has potential of rendering community radio stations susceptible to dependence on NGOs for their sustainability. By not relying heavily on large-scale advertising as do commercial broadcasters, Howley (2010: 4) argues, “community media are insulated from the direct and indirect influence advertisers exert over media form and content”. However, although there is insulation from advertisers, there is both direct and indirect influence from donors who sponsor programmes. Some NGOs have tended to patronize community radio stations in the name of sponsoring programmes. Consequently, community radio’s ‘community-ness’ manifests only in the ‘radio structure (equipment, identity and name)’ (AFFRI, 2008). The major source of funding for both stations is through sponsored programmes by different organizations and NGOs. Therefore, a major concern of this thesis is to see how much this sponsorship shapes media context and audience engagement.

5.9.1 Programme Sponsorship by NGOs and its Effects
There are many NGOs which sponsor programmes on the two community radio stations thereby contributing to their financial sustainability (see Appendix 7). Sponsorship comes in two forms: sponsored programmes and special programmes. According to the station manager of Mzimba community radio station, a sponsored programme is a generic programme which is already running on the radio and its messages are relevant or similar to the activities of a particular organization. For example, an agricultural programme can attract an organization which specializes in selling seeds to sponsor it. The concerned organization comes to sponsor the programme and uses it to convey its messages. In the programme, the presenter mentions the name of the organization sponsoring it frequently. Other organizations come up with their jingles to be aired in these programmes as adverts (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012).

The station manager further explained that special programmes are those which are sponsored by organizations which would like to carry out a campaign in the community. These organizations use community radio as part of their communication strategy to disseminate their messages. The campaign could run for three or six months or even a year. The organization will typically sponsor a particular special programme produced for this purpose and given to the community radio station or produced jointly with the radio producers. For example, one local NGO which spreads messages about HIV/AIDS and promotes behaviour change, produces radio jingles in collaboration with producers of Nkhotakota community radio station. The Director of the NGO, for example, explained that:
We either produce with them the jingles and other messages or we go together in the field to record a certain programme that is done by the community then they air it on the radio. Of course we pay for the airtime and for the recording (interview, 7 November 2012).

From the interview excerpt above, we note how NGOs influence the agenda of community radio stations. While trying to implement their programmes or campaigns in the community they either buy airtime or sponsor radio programmes on community radio to help them disseminate their messages to the target community. All the materials for producing the programme are provided by the client organization that also dictates the format in which the programmes are aired. It was reported that the special programmes bring in more income to the radio station than any other source of revenue (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012). The more NGOs are working in the community and the more they sponsor programmes on community radio stations, the more income the station earns.

In Malawi, as a result of donor funding community radio stations change their programming from time to time:

You will notice that most of the community radio stations change their programming over a period of time not necessarily to suit the donor who is funding the station but because there could be more donors coming in. For example, you will find that this year a particular radio station is concentrating on child labour, next year they would be concentrating on water and sanitation, the other year may be on health, etc, mostly because that is where money is. So it could be seen that it is indeed the donors who are influencing the agenda of the radio stations (interview with MACRA’s projects manager, 10 October 2012).

Therefore, donor sponsorship of programmes influences the agenda of the radio stations forcing them to move away from their normal programming. The MACRA’s projects officer further said:
Where community radio stations are doing their normal programming without external funding, they have the liberty to determine what goes on air but where there is donor funding the agenda is set by the donor (interview, 10 October 2012). Dependence on sponsored programmes reduces community input in programming which is against the participatory ethos of community radio. There can also be a lack of consistency in programming which can potentially reduce listener loyalty to specific programmes and to the radio station.

Another effect is that while some of these sponsoring organizations aim to improve the living standards of rural poor people by providing social services, other sponsors aim to market their services or products to farmers through the programme content provided or produced in collaboration with the community radio stations. For example, one corporate organization sponsors Phindu mu Ulimi ‘Productive Agriculture’, a programme which encourages farmers to practice conservation farming and to treat farming as a business. The company sells different seed varieties and herbicides. Through sponsoring of this programme the company advertises and encourages farmers to buy the seeds and herbicides that they sell. The herbicides are sprayed in the gardens to kill weeds. Once a farmer adopts conservation farming practice, he/she remains with no choice but to buy and apply the herbicides to control weeds. It was reported that:

We have learnt the use of Mtayajembe [conservation farming], which is the use of herbicides such as Bullet Roundup and Harness. These herbicides were initially used by those people who have money, but now the government says that people from the village should also use these herbicides so that people have time to concentrate on other development activities (FGD 8, 13 November 2012).

This response was expressed more as a complaint than an appreciation of the practice of buying and applying herbicides in their gardens. The farmers are not against conservation
farming as a modern farming technique as such, but they begrudge the practice of buying the herbicides because many of them cannot afford them. The organization that promotes this makes profits out of the poor farmers as shall be discussed later. Although there is mention of government, it should be noted that ordinary people sometimes fail to distinguish between messages from the government and those from private organizations.

Similarly, some organizations which produce and sell different seed varieties also sponsor programmes on both radio stations to achieve the same commercial ends. As farmers are encouraged to adopt modern farming techniques, these organizations compete to convince them to buy and plant their improved seed varieties to go along with the modern farming techniques. In these programmes, they feature adverts in form of jingles and mini-dramas to persuade farmers to buy and plant maize seed varieties produced by them. In this case, sponsorship is not entirely free as there are benefits the organizations realize from sponsoring certain programmes. Questions can be asked as to whether it is ethical for a community radio station to accept sponsorship for programmes that promote modern farming techniques that simultaneously accept opportunities for the sponsors. This example demonstrates the complexities of the relationship between the development agenda and commercial interests.

5.9.2 Advertising on Community Radio

Apart from sponsored programmes by NGOs, community radio stations also rely on advertising albeit on a minimal scale. For example, the marketing manager of Nkhotakota community radio station explained that the station earns an income ranging from MK150,
000 to MK200, 000 (£294- £392) per month from advertising. These figures vary from time to time depending on the season, for example, the dry season, the period after harvesting, attracts more revenue. This is because farmers are advertising their produce, there are many festivities taking place such as weddings, initiation rites, and thanksgiving. On the other hand, the rainy season is the leanest period when farmers have invested their money in farming, the crops are still in the garden, and there are few activities taking place (interview, 29 October 2012).

The income earned is used to pay electricity bills, water bills, and Malawi Telecommunications Limited (MTL) for the use of the tower on which their antennas are erected. Part of the income earned is used to pay stipend to its volunteers who receive it on monthly or quarterly basis. The stipend they receive varies from time to time depending on the income earned in each month and after paying all the bills. The station also has one office assistant and two security guards who are paid a monthly salary.

Table 7: Community Radio Station's Expenditure

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>UTILITY/SERVICE</th>
<th>AMOUNT</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Electricity</td>
<td>MWK35, 000 (£70.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Water</td>
<td>MWK8,000 (£16.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>MTL (rent for antenna)</td>
<td>MWK28, 000 (£56.00)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td></td>
<td>MWK71, 000 (£141.00)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
It should be noted that the figures in the table above exclude other expenditures like phone bills, internet services and maintenance expenses. Expenses for these could not be established. I also deliberately did not ask how much salary the security guards and office assistant receive. Since it was difficult to establish all the income and expenditure figures, it was not possible to estimate how much surplus the station remains with to determine how much each volunteer earns. The key point is that overall the income earned is not enough to cover the daily operations of the radio station and meeting staff stipend. If all staff members of a community radio station were paid a fixed monthly salary, all the revenue of the station would be drained thereby affecting its operations. In fact most of them would be shut down.

Up to the time of this research, the major source of funding for Mzimba community radio station had been OSISA. OSISA signed a 3 year contract with Mzimba community radio station to provide funding of US$126, 000 in 2006, and being paid in installments (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012). The income that the radio station generates on its own from various sources is deposited in the bank until such a time when funding from OSISA ceases (interview with programmes manager, 10 November 2012). The funding from OSISA is used to meet the cost of the daily operation of the radio station including paying utility bills and implementing the action plan as agreed in the contract that the two sides signed. As Tamminga (1997: 68) argues, “for grassroots organization with few resources to begin with, the end result may be that more energy is spent in trying to comply with the bureaucratic norms and conditions of the funding agency than working in the field”. This is a problem affecting the radio station because I observed that its
management was just complying with the conditions of the contract it signed with OSISA. The 20 volunteers of the radio station also receive a stipend which varies from MK4000 to MK15 000 (about £8–£29) per month (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012). These amounts are below the statutory minimum wage in the country and not enough to meet the daily needs of a single person. The statutory minimum wage in Malawi is now at £25 up from £14 per month with effect from January 2014 (Kasanda, 2014). Therefore emphasis on volunteerism is important when recruiting staff for the radio station to avoid frustrations which can eventually lead to high staff turnover. However, high staff turnover in community radio stations should not be seen as a problem because in that way the station is playing its role of training many members of the community who can be productive elsewhere.

5.10 Chapter Summary

This chapter has reviewed the organizational structure, the methods of funding and the regulatory environment and how these factors affect how community radio in Malawi operates and performs. The chapter has established that there is involvement of members of the community and donors in establishing community radio stations. The community, through influential members of the community is able to initiate the establishment of a community radio station. However, the chapter has established that because of lack of capacity of the local people to fund the setting up of a community radio station that responsibility falls on donors. The donors provide funds for the purchase of broadcasting equipment and training of staff in radio production and how to use the equipment. As it has been argued,
often a community radio station is built before the community is willing or able to fund it; thus, the tower is planted and then its life-sustaining roots attempt to grow. Because the station was created with external funding, the ownership tends towards the external. With such a model, it becomes an uphill task for the station to build participation, trust, perceived ownership and need (Conrad, 2010 cited in da Costa, 2012:144).

Therefore, if funding organizations are well meaning and serious about advancing participatory development, they should ensure that participatory processes have been embedded in those projects. In terms of the daily operations and management of the stations, community members participate as volunteers in station management, and broadcasting of programmes. However, when it comes to financing the daily operations of community radio, it has been established that “although local communities principally own rural radio stations, they still depend on donor funding to implement their own programming and management initiatives” (AFFRI, 2008: 64). Mainly this is done through sponsorship of programmes. This means that community radio stations are open to influence and control by commercial forces because of overreliance on sponsored programmes making them resemble commercial media.

Finally, the review of the funding and governance issues reveals that there are different levels of community engagement in community radio. The presence of donors in community radio which is part of participatory communication is the case in point here. Communication for development in Malawi through community radio, therefore, incorporates the participatory approach and the top-down approach. According to Servaes (2008: 38)

the very success of ‘participatory’ approaches needs to be seen against the gradual institutionalization of the NGO movement in large parts of the world and the many attempts by governments to co-opt and dilute the notion of participatory change –
from its original meaning rooted in the idea of grassroots, people-led, inclusive, autonomous change to that of people-led change defined by NGOs and governments.

This also confirms Lennie and Tacchi’s (2013: 5) argument that “despite the prominence of ideas around the participatory nature of communication, older modernization paradigms have not been completely displaced”. As a result of the hybridization of participatory and top-down approaches to development, it is seen that ordinary people’s participation in development projects and in the media somewhat occurs at different levels, some of which has no or little impact on development. Chapter 6 examines the different levels or forms of participation in the media and in development.
CHAPTER SIX: ROLE OF PARTICIPATION IN DEVELOPMENT THROUGH COMMUNITY RADIO

6.0 Introduction

This chapter examines the ways in which community radio in Malawi encourages grassroots participation in the media and in development projects to address individual and community development goals. According to Myers (2008: 5), “radio seems to have proven itself as a developmental tool, particularly with the rise of community and local radios, which have facilitated a far more participatory and horizontal type of communication than was possible with older, centralised broadcasting model of the 1960s and 70s”. A key question that is asked by this research is how has community radio been used as a tool for development? Milan (2009) identifies two ways in which community radio can be used as a tool for development. First, it is used to promote democratic participation among local people, enabling ordinary people to become involved in identifying and defining community problems and finding solutions to those problems (Berrigan, 1979; Myers, 2011). This is a bottom-up approach to development as opposed to the top-down approach. Secondly, as an information diffusion strategy where the community radio station is used especially by NGOs and governments to communicate developmental news or information in areas such as health, education, agriculture, family planning, etc, to communities. In media for development, this approach has mainly been used by mainstream media where “emphasis has been on telling and teaching, rather than an exchange of requests and ideas between the centre and outlying areas” (Berrigan, 1979: 7). This approach lacked appeal to marginalized people and did little to change their
situation apart from perpetuating their marginalization and rendering them voiceless. “People are ‘voiceless’ not because they have nothing to say, but because nobody cares to listen to them” (Servaes and Malikhao, 2005: 91). This is what characterized development work in the 1960’s and 1970’s, where beneficiaries of development projects were often passive recipients (Tandon, 2008). Berrigan (1979) sees no problem with community radio continuing with this approach of informing and pointing out why certain development programmes are being undertaken, and the information-diffusion strategy is the main focus of Chapter 8. However, as a tool for development, “community radio needs to be not only a channel to transmit to people, but also a means of receiving from them: not only an instrument to hear from or about the world, but the people’s voice, to make their voice heard” (Offor, 2002 cited in Milan, 2009: 600). This is why participation is a key characteristic of community radio and this chapter examines how community radio facilitates development through people’s participation. The chapter further examines how community radio can expand the resources with which ordinary people can participate by combining with mobile phones.

6.1 Forms of Participation: Participation in the Media

According to Berrigan (1979: 18) participation in the media “implies the involvement of the public in production and in the management of communication systems”. There are many ways through which this can be achieved. Berrigan (1979: 18) categorizes forms of participation at three levels: production, decision-making and planning levels. However, Carpentier (2011) classifies participation in two forms, participation in the media and participation through the media (see also Bailey et al., 2008). Therefore, I draw on
Berrigan’s (1979) categorizations and Carpentier’s (2011) forms of participation to identify the forms of participation available in the two community radio stations under analysis. I then apply Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation introduced in Chapter 2 and Carpentier’s (2011) minimalist and maximalist forms of participation to assess the overall extent to which people participate in media production and in development. Participation in the media is categorized in two forms, ‘content-related participation’ and ‘structural participation’ (Carpentier, 2011: 68). Content-related participation involves programme production; selection, provision and scheduling of programmes; and availability of technical resources to the ordinary people. I first discuss different forms of content–related participation as they relate to the two community radio stations under analysis.

6.1.1 Content-related Participation: Individual Right to communicate and Listen to Programmes

According to Girard (2001: 3) community radio “aims not only to participate in the life of the community but also to allow the community to participate in the life of the station”. This is made possible through the presence of a community radio station in a community in which ordinary people are enabled to participate in various ways and to different levels. Similarly, Carpentier (2011: 28) views access as a means of “achieving presence (to technology or media content)”. The presence of a community radio station in the community means that ordinary people have access to the radio technology and can use it as a means to communicate and receive information as explained below:

This radio is known as Mzimba community radio. ‘Community’ means the local people of this area, the villagers, the unemployed […]. It may take a long time for
an ordinary person like me to go and talk on MBC Radio 1 or MBC TV but for Mzimba radio it is very easy for me to go and say what I want without fear and segregation and my voice will be heard on the radio simply because it is a community radio station, it belongs to us (FGD 8, 13 November 2012).

The establishment of community radio stations in marginalized rural communities can, therefore, allow access to information and media technology. In this way ordinary people are able to participate in the activities of the radio station. The “low literacy levels that impede the majority of people from accessing information through the print media” (Panos, 2005: 1) is no longer an impediment.

The presence of a community radio station also allows for the “transmission of materials requested by the public” (Berrigan, 1979: 18). Community radio broadcasts programmes which have local content and are relevant to the needs of the community. Apart from request programmes, both Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations broadcast programmes which tackle developmental challenges faced in the communities. For instance, the programmes manager of Mzimba community radio station explained that:

We based [our programmes] on community problems we are facing like HIV/AIDS, transport, security, vulnerable children, education, health, infrastructure, agriculture, maternal health, etc. So we are basing our programming on things that affect people in the community including sports and prayers (interview, 10 November 2012).

According to Berrigan (1979: 18) “the availability of a wider range of materials, the choice of which is made by the public instead of being imposed by production organizations” is a form of participation. Provision of relevant programmes is one way of achieving the individual right to listen to their preferred programmes. However, I found that although community radio programmes were accessed by members of the community there was
little or no audience participation in the formulation of the initial programmes schedules of the radio stations under analysis, as will be discussed in the next section.

6.1.2 Content-related Participation: Participation in Programme Scheduling

It has been argued that “participation should begin at the beginning, in defining of problems” (Berrigan, 1979: 26). This entails involving community members early enough in the establishment of a radio station and deciding what sort of programmes they want to be broadcast on their local station. However, when each of the community radio stations in this research was formulating their initial programme schedules, ordinary people were not offered a chance to contribute towards programming. They were also not consulted about the need to establish the community radio stations. For example, the participants in Nkhotakota said:

Honestly, they did not consult us on the programmes. However, when they came to inform us about this programme [an agricultural programme], we cordially welcomed it. We are grateful and satisfied with the programme (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

A similar situation happened with Mzimba community radio station. It was the staff members who came up with the programmes as an interim measure to set the radio station running. The station manager of Mzimba community radio station explained that, “We sat down here to come up with the programmes related to the themes that if we are developing we should be programming out of until when we are seen that we are addressing all those things” (interview, 13 November 2012). This was done on the understanding that people’s views and input into programming would only be sought after the people entrusted to run
the radio station had already decided on the programming. The station manager further explained that:

At first we thought consultation could take longer but now we will give people a chance to critique our programmes and decide which ones to maintain, which ones to throw away and the new ones to introduce (interview, 13 November 2012).

Therefore, there was less participation by ordinary people in the formulation of community radio programmes in both stations. This kind of thinking is reminiscent of the top-down approach to communication prevalent in the modernization paradigm in which consultation was thought to be slow, expensive, and ineffective. This is consistent with Balit’s (2010a) argument that “participatory approaches that promote dialogue and engagement are often seen as costly, time consuming, and difficult to accommodate in well-defined plans and logframes” (cited in Lennie and Tacchi, 2013: 12). However, although consultation is thought to be expensive, the lack of it is equally expensive because people would still need to be mobilized at a later stage otherwise it will affect the way they would accept the development initiative. The situation described above confirms Eversole’s (2012: 8) observation that “too often, genuine and balanced community participation only takes place at the operational stages of programme development”. This relates to the function of manipulation on Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation. It is against the ethos of participatory communication which emphasizes “active involvement of rural people in the identification of their needs, the mobilization of local resources and local level implementation of plans to satisfy local needs” (Kolawole, 1982: 122). Ordinary people are being manipulated to think that the station is doing its best in their interest yet programme framers are unconsciously imposing their own view of things on the people.
The situation above also begs the question about who is appointed to work in the radio station, to produce programmes and decide on content. Although the two radio stations have a team of local volunteers who work at the radio stations, the problem is how they were identified as volunteers. According to Ranganathan and Sarin (2012: 70), “the more educated, confident or technology friendly people are likely to self-select themselves as generators of content”. For example, at Mzimba community radio station, volunteers undergo an interview process for them to be allowed to work at the radio station. The station manager explained that:

When we have applicants we have to respond to their applications, invite them for an interview, see if they have the necessary qualifications, and decide whether they have the experience (interview, 13 November 2012).

What this implies is that not everyone can volunteer to work at the station because only those with relevant qualifications and experience in radio production are considered suitable for positions at the station. This is what Ranganathan and Sarin (2012) describe as ‘self-selection’. Self-selection “separates the producers from the listeners or viewers and in doing so has potential to ‘other’ them from the very community they are supposed to be part of” (Ranganathan and Sarin, 2008: 70). This situation has the potential to create power relationships which acts as a major barrier to participation. According to Tamminga (1997: 37) “the skills and knowledge acquired to use communication technologies like radio can be monopolized by a few contrary to a spirit of democratization”. To illustrate this point further, in his study of Radio San Miguel (RSM) and the Honduran Ecumenical Community Services Institute (INEHSCO) in Honduras, Tamminga (1997) found that producers of both radio stations had no training in radio production. However, when basic
recording and production equipment were donated to each station, only the most senior
members of the radio stations had access to the equipment (Tamminga, 1997: 65). To
make matters worse, “tape recorders were kept locked up and not used for field recordings
in remote communities or for community members to practice interviewing skills, etc”
(Tamminga, 1997: 65).

6.1.3 Content-related Participation: Participation through Programme Production

According to Alnaldo (1998) “community radio is a social process or event in which
members of the community associate together to design programmes and produce and air
them, thus taking on the primary role of actors in their own destiny” (cited in Fraser and
Estrada, 2001: 1). The findings of this research support Alnaldo’s definition of community
radio. Ordinary people in the research areas have the opportunity to become producers of
some programmes. For example, it was reported that:

In the running of the radio, we take part when we present our programmes to others
about how we have benefited from adopting modern farming techniques, but also
when we learn from programmes produced by fellow farmers. Therefore, we are
taking part in helping the radio’s development with our programmes (FGD 3, 3
November 2012).

Therefore, it is the local people’s voices that are heard in the programmes of community
radio stations. According to Türkoğlu (2011: 147) participation “is used in an optimistic
sense with regard to the empowering role of community media in giving voice to ordinary
people through their participation in media production and organizational management”.
When ordinary people participate in programme production it can be viewed as the most
empowering aspect of community radio. Community radio empowers ordinary people to
become active producers, and not merely passive recipients of information and opinion (Bresnaham, 2007; Gumucio-Dagron, 2001).

According to Chapman (2003) “rural radio is effective in improving the sharing of agricultural information by remote rural farming communities” (cited in Al-hassan et al., 2011). Similarly in this research, the farmers in Nkhotakota further explained that:

Here in our village, they record programmes about our farming activities. They basically ask us how we conduct our farming practices and also the benefits that we realize from them. They also record the achievements that we have made from farming so far and what progress we are making. They record these so that when others listen to them they too get lessons and inspirations (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

This was corroborated by the listeners of Mzimba community radio station who said that, “It’s not that those people bring programmes to us but what they do is that they collect from us the activities that we do and they compile those activities into a radio programme which is broadcast on the radio” (FGD 7, 12 November 2012). By allowing farmers to produce programmes in their clubs and listening to each other’s programmes, community radio meets one of its objectives of allowing ordinary people to participate in the activities of the radio.

Members of other listening clubs are also involved in programme production. For example, members of an HIV/AIDS club listen to programmes such as Padooko (On the Dock) on Nkhotakota community radio station and then pass on the message to others in the community in a dramatized format and sometimes through song and dance. The members of the club also gather information about HIV/AIDS from within their community. This information helps them to come up with mini-dramas which they perform in the
community to sensitize others. The dramas, songs and dances are also recorded and sent to the radio station for broadcasting for people in other areas to listen to. Programme production by ordinary people, therefore, happens in two ways, firstly, when community radio producers visit listening clubs to record and produce programmes from the activities that listening clubs are doing. Secondly, the listening clubs produce their own programmes which they record and send to the radio stations for broadcasting. In this way, ordinary people achieve a more advanced level of participation which is having access to “technical facilities and production resources” (Berrigan, 1979: 18). When evaluated against Arnstein’s (1969) ladder one can argue that there is some form of citizen power in the area of programme production although it is not full control as the station still holds some power regarding what programmes people can produce. This level of participation can be described as partnership because ordinary people are contributing something to programming.

According to Prehn (1991: 259) community radio stations “allow for the participation of non-professional producers in the production of media content, providing an alternative model of media production and facilitating the participation of various (older and newer) social movements, minorities and sub/counter cultures”. By involving non-professional media makers in programme production, Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations expand opportunities for participation which is at maximalist form according to Carpentier (2011). “In the maximalist forms, (professional) control and popular participation become more balanced, and attempts are made to maximize participation” (Carpentier, 2011: 69). When members of the community are involved in producing radio
programmes there is generation and promotion of local content. Localized programming is relevant and appeals to the members of the community more than national and generalized programming that appeals more to general and undefined audience (Lingela, 2008). This is one characteristic of participatory communication.

6.1.4 Content-related Participation: Interaction between Producers and Receivers of Messages

Berrigan (1979: 18) argues that “keeping in touch with producers, administrators and the managers of communication organizations” is another way of encouraging ordinary people’s participation in the media. I found that listeners and radio practitioners of Nkhotakota community radio station interact in a number of ways. For example, the few randomly selected people I talked to at the station gave a number of reasons why they had visited the radio station. The reasons given were as follows: to buy paper for writing letters; deliver a letter of greetings; place an advert on the radio station; tip reporters about a news item; make an announcement on the radio; interact and chat with station staff; see the radio station; and to give feedback about some programmes and their content. Some of them had come to thank members of staff for airing their messages which led to, for example, lost property or relatives being found, or someone coming to donate blood at the hospital to save a life. I also observed that the reception area was always busy and crowded with people. The listeners were free to walk in and out of the station after being assisted on their mission.
The reasons described above illustrate the kind of interaction existing between the listeners and radio producers. Every listener has an opportunity to interact with the radio producers without hindrance. At one point I observed an illiterate man who had come to Nkhotakota community radio station to send a message. He asked one of the radio announcers to write the message for him by dictation. Illiteracy can, therefore, be less of a barrier for community members. This is significant because it demonstrates that community radio “is an ideal communication tool for the illiterate population (which is still huge in many countries)” like Malawi (Sharma, 2011: 19). Community radio, therefore, can redress the exclusion that illiterate people experience with mainstream media. It can provide them “with an opportunity to ‘go public’ – that is represent themselves on air, in their own languages and their own way” (Jeffrey, 2002: 46). Although these forms of interaction cannot be described as participation, they help to build a high sense of community ownership which is a key characteristic of community radio.

The forms of interaction discussed above fall in the category of tokenism under the rung of consultation in Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation. According to Carpentier (2011: 44) consultation is “based on the invitation to people to communicate their opinions”. Although, not the intention of the station, this kind of participation can be considered “a sham since it offers no assurance that citizen concerns and ideas will be taken into account” unless it is combined with other forms of participation (Arnstein, 1969: 219). At Mzimba community radio station the situation was different. Here, I did not get the same kind of impression that I got at Nkhotakota in terms of local people coming to the station to do one thing or another. The reception area was deserted most of the times and the
personnel manning the reception could be seen sitting and chatting outside which would suggest that they did not have much work to do.

6.1.5 Content-related Participation: Participation through Feedback on Programming

Fairchild (2010: 16) argues that “community media’s raison d’être is to facilitate two way communication within the local community” and this involves ordinary people providing feedback. When ordinary people are accorded the opportunity to offer feedback, Berrigan (1979) argues, they “enter into public discourse, thereby supporting popular participation in decision-making processes and promoting a greater sense of individual and collective agency in directing the community’s growth and development” (cited in Fairchild, 2010: 16). In terms of giving feedback, I found that both radio stations seek the views of ordinary people when they want to introduce new programmes. Ordinary people express their views on the relevance of the programmes and the best times to broadcast them. In this way the radio stations take soundings when developing new programmes. When listeners are not satisfied with the way some programmes are handled, they inform the radio station practitioners directly through the various interactive events or through a phone call to the station. Upon receiving a complaint, management of the station meets to make a decision on the complaint. The participants explained that:

Not all programmes that are broadcast on the station were decided for by themselves. Most of the programmes are from people’s ideas. For instance, the people may decide that we want to be presenting these programmes. People also request programmes they want on the radio. Sometimes they encourage the presenters saying okay your programme is educative, keep it up. This is because this radio is for the people of Nkhotakota and it has to abide by what we want.
These programmes that we have now were not there before. Rather they have been made from listeners’ ideas (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

For example, it was reported that radio producers of Nkhotakota community radio station sought local people’s views about the name and content of Maziko (Foundation) programme. The participants said:

We opted for that name, and in this programme, our voices are heard. This programme is a brainchild of the listeners’ input so I feel as listeners we are playing a big role in the formulation of programmes (FGD 6, 5 November 2012).

These are the kind of things that any radio station is supposed to do. According to Cuddeford (2012) “When radio stations talk to their listeners about what they want to hear on the radio […] listeners can participate in programming by telling you what they need to hear and when they want to hear it”. However, community radio in theory is supposed to facilitate much greater involvement than this. As such, although opportunities like these can make ordinary people feel that they own the community radio station because they are participating in decision making about what goes on air, it falls on informing in the tokenism category on Arnstein’s ladder. In informing, people are given little opportunity to influence decisions (Arnstein, 1969).

6.2 Participation in the Media: Structural Participation

The second form of participation in the media is called structural participation. It refers to participation in the structure of the station such as election of leaders, policy making for the station, management or administration and financing of the station (Carpentier, 2011; Berrigan, 1979). According to Gumucio-Dagron (2001: 16) community radio is characterized by “total ownership to different degrees of audience involvement in
programming and management” by the community it is meant to serve. In the sections below, I discuss the different types of structural participation and the degrees in relation to the two community radio stations.

6.2.1 Structural Participation: Participation through Financial Contributions

According to Sharma (2011: 7) individual community members and local institutions are the main sources of support for the daily running of community radio stations. In this research, I found that making financial contributions is a major way through which ordinary people support and participate in the daily running of Nkhotakota community radio station. For example, the deputy station manager of the station explained that:

> We buy reams of paper and we stamp each of the papers with our date stamp, then the people come to buy each paper at a cost of MK15 (£0.03) per paper. They write letters on these papers to greet each other. In this way, we also generate money from the sales of these papers. We make money from the community members and even the community members themselves feel that they are contributing towards the running of this radio station (interview, 31 October 2012).

The radio station earns a profit through the sale of station branded paper. Participation through making financial contributions was mentioned in at least all listening clubs of the station. By buying papers and sending letters to the radio station, local people feel that they are participating in the running and management of the radio station. For example, one participant said:

> As we have already said, the radio station has papers on which we write letters, and these papers are sold to us. In this way, we are assisting in financing the radio because the money we pay for the papers helps in the running of the radio station (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).
There is also an added advantage that the station markets itself using station branding on stationery. Financial contribution extends to advertising as well. According to Loeser (2011: 2) when advertisers advertise on community radio “they believe it’s an investment in their community, an investment that will improve the quality of life for their customers and employees, thereby improving the opportunities for business success in the long term”. Similarly, the participants expressed the same belief that when they place adverts on the community radio, they are not only helping boost their businesses but they are supporting the radio station financially. These participants portrayed a high level of understanding about the need for them to fund their community radio station in whatever small way they can manage. As Loeser (2011: 2) further argues, advertisers “spend money on community radio to improve the community first, and improve sales second”. The listeners reported that:

The other way of supporting the radio station is through advertising; local traders and individuals advertise their businesses and place messages about weddings, lost property, etc, thereby promoting the radio station through the money they pay (FGD 6, 6 November 2012).

The rates of advertising are much cheaper as compared to the rates charged by commercial broadcasters in the country (interview with the marketing manager, 29 October 2012).

Although, some community radio stations thrive on financial contributions by members of the community, some critics have questioned the logic behind asking the most marginalized sectors of the population to financially sustain and support community radio stations given their own pressing economic needs (Tamminga, 1997). This point proved true in this research when some participants complained that:
Radio Listening Clubs are also experiencing problems to get to the radio station to buy papers due to transport expenses. It is very expensive. We are also asking for assistance of a bicycle because we spend MK600 (£1.17) just to buy papers worth K200 (£0.39) (FGD 2, 3 November 2012).

These people feel that it does not make economic sense to travel by bus and pay a fare of £1.17 to go to the radio station and buy papers worth £0.39 for writing letters, hence their request for a bicycle to be used for such errands. The underlying factor here is poverty and this relates to Mtinde et al’s., (1998: 18) observation that, “some stations are based in rural areas or in areas with less or no economic base to sustain the station. In these areas, sufficient self-generated income (advertising, membership fees, and local sponsorship) might be difficult to secure for all the needs of the station”. To solve this problem they propose legitimization of financial and material support by international development aid agencies and national donating organizations to complement self-generated income of community radio stations (Mtinde et al., 1998). Inasmuch as making financial contributions is necessary for the daily operations of the community radio, this form of participation is what Arnstein (1969) describes as ‘manipulation’. It is a form of non-participation. Ordinary people are made to believe that their financial contributions are used to run the station when in fact this amount of money contributes a smaller percentage. As discussed in the previous chapter, the two community radio stations depend on sponsored programmes for their sustainability. Sponsored programmes bring in more money than any other form of income. On the other hand, at Mzimba community radio station, ordinary people’s contribution in form of buying paper is absent. However, people place adverts on the radio but the money that is earned through these adverts and other
forms of income generation is deposited in the bank because the radio station runs on donor funding as previously observed.

6.2.2 Structural Participation: Participation in the Management of the Radio Station

Fraser and Estrada (2001: 51) argue that “with regard to management, the concept of community radio is that the community itself should be in overall control”. However, they are quick to point out that everyone cannot be involved all the time, and therefore a representative body needs to be established. “In many cases, a community media committee is created to assume the management role” (Fraser and Estrada, 2001: 51).

When asked whether they are involved in the management of their station, the participants of Nkhotakota community radio station explained that:

Of course sometimes we are involved, more especially when there is a problem. What happens is that the radio station invites people who are more knowledgeable in our community to discuss with management on how best they can solve the problem at hand (FGD 1, 2 November 2012).

These participants were referring to the Board of Trustees and officials from the district council who are involved in the management of the radio station. The committee that was entrusted to oversee the establishment of the station took over the responsibility of managing the station when it started its operations. This committee is now called a Board of Trustees. However, the Board of Trustees works hand in hand with the District Council.

The representative of the DC explained that:

UNESCO donated equipment to the people. As council we own the radio. Of course as a council our desire is not to get involved but there should be a board to see the running of the station. There should be management to see the affairs of the radio station. At the moment there is a board but is closely monitored by council. But we want a board that is vibrant (interview, 7 November 2012).
He further explained the reasons why there is this arrangement between the Board of Trustees and the district council saying:

I think the beginning… let me be open, somehow somewhere at the beginning it was politicized so I think people took advantage to say it was me who implemented this project, and now that mentality is still looming around but it’s a question now of understanding that it is a community radio station (interview with representative on the DC, 7 November 2012).

The presence of a Board of Trustees and the local council implies that the station is jointly managed by the members of the community and the council. It should also be noted that “the District Council is the highest policy making body responsible for promoting infrastructural and economic development in the district” (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 9).

According to the deputy station manager, the Board of Trustees has 10 members composed of a representative each from the business community; statutory corporations in the district; local farmers; NGOs; the district council and other government institutions in the district; the religious community; traditional leaders; and the community. The station manager is the secretary of the board. The main responsibility of the board is to provide the radio station with the necessary tools for broadcasting and lobbying for funding for maintenance or purchase of the necessary equipment (interview, 31 October 2012). Some of these roles are taken up by the district council as explained:

They are not given direct assistance but in terms of support like if they require transport even lobbying for equipment from well wishers, the council has been playing a pivotal role (interview with representative of the DC, 7 November 2012).

Therefore, although the station has strong links with the local council, it does not receive any financial assistance from the council. The station thrives on sponsored programmes and commercial advertising albeit on a minimal scale. The composition of the board is a good representation of the community as it is inclusive of all relevant stakeholders. Having
a Board of Trustees to represent ordinary people in the management of the radio station could be viewed as selective participation. According to Tamminga (1997) providing opportunities for participation in this way may privilege some social actors while silencing others. However, in his counter-argument, Cornwall (2008: 276-277) observes that “truism as it is, it is often far from obvious that most participatory processes do not and literally cannot involve ‘everyone’. In practice, explicit or implicit choices are usually made as to who might take part”. Usually these include “‘stakeholders’ whose views are taken to represent others of their kind” (Cornwall, 2008: 277). In keeping with the tradition, this station has a Board of Trustees. Ordinary people’s views are represented in that way. This kind of participation falls under citizen power on Arnstein’s ladder because community members have power to influence decisions in the operations of the radio station. However, the manner in which this form of participation is handled, where the district council is involved, reduces it to placation. In placation, a few individuals are ‘hand-picked’ to work on the board and there is a risk that these people can be “outvoted and outfoxed” (Arnstein, 1969: 220) by the officials from the district council in this context.

On the other hand, Mzimba community radio station does not have a representative body. At the time of the research, it was the Management Committee, composed of the station coordinator and the station manager, which was responsible for the daily operations of the station. This committee reported directly to the funding organization, OSISA. At the time of the research, the radio station was conducting outreach programmes to sensitize community members on how they can manage the radio station and how it can best serve their needs. The station manager explained that:
At the moment we have just started going out to articulate these things with the community that this is how they are going to manage it, the radio is theirs. Since we started we haven’t gone to the community to tell them that this is the structure (interview, 13 November 2012).

The management of the station was also setting up Radio Listening Groups (RLGS) through the same outreach programmes which they were conducting (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012). The manner in which Mzimba community radio station was established has the potential to shape people’s thinking that participation is invited. Ordinary people may assume that development agents and professionals are responsible for inviting them and deciding how they should participate. Cornwall (2008: 275) considers the problem with ‘invited spaces’ provided by development agents as being “structured and owned by those who provide them, no matter how participatory they may seek to be”. Consequently, those invited to ‘participate’ are likely to end up disenchanted with the promise of participation because they don’t know the rules of the game (Eversole, 2012). Here we note that Mzimba community radio station did the opposite of what would normally be the case. Instead of mobilizing the community before the establishment of the station, that exercise took place when the station was already on air. At the time of the research, the people are being informed and consulted about what they can do for the station. It remains to be seen whether this will eventually translate into higher levels of participation on Arnstein’s (1969) ladder.

6.3 Participation through the Media

In the previous sections, I have discussed two forms of participation in the media, and these are content-related participation and structural participation. According to Carpentier
(2011: 67) “these forms of media participation allow citizens to be active in one of the many (micro-) spheres relevant to the daily life, and to put in practice their right to communicate”. However, ‘meaningful’ participation means “providing individuals and communities with a platform to express their views” (Rennie, 2006, 3). This can equated to participatory democracy which 

fosters human development, enhances a sense of political efficacy, reduces a sense of estrangement from power centres, nurtures a concern for collective problems and contributes to the formation of an active and knowledgeable citizenry capable of taking a more acute interest in government affairs (Pateman, 1970 cited in Held, 2006: 212).

Since community radio stations target smaller geographical communities, they can be ideal media for allowing marginalized people to participate in decision making on issues that affect them locally. For Carpentier (2011: 67), participation through the media deals with “the opportunities for mediated participation in public debate and for self-representation in the variety of public spaces that characterize the social’. Therefore, this section discusses how ordinary people participate in the community radio stations through debate and self-representation.

6.3.1 Participation through Self-representation

This research finds that local people in the study areas have their own communication structures which are used to communicate community problems to elected leaders. The local communication structure starts at village level where there are Village Development Committees (VDC) and then Area Development Committees (ADC) at constituency level. Local people present their concerns and discuss various development projects needed in
their communities at these fora. The VDC “is a basic entry point for people to participate in the planning and implementation of development projects” at village level (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 8). The VDC is headed by the Village Headman while the ADC is headed by the Senior Chief or Traditional Authority (TA). People’s concerns are later taken to the District Commissioner (DC) or the MP or any other concerned leaders at district level for their action. For example, it was reported that:

We present our grievances to group village headmen. They take our grievances to the Traditional Authority who talks to the MP on our behalf...We want the MP to visit us. There is a programme on the radio called *Titukule Boma Lathu* [Lets Develop Our District] whereby development plans are discussed but he has never come to discuss his plans with us here. We have many problems that we want to discuss with our MP. We can present our grievances through the radio station but even if the MP can listen to them, he never follows up (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

The local communication and decision-making structure described here is rather bureaucratic. Decisions made at a lower level are passed on to the next higher level until they get to the DC or MP who makes the final decision. This is where community radio comes in as a space where local people can represent themselves and channel their concerns to their leaders directly. As Carpentier (2011: 67) argues, “the media sphere serves as a location where citizens can voice their opinions and experiences and interact with other voices”. Nkhotakota community radio station creates an interface between local leaders and the electorate but such a forum is shunned by political leaders especially the MPs. This leaves the electorate angry and frustrated as demonstrated in the excerpt below:

We have been asking for an opportunity to meet our MP but to no avail. Meanwhile we have just stopped because we think they regard us as unimportant people (FGD 5, 5 November 2012).
According to Fraser and Estrada (2001: 20), “in poor communities, local authorities and politicians can easily take advantage of citizens, either individually or as a group, in part because the marginalized and oppressed have no way to complain”. This is where community radio comes in as a community mouthpiece. It “helps people obtain their just rights by giving them a platform to air their grievances” (Fraser and Estrada, 2001: 20). It was reported that other office bearers at district level are readily accessible to answer people’s questions. For example, it was reported that, “Officials from the district hospital do come and partly the officials from the council. They explain and give the subjects a chance to speak out their views” (FGD 6, 6 November 2012). Similarly, participants in another group said:

The radio acts as a bridge between the leaders and the subjects. It draws leaders nearer their subjects to explain what they are doing, how they are doing it, and what weakness the subjects find in their leaders and in the developmental projects. The subjects also suggest what they think should be done. Hence, the radio strengthens the relationship between the leaders and us (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

According to Livingstone and Lunt (1994: 4) the mass media “can allow the public to hold politicians and experts to account directly, rather than by proxy”. Nkhotakota community radio station provides a space for a question and answer interface between local officials and ordinary people through the RLCs. “This live exchange provides a unique opportunity for ordinary citizens to directly confront or engage with public officials in ways that the normal ordering of power relations would otherwise not allow” (Tettey, 2011: 24-5). This opportunity can also allow ordinary people to make repeated calls for effective delivery of social services and implementation of projects. As Fraser and Estrada’s (2001: 19) posit, ‘democratic processes’ “must reach into the government and the private institutions
operating in the community, as well as to policy makers and authorities at the local, regional, and even national level”. When community radio provides a space for ordinary people to confront local authorities in a face-to-face encounter, it can help to bring their grievances directly to the attention of government. In this way, community radio can promote local democracy.

However, as Carpentier and Dahlgren’s (2011: 8) argue, “the presence of a participatory culture cannot be conflated with participation itself and its logics of equal(ised) power relations”. I found that the power to implement the decisions agreed in the interface between ordinary people and local leaders remains in the hands of the leaders. This situation is what Pateman (1970: 70) describes as ‘partial participation’, “a process in which two or more parties influence each other in the making of decisions but the final power to decide rests with one party only”. This arrangement can create an illusion of participation which can make ordinary people feel as though they are involved in a democratic process when in reality they are not (Dahlgren, 1995; McNair, 2002). Similarly, Arnstein (1969) places this form of participation under placation. Placation is “a higher level of tokenism in which have-nots are entitled to advice, but power holders still have the right to decide” (Carpentier, 2011: 44). Therefore, although there is evidence of listener involvement in decision-making processes in community development projects through community radio, the form of participation can be described as minimal or partial.

Furthermore, Nkhotakota community radio station creates an interface between ordinary people and local community leaders through a phone-in programme called, *Tsogolo La*
Boma Lathu (The Future of Our District). In the programme, officials from the district council come in the studio to explain what development plans they have for the people and also hear from them what they want to see happen in their community and thereafter, respond to the people’s concerns. The deputy station manager explained that:

We produce this programme with the help and participation of the officials from the district council and the district Director of Planning. We gather information from them so that we can bring their development plans closer to the people simply because the people have their own expectations from them (interview, 31 October 2012).

Sometimes, people write letters to the DC through the radio station whose producers carry the letter to him and his response is recorded and broadcast to the people. Livingstone and Lunt (1994: 10) posit that “if the citizenry is to play a role in a democracy then it needs access to an institutionally guaranteed forum in which to express their opinions and to question established power”. Here this radio station provides such a forum which has potential of stimulating debate thereby supporting development in the district. In corroboration, the representative of the DC explained that:

As council, we have a programme, Tsogolo la Boma Lathu, which is aired for free. So to us, I think, we are benefiting a lot when it comes to sending messages to the people. The programme deals with development messages, about how we are implementing development projects in the district (interview, 7 November 2012).

This is keeping in line with the decentralization process, and resonates with Fraser and Estrada’s (2001: 19) argument that “it is the function of community radio to provide an independent platform for interactive discussion about matters and decisions of importance to its community”. However, although opportunities like these can accord marginalized people an opportunity to represent themselves in public life, ordinary people do not have the power to implement the decisions made as previously noted.
6.3.2 Participation through Public Debate

Participation in public debates has been enhanced on community radio stations through the establishment of phone-in programmes. For instance, Mzimba community radio station broadcasts a phone-in programme called *Esangweni* (forum), a concept resembling Habermas’s public sphere. A public sphere is formed in every conversation in which private individuals assemble to form a public body (Habermas, 1974 cited in Carpentier, 2011). In the programme, the host introduces a topic which is either chosen by the producer or a topic is chosen by the community members in advance. Then ordinary people call in to express their views about the topic. Towards the end of the programme the host summarizes the views of the people. Sometimes relevant stakeholders or experts in a particular field such as health, education or human rights etc, are brought in the studio to discuss the topic in form of a panel discussion. After that phone lines are opened for ordinary people to phone-in to contribute their views or to ask questions so that the experts can respond. According to Livingstone and Lunt (1994: 39) these programmes “offer a sense of a community where everyone belongs, there is consensus about the social, political and psychological agenda, and common sense is the key to addressing everyday problems”. It can be argued, therefore, that community radio can provide a space for mediated public sphere in which ordinary people deliberate, in a rational manner, issues of social concern to them, ask questions and explore options for solving the problems they encounter.
To provide context to the discussion above, during the course of this research, there was a general debate in Malawi regarding Chinese traders who were doing business in rural towns instead of being in the cities. In Mzimba district where this station is located, these Chinese traders were told by local traders to stop running their businesses there. The reason for this decision might have been based on Section 41 of the Competition and Fair Trading Act (1998) which makes it an offence for any person with “a dominant position of market power to eliminate or damage a competitor” (GoM, 1998: 17) at any market. Although the Act does not address this issue adequately, in the rural areas the Chinese traders are viewed by the locals to have that dominant market power resulting in having unfair advantage because they have more money and their products are imported. The lower prices of their commodities may be “due to high import duties imposed on formal traders, which give rise to appreciably high cross-border price differentials, which in turn are exploited by informal traders using various methods, including tax evasion or import under-valuation” (Tsoka, 2006: 12). Mzimba community radio station gave ordinary people a chance to express their views on the issue. The programme manager explained that:

We had a phone-in programme where some people were saying the Chinese traders should come back because they were buying cheap things from them unlike local traders who were overcharging the commodities” (interview, November 2012).

It transpired through the phone-in programme that local traders were the ones who were against the Chinese traders. They claimed that they were facing tough and unfair competition from Chinese traders, a situation which could eventually force them out of business. On the other hand, ordinary consumers wanted Chinese traders to come back because they were buying cheap commodities from them, arguing that whoever made the
decision to chase Chinese traders was wrong to do that in a liberalized economy (interview with programmes manager, 10 November 2012). This supports Held’s (2006: 237) argument that “deliberation can expose the one-sidedness and partiality of certain viewpoints which may fail to represent the interests of the many”. At the time of this research, discussions were underway to look into possibilities of bringing the Chinese traders back but there was little progress because the problem hinged on a national policy issue. Community radio, therefore, can give ordinary people access to participate in public debate. Through such opportunities, ordinary people can express their views about issues that affect them and be able to influence decisions at the local level. As Habermas (1989) argues, “the public sphere has a potential influence over power by forming a critical consensus which produces a coherent public opinion and by making the state accountable to its citizens” (cited in Livingstone and Lunt 1994: 16). In that way a public sphere is created with the potential of creating understanding and bringing people’s problems to the attention of relevant authorities for action. This emphasizes the importance of communication through debates because communication “empowers; enables dialogue and expression; raises awareness of social and structural problems; and promotes self reflection” (Tacchi et al., 2009: 581). Although this form of participation is placation, it points to the importance of the combination of community radio and mobile phones in expanding opportunities for ordinary people to participate as discussed below.
6.4 Expanding Participation through the Combination of Community Radio and Mobile Phones

According to Gilberds and Myers (2012: 76) “promoters of ICT for development programmes argue that convergence of new digital technologies with radio will enhance the ability of ICTs to contribute to development outcomes by facilitating two-way flows of knowledge”. In recent years, emphasis has been placed on integrating ICTs such as mobile phones into community radio practice to enhance and expand opportunities for participation. It has been observed that “in many developing countries, more people own, have access to, or use mobile phones than fixed-line telephones” (Goggin and Clark, 2009: 586). This is true in the case of Malawi as discussed in Chapter 5 that 36 percent of households own a mobile phone while only less than one percent of the households has access to a landline telephone (NSO, 2011). What this signifies is that marginalized people now have an opportunity to use mobile phones to meet their information and communication needs. Therefore, this section discusses the impact of the interface between community radio and mobile phones and how it can expand opportunities for participation in the production and sharing of information (Megwa, 2007; Tacchi, 2009).

6.4.1 Evidence of the Penetration of Mobile Phones in Rural Areas in Malawi

I found that there is steady increase in ownership of mobile phones by ordinary people in the areas where this research was conducted, an indication that mobile phones have penetrated in the rural areas of Malawi. As discussed in the previous chapter, in Nkhotakota district alone, ownership of mobile phones rose from 2.1 percent in 2005 to
44.9 per cent in 2011 while in Mzimba district ownership of mobile phones rose from 0.4 per cent in 2005 to 35.5 per cent in 2011 (NSO, 2011: 124). This is a significant increase signifying the importance of mobile phones not only in the research areas but the whole country. It was also reported that “mobile phones have become so popular that after selling their farm produce farmers rush to buy them. They may buy a mobile phone even if they do not have food (interview with Head of News, Nkhotakota, 29 November, 2012). If local farmers opt to buy a mobile phone instead of food, it confirms how useful mobile phones have become as an indispensable tool of communication for people in rural areas. Mobile phones have become so highly in use in rural areas just as is the case in urban areas although the purposes for using them in rural areas are different. The longer new ICTs are used among people in urban areas the higher the likelihood that they would become cheaper and more affordable for people in rural areas. The Head of News at Nkhotakota estimated that “about 7 out of 10 farmers have mobile phones through which they send their SMSs and listen to radio programmes” (interview, 29 November 2012). I was able to confirm this during FGDs in listening clubs where more than half of the participants in almost every club indicated that they owned a mobile phone by show of hands. During some phone-in programmes which I participated in, some phone calls came from remote areas thereby confirming the penetration of mobile phones in rural areas and how they are being used. The station manager of Mzimba community radio station who is a retired primary school teacher corroborated this:

You will be interested to know that these phone calls come from typical remote areas. People have got mobile phones in the rural areas this time but to what degree I wouldn’t say…I know the district very well such that each time someone calls and mentions the village he/she is calling from, I am able to recognize that he/she is
calling from such remote place this direction of the district (interview, 13 November 2012).

Therefore, the mobile phone has penetrated the rural areas where this research was conducted, and according to Mariscal and Rivera (2007: 51) it is “becoming the favoured means of communication for less-privileged segments of the population”.

6.4.2 How Mobile Phones are Expanding Opportunities for Participation in the Media and Development

Firstly, I found that mobile phones are used both as a means of communication and as a form of media. As a means of communication, they are used for making and receiving personal calls, sending and receiving personal messages although people use them for receiving calls and messages more than making calls (see Nassanga et al., 2013). As a form of media, they are used for listening to the radio, sending and receiving SMSs to and from the radio stations. The two radio stations in this research have integrated use of mobile phones in their operations to widen ordinary people’s access and participation in programme production as well as dissemination of information. This has been facilitated through the use of the Frontline SMS system. This is “a group-messaging software which works with a laptop connected to a mobile phone or modem. This setup allows…users to send, receive and manage text message interactions with communities of people” (Frontline SMS, n.d.).

Using the Frontline SMS system, I found that farmers were able to receive agricultural tips (AgriTips), the farming calendar, and information about modern farming practices on their mobile phones. They were also being notified about the starting time of the programmes
which they were supposed to listen to, and the contents of that programme. For example, the farmers said:

they also contact us using the same SMS to advise us that this is the time to start land preparations; this is the time to apply fertilizers to your rice, and so forth. They also remind us through the same SMS where else do they broadcast these programmes and at what time (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

This information helps farmers to know which stations to listen to and when to tune in their radio to listen to a designated programme, when to do a particular farming activity and to decide whether or not to adopt a particular farming practice. Furthermore, the organization of farmers into clubs ensures that those farmers who do not have mobile phones are still able to access agricultural messages through their friends who have them, as one farmer explains:

When any member from the club receives a message, on the next meeting we discuss it. We inform each other that we have received this message reminding us that this time we should be doing such an activity. If there are messages that we need to send back to them, then we use those who have the phones to send for us (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

Farmers also send SMSs for free to request a rebroadcast of the programme, to ask questions or simply to send their comments. This was also reported in the FGDs where farmers said:

Where we did not understand on farming practices, because of the existing relationship with the radio station, they gave us their contacts through which we send questions. Also when we have not understood a particular day’s programme, we normally request them to rebroadcast it. There is that opportunity that we have and we use it. We send SMSs and sometimes we call (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

These examples illustrate how the combination of mobile phones and community radio expands opportunities for participation. The combination of the two enables transmission
of development information to the farmers in a timely manner. It is also used to promote
two-way communication between farmers/listeners and radio producers and development
partners. Furthermore, Rennie (2006: 187) argues that with new technologies such as
mobile phones “has come a greater acceptance of the fact that people can, and do, produce
media outside of professional contexts”. The integration of community radio and mobile
phones has given rise to citizen journalism in rural areas. This is “where the ordinary
community members have been empowered to participate by sending in stories, calling to
give their views, and giving comments on policies thus challenging the hegemonic control
of content production by journalists” (Gordon, 2012 cited in Nassanga et al., 2013: 259). I
found that mobile phones are being used as a recording tool by both radio reporters and
villagers. Local villagers tip reporters about news items, for example, arson or theft cases,
etc. Radio reporters investigate and verify the information before they broadcast the news
on the radio. This is where mobile phones are useful both as a media device as well as
channel for sending information. It was reported that:

Due to transport problems and in cases where a particular place is unreachable by
road, reporters make use of influential people in the village, for example, village
headmen, religious leaders, school heads, etc, to confirm the news and the news
sources, and the news is recorded on the phone (interview with Head of News,
Nkhotakota, November 2012).

This is consistent with an investigation by Nassanga et al. (2013) on the impact of ICTs on
community radio in Mozambique, Uganda, and Mali which found that “the most utilized
ICT for journalists in rural areas was the mobile phone and it was the second most utilized
for journalists in semi-urban areas” (Nassanga et al., 2013: 262). Therefore, the mobile
phone can be used by both trained journalists and the ordinary untrained rural people
through what is called citizen journalism. To add context to this issue, Mzimba community
radio station has news stringers in some strategic places within its area of coverage. These stringers collect news from these areas and send it to the station for broadcasting by calling the station. The station manager explained that:

We also want to have on-the-spot reporters and executive marketers in those regions. As of now we only have reporters in Mzuzu City and Nkhata Bay district. We have two reporters and two marketers (interview, 10 November 2012).

Therefore, mobile phones have “eased the logistics of reporting from the field since reporters are now able to phone-in their reports to their studios from far-flung places in real time” (Myers, 2008: 27). This makes use of mobile phones a reliable, fastest and cheapest way of getting news not only in the rural areas but also in urban areas as compared to using a vehicle to travel to the source of the news.

6.4.3 Benefits of the Combination of Mobile Phones and Community Radio

The combination of community radio and mobile phones has a number of benefits both to the radio station and the listeners. According to Gilberds and Myers (2012: 78) “in the context of sub-Saharan Africa, the boom in mobile telephony, […] has facilitated the rise of radio call-in programmes and the ease with which listeners can now connect directly with broadcasters to give feedback, ask questions and have a say”. This is also the case with the two community radio stations in my research which also introduced phone-in programmes. According to Crisell (1994: 189) the purpose of phone-in programme is “to verify that the station or channel has an audience and that this audience is capable of understanding and responding to the message which the station transmits”. The two community radio stations also rely on phone-in programmes and text messaging to
communicate and receive feedback. This has the effect of expanding the resources with which ordinary people can participate in the media. According to Ranganathan and Sarin (2012: 70) “active participation of all members is the key mechanism by which community radio is said to empower the community”.

According to the station manager of Mzimba community radio, the reason why phone-in programmes exist is because there are people to patronize them. “They have got the facility with which to patronize them by way of mobile phones” (interview, 13 November 2012). Therefore, phone-in programmes are not only viable but they can also be sustained. If local people did not have mobile phones, there could have been no one to patronize them or phone in since most people in rural areas do not have access to the land line as already discussed. However, some media analysts view the significance of phone-in programmes as “an attempt to accommodate the mounting pressure from excluded and underrepresented groups for greater access to scarce communications facilities” (Murdock and Golding, 1977 cited in Crisell, 1994: 192). This consolidates the view that the combination of community radio and mobile phones can expand resources with which ordinary people have a voice. This is because phone-in programmes offer listeners “for the first time some chance of challenging the power of the media men and interested parties to impose their view of events on the community at large” (Evans, 1977 cited in Crisell, 1994: 192). Here we note that attempts are made by the community radio stations to maximize participation through the combination with mobile phones. There is also “acknowledgement of audience diversity and heterogeneity, and of the political nature of media participation” (Carpentier, 2011: 69). This form of participation is at the maximalist level, according to (Carpentier,
2011), although such efforts fall short of the ability to empower citizens fully if evaluated against Arnstein’s ladder.

Finally, according to Myers (2008: 23) “adding up the number of ‘beeps’ received from different callers is also a basic way of gauging the popularity of songs, or of gathering audience responses to a poll”. Therefore, the other advantage is that radio stations are able to make news items from people’s views on a topical issue which they get through phone-in programmes. For example, the programmes manager of Mzimba community radio station explained that:

we are able to get instant feedback, for example, if we have 29 callers we analyze how many have said this or have said that. In that way we make news from there depending on what they have said (interview, November 2012).

It can be argued that this is a convenient, though not reliable, way of conducting audience research and opinion polls at a local level. Instant feedback is achieved and conclusions can be arrived at very quickly. Ordinary people can also influence policy at local level through the results of the audience research although they cannot influence the decisions. Mobile phones, therefore, can also enable ordinary people to access and exchange information and participate in public debate through use of text messaging and phone-in programmes. This has potential of making ordinary citizens become active in social life, fostering their own development and reducing a sense of estrangement from media (Held, 2006).

6.5 Chapter Summary
In conclusion, this chapter has examined the ways in which community radio stations in Malawi encourage audience participation in and through community radio to achieve development goals. The chapter has also analyzed how the integration of mobile phones with community radio can expand opportunities for participation. The findings confirm Berrigan’s (1979: 25) argument that “it would be unrealistic to expect that each and every community media project would involve access and participation to the same degree, given the various differences between situations and development projects”. Each community radio station and the community it serves is unique, as such they can devise their own ways of involving the community depending on their needs and situation. It is worth noting that the two community radio stations faced some challenges at the start which affected the implementation of meaningful participation. Tamminga (1997: 74) notes that “organizations like AMARC propose that community radio should strive to include full participation of the community in the design, implementation, evaluation and management of projects”. The reasoning behind this is that higher levels of participation result in tangible benefits for the participating individuals and communities. However, after conducting his study, Tamminga came to the conclusion that “it is unrealistic to expect community radio stations to embody all the characteristics of the grassroots model. They must be allowed to make and learn from their mistakes” (Tamminga, 1997: 90). This is also the case with the two community radio stations in this research which partially fulfill the ethos of participatory communication.

While some scholars have argued that the term ‘participation’ “has proven difficult not only to define but to practically initiate and sustain” (Eversole, 2012: 7), I feel that if
participatory projects can pay more attention to implementing participation, tangible results can be achieved. The findings and the discussion above have demonstrated that opportunities for facilitating participation are available but not much is being done in that regard. In many instances, ‘participation’ is assumed to exist when in actual sense it is not participation but what Arnstein (1969) describes as tokenism. Inagaki (2007) believes that one reason for this are the inconsistencies in the way participatory communication is practiced, and one “source of inconsistency is that what actually counts as ‘participation’ is not agreed on among the exponents of the model” (Inagaki, 2007:8). Both the people who are supposed to participate and those who are supposed to facilitate the participation of marginalized people do not understand what participation means. The other reason is that the current practice of community radio in Malawi does not adopt a fully-fledged participatory approach because of the reliance on donor funding for sustainability which is diluting participation. Therefore, measured aginst Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation, participation in community radio is minimal or reduced. However, the findings demonstrate that there are other ways in which people benefit through community radio, for example, through radio listening clubs. Therefore, participation through community radio fit well with an approach to development related to enabling capabilities. The next chapter expands on the theme of participation and discusses how radio listening clubs can help to expand people’s capabilities.
CHAPTER SEVEN: RADIO LISTENING CLUBS (RLCs) AND HOW THEY HELP TO EXPAND PEOPLE’S CAPABILITIES

7.0 Introduction

This chapter discusses Radio Listening Clubs (RLCs) and how they provide a forum for ordinary people to receive development information, discuss it, explore options for solving common problems, and where necessary, seek outside assistance. I argue that this has the potential to expand ordinary people’s capabilities. The chapter also examines the relationship between RLCs and community radio stations. In the chapter, an overview of RLCs, the motivations behind them, the activities performed in the clubs and the benefits of participating in the clubs are explained. Finally, I present case studies of RLCs that I visited to give an insight into what takes place in the club meetings.

I must point out that some RLCs I visited were started by community radio stations themselves while others were established by NGOs which sponsor some programmes on the stations. One NGO which introduced many farmers clubs countrywide and was frequently mentioned by the listeners of the two radio stations is Farmers Voice Radio (FVR). FVR and other NGOs such as Total Land Care (TLC), Sasakawa Global 2000 and others introduced innovations in the communities especially in the fields of agriculture, health, HIV/AIDS, etc. The idea was that members of these clubs would meet to listen to designated radio programmes and hold a discussion about what they had heard in an attempt to ensure that their innovations were adopted. Therefore, there are different kinds of listening clubs such as Youth Clubs, Farmers Clubs, and HIV/AIDS Clubs. However,
because of their dependence on community radio programmes which form the basis of their discussions and which also feed into some of their activities, they are all categorized under RLCs. In this research, I use the name RLCs to refer to all types of clubs that were established by both community radio stations and NGOs.

7.1 Reasons for Establishing Radio Listening Clubs

At its inception in 2003, Nkhotakota community radio station established one RLC in each of the six Traditional Authorities (TA’s or Senior Chiefs) in the district. By 2004 about thirty-two RLCs, that is, about ten clubs in each of the six TA’s, were established (interview with deputy station manager, 31 October 2012). At the time of my research the radio station was working with these thirty-two RLCs some of which were established by NGOs such as FVR, TLC and Sasakawa Global 2000 as previously stated. These RLCs are composed of the chairperson, secretary, treasurer, and members. The chairperson, treasurer and secretary are elected positions by the members. The chairperson is the leader and facilitator of the club meetings. Each club is supposed to have twenty-five members but due to large numbers of people in the villages willing to join, the total number of members exceeds twenty-five in some instances. Membership in these clubs is open to anyone willing to take part. Members of the clubs are trained by the radio practitioners (interview with deputy station manager, 31 October 2012).

The RLCs which were set up by Nkhotakota community radio station had three major aims. First, as support networks to ensure that there is a listening audience. These listeners
give feedback to the station on its programming and daily operations. This is also a way of ensuring audience feedback and it also functions as a form of audience research. Secondly, the clubs aimed to generate income for the radio station. As discussed in the previous chapter, the station sells station branded plain paper to RLCs and individuals at a profit. This paper is used for writing letters to the station. In an effort to make their clubs visible the clubs compete among themselves by buying many sheets of paper and writing many letters, and in the process make more money for the station (interview with deputy station manager, 31 October 2012). Finally, some programmes were established with the aim of imparting specific messages targeting specific groups of people in the community. For example, these could be programmes aimed at spreading messages about HIV/AIDS, safe motherhood, programmes targeting fishermen, and so on. The programmes can be sponsored programmes by NGOs or produced by the community radio station itself. Therefore, the third reason was to ensure that programmes produced to achieve specific development purposes have an impact on their target audiences. The impact expected could be change in behaviour or adoption of a new farming technique. This implies that some specific programmes have their own listening clubs whereby members use the information listened to directly in their activities. Club members discuss what they listen to in groups and share knowledge to enhance understanding. The interview excerpt below explains the aim of establishing RLCs:

The aim was to improve listenership because we realized that when they listen to the radio in groups, they are able to discuss what they listen to. Again the level of understanding is different so in groups they can share the knowledge which each person gets from the radio. The other reason is that we wanted to make sure that these programmes that have been produced for different reasons really bring an impact on the listeners. Some clubs were specifically created for specific programmes so that the people are really able to grasp what they listen to on these
programmes. We want the people to make use of what they listen to on these programmes. Some listening clubs were created mainly to enhance health in our areas; others were created to enhance agriculture activities in the district; some were created to enhance HIV and AIDS awareness while others were created to mitigate the impact of climate change. That’s the whole essence of establishing the radio listening clubs (interview with deputy station manager, 31 October 2012).

As Megwa (2007: 53) argues, “community support and participation are critical to the existence and survival of community-based organizations including community radio stations”. Therefore, establishment of RLCs as support networks can be viewed as a strategic move. It would be almost impossible to broadcast at community level where there is no community support since community radio stations are ostensibly established for them.

The opportunity given to club members to discuss programme content with the aim of enhancing collective understanding “enables literates and illiterates to leap the illiteracy barrier” (Rogers et al., 1977 cited in Manyozo, 2012: 30). Due to high illiteracy levels among listeners, some people find it hard to understand some concepts broadcast on the radio station. However, as Held (2006: 237) argues, “through sharing information and pooling knowledge, public deliberation can transform individuals’ understanding and enhance their grasp of complex problems”. This is demonstrated through the agricultural programmes in which farmers are given many agricultural tips and development information. Some of the information is too complex for the farmers to understand on their own. For example, they are advised to plant maize, which is a staple food crop in Malawi, at a spacing of 15 centimetres apart using the 1-1 maize (sasakawa) planting system to maximize production. This is contrary to the traditional practice of planting 3 maize seeds
per station at a spacing of 30 centimetres. The ridges have to be 25 centimetres apart. Within their clubs, those who are literate demonstrate to the others how to achieve the prescribed measurements using sticks. Those who are not members of any club may not know this and may end up doing things the wrong way. The participants explained that:

Individually you can hear on the radio that to grow maize using the *sasakawa* type of farming, you have to make your ridges at a spacing of 25 centimeters apart but without knowing what it really means. However, in our club we do have some members who can demonstrate using measuring instruments such as sticks. Sometimes we invite our agricultural advisors to explain to us as a group. Therefore, when we go to our farms we know exactly what to do with the measurements. On the other hand, non-club members have problems with such measurements (FGD 3, 3 November 2012)

This signifies the importance of interpersonal channels of communication in development communication (Rogers, 1976). The manner in which members of RLCs discuss issues in groups can result in shared interpretation, shared meaning and eventually collective action. This technique of incorporating interpersonal oral communication in development communication is, according to Howley (2010: 184) “useful for overcoming resistance to development messages that either ignored or were insensitive to local cultural values, forms and practices”. Therefore, RLCs can provide a forum where those who are more knowledgeable can explain and clarify issues to those who find things hard to understand. This can ensure that nothing is missed and that during implementation they can do as prescribed. In participation, it is the sharing of knowledge and ‘the transformation of the process of learning itself in the service of people’s self-development’ that is more important and empowering (Connell, 1997). By discussing the content of radio programmes, there is that mediated community engagement which brings out agency in ordinary people to realize that they are doing the right thing because everybody is doing it.

This point is illustrated by the farmers’ response that:
In our meetings, we also make sure that every member knows how to do these things on their own with the help of those members who have understood them better, for example, this practice of growing maize at 15 centimetres apart (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

This is a way of overcoming a problem arising from a lack of literacy through the sharing of information and, in the process, club members become their own and each others’ development agents. This community engagement can enable marginalized people to “have maximum influence, control and ownership over decisions, forces and agencies, which shape their lives and environments” (UK Government, 2008 cited in Manyozo, 2012: 16). Members of RLCs have the autonomy to freely discuss the information and decide how best to use that information or implement the decisions arrived at jointly or individually.

7.1.1 Farmers Voice Radio (FVR) and Radio Listening Clubs

Farmers Voice Radio (FVR) is “an impact driven radio agricultural project targeting the smallholder farmers of the Sub-Saharan region of Africa in order to increase their productivity and improve their general well-being” (Mthinda, 2012: 52). FVR made a deliberate choice to establish clubs in areas where there are community radio stations from July 2009. FVR aimed to mobilize farmers to listen to agricultural programmes and to

---

17 In Malawi, FVR is a consortium made up of the Ministry of Agriculture, Irrigation and Water Development (MoAIWD); Bunda College of Agriculture, a former constituent college of the University of Malawi; Centre for Alternatives for Victimized Women and Children (CAVWOC); Creative Centre for Community Mobilization (CRECCOM); Farm Radio Malawi; Malawi Broadcasting Corporation (MBC); and all community radio stations in Malawi with funding from the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation of the USA. The pilot phase which run from July 2009 to December 2012 was implemented by the American Institute for Research (AIR) in partnership with, in the case of Malawi, the organizations mentioned above (http://www.farmradiomw.org).
implement the lessons learnt in their gardens to improve crop production as explained below:

We were saying farmers voice radio, it was a project that said the majority part of it would be done by farmers, so we made sure that the project was in the areas where there are community radio stations (interview with FVR Projects Officer, 14 March 2013).

FVR established farmers clubs and partnered with community radio stations so that farmers can listen to specific agricultural programmes on the radio station. FVR used agricultural extension workers\(^{18}\) to help in establishing these farmers clubs, as explained below:

Our club started some two years ago. Its beginning was that after FVR had come to Nkhotakota, we got an opportunity to form a radio listening group essentially for agricultural messages. This is because the programme [Voice of the Farmer] got started following the arrival of FVR through agricultural advisors. During one of the visits of the agricultural advisor to this area, he told us that, ‘there is this programme so all you need to do is to form groups where you can listen to these programmes together and be able to get farming tips as a group. With this programme, you will be getting everything you need to know about farming’ (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

The aim of FVR was twofold, firstly to promote smallholder farmers in Malawi to maximize production on their fields by using practical experiences of fellow farmers through use of impact radio programmes. Maximization of crop production would be achieved by adopting modern farming technologies and practices, for example, \textit{sasakawa} (1-1 maize) system of planting, conservation agriculture, irrigation farming, and applying manure in the garden for those who cannot afford fertilizers. Secondly, FVR aimed to

\(^{18}\) These are intermediaries between research institutions/government and farmers who operate as facilitators and communicators, helping farmers in their decision-making and ensuring that farmers implement appropriate knowledge to obtain best results in their farming (White, 2009).
teach farmers to establish Village Saving Loans so that they might have access to cash to enable them to achieve their economic goals (interview with FVR Projects Officer, 14 March 2013). FVR considered radio as a strategic element that could catalyze increased productivity among smallholder farmers. As Mthinda (2012: 52) argues, “one of these elements is to develop a vibrant, interactive programming aimed at behaviour change among smallholder farmers by substantially increasing the quantity and quality of agricultural radio programming that involves the farmer in a participatory manner in both content development and delivery”.

FVR emphasizes the practical experience of fellow farmers as a means of educating those less experienced. This approach is based on the postulates of peer-education (Freire, 1972) where it is considered or assumed that farmers can learn better from their peers who narrate real and practical experiences of their farming activities, unlike experts who mostly give theoretical and technical knowledge (interview with FVR Projects Officer, 14 March 2013). On the national broadcaster agricultural extension workers are mostly featured to disseminate agricultural news to farmers. FVR considered the manner of transferring information from the extension workers to the farmers as being top-down and sometimes the information was full of technical jargon which lay farmers could not understand (interview with FVR Projects Officer, 14 March 2013). Furthermore, some of these experts had not put into practice some of the knowledge they had gained in the classroom to check where practice departs from theory. As Kane (2001 cited in Durden, 2010: 81) posits “in Freire’s analysis, knowledge that is deemed to be scientific, academic, or technical is seen as belonging to the dominant classes. To a certain degree, the sub classes may distrust this
information, precisely because it emanates from such a source”. To avert the situation, FVR uses the voice of the farmer to talk to fellow farmers in their own language drawing from their own farming experiences from their own gardens, as the FVR Project officer explains:

"We make sure that farmers are learning from fellow farmers because it was shown that farmers learn better from their peers. If someone would come from an institution like this [University of Malawi], they would say this person has knowledge just from the books, he is just telling us the theoretical part of farming. But if they get information from a fellow farmer who also practices the same thing that they do, who uses similar type of soil that they use in a similar environment that they are using, it’s very easy for them to learn from those people because they know that if someone who is in a similar position like myself is able to benefit, is able to have maximum yield, then I can also have [a] bumper yield (interview, 14 March 2013).

This is consistent with findings of a campaign conducted by the Canadian Association for Adult Education (CAAE) in conjunction with the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation (CBC) in which farmers were organized in groups to listen to agricultural messages for ‘co-operative action’ (Lewis and Booth, 1989). It was found that “agricultural extension methods and a reliance on experts or book knowledge often fail whereas group discussion with ‘complete and equal participation of all members’ (the campaign’s stated objectives) evidently worked” (Lewis and Booth, 1989: 169). This is the same idea which FVR is using in Malawi. It also relates to Rogers’ (1974) argument that “development messages that combined traditional modes of communication with modern electronic and print media could help overcome resistance to development projects at the local level”. The farmers themselves attested to this kind of theory when they argued that:

"Messages from officials just explain what shall be achieved from their formula whether it is beneficial or not. On the other hand fellow farmers explain by giving evidence of how they have benefited. For example, they may tell how they have benefited from sasakawa. Therefore, we indeed get motivated and work hard
because we now know that we are no longer testing the practice; it’s already been proven beneficial by others (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

This is in line with Freire’s (1983) argument that “knowledge is produced socially, and acquired through social interaction” (cited in Durden, 2010: 81). When farmers give agricultural tips to fellow farmers they help other farmers to acquire knowledge by drawing examples from their own farming to explain how they have benefited from adopting a particular farming technique. In the process, they also validate the knowledge that is produced by experts. This motivates farmers to work hard because they know that they are not simply experimenting with a new farming technique but are actually implementing a practice that has already been validated or proven beneficial by others.

7.1.2 Production of Agricultural Programmes and How Ordinary Farmers Participate

According to the FVR Projects Manager, when FVR started its activities in Malawi, they established clubs composed of three men and four women in those areas where there are community radio stations. These men and women worked with communities to encourage ordinary people to join clubs and engage in development activities. Then sub-committees known as Local Radio Agricultural Advisory Committees (LRAAC) were set up to encourage farmers to bring up issues of concern. The views collected from farmers by Radio Extension Officers (REOs) were known as Local Agricultural Radio Agendas (LARAs).

The LARAs are produced by the Local Radio Agricultural Advisory Committee (LRAAC) whose members are representatives from three established Radio Listening Clubs (RLC) in the impact area. The LRAAC acts as an advisory body that works on behalf of RLCs. Its major role is to develop the LARA in
consultation with other key community stakeholders such as the extension worker and other farmers in that area (Mthinda, 2012: 54).

The agendas collected from farmers are sent to Bunda College of Agriculture\(^{19}\) (knowledge experts) for verification and approval or amendments. Bunda College of Agriculture “supports this radio programming with technical notes in areas where there are knowledge gaps by the production teams” (Mthinda, 2012: 54). After this process, the agendas are sent to community radio stations together with an agricultural technical expert for scripting and broadcasting (interview with FVR Projects Officer, 14 March 2013). Here it is noted that farmers’ involvement in this process is about giving their farming experiences or formulating the agricultural agendas (LARAs). For example, farmers might explain how adoption of 1-1 maize planting has benefited them as opposed to the traditional practice of planting three maize seeds per planting station or hole. This could form the agenda of a radio programme in which the concerned farmer explains what he did to achieve a higher yield. If some of the information coming from the farmer is not consistent with acceptable practice, then knowledge experts in farming from Bunda College of Agriculture come in to amend the information before it is broadcast.

From the theoretical point of view, although the modernization paradigm or the dominant development model has been rejected by many critics (Melkote, 1991; Servaes, 1999; Servaes, 2009), there is evidence here to prove that it is still being applied in development projects today. Servaes (2009: 51) argues that “the assumptions on which the modernization paradigm was built, linger on and continue the policy and planning-making

\(^{19}\) Bunda College of Agriculture was formally a constituent college of the University of Malawi before it was delinked by an Act of Parliament of 2011 to become part of the new Lilongwe University of Agriculture and Natural Resources situated in the capital city, Lilongwe.
discourse of major actors in the field of communication for development, both at theoretical and applied levels”. The evidence in my research is how FVR is implementing its projects in rural areas in Malawi. FVR encourages lead farmers also known as radio farmers to adopt new farming techniques to maximize production. This is a top-down approach or expert-led development. When the lead farmers register increased yields as a result of the adoption of new farming techniques, as claimed by the farmers in the group discussions, they are used as examples to other farmers who are also being encouraged to adopt the new techniques through community radio. The participants claimed that:

We practice the modern farming technique known as sasakawa (1-1 maize planting). Before adopting this farming practice, our harvests were very little but now the harvests have tremendously improved (FGD, 12 November 2012).

Therefore, the farmer’s narration of increased yield is recorded and later broadcast on community radio stations for widespread adoption of the new farming techniques by other farmers. This reinforces the idea that the farmers are validating the knowledge that is produced by experts. The members of RLCs contribute ideas and support the development of the radio programmes instead of simply being passive recipients of information from experts. FVR bases its activities on participatory communication theory. The theory postulates that meaningful development is that which involves the intended beneficiaries of a development project in decision making (Mekkote, 1991; Freire, 1996). For example, FVR engages farmers to produce agricultural programmes based on the concept of a participatory radio campaign (PRC) developed by Farm Radio International in 2007. According to Farm Radio International (2011: 6)

PRCs are farmer-centred radio programmes. Farmers participate in selecting the focus –or topic – of the radio campaign, choose the time of broadcast, and are intimately engaged in the ongoing development of the farm radio programming
over a set number of weeks; including as central agents of the knowledge-sharing process. Lively and entertaining formats are designed to attract listeners.

This resonates with participatory content creation. Participatory content creation is defined as “content created after extensive discussions, conversations and decision-making with the target community; and where community group members take on content creation responsibilities according to their capacities and interests” (Watkins and Nair, 2008: 81). FVR achieves this in a subtle and unsuspecting manner to avoid creating feelings of discontent that the new techniques represent expert knowledge. Even the naming of one of the agricultural programmes in local language, *Liu la Mlimi* (Voice of the Farmer) was carefully done to convince farmers to feel that their voices matter in the programme on the radio station. According to Mthinda (2012: 54) “The radio programming approach as implemented by FVR is the first of its kind in this country and the experiences show that it has great potential for revolutionizing agricultural radio programming in Malawi”. It also has great potential of enhancing ordinary people’s capabilities by enabling them to access agricultural information which helps to increase agricultural productivity. In this way community radio is used both as participatory media to enhance people’s development and as a conduit of development information from NGOs and other development agents. These are some of the ways in which community radio is used as a tool for development.

These examples provide evidence of the integration of top-down and participatory approaches in communication for development by development agencies aimed at positive behaviour change. In communication terms, this is an example of the diffusion of innovations theory (Rogers, 1962) as a preferred strategy to achieve development at
community level. It can be a way of forming partnership between intended beneficiaries of
development and development agents. A new idea (modern farming techniques) is
introduced by a development agent (FVR, TLC, etc) among farmers (intended
beneficiaries). Based on the success stories of lead farmers, the new farming technique is
adopted by other members of the community (diffusion of innovation). The farmers engage
in participatory content creation when they share their success stories (bottom-up,
participatory communication) with each other through their community radio (media). The
farmers thereby contribute to the process of content creation and to the voices on the radio.
This is consistent with the principles of community radio which “allow for the
participation of non-professional producers in the production of media content” (Howley,
2010: 98). However, Carpentier (2011: 26) argues that “the positions that defend strong
forms of media participation do not necessarily focus on the elimination of the media
professional (or the journalist), but attempt to diversify and open up this societal identity so
that the processes and outcomes of media production do not remain the privileged territory
of media professional and media industries”. In the case of the development agents and the
ordinary farmers, it is noted that ordinary farmers are given opportunities to participate in
content creation for the benefit of those communities that cannot be reached by agricultural
extension workers. This is a way through which local farmers validate the development
message through their own experience. According to Quebral (2012: 19) community radio
can act as a hub through which listeners can connect with one another. For a
community project on, say, multiple cropping of which the station is a part, it can
invite participants to relate their experiences and problems on air to other members
of the project. This can start dialogue out of which solutions can be worked out
among the project members themselves, the field technicians and other interested
listeners.
To contextualize this to the two stations under analysis, FVR encourages farmers to adopt modern farming techniques and then produces agricultural programmes with some farmers using community radio producers. The programmes are aired on the community radio stations from where local farmers listen and discuss the contents of the programmes in their clubs. After listening and discussing programme content, some farmers adopt the new farming technique. FVR comes again to record the success stories of these farmers which are also shared with other farmers through the radio, and the process goes on in a cyclic manner.

Community radio stations have benefited from this partnership in a number of ways, for example, by having some programmes already produced for them. Shema (2012) reports that community radio stations have seen their agricultural programming transformed as producers and presenters have been equipped with radio programme production skills, which has helped enhance the quality of other programmes as well. Secondly, Radio Extension Officers (REOs), “who have had no formal training in broadcasting, have been equipped with skills to collect materials for programming. 98% of the materials used in FVR programmes are collected by REOs” (Shema, 2012: 43).

Finally, community radio stations have also received equipment such as laptops and recorders from FVR for production of those programmes (interview with FVR Projects Officer, 14 March 2013). This was corroborated by the deputy station manager of Nkhotakota in the interview excerpt below:
We work hand in hand with them in the production of programmes. They don’t necessarily come in with money to sponsor us but rather to help us in capacity building and technical knowhow of programme production so that their messages are successfully put across to the people; they provide laptops for programme production, recorders for recording programmes in the field and they meet the running costs for paying electricity bills (interview, 31 October 2012).

The RLCs have also benefited from the relationship. FVR and other organizations such as the United Nations International Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF) provided RLCs with solar radio sets. FVR aimed to enable farmers to listen to the agricultural programmes in the clubs it had established, while UNICEF targeted parents to encourage their school age children to listen to educational programmes aired on the radio stations. In this way both FVR and UNICEF and other NGOs directly and indirectly influence the programming and agenda of community radio stations through their activities. In other words community radio stations are being used to propagate the agendas of NGOs. FVR benefited by partnering with community radio stations to disseminate agricultural messages to farmers for free.

It can, therefore, be concluded that active participation of community members is “the key mechanism by which community radio is said to empower the community” (Ranganathan and Sarin, 2012: 70). Moreover, “it is not only about content or information but also the act of producing and sharing that content which is empowering” (Ranganathan and Sarin, 2012: 70). The success of FVR projects underscores the importance of participatory communication in facilitating development through knowledge sharing. Therefore, community radio “has easily found a niche in the creation of multidirectional participatory communication involving the local communities who are treated as citizens, rather than
consumers” (Nassanga et al., 2013: 259; Gumucio-Dagron, 2003). This supports Rennie’s (2006) argument that “participatory media projects often rely upon and generate innovative relationships between the community and relevant non-governmental organizations (NGOs), development organizations, and other institutions”. There can be, therefore, a symbiotic relationship between community radio stations, RLCs and NGOs such as FVR.

7.2 Conduct of Discussions in Radio Listening Clubs

Lewis and Booth (1989: 170) observe that in developing countries “the lack of receivers means that group listening is the norm, and an oral culture which favours debate makes the forum/discussion approach especially suited in the region”. The RLCs in Malawi were also established with this fact in mind as previously discussed. When club members meet to listen to a particular radio programme they then discuss the content of the programme and decide how the information applies to them. After that they can go ahead to use the information in their daily activities such as farming, engaging in income generating activities, dealing with the spread of HIV/AIDS, and so on. This is done on the understanding that by discussing programme content, “people may come to understand elements of their situation which they had not appreciated before” (Held, 2006: 237). Prior to the start of the programme, club members, especially those that own a mobile phone, receive a reminder from the radio station that their designated programme will be starting in 30 minutes’ time and also the topic that it will address. When it is time for a particular programme, club members gather in one place, for example, in a classroom block, under a tree or at the house of the chairperson of the club, and the radio set is placed in the middle of the group. When the programme starts all members of the club listen attentively to the
message contained in the programme. While listening, some club members take notes on what they are listening to. The notes are used as reference points during the discussion which follows after listening and also when the members of the club would like to use the information from the programme.

After listening to the programme, the chairperson plays the role described by Manyozo (2012) as ‘participant-facilitator’. In this role, the chairperson leads the discussion and motivates the members to express their opinions on the programme and what lessons they have learnt for dealing with their common problems. According to White (2009) among organized groups of farmers, the preferred method of communication is not the lecture method by a professional representative or expert. It is rather appropriate to have “a discussion among the members led by a local leader or outside catalyst with some skills in group animation in which members define their problems, exchange the information they have available, and come to some consensus on what information they think would be most useful for them at the moment” (White, 2009: 15). Below is one description of what happens when club members meet:

Whenever we meet as a club we listen to that particular day’s programme. After listening to the programme, we then discuss how we have understood it. Thereafter, we encourage each other based on the programme content, and that whatever we have heard on the radio we should be applying it in our homes to test the results. For instance, we heard about conservation farming, so in my case I have a piece of land next to my house just to experiment and see whether what they taught us about the practice is really true or not. Do they really harvest the said quantities? So after the experiment we decide whether the practice is beneficial or not. Thereafter, when we meet as a group we discuss and encourage each other whether to proceed with it or abandon it (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

This emphasizes the importance of interpersonal influence in decision-making. According to Inagaki (2007: 35) “when measured alone a mass media message may have negligible
direct impacts, but the same message can have significantly greater impacts when mediated through other channels of communication, such as interpersonal communication and group communication”. As such, RLCs provide opportunities for club members to discuss issues and through interpersonal influence, encourage one another to adopt new farming techniques to increase crop production. Rural poor people quickly jump at any opportunity that promises them a better life than the one they are currently living. It has been argued that, “while the community radio movement is worldwide, its resonance is most felt in places where the world’s most vulnerable people eke out precarious livelihoods in a bid to escape poverty” (da Costa, 2012, 138). For example, a study of RLCs in Malawi and Zambia found that “many members of the clubs viewed themselves as an entity of solidarity, bound together in their desire to extricate themselves from the effects of poverty on their communities” (Banda, 2007: 141). This is the main reason why ordinary people join RLCs. To put what happens in RLCs in perspective, below is a case study of Mpamantha Farmers Club.

### 7.2.1 Case Study 1: Mpamantha Farmers Club

I visited Mpamantha Farmers Club on 4 November 2012. The farmers were scheduled to listen to a programme known as Liu la Mlimi (Voice of the Farmer). The programme is broadcast every Thursday, at 2 pm and rebroadcast on Sunday, also at 2 pm. The time for the broadcast of the programme was chosen by the farmers themselves because that is when most of them are resting at home after coming back from their gardens. The farmers explained that:
Some time back, we told them that the time of broadcasting this programme should be reconsidered. Now we are happy that they complied with our request. We wanted them to be broadcasting this programme in the afternoon because many people are in their homes during this time, hence are likely to listen (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

Accompanied by a radio practitioner, I arrived at the venue, which was a school block, at about 1:30 pm. At this time, the people had already gathered in large numbers. Some of them were not club members but had just come to see what was going on in case there were some free gifts to be distributed. The radio practitioner who accompanied me is the producer and presenter of the programme. When we alighted from the car, there was ululation, singing and hand clapping signifying that they had welcomed us warmly. Upon settling down, introductions were made. The chairperson of the club asked one member to open the meeting with a prayer, after which he welcomed us and introduced his club members to us and briefly talked about what they do in their club. After that he handed over to the radio practitioner to introduce me and the purpose of my visit. The radio practitioner also asked on my behalf for permission to participate in their discussions. He also explained to them that they had to sign a consent form as evidence of their willingness to participate in the FGDs.

At about 1:58 pm the radio set was switched on and at exactly 2 pm the programme was on air and the presenter introduced himself and the theme of the programme. This was a 30 minute programme. When the presenter introduced himself, there was dead silence and expressions of puzzlement were written all over the villagers’ faces. The villagers could not understand how the presenter who was present among them could be presenting the programme at the same time in the studio. What they did not know is that this was a
prerecorded programme. The presenter then introduced the guest in the studio who was the District Chairperson of the Farmers Union of Malawi (FUM).

The topic of the programme was ‘Benefits that farmers can realize through joining Farmers Union of Malawi’, an umbrella body of all farmers in the country. In the programme the Farmers Union chairperson responsible for Nkhotakota district was encouraging farmers in the district who had already formed farmers clubs to join and become members of FUM. He also encouraged those farmers who had not joined or formed clubs to do so and subsequently also join the mother body. He also explained the benefits of joining FUM, the procedures that clubs can follow to join FUM and the fees that they need to pay to become members. Finally, he gave contact details in case they wanted to contact him or the FUM district office. While the programme was being aired, I observed that some farmers had notebooks in which they were writing down some points that they were getting from the radio programme. At the end, the presenter wound up the programme.
Immediately after the radio set was switched off, there was laughter and questions flooded the presenter as to how his voice was on air when he was in the village. After some explanation, they were convinced and the chairperson of the club led the discussions that usually follow after listening to the programme. First of all he asked the people gathered to each explain only one point that they had picked from listening to the programme. One by one they responded by relating what they had learnt until all points were exhausted. As this was happening the secretary of the club was recording the people’s responses. When a
person gave an irrelevant answer or described something that was not said, the others would correct him/her.

After that the chairperson asked the secretary to summarize the points and then asked the group on the way forward. After some debating and reaching no conclusion, the chairperson curtailed the discussion on the pretext that time was running out for my FGD. He told the group that the discussion would continue during their next meeting. However, I did not fail to notice the discomfort in the chairperson that he did not want me to get the impression that the discussion had hit a dead end without a resolution on what they needed to do to join FUM. My presence, therefore, did in this sense affect their discussions. It was evident that the people were willing to become members of FUM and enjoy the benefits of being members but most of them being illiterate villagers were helpless because of a number of hindrances. For instance, the procedure for becoming members was tiresome, the membership fee of K25 000.00 (about £35.00) was exorbitant and the distance from the village to the Farmers Union district head office was rather long, no wonder some of them said they were satisfied with being in a club at village level.

The chairperson then handed over the floor to the presenter who was acting like the master of ceremonies and who quickly asked me to go ahead with the FGD, which I did. At the end of the FGDs I gave out the consent forms for them to sign. During the signing of the forms, I noticed that the participants had many expectations from my visit. For instance, when signing the consent forms some people thought that they were signing for allowances. That was despite the fact that I had explained to them about what the form was
all about. This is consistent with the findings of Mchakulu’s (2007) study of ‘Youth Participation in Radio listening Clubs’ in Malawi which revealed that the major reason why people join listening clubs is ‘personal self-sufficiency’. This can either be financial or material gain. In my case study, before the formal protocols were observed again at the end, I asked the club members to comment, ask questions or to say their final remarks. One man stood up and said: “I want to ask a question directly at you our visitor. How do you think we will benefit from your visit?” This came as a surprise because the purpose of my visit had already been explained to them. The radio practitioner came to my rescue by reminding the group that I was simply doing research for academic purposes. I could not fail to notice some disappointment from the man and a few other people. This made me confirm that the reason why some people participate is for personal gain. Goodbyes were said from both parties and as we were leaving there was singing and dancing especially from the women and children as they escorted us to the car.

7.2.2 Case Study No. 2: Kashati Farmers Club

I also participated in listening to another agricultural programme at Kashati Farmers Club on 3 November 2012. The club is also a model agricultural club in the area. This time the observation and the FGD that followed took place at the demonstration garden of the club. The reason for this arrangement was to ensure I had firsthand information on the activities of the club. On this trip I was also accompanied by a radio practitioner. Upon arrival, we found the farmers working in their gardens while waiting for us. After welcoming us and exchanging greetings, introductions were made and then we were first taken around the demonstration gardens of the members of the club. Referring to a snapshot survey which
was conducted by FVR in January 2011, Shema (2012: 42) argues that “70% of the smallholder farmers who listen to FVR programmes implement what they listen to”. I was able to confirm this in their demonstration gardens. The farmers practice irrigation farming, especially for maize and sugarcane and they grow their maize using the 1-1 (sasakawa) system of planting throughout the year. This was clear evidence that farmers were indeed implementing the messages that they get through the agricultural programmes aired on their community radio station. I was surprised to see maize doing very well in the garden despite the fact that it was summer time. The farmers also grow cassava, sugarcane and groundnuts. In addition, the farmers rear animals such as pigs and goats. After going round the gardens, we sat down right there in the garden under a tree where we listened to an agricultural programme together. The name of the programme we listened to was *Phindu mu Ulimi* (Productive Agriculture) broadcast at 2 pm. The topic of the programme was ‘Specialization of crops which do well in a particular area’. The programme featured an agricultural extension worker who was advising farmers to identify types and varieties of crops that can do well in their areas depending on the type of soil available there instead of just planting crops anyhow. After listening to the programme, the farmers discussed and identified the type of soil in their area as being sandy and that it was suitable for groundnuts and cassava. They agreed that they should try these crops as main crops but in addition to other crops such as maize and sugarcane. The members of this club keep a demonstration garden where knowledge acquired from the radio programmes is immediately applied.

The arrival of FVR in this area enabled us to have demonstration farms where we experiment with the modern farming techniques such as conservation farming. In
this practice, we choose a piece of land from one of us to experiment a certain practice as a school. This piece of land is our demonstration garden, it contains our small plots. It’s a 1 hectare piece of land, but everyone has a plot on it. For instance, where you have seen a signpost bearing the name Richard Banda, it means that plot belongs to him (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

I learnt during the FGD that the chairperson of the club who is also the Village Headman was voted farmer of the year 2011 in the district by FVR for his outstanding farming skills in his demonstration garden. After observing all this and listening to the programme, I conducted an FGD with the farmers right there in the garden. At the end I asked the farmers to sign the consent forms which they did. We said goodbyes and we left them there in their gardens tending to their crops.

At this club there were no formal protocols observed like the ones we experienced at the previous club such as opening and closing prayers. Although their expectations were similar to those of the first case study, this was not explicitly shown probably because we found the people in their gardens.
Figure 5: A Demonstration Maize Garden at Kashati Farmers Club

7.2.3 Other Activities Done in the RLCs and their Impact

As Banda (2007: 132) has rightly observed, the concept of RLC is ‘misleading’ because it assumes that club members merely listen to the radio programmes. Yet there are many activities that take place apart from listening to the radio programmes as the two case studies above have demonstrated. Listening clubs are one way of engaging people in discussion and sharing of ideas. This has some properties of the public sphere although this happens in a mediated and managed context. For example, RLCs perform a number of
other activities such as drama performances carrying messages on a number of social issues; poetry recital about HIV/AIDS and other social issues; supporting orphans and HIV/AIDS patients; establishment of village banks; and offering assistance during funerals and disasters. In a way, these clubs are a kind of civil society. According to Howley (2010: 72) civil society refers to “voluntary associations, distinct from both the state and the market, that enable and encourage widespread participation in public life”. These RLCs receive support from different NGOs working in the areas. They also support themselves with income earned through their income generating activities. To ensure sustainability of the clubs, some NGOs such as FVR also introduced activities such as the village bank to help farmers generate income for themselves and for the club as a whole. Club members access the money through loans or interest on shares to meet their economic needs (interview with FVR Projects Officer, 14 March 2013).

Participation through RLCs allows members to discuss many social issues affecting them including gender issues. This is necessitated by the fact that there are multiple messages that are disseminated in one programme. Therefore, information that is educative and developmental is disseminated to members of RLCs to influence positive behaviour change. For instance, one man reported that:

We also learn about gender equality and it becomes easier to implement concepts about gender equality if we discuss it in our groups simply because we are open to each other. Now women are able to do men-dominated chores and vice versa. I can assure you our visitors that if you come to my house, as a man, I can cook for you to eat. If you are alone it becomes difficult to understand these concepts about gender equality (FGD 7, 12 November 2012).

This form of access to crucial information means that “community members have a platform for all manner of individual and collective self-expression, from news and
opinion to entertainment and education” (Howley, 2010: 16). The same issue was corroborated in another group discussion where participants reported that:

In addition to what has already been said is that for a farmer to progress, that farmer should be in good health. For this reason, we discuss in our groups issues relating to HIV and AIDS so that farmers are kept healthy and strong. We do this to encourage prevention of HIV infection so that our families are strengthened and our children are well cared for (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

Therefore, RLCs provide a platform where ordinary people can discuss a number of issues ranging from agriculture, HIV/AIDS to gender equality. The RLCs play an interventionist role by allowing members to discuss risky behaviours that could lead to contracting HIV/AIDS. In all this, the two community radio stations are at the centre of the clubs’ activities, both as a source of and as a tool for the dissemination of that information. A more detailed picture of some of the activities that take place in the RLCs and their relationship with community radio stations is given below.

7.2.4 Case Study 3: A Youth Club and Its Activities

I also visited a youth club which disseminates messages about prevention of the spread of HIV/AIDS by raising awareness among the youth its catchment area. During the group discussion, the members of the club explained that the club started in 2002 with three people who organized themselves to do something about the problems that the youth encounter in their community. At the time of the research, the club had twelve members. The members of the club further claimed that the club started as a volunteer group with no external financial assistance or attachment to any NGO. Motivated by the fact that many youth in the area find themselves in trouble due to lack of awareness about social issues,
the club decided to empower them with information through raising awareness in the community. The club constructed their own office block using local resources and they hold meetings and do drama rehearsals at this place. I was informed by the members and I personally observed that the office block also houses a library where books and other reading materials about HIV/AIDS are kept. These reading materials are donated by well-wishers. The main focus of the club is to change those lifestyles or behaviours that can result in the further spread of HIV such as indulging in alcohol, drug abuse and sexual immorality. Drug abuse especially smoking marijuana is the most common problem among the youth of the area. This is the case because the area is very well known for the cultivation of marijuana making it easily accessible to the youth (FGD 5, 5 November 2012). When some of the youth smoke marijuana, they can lose their sense of judgement and can start indulging in unprotected sex, a practice which contributes to the further spread of HIV/AIDS. Some of them drop out of school at an early stage.

Members of the club said they visit schools in the catchment area where they perform dramas, poem recitals, and song and dance. Then they hold discussions with fellow youths on the dangers of excessive alcohol drinking and smoking marijuana. They also encourage them to continue with their education and avoid sexual promiscuity which results in contracting HIV/AIDS. By involving themselves in these activities, the members of the club claimed to have contributed to reducing the number of school dropouts especially among girls. The members claimed that the problem of early marriages among girls has been reduced as more and more girls are eager now than before to continue with their education. Even those who had dropped out of school due to unplanned pregnancies were
reported to have gone back to school partially as a result of the activities of the club among other factors (FGD 5, 5 November 2012). Apart from raising awareness about HIV/AIDS among the youth, members of this club claimed that they offer home based care to terminally ill patients and taking some patients to the hospital when there is no one to do so.

The members claimed that the club generates its own income from the performances they hold by disseminating messages about HIV/AIDS in schools and communities. Community members pay money to watch these performances. The club members also do some work in people’s gardens, for example, weeding or harvesting crops for a fee. The money realized from these income generating activities is used to support the activities of the club which include assisting orphans. The effects of HIV/AIDS have seen a number of orphans being left in the hands of relatives or guardians. The members of the club said that:

We also came across the problem of orphans whereby they are ill-treated in their homes, or may be their guardians are not raising the children in the right and proper way. We therefore talk to the guardians so that they see the importance of sending these orphans to school and also raising them as their own children (FGD 5, 5 November 2012).

The club runs a school feeding programme for orphans where they prepare porridge for them to eat before they return home. At this play school they also offer lessons to the orphans free of charge. The money is also used to buy groceries and some food stuffs which are distributed to the guardians of the orphans, most of who are elderly and are not capable of providing the needed assistance to orphans.
In all this, the role of the community radio station is to promote and support the activities of the club. When Nkhotakota community radio station was established, management of the station found that the activities of the club were in tandem with some of the main aims of the radio station. For example, the club is involved in spreading HIV/AIDS awareness messages and promoting the education of the youth. On the other hand, the radio station broadcasts a programme called *Voice of the Youth* which is geared towards influencing positive behavior among the youth. There is also another radio programme called *Maziko* (Foundation) which encourages the youth to go to school and remain there until they finish their studies. They, therefore, formed a working relationship and started producing and disseminating HIV/AIDS and education messages together through these radio programmes. This enabled the messages of the club to be disseminated not only to the people in their catchment area but to the whole area where the radio station is heard. In other words the involvement of the radio station enabled wider dissemination of the activities of the club for possible bigger impact. Members of the club also learn new things through listening to these programmes, and they use the acquired information to further the activities of their club. In this way a club which started as a volunteer group aimed at promoting good behavior among the youth assumed the status of a RLC. This is one way through which community radio stations engage with RLCs, as discussed in more detail below.
7.3 Relationship between Listening Clubs and Community Radio Stations

There exist a number of relationships between community radio stations and RLCs, some of which are symbiotic in nature or dependent on each other. For example, Mpamantha Farmers Club was established by Sasakawa Global 2000\textsuperscript{20} before Nkhotakota community radio station was established. Just as was the case with the youth club described above, when the radio station management saw that what members of this farmers club were doing was in line with what the radio station was broadcasting, they approached them to form a working partnership (FGD 4, 4 November 2012). Members of the club produce documentaries on agricultural activities for the radio station to broadcast. In this way, community radio stations are used to link farmers in one club to fellow farmers in other clubs and then learn from one another. As Quebral (2012: 19) argues, “the station, in effect, serves as a facilitator of interpersonal relationships in a rural community”. To illustrate this point, after listening to a documentary on Mzimba community radio station about a farmer from one club who was cross breeding local and exotic chickens to produce hybrid chickens, the farmers of Chinombotchaya Farmers club went to learn from him about how he achieves this. They bought some chickens from him and started cross breeding their own. During my visit to the club, the farmers reported that the club is a model farmers club and it receives many visitors who come to learn about the activities of this club courtesy of Mzimba community radio station (FGD 7, 12 November 2012). The station records and broadcasts these activities and that is how many people from other

\textsuperscript{20} Sasakawa Africa Association (SAA) is an international agricultural development NGO registered in Geneva. It was co-founded in 1986 by Nobel Laureate Dr. Norman Borlaug, Japanese philanthropist Ryoichi Sasakawa, and former US President Jimmy Carter. Since then, SAA has worked with the Carter Center’s Global 2000 Program to establish Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) agricultural programs in 14 sub-Saharan countries (http://www.saa-safe.org/).
clubs get to know about them. Therefore, community radio stations sometimes create partnerships with existing community initiatives for mutual benefit. The community radio stations also create links or interconnections between different groups of people in the community which would otherwise have not been there without the stations.

In the same area of programme production, an HIV/AIDS club was established by Nkhotakota community radio station in 2005 with the aim of disseminating HIV/AIDS messages especially to people who do not have radio sets. The members of the club listen to targeted HIV/AIDS programmes on the radio station and then they pass on the message to others in a dramatized format or through song and dance. The dramas, songs and dances are also recorded and aired on the radio station for people in other areas to listen to (FGD 1, 2 November 2012). Therefore, RLCs accord members an opportunity to produce programmes for the station which is one way of making use of the airwaves. The RLCs receive logistical support and training from the community radio station to sustain the clubs; for example, they are given equipment such as recorders for recording their debates and programmes.

Therefore, the relationship between community radio stations and RLCs is based on mutual dependence especially in the areas of programme production. Radio producers target specific RLCs to record and produce programmes on specific themes. This ensures concerted efforts in information dissemination for greater impact. Community radio stations ensure that the activities of one RLC are publicized and form the basis of
discussion for members of other listening clubs. In doing this, community radio becomes a link between clubs to ensure that they are not working in isolation.

7.4 How Radio Listening Clubs Help to Expand People’s Capabilities

This section examines how participating in RLCs has the potential to expand ordinary people’s capabilities. Farmers reported that there are many opportunities emanating from participating in RLCs. Some of these opportunities are not available to people who are not members of any club. The benefits are explained below.

7.4.1 Attainment of Collective Capabilities

According to the UNDP (1994: 13) “the purpose of development is to create an environment in which all people can expand their capabilities, and opportunities can be enlarged for both present and future generations”. I found that RLCs can help to create such an environment. Within the clubs, members support each other to achieve their individual and collective goals of escaping poverty. They create support networks for themselves and also get support from the community radio stations and NGOs which work with them. They make sure that they are progressing together despite the problems that individual members may face. For example, it was reported that:

We assist each other in the groups. A person cannot stand alone. For instance, if one falls sick, the club members help that person to cultivate in his garden- a thing that cannot happen when you are not in a club (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

To illustrate this point one farmer confessed how he was specifically assisted by his club members:
Being in a club is very important. For instance, I did not buy fertilizers this year because I didn’t have money, but my fellow club members helped me with some fertilizers and now at least I have maize. If I were not in the club, I could not be able to harvest the maize that I have now because I didn’t have the fertilizers (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

The RLCs, therefore, can be an effective means of mobilizing people to participate in self-help initiatives. It has been argued that people are “not only the beneficiaries of development; they are also agents, whose vision, ingenuity and strength are vital to advancing their own and others’ well-being” (Alkire, 2010: 25). In the RLCs farmers reported that they are each other’s development agents. For example it was reported that:

In our meetings, we also make sure that every member knows how to do these things on their own with the help of those members who have understood them better, for example, this practice of growing maize at 25 centimeter apart (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

The farmers further reported that there is a difference between those who joined farmers clubs and those people who are not members of farmers clubs, one respondent said:

Most of the times when, something is beginning not all people join instantly. After they have appreciated the benefits from members who joined in the first place, then the rest join the grouping. Likewise here, they are currently inspired by what we gain from the club, hence prospects of joining us. For instance, when we experiment what we have heard on the radio it is observed that we produce more yields than anyone else. So they usually ask what our secret is. Then we tell them that although you listen to the radio on your own, it is totally different with us, because we do schedule a time to discuss them in detail (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

It can be argued, therefore, that participating in RLCs can help community members achieve collective capabilities. Collective capabilities are defined as “the newly generated functioning bundles a person obtains by virtue of his/her engagement in a collectivity that help her/him achieve the life he/she has reason to value” (Ibrahim, 2006: 398). The
collectivity here is the RLC. Ibrahim further gives two characteristics of collective capabilities. First, collective capabilities ‘are only present through a process of collective action’, and secondly, that collective capabilities are “the new choices that the individual alone would neither have nor be able to achieve unless he/she joins a collectivity, such as a self-help group” (Ibrahim, 2006: 398). In the case of RLCs, collective capabilities can be achieved through group listening to the radio, discussing the message and adopting the best practices contained in the message; for example, modern farming practices. This can help to expand people’s capabilities when they act jointly or individually to implement the decisions made. It was reported that as a result of the benefits realized by early adopters, the late adopters are also persuaded to join clubs with an aim of realizing the same benefits; for example, one farmer testified that:

I was one of the hard nuts to crack. I did not know that planting one maize seed per station is good and I could scorn those people who used to follow this method. Now when the advisor came to us together with Mr Nkhata [chairman of the club], they explained the importance of planting one maize seed per station and they asked me to make manure and plant my maize seeds as advised. I found that it worked very well then I completely changed my mindset and I have finally adopted the use of manure and planting one seed per station (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

It is common knowledge that people resist change sometimes. However, as Megwa (2007: 54) argues, “when an individual, for example, is trained to perform certain functions at a community radio station or learns from listening to community radio programmes, it is generally accepted that this knowledge and skill will be diffused to other members of the community”. Participation in RLCs can help to expand people’s capabilities through interpersonal influence to persuade those people who resist change to see the importance of adopting modern farming techniques. It has been reported that the number of farmers
practicing conservation agriculture in the central region of Malawi where Total Land Care (TLC) promoted the practice in the communities grew from the initial 12 in 2005 to over 30,000 in 2012\(^2\). Part of this increase can be attributed to RLCs which TLC introduced, which helped to influence other farmers to join.

In the excerpt above there is also evidence of the modernization paradigm at work, which gives us an idea of how people adopt new innovations or behaviours. Not all people adopted the new farming techniques at the same time. There were skeptics or late adopters of new innovations as shown by the response of the woman in the excerpt above. Kincad (2000: 730) described this situation as ‘behavioural inertia’, when “people continue to act as they always have until there is sufficient influence for them to change”. For her to adopt the new farming techniques, she had to go through some stages of diffusion of innovation as postulated by Rogers (1995) which are ‘knowledge, persuasion, decision, implementation, and confirmation’. She had knowledge about the new farming techniques (innovation) from radio agricultural programmes (media), she was persuaded by the chairperson of the club and an agricultural advisor (persuasion/interpersonal influence), which led her to adopt (decision-making) the practice of planting one maize seed per station (implementation), and after realizing increased yield (confirmation), she changed her mind set (behaviour change). According to Kincad (2000: 727), “the rate of social interaction about an innovation affects the rate at which new ways of thinking become shared within a social system. The more widely shared an innovation is, the easier it is for nonadopters to decide to adopt”. This is the principle that seems to be at work within the

---

\(^2\) This information was obtained from a blog available on the International Maize and Wheat Improvement Center website: [http://blog.cimmyt.org/?tag=total-land-care](http://blog.cimmyt.org/?tag=total-land-care).
RLCs which has led to behaviour change not only as evidenced in the mass adoption of modern farming techniques but also in other social aspects such as health, education, HIV/AIDS, etc, as shall be discussed in the next chapter.

Therefore, interpersonal influence that takes place in the RLCs is presented as a necessary factor for behaviour change or adoption of an innovation to occur, in addition to exposure to mass media. According to Lazarsfeld et al. (1968) “while making decisions, individuals are particularly influenced through interpersonal communication with opinion leaders and their peers” (cited in Sood et al., 2004: 64). Brought together, the two factors, exposure to mass media and interpersonal influence, combined with positive attitude make the ideation model. The model was developed as an alternative to the modernization theory (Kincad, 2000) after noting that although the mass media have effects, “there is little agreement on the nature and extent of those assumed effects” (McQuail, 1994: 327).

Ideation is defined as “new ways of thinking that diffuse within a culture by means of social interaction” (Kincad, 2000: 724). In this model “the likelihood of someone adopting a new behaviour is much higher when she or he has gained sufficient knowledge about it, developed a positive attitude toward it, talked to others about it and feels right about doing it” (Sood et al., 2004: 66). Knowledge is gained not only through exposure to mass media messages, but also through interaction with others, and by discussing the new idea. This is the format that RLCs seem to follow or adopt which can contribute to expanding people’s capabilities. Discussion with other members leads to developing a positive attitude which

---

22 Although, I am making reference to the mass media here, it should be noted that the community radio stations being analyzed in this station sometimes behave like standard radio stations, and that they are used to disseminate information to people in the community they serve.
eventually makes one adopt the new innovation. Therefore, ideation can be related to participatory communication. This also reinforces the view that the older modernization theories are still being used in participatory development projects.

7.4.2 Easy Access to Material Resources

It was further reported that participating in RLCs results in easy access to loans, farm inputs and other material resources. Community radio stations link RLCs to different organizations which come to assist members in various ways. The farmers, for example, reported that “we are encouraged because in our groups it is now easy to access loans” (FGD 3, 3 November 2012). Banda (2007) attributes this to the credit worthiness of RLCs to attract external loans to their ‘organizational’ structure. Banda (2007: 143) argues that “the knowledge that the clubs were organized structures, complete with rules and decision-making processes, presented an attractive forum for several development partners and policy-making elites to work with the clubs”. The RLCs in my research also act as a platform to help farmers find organizations which assist them with free seeds, fertilizers, and to find markets for their produce. Farmers reported that:

We have other organizations in this village that help us. We have NASFAM [National Smallholder Farmers’ Association of Malawi] which assists us with groundnut seeds. NASFAM assists us because we are united and we do our activities as one (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

When people are already organized in clubs, NGOs and other development agents find it easier to mobilize them for a particular development project in the community. These opportunities are not available to community members who are not in clubs.
Furthermore, when the farm inputs are not sufficient for everyone, club members share the few resources that are there to ensure that everyone benefits equally. When a member of a club fails to repay a loan, club members mobilize themselves to bail out their colleague.

Sometimes organizations come and tell us that there is a chance of getting fertilizer on loan but there is need for a subscription fee. So what we do in our clubs is to contribute money as a club to pay for this subscription fee. When we find that the fertilizer is not enough then we just share among ourselves the little that we manage to buy. The other advantage of being in groups is that it is easier for organizations to reach us in our groups than when we are not in groups (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

Therefore, RLCs can be used as collateral when accessing loans. They can be used as a form of social capital for the members. “Social capital is created through citizens’ active participation in organizations and groups but is in itself a set of features of social organizations – like trust, norms and networks” (Putman, 2002 cited in Damasio, 2011: 40). Farmers’ participation in RLCs can also help them to develop trust in one another through how their activities are coordinated and this can improve interpersonal relationships. Putman (2002) further argues that “a group whose members manifest trustworthiness and put trust in one another will be able to accomplish much more than a group that is comparable but lacks trust” (cited in Damasio, 2011: 40). The RLCs can build trust among members which in turn can expand their collective as well as individual capabilities. It was further reported that the RLCs are used as credit cooperatives in form of village banks. The farmers claimed that their socio-economic statuses have improved as a result of accessing loans from the village banks as discussed in the next section.
7.4.3 Access to Cash through Village Banks

In a study by Panos (2011) it was reported that participation in RLCs enabled ordinary people to open small scale businesses through loans obtained from micro-finance lending institutions but it was not clear how this really happened. However, the excerpt below explains that this happens through establishment of village banks. What a village bank is and how it is managed is also explained below:

A village bank is about keeping and lending money. After selling our produce, we keep our money in this village bank and we meet every Thursday for this village bank...Then we start lending the money to each other to open up small scale businesses to help us look after our families in order for us to reduce our socio-economic problems. If we make profits, we repay the money to the bank. Here we don’t have those high interest rates on the money that we borrow from the village bank. If one has a problem with paying school fees the best solution is to go to the village bank to borrow money and send a child to school and you will repay the money at low interest rate (FGD 8, 13 November 2012).

The village bank is operated at club level. In the village bank, the farmers buy shares at an agreed price depending on what the members of the club have agreed on. It was explained that “We heard from the radio that we should be keeping and borrowing money from the village bank and truly we accepted this wholeheartedly” (FGD 8, 13 November 2012). If the money invested in the bank accumulates to a substantial figure then the farmers are allowed to borrow the money to assist them to open up small scale businesses to help improve their socio-economic status. The money is paid back to the bank at the rate of one per cent which is much better than the rate charged by commercial banks. The money is supposed to be paid back in three months time from the time of borrowing. At the end of the season, farmers share the dividends and this money is used for the purchase of fertilizers and other farm inputs in preparation for the next growing season.
I thank Radio Mzimba on village banking - keeping and lending money. For example, we are going to share the money that we kept with this village bank on 22 November [2012]. In the end, we shall be able to purchase fertilizer if our names have been skipped on the list of beneficiaries of the farm input subsidy programme (FGD 8, 13 November 2012).

The dividends are shared according to the number of shares one has in the bank. The more shares one has the more he/she gets.

The secret is that the person who contributes more to the bank will get more money when sharing the money kept at the bank at the end of the season (FGD 8, 13 November 2012).

It should be pointed out that the idea of a village bank was highlighted more in Mzimba rather than Nkhotakota. The RLCs, therefore, can enable ordinary people to initiate self-help projects such as village banks where they can access loans to establish small scale businesses. This has the potential of expanding their capabilities to meet their economic goals and achieve a life of value. It can help to ease people’s financial constraints in times of need such as when sending children to school and buying farm inputs. Community radio stations can attract well-wishers and NGOs to work with local people, mobilizing them to form RLCs where their capabilities can be expanded.

7.5 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has discussed the potential that RLCs have to expand ordinary people’s capabilities through the activities that take place in the clubs. The discussion has shown that participation through RLCs can help to expand people’s capabilities to achieve more than what individuals can achieve if they acted alone. In analyzing how RLCs operate, I have demonstrated how older development theories, such as the diffusion of
innovations, are still being used in participatory communication projects. According to Connell (1997: 251) for the process of participation to be effective, “knowledge located outside needs to be transferred into the community, just as knowledge within the community needs to reach the development agents and sponsoring agencies”. This implies that there is a multiplicity of factors from both within and outside the community which can influence the adoption of new development initiatives using community radio. Community radio can thus support development by encouraging participation of people in its activities and also acting as a conduit of development information from development agents and agencies. The RLCs provide a platform where development information from development agents is discussed and simplified for the benefit of the members of the clubs. NGOs and other development agents are also more willing to assist people when they are organized in clubs. In the final analysis, it can be argued that RLCs can provide a platform for ease of access to information and other material resources. This can eventually help people who are beneficiaries of development initiatives to end up being each other’s development agents. This implies that community radio can still contribute to achieving development even though people are not fully involved in the activities of the radio. One way to achieve this is through participation in RLCs. As Lennie and Tacchi (2013) warn, there is a big challenge in achieving substantial levels of participation and inclusion in situations with high levels of oppression and disadvantage, and where there are inequalities and conflicting agendas. The community radio stations I visited are located in rural areas where resources are very limited or non-existent and different forms of inequalities such as gender and power still exist. Nonetheless, the findings show that the RLCs provide opportunities for participation in media production and in development despite limited
resources. They help to expand the capabilities of individuals and offer opportunities for active citizen participation in development projects for their own benefit and that of their communities. They also enable ordinary people to have a forum through which they can have one voice for collective action and to draw the attention of development agencies and government to their plight through community radio. All these are aspects of development which community radio stations can facilitate or support. The next chapter discusses how the two community radio stations support development and expand people’s capabilities through their programming.
CHAPTER EIGHT: HOW THE PROGRAMMING OF COMMUNITY RADIO IS INFLUENCED BY THE DEVELOPMENT AGENDA OF NGOS

8.0 Introduction

In Chapter 6, I introduced two key roles that community radio stations play, first, as conduits of development news to local people, and secondly, as a means of encouraging ordinary people to participate in development and in social life. In the chapter, I discussed the participatory strategy function of community radio which also extended to Chapter 7 in which I examined how RLCs are helping to expand ordinary people’s capabilities. I also examined how RLCs can provide a participatory forum for sharing and discussing issues affecting the local people and their community. This enhances the notion that community radio is widely considered as an important tool for participatory development (Gilberds and Myers, 2012). In this chapter, I discuss how Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations support the development projects through their programming. The issues around farm radio will be explored again in this chapter, but from the point of view of exploring the link between the community radio stations and key development themes that the stations address in their programming. This consolidates the view that community radio can play diverse roles by functioning as a participatory medium discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, and as a conduit of development information. According to Milan (2009: 600) community media “cover diverse topics, but often they embrace what can be called a ‘social mission’”. This suggests that community radio concentrates on issues that can help to improve the living standards of the poor, rural people, such as education, health,
agriculture, women’s rights, just to mention a few. In this role community radio can be said to function as a public service, as the chapter demonstrates.

According to Nkhotakota community radio station policy document (n.d.), the major programmes broadcast on the station include agricultural programmes, community health programmes, programmes which encourage people’s participation in development activities, and educational programmes. Most of these programmes are sponsored by NGOs and other development agents. This reinforces the view that the programming of community radio is influenced by the development agenda of outside bodies. A review of Nkhotakota community radio station’s programme schedule indicates the following proportion of the programming:

![Programme Genres at Nkhotakota Community Radio station](image)

*Figure 6: Programming of Nkhotakota Community Radio Station*
The draft programme schedule of Mzimba community radio station shows the following proportion of programmes:

![Programme Genres of Mzimba Community Radio Station](image)

**Figure 7: Programming of Mzimba Community Radio Station**

At the time of this research Mzimba community radio station did not have a fixed programme schedule because the radio station was still in the process of developing one. In addition, not all the programmes on the schedule were being broadcast because of lack of resources, both human and material. I must also point out that when community radio stations are not broadcasting development programmes sponsored by development agents, they concentrate on entertainment programmes (in form of music and greetings) and news programmes. These are programmes which are easy and less costly to produce. That explains the higher scoring in these programmes on the programming schedules as shown in the graphs. Therefore, this chapter examines how the thematic programming of
community radio supports development in the research areas. The chapter explores activities within the everyday lived experiences of the listeners to determine how their lives and communities have been changed as a result of listening to programmes that address developmental challenges in the community and in implementing what they learn from them.

8.1 Agricultural Programmes

Since the majority of the people in Nkhotakota and Mzimba districts live in rural areas where they are engaged in subsistence farming, agricultural news is of prime importance to them. The major food crops grown in Nkhotakota include maize, cassava and rice, while tobacco and cotton are the major cash crops (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 36). Farmers also keep pigs, cattle, chickens and goats. On the other hand, the major food crops grown in Mzimba district are maize, groundnuts, beans, and cassava while tobacco is the major cash crop (Mzimba Socio-economic Profile, 2008: xix). The farmers there also keep cattle, goats, pigs and poultry. According to Tanganyika et al. (2011: 496) in Mzimba “livestock production is practiced by about 60% of the households”.

To this effect, Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations broadcast what they term as ‘real impact agricultural programmes’ to persuade farmers to adopt modern farming practices in order to improve crop production. According to one station manager, the phrase ‘real impact’ is used to mean that once farmers adopt the new farming practices as advised in the programmes, they are assured of increased crop production (interview, 31
October 2012). The agricultural programmes aired on both stations are *Phindu mu Ulimi* (Productive Agriculture) and *Liu la Mlimi* (Voice of the Farmer). As we saw in Chapter 7, these programmes were introduced and produced by Farmers Voice Radio (FVR). In a study by Manyozo (2012: 241) “radio programmes created by communities attract high listenership”. The programmes feature lead farmers, also known as radio farmers, from different areas explaining how adoption of modern methods of farming has led to increased crop production. Through these approaches, community radio stations are being used as farm radio by NGOs. Farm radio is defined as “the whole system and structure within broadcasting institutions through which agricultural radio programmes are produced and disseminated to the general public, largely as part of agriculture extension strategies” (Manyozo, 2007: 121). As examples of Farm Radio, Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations are promoting adoption of various modern methods of farming discussed below.

8.1.1 Modern Methods of Farming Promoted by NGOs

The research establishes that there are four modern farming practices that smallholder rural farmers are encouraged to adopt in order to maximize production. In Chapter 7, I mentioned 1-1 maize planting, a practice commonly known as *sasakawa* and *mtayakhasu* (conservation agriculture) type of farming. Others include irrigation farming and the making and applying of manure in the garden for those people who cannot afford to buy fertilizers. Firstly, *sasakawa* is a type of farming where farmers dig holes and plant one

---

23 Sasakawa Global 2000 (SG 2000) programs have improved profitability of smallholder farmers by encouraging the adoption of higher-yielding varieties and enhanced production practices such as sasakawa type of farming (http://www.saa-safe.org/).
maize seed per hole or station of 15 centimetres apart as opposed to the traditional practice of planting 3 maize seeds per station of 25 centimetres apart. The participants explained how this system was introduced to them:

Our club started in the year 2001. An organization known as Sasakawa Global 2000 was the one which initiated the formation of this club. The aim was to teach us to start planting one maize seed per planting station. At first we didn’t know what to do; then as a group we went to the chief to ask for a piece of land that could be used as a demonstration garden for experimenting with the Sasakawa system (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

Secondly, in mtayakhasu (conservation agriculture) type of farming, farmers do not construct ridges every year but simply spread maize stalks in the garden soon after harvesting so that by the next planting season the stalks have decomposed to form manure. The manure helps to increase soil fertility and conserve moisture while the stalks inhibit the growth of weeds. In conservation farming, farmers also spray herbicides to kill weeds; hence there is minimum tillage and a reduction in labour. Thirdly, farmers are taught and encouraged to make organic manure since most of them are poor farmers who cannot afford to buy fertilisers to apply in their gardens.

Actually we learn and discuss what other clubs do to promote the making and using of manure. Then we adopt the new methods that our sister clubs do to make manure. We realize that if we don’t want to lag behind and to do well, then we have to implement what our friends are doing to make manure. That’s why this year, almost each one of us has compost manure (FGD 8, 13 November 2012).

Therefore, farmers are equipped with farming tips to ensure that crop production is maximized at all levels. Finally, farmers have been encouraged to embrace the idea of the

24 Conservation Agriculture (CA) is defined as a concept for resource-saving agricultural crop production that strives to achieve acceptable profits, high and sustained production levels while concurrently conserving the environment. Interventions such as mechanical soil tillage are reduced to an absolute minimum, and the use of external inputs such as agrochemicals […] are applied at an optimum level and in a way and quantity that does not interfere with or disrupt the biological processes (Friedrich and Kienzle, 2007: 3).
green belt\textsuperscript{25} initiative by practising irrigation farming instead of relying on rain fed agriculture. Using irrigation farming, farmers can plant and harvest twice a year thereby ensuring food sufficiency and security, as one farmer explains:

Initially we were just keeping those wetlands unused. Now after listening to the radio, we know that wetlands are good areas for farming. We can now grow crops in the wetlands twice a year and get much profit (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

The farmers claimed that this has resulted in hunger reduction because they can sell part of their produce and still retain food for their families, as one farmer explains: “The radio has changed our lives because hunger has been reduced due to this green belt farming which is promoted on this radio” (FGD 4, 4 November, 2012). The green belt farming practice is another government initiative to ensure food security in the country.

8.1.2 Positive Changes as a Result of the Agricultural Programmes

Firstly, ordinary people in the research areas claimed that they have been sensitized to the modern farming practices. They have also been equipped with practical knowledge and skills in farming which they did not have previously. For example, it was reported that:

The most important benefit is that now we are getting lessons and pieces of advice frequently. This is quite different from the past because in this whole area we just have one agricultural advisor who lives far away from here. Therefore, to always get him whenever we needed his assistance was difficult, but now everything we need is at our finger tips. Nkhotakota radio gives us such information all the time (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

\textsuperscript{25} The programme seeks to make Malawi independent of rain-fed agriculture. The plan is to protect gains in food security, reduce vulnerability to drought and to boost production further by irrigating a million hectares of land in a swathe lying within 20 kilometres of the country’s three lakes and 13 perennial rivers (Mpkwa, C. 2010: http://www.ipsnews.net/2010/01/malawi-green-belt-initiative-taking-shape/).
The radio stations are, therefore, playing an informative and educative role, offering solutions to the problems that farmers have been facing for a long time.

Secondly, community radio stations are complementing the role of agricultural extension workers because there are few agricultural extension workers in Malawi. For instance, the current agricultural extension worker to farmer ratio in Nkhotakota district is estimated at 1: 2122, exceeding the recommended ratio of 1 extension worker for every 750 farmers (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 34). According to Manda (2012: 11) “If experts were engaged to travel across Malawi to directly assist farmers, the national budget for agriculture would collapse and the return on that huge investment would be dismal. This is where radio comes in”. It was reported that:

Usually before we seek the advice of an agricultural advisor, we already have listened to the advice on the radio. Therefore, we don’t bother him with requests for assistance because the radio plays his role instead (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

Community radio stations use these farmers to provide agricultural extension services to other farmers (farmer to farmer extension) by allowing them to share their farming experiences on the radio and become each other’s agricultural advisors. To illustrate this point further, in one FGD, there was an agricultural extension worker who said:

As an agricultural extension worker, I should thank the operations of Mzimba community radio station. In Malawi, there are few agricultural extension workers. It is difficult to advise farmers in the short period of time since farmers are scattered. With the coming of the radio station, it is now easier to reach out to farmers at once because messages are disseminated through the radio and farmers from different places access the messages at the same time. In this way, even the government is being helped because advisory messages about agriculture are spread faster to the people (FGD 8, 13 November 2012).
This is how “radio complements agricultural extension services by sending out information on production practices that benefit farmers and Malawi’s economy” (Manda, 2012: 10) Therefore, the government whose responsibility it is to train and send agricultural extension workers to rural communities also benefits from the activities of the NGOs and the community radio stations.

Thirdly, this research finds that adoption of each of the modern farming practices and technologies has a multiplier effect on yield in the sense that it increases the amount of yield per hectare. The farmers who adopted the modern farming techniques claimed to have produced more yield as a result of listening to and implementing the advice disseminated through the community radio programmes as reported in most FGDs:

In the past I used to harvest only two bags of maize, but these days I harvest more than fifteen bags on the same piece of land. Through this radio, I have learnt better methods of farming (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

Even application of compost of manure has the same resultant effect as claimed by the participants:

We have learnt that in case fertilizer becomes very expensive, we should learn to make and use manure and indeed I dug ten pits which I used to make compost manure. I applied the manure in my garden and I managed to harvest enough without the use of fertilizer (FGD 8, 13 November 2012).

It can, therefore, be argued that both Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations generally support government policies of poverty alleviation and food security at household level through their agricultural programmes. This is contrary to the findings of Chirwa’s (2005) study on community broadcasting in Malawi aimed at providing the then
country-level state of play for community radio and an assessment of its strategic priorities for future development. Chirwa’s (2005) study found no linkage of the community radio stations with public policies that have a direct bearing on local people. This means that positive changes have taken place over the years since community radio stations have operated in Malawi. This is one way through which community radio stations are supporting development in the areas they are located. It was claimed that these agricultural programmes have changed the way people used to practice farming, something which has seen their livelihoods improving, as explained below:

If I am to compare with previous years, then we have indeed improved because when we talk of development in the village then it depends on agriculture. Messages from the radio have improved the living standards of most of us. Further to these, lessons about farming practices are no longer scarce (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

For an ordinary person in the village development means food availability and sufficiency. As long as food is available at household and community level, then that is an indicator of development. Examining these findings in relation to theories of development, the interview excerpt above reinforces the notion that development is a human issue and not exclusively an economic one (Sen, 1999; UNDP, 1994). To return to the understanding of ‘development as freedom’ which this thesis adopts, the argument that “the key idea of the capability approach is that social arrangements should aim to expand people’s capabilities – their freedom to promote or achieve what they value doing and being” (Alkire and Deneulin, 2009: 31) makes more sense. Here it is noted that the community radio is helping to expand people’s capabilities (Sen, 1999) by disseminating information which ordinary people can use to overcome hunger. This can help people to achieve a life they value. Farmers are more likely to adopt and implement agricultural messages which help
them to meet basic needs such as food and escape a life of poverty. As Sen (1999: 208) argues, “it is important to see the production of food as a result of human agency, and to understand the incentives that operate on people’s decisions and actions”. In adopting modern methods of farming, ordinary people are moved by the incentive of increased yield that is associated with those techniques. Increased yield leads to freedom as a result of food sufficiency. Food sufficiency leads to the attainment of yet other freedoms such as social and economic freedom which ensue when farmers sell the surplus food to earn money. As Sen (1999: 87) further argues, “poverty must be seen as the deprivation of basic capabilities rather than merely as lowness of incomes”. Similarly, the UNDP (1994: 13) argues that “the purpose of development is to create an environment in which all people can expand their capabilities, and opportunities can be enlarged for both present and future generations”. This is one way through which community radio as part of communication for development can be used to address the challenges that people in rural communities face. According to Inagaki (2007: 24), “the hallmark of development communication is the explicit and implicit desire to change the way people behave”. Here we note that community radio is playing that role - changing the way ordinary people used to practice farming thereby enlarging their opportunities for improved agency. This is one way in which community radio in Malawi is facilitating and supporting development.

8.2 Community Health Programming
Both Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations are also used by some NGOs and local government departments to sensitize communities to various health related issues, such as HIV/AIDS, malaria, and safe motherhood. The aim is to increase awareness, to
provide people with information about health issues, and to reduce health risks by influencing people’s behaviour. Here it is important to note that community radio stations are used as a communication strategy of a larger campaign on behaviour change conducted by local NGOs and some government departments such as the District Health Office (DHO) under the Ministry of Health. Below I discuss how various community health radio programmes are contributing to raising awareness, providing people with information about health issues and to reducing health risks by influencing people’s behaviour.

8.2.1 Programmes about HIV/AIDS Awareness and Behaviour Change

According to the Malawi National AIDS Commission (NAC), at national level, Nkhotakota district appears as one of the high risk districts in terms of HIV prevalence which is estimated at 12% (NAC, 2005 cited in Republic of Malawi, 2010: 74). The Nkhotakota community radio station Policy Document (n.d.) states that “the station realizes the negative impact brought by the HIV/AIDS epidemic in various social economic developments in the community and it is for this reason that the station advocates raising awareness through production of various HIV/AIDS programmes”. Raising awareness can help clear misunderstandings or myths regarding HIV/AIDS. This is consistent with Parker et al’s. (2007) argument that better understanding about HIV and AIDS are generated at a local level where dialogue about the epidemic leads to generation of solutions at this level, involving community-generated media. Therefore, sharing of information can help ordinary people to become knowledgeable about HIV/AIDS issues as discussed below.
There is a programme on Nkhotakota community radio station called *Pa Dooko* (On the Dock) which targets fishermen and fish vendors along the lakeshore to be faithful to their partners to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS. It is reported that multiple concurrent sexual partnerships are commonplace in various fishing docks in this lakeshore district involving both men and women (interview with station manager, 31 October 2012). As previously argued, the fishing industry along this lakeshore district is dominated by men, meaning that men are in control of the cash flow. Therefore, “in quest for resources, women exchange their bodies with fish, cash and other products from the lake hence the popular phrase of ‘sex for fish, fish for sex’ (WILSA, 2004 cited in Republic of Malawi, 2010: 75). This is the practice which is fueling the spread of HIV/AIDS in the district. As Tufte (2005) argues, it is not lack of information but social inequality that is contributing to the spread of HIV/AIDS. Therefore, *Pa Dooko* programme targets those people engaged in this practice to refrain from indulging in it. I found that members of some RLCs listen to HIV/AIDS programmes, discuss the programme content and educate one another on how to prevent further spread of the disease and how to avoid contracting it as the participants said: “*Pa Dooko* encourages women to refrain from risky behaviours and we also advise our husbands about HIV and AIDS (FGD 2, 3 November 2012).

During the FGD I conducted with members of one RLC, the issue of ‘sex for fish’ or ‘fish for sex’ was highlighted as a major problem in the area as well as how *Pa Dooko* programme is helping with this. One person in particular said:
We have learnt a lot in that programme pertaining to what we do in our houses as well as about extramarital affairs. We never went to school but we have found one in that programme (FGD 2, 3 November 2012).

Therefore, community radio can be used to educate illiterate people by equipping them with life skills and relevant lessons about how to reduce health risks by influencing people’s behaviour. This too is an aspect of development because “development aims to educate and stimulate people to be active in self and communal improvements” (Servaes, 1999: 93). This has the potential to reduce the further spread of HIV. The participants claimed that multiple concurrent partnerships have been reduced because of this programme, as another participant further explained:

We have changed through some radio programmes such as Pa Dooko. We didn’t have peace of mind in our houses but since we started listening to this radio station we have peace of mind. Even our husbands have changed their habit of having girlfriends because we are now doing whatever they say. This club is helping to lessen the spread of HIV/AIDS (FGD 2, 3 November 2012).

In this excerpt, the women claim that previously they had no peace of mind because they were always disturbed with fears that their husbands would infect them with HIV due to their promiscuous behaviour. The fear is no longer there because the programme and the discussions which take place in the RLCs give these people hope as they see themselves stopping their promiscuous behaviour. According to Servaes (1999: 93) “development is meant to liberate and emancipate people and, in doing so enable them to meet their basic needs”. Community radio, therefore, has the potential to liberate and emancipate people through educative programmes. The discussions which follow in the RLCs can help to increase uptake of knowledge resulting in adoption of positive behaviour.
Another radio programme called *Timasukilane* (Let Us be Open with One Another) discusses marriage issues. The programme equips married couples with interpersonal communication skills to help them tackle misunderstandings in the family which arise due to poor communication among them. It was claimed that less men are leaving their matrimonial homes and this is helping to save marriages from breaking up and to reduce the spread of HIV/AIDS as reported below:

We have also benefited from the radio through programmes such as *Timasukilane*. In the past, our marriages ended unexpectedly. Men were leaving their wives and went to town; there were a lot of broken families. But with *Timasukilane*, the families have reconciled and men are no longer leaving their matrimonial homes. Since this programme has helped build our marriages, we make it a point not to miss it (FGD 1, 2 November 2012).

To further exemplify this point, one woman said, “I had misunderstandings with my husband because he kept on insisting that we should go for HIV testing. After listening to radio programmes on HIV/AIDS, both of us went for testing and we are now happy because we know our status” (FGD 1, 2 November 2012).

It is worth mentioning here that community radio is being co-opted or enrolled as communication for development. The positive changes in behaviour which the participants attribute to community radio and the discussions in the RLCs are a result of other factors as well which are contributing to these changes. For example, some NGOs working in the research areas use community radio as their communication strategy to disseminate information about their activities. Use of community radio is, therefore, a complementary activity within a major public health or behaviour change campaign taking place in the community involving the local people. To explore this point, I interviewed the Director of
Nkhotakota AIDS Support Organization (NASO), one of the NGOs working locally, who said:

We are Nkhotakota AIDS Support Organization. It is a local NGO which was established to respond to the issues of HIV/AIDS and the impact that it is bringing on the people, both the infected and the affected. To address these issues effectively, we have four core areas whereby we have programmes under prevention. We are working with the most at risk population like vendors, sex workers, truck drivers, plantation workers and even fishermen on issues of prevention and behavior change interventions. We are also working with the youth in different areas so that they should avoid getting infected or, if they are already infected, they should not further re-infect themselves or infect others...The other component is on HIV testing and counseling (HTC) where we have two static sites and we also do mobile services like the door to door HTC and other outreach services in relation to HTC (interview, 7 November 2012).

When asked to explain the strategies that they use to ensure that their messages reach out to the intended audience, she said:

We have different strategies that we use to reach out to the community. The first strategy is that we utilize the people in the community themselves whereby they identify the potential people that we can work with either to be peer educators, or motivators or service providers, community workers in various programmes such as CHBC [Community Health Behaviour change], Youth, Prevention of positives... And another strategy is to use the community radio to disseminate different messages in the area where we are implementing the activities (interview, 7 November 2012).

This is how community radio stations are being used to disseminate messages intended to achieve specific development goals of NGOs such as reduction in the spread of HIV/AIDS. This is part of communication for development. Community radio is also used alongside interpersonal communication to achieve a bigger impact. According to Inagaki (2007: 37) “in participatory projects, interpersonal communication (including horizontal group communication) has a generative function, in addition to being a vehicle for transferring information and knowledge”. In the examples given above, the interaction between messages disseminated on the community radio and the discussions in the RLCs...
plus what Inagaki (2007) describes as spousal communication all play a role in reducing HIV/AIDS prevalence and promoting family ties. The same can be said of other interventions discussed before and below.

8.2.2 Programmes Promoting Safe Motherhood

Although maternal mortality remains high in Malawi, the United Nations International Children’s Education Fund (UNICEF) (2012) observes that “there has been a decrease in maternal deaths, from 807 per 100,000 live births in 2006 to 675 per 100,000 live births in 2010”. Nkhotakota district alone had 32 cases of maternal deaths in 2009, representing 521 per 100,000 live births (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 55). The World Health Organization (WHO) defines maternal death as “the death of a woman while pregnant or within 42 days of termination of pregnancy, irrespective of the duration and the site of the pregnancy, from any cause related to or aggravated by the pregnancy or its management, but not from accidental or incidental causes” (Bowie & Geubbels, 2013: 2). The two community radio stations in this research are used to disseminate information educating listeners on how they can prevent maternal deaths. In a FGD, it was reported that:

“We have learnt on this radio that as women, we are supposed to go to the hospital whenever we are pregnant for maternity checkups in the company of our husbands. We are further encouraged to deliver at either health centres or hospital. In the past many women could take a risk and could deliver right in their respective homes. So the radio station has done much good to improve women’s welfare, hence nothing bad can be said about this radio station (FGD 7, 12 November 2012).

Here community radio is being used as a communication strategy in a public health campaign by the government and some NGOs such as World Alive Community Relief and Development (WACRAD) (interview with station manager, 13 November 2012) to
disseminate information about maternal deaths. For example, the Ministry of Health’s priority policy plan on safe motherhood is to ensure that “all pregnant women should have their deliveries done at the health centre other than home or at traditional birth attendants (TBAs)” (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 55). To that effect, the Ministry of Health through Mzimba District Health Office introduced a campaign called ‘Male Championship Involvement and Sexual Reproductive Health’ in the district (Masauli, 2013). A government newspaper, Malawi News Agency (MANA) reported that “apart from encouraging men to accompany their wives for antenatal services, the programme has also helped to reduce maternal deaths because the couple learns several skills on how they can care for the unborn child and to prevent other complications during birth” (Masauli, 2013). Mzimba district is said to have registered zero percent of maternal deaths since the introduction of the Male Championship Involvement campaign in October 2012 (Masauli, 2013). The radio station was used in this campaign as a communication tool to disseminate such messages. This further confirms that positive changes registered in the study areas might be outcomes of a multiplicity of factors, including larger campaigns which use community radio stations as a tool of information dissemination. In addition, it is another example of programming that is not produced by members of the local community.

From the development point of view, there are some theoretical underpinnings deriving from the field of communication for development in the way NGOs or governments produce programmes to help contribute to influencing change of behaviour. Communication for development is defined as “a strategic tool to persuade people to change and enhance development processes” (Tufté and Mefalopulos, 2009: 1).
Community radio stations can be used to disseminate information to specific target audiences about the importance of adopting a particular health practice. One can, therefore, argue that this kind of communication resembles the diffusion of innovations paradigm. In this paradigm, although the messages are pre-encoded by NGOs or government and then transmitted in a top-down manner to the target audience, interpersonal communication is considered essential for the message to have an impact. According to Inagaki (2007: 37) “in the diffusion theory framework, the expected function of interpersonal communication is primarily to amplify and relay the messages to peers, spouses and clients”. A similar situation is evident here whereby ordinary people are exposed to public health messages through community radio programmes, and the RLCs provide opportunities for interpersonal communication to amplify and relay the message to peers and spouses. In the diffusion of innovation model radio was considered a cost-effective way to “rapidly reach large audiences with informative and persuasive messages about the details of development” (Rogers, 1976: 134). However, in this engagement community radio might also be sensitizing people and raising their awareness to the fact that there is a problem and that a solution to that problem exists. According to Freire (1985: 89) “conscientization is first of all the effort to enlighten men about the obstacles preventing them from a clear perception of reality”. Community radio is, therefore, being used as an agent of consciousness-raising.

In communication for development, Quebral (2012: 14) argues, communication media can “circulate knowledge that will inform people of significant events, opportunities, dangers
and changes in the community…; teach those ideas skills and values that people need to achieve a better life”. To illustrate this point, the participants claimed that:

This radio has helped a lot to promote good health of women. For instance, we are encouraged to go to health centres whenever we feel ill to get tested and examined before we get treated. Most women have problems with maternal health so we now know what to do when we have these maternal health problems (FGD 7, 12 November 2012).

Similarly, Berrigan (1979: 10) argues that in communication for development, “the mass media have been used to support development initiatives by beaming messages or directives encouraging people to support development projects”. The same approach is what NGOs and government are applying to inform and educate people about the need to adopt a particular family planning method. For example, one woman explained that:

What I like most is that we are taught on how best we can keep our families, how many children we should be bearing and how best we can take care of them considering the scarcity of food amongst us (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

Such information contributes to a reduction in maternal deaths, improved family health, more care and love given to children, and enough food for the family. Such messages were not readily available to the mothers but the radio stations have made it possible. This has the potential to enable people to live a life of value because of the ability to have smaller families which they can manage to look after.
8.2.3 Reduction in Malaria cases

In the area of Malaria control, Nkhotakota District Hospital in conjunction with Research Triangle Institute (RTI)\textsuperscript{26} went on a campaign to fight malaria by spraying insecticides to kill mosquitoes in homes in the district in 2007 and 2008. As its outreach strategy, the campaign employed Village Health Volunteers (VHV) to alert people about indoor residual spraying on a door-to-door campaign; IEC [Information, Education, and Communication] mobilizers to distribute pamphlets and inform residents about Indoor Residential Spraying (IRS) (RTI International, 2008: 4). In addition, Nkhotakota community radio station was used to support the campaign as it was stated that, “A radio campaign educating the public about IRS operations and announcing dates [supported] the community based IEC” (RTI International, 2008: 5). According to the deputy station manager:

> Out of all the means they used, they discovered that the community radio station was the most effective means of disseminating the information compared to other means…In their survey, they also discovered that the death rate of the people due to malaria has been greatly reduced in the district. So if our messages have helped in the reduction of the death rate of malaria cases then we say that the radio has helped in this aspect (interview, 31 October 2012).

The Post IRS Community Beneficiary Review conducted by Chemonics International in conjunction with Nkhotakota District Health Office (DHO) confirms the information provided above by the deputy station manager. The report states that:

\textsuperscript{26} The United States Agency for International Development (USAID) under the President’s Malaria Initiative (PMI) awarded RTI International (RTI) a contract to work with the Malawi Ministry of Health (MOH) and its National Malaria Control Program (NMCP) to implement indoor residual spraying (IRS) in Malawi. Between November 2007 and January 2008, RTI and the District Health Medical Team sprayed 27,125 (preliminary count) households in Nkhotakota District (RTI International, 2008).
When asked from where they heard about IRS, the majority of the FGD participants (95.8%) out of 300 mentioned Nkhotakota community radio, 83.3% said they heard from the mobilizers, 70.8% from the health facility and 66.7% from traditional leaders. Others heard from various community gatherings/social fora (Chemonics International, 2012: 12).

The report notes that “most members had heard about the IRS campaign from more than one source hence some were even mentioning up to 3 sources” (Chemonics International, 2012: 12). On reduction of malaria cases, the report states that “the communities interviewed reported fewer incidences of malaria cases since their houses were sprayed compared to the same period last year” (Chemonics International, 2012: 3).

In a nutshell, the examples provided above portray community radio as playing an important role in disseminating public health communication messages. As a result of its high listenership figure NGOs and local government departments are incorporating Nkhotakota community radio station in their communication strategies to assist them to achieve their campaign outcomes. For example, it is indicated that:

Nkhotakota community radio station is an important organization within Nkhotakota. It cooperates with almost every sector and NGO within the district on delivering messages and information to the people… The radio station has proved that it is the major communication media in the district (Republic of Malawi, 2009: 31-32).

From the discussion above, one cannot fail to notice a fusion of diffusion of innovations (top-down) and participatory communication. This is consistent with Inagaki’s (2007) findings. Inagaki (2007) analyzed articles of empirical research studies published five years prior to his study. He chose articles dealing with communication aspects within the context of specific development issues in non-OECD (Organization for Economic Co-operation for Development) countries and those articles providing substantive evidence
linking a communication initiative to measurable impacts on a particular development issue. His findings showed that the current theoretical state in the applied communication for development is characterized by the ‘co-presence of multiple frameworks’. Specifically, his findings indicated that there is a “convergence of the participatory approach with other theoretical models” (Inagaki, 2007: 13). In participatory communication theory, Carpentier (2011) argues, the introduction of the notion of participation was ‘a strategy to counter the reduced agency’ of the lower echelons of society and to increase their empowerment. Carpentier (2011: 48) further argues that

these articulations of participation are very much influenced by the interventionist nature of development theory and practice, which leads to the presence of a multi-layered concept of participation that, on one hand is seen as a means (a tool for better project outcomes), and on the other as the ends (as enhancing societal equity, empowerment and social justice).

In these examples, NGOs and government disseminate public health and agricultural messages using community radio as a means to achieve the intended outcomes of their campaigns. This is an aspect of the diffusion of innovation approach. However, according to Rogers (1974 cited in Howley, 2010: 182) development projects needed to recognize the value of traditional media such as interpersonal communication, which when combined with modern electronic media could help overcome resistance to development projects at the local level. This is achieved, as seen in this research in some cases, when ordinary people discuss radio programme content in their RLCs to enhance understanding of the messages and influence one another at interpersonal level. One of the goals of participatory communication is encouraging communities “to act in concert and to do so in a deliberate, conscious, and self-perpetuating fashion that builds and maintains social relations over
time” (Howley, 2010: 184). Therefore, in RLCs ordinary people ‘amplify and relay’ the message to their peers and act in concert.

8.3 Programmes about Community Development Projects

The two community radio stations under analysis broadcast programmes which sensitize and mobilize people to participate in community development projects. Some of these development projects are initiated in the community by the local district council. Examples of programmes dealing with community development projects include Titukule Boma Lathu (Let’s Develop our District) and Zachilengedwe, Tsogolo Lathu (The Environment, Our Future). The programme, Titukule Boma Lanthu, encourages people to express their views on development projects taking place in their community. It was explained that:

> When there is a bridge construction project, we ask the views of the people from the grass roots about the development project before meeting the duty bearers who are the ones who sponsor the development projects in our district such as officials from the District Council. The main aim of this programme is to enhance the development initiatives by the government and let the grass root people realize that they have a role to play in developing this district (interview with deputy station manager, 31 October 2012).

Allowing ordinary people to participate in development activities including decision-making about issues taking place in their areas in this manner may be considered as a form of empowerment. Unlike in the past when “local people thought that development was the responsibility of the government” (interview with Head of News, 29 October 2012), these days ordinary people are able to demand development activities for their areas. As Quebral (2012: 12) argues, “there is less reliance nowadays on central government as the orchestrator of development. Instead the focus is on the capacity of communities and individuals to set their goals and work towards them in a manner that does not damage the
environment or destroy natural resources”. The participants confirmed that radio producers visit the communities to ask people’s views about development activities taking place in their areas and taking these to relevant authorities.

This radio helps through the programme that is known as Titukule Boma Lathu ‘Let’s Develop Our District’. They go to record concerns from many places. They go to interview people and the people’s views are aired on the radio. Whether the problem needs the District Commissioner’s attention or the problem needs the attention from the hospital then the grievances are channeled to the concerned parties (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

In this way community radio is being used as a two-way channel of communication. It is a community’s mouthpiece whereby ordinary people are called upon to express their views on development issues in the community. It has been argued that:

Being participatory for the sake of being participatory is not the important issue – rather, the real issue is the reason behind why an initiative should involve the people in community - so that they feel ownership […]; so that it truly addresses their needs from their own perspective; and as such, so that they will commit to see the initiative through until it is completed (Cadiz, 2005: 146).

From the point of view of communication for development, this is an important function of communication whereby ordinary people’s views are sought and taken into account, and community radio facilitates this consultation process.

The programme, Zachilengedwe, Tsogolo Lathu (The Environment, Our Future) is broadcast on both Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations. “This programme is designed as one way of complementing government’s efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change by bringing awareness to the grassroots people about what they can do to reduce the negative impact of climate change” (interview with deputy station manager, 31 October 2012). For instance, Mzimba community radio station partnered with Raiply
Malawi Ltd, a company that manufactures and exports wood products which is in the area to sponsor programmes about climate change on the radio station. The programmes sensitize the community about wanton cutting down of trees and setting bush fires. The station manager explained that:

We are talking about climate change and environment. Malawi today is bare of forest cover which was not the case in the past. Government talks about addressing the problem of deforestation. We are discussing this on Mzimba radio station. We have got programmes with RAIPLY and generic programmes by the radio itself discussing these things. People should not be destroying trees, things like that (interview, 13 November 2012).

The participants claimed that they are now aware why it is necessary to protect the environment and natural resources as explained below:

The other thing about development in this area is that before the radio station was established, we used to set bush fires anyhow, but these days, we are aware of the dangers of bush fires because of the advice which comes from different radio programmes (FGD 1, 2 November 2012).

According to Inagaki (2007: 2) communication for development can make “development initiatives scalable by employing different communication techniques and devices that address varying spatial requirements for local, national and international levels”. Therefore, this is another area where community radio can be linked to national policy goals by helping disseminate messages about issues which are within national development policies by contextualizing and making them more relevant to the local situation.

8.4 Programmes which Encourage Attainment of Education

According to Fraser and Estrada (2001: 62) “whether or not a community radio decides to broadcast educational programmes per se, its policy should take into account that education in the broad sense of the word, and in the context of helping people to improve
their lives, is one of the fundamental objectives of community radio”. Bearing that in mind, educational content is available in programmes other than the ones discussed in this section. To that effect, community radio can play the role of a radio school which takes the format of School on the Air. The concept of School on the Air was “introduced in the Philippines in 1952 when a freelance broadcaster started producing educational agricultural programmes” (Librero, 2004 cited in Manyozo, 2012: 32). According to Flor (1995: 78) School on the Air is “a specially-designed radio programme where the subject matter is presented systematically and in progressive manner so as to achieve ‘desired results under a teacher-learner situation’”. For example, the British Council-Malawi Office sponsors a programme called ‘Let’s Learn English’ on Nkhotakota community radio station. “This programme is produced in the United Kingdom and we just broadcast it here and the target is to teach English to our primary and secondary school students” (interview deputy station manager, 31 October 2012). Some students and a teacher claimed that they find the programme useful as explained below:

I am a teacher by profession and through this radio we learn how we can handle lessons more especially through an English programme. This programme comes our way twice a week and has helped me improve in my teaching career indeed (FGD 5, 5 November 2012).

This is another example of radio programming which does not involve community participation in its production. By broadcasting information and educational programmes the station is providing resources for people to enable self-development. Furthermore, there are some programmes which, although their content is not educational, I have categorized them under educational programmes because they encourage school attendance. For example, Nkhotakota community radio station partnered with different
stakeholders such as the district Social Welfare Office, Labour Office, and the Victim Support Unit (VSU) of the district Police Station to produce radio programmes. These programmes firstly, aim “to enhance modifications of some harmful practices that drive and increase children’s vulnerability to physical harm and social injustices such as child labour, child trafficking, rape, and so on” (interview with deputy station manager, 31 October 2012). Secondly, as a consequence of high school dropout rate due to the fishing industry, unplanned pregnancies, early marriages, child labour and poverty, Nkhotakota district registered high illiteracy levels in the 2008 Malawi Housing and Population census (NSO, 2008). To encourage the community to take education seriously, the radio station in collaboration with the District Education Manager’s (DEM) office produces and broadcasts the following programmes; Maziko (Foundation) and Role Model (interview with deputy station manager, 31 October 2012). There is also a programme known as Voice of the Youth which encourages good behaviour and hard work in school among the youth, and discourages them from indulging in unprotected sex to avoid contracting HIV/AIDS. It was claimed in some focus groups, especially the youth clubs, that these programmes have helped most girls and boys who had dropped out of school to go back thereby reducing the dropout rate as reported below:

The radio station has encouraged education in such a way that some youths who dropped out of school have now gone back because of the encouragement that they are given (FGD 5, 5 November 2012).

Therefore, community radio can also be used to disseminate public information aimed at addressing community development issues such as education, child trafficking, unplanned pregnancies and early marriages. Adoption of best practices to tackle these issues has the potential to expand the youth’s capabilities and promote their self-development, for
example, by making informed decisions such as delaying marriage and concentrating on their studies.

8.5 Chapter Summary

In summary, this chapter has identified and discussed a number of different ways in which community radio stations engage in the process of enhancing people’s capabilities. The two radio stations under analysis are used to disseminate development messages which highlight the importance of adopting new innovations and best practices. They contribute to raising people’s awareness about existing problems and influencing them to do something about their situation. In this way, the stations are helping to expand opportunities for ordinary people to achieve a life of value, building their agency and stimulating individual and community consciousness to the problems affecting them. They are achieving this through broadcasting of programmes that address community problems and needs, especially in the areas of agriculture, health, infrastructural development, and education. According to Servaes (2009: 55), in communication for development, communication media “can play two kinds of advocacy roles: (a) they can support development initiatives by the dissemination of messages that encourage the public to support development-oriented projects; and (b) they can provide decision makers with the information and feedback needed to reach a decision”. The findings presented in this chapter indicate that the community radio stations are playing both roles. For example, community radio legitimizes what is being advocated by NGOs, which makes it possible for people to change or adopt the information communicated to them. In this way community radio stations are supporting development-oriented projects and government in
the implementation of its policies, for example, in the areas of food security and poverty reduction, climate change and maternal health. The discussions which take place in RLCs, enable people to make informed decisions before adopting what is being advocated. The people’s claims about the positive changes that have taken place in the study areas provide some evidence of increased agency. The NGOs and government departments working in the research areas are using community radio as part of their communication strategy thereby reinforcing the view that the programming of community radio in Malawi is influenced by the development agenda of NGOs. Ordinary people’s participation is to a lesser degree as a result of this. This supports Inagaki’s (2007: 38) argument that “in reality, many participatory projects are goal oriented, framing participation as a strategic instrument to achieve predetermined outcomes”. However, the participation of ordinary people in RLCs in which they discuss programme content can be considered as a development goal in itself because it has potential to enhance self-development (Inagaki, 2007). In this way, community radio is also making resources available to the people that help to enhance their capabilities. The next chapter further analyses the changes realized in the community brought about by community radio stations.
CHAPTER NINE: COMMUNITY RADIO AND ITS IMPACT IN THE COMMUNITY

9.0 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I discussed how the two community radio stations under analysis attempt to support and facilitate development through their thematic programming. The chapter discussed the various ways in which the radio stations mobilize communities for development, for example, by disseminating relevant information to enhance ordinary people’s capabilities in the areas of agriculture, health, and education. The information disseminated also helps ordinary people to make informed decisions, for example, adopting modern farming techniques, having smaller families, going for HIV testing and others. This chapter expands on this discussion and examines the impact of the two community radio stations in the communities in areas other than agriculture, health and education discussed in the previous chapter. The chapter discusses the positive changes that have taken place in the communities which the participants attribute to the activities of the community radio stations.

9.1 Community Radio as a Community Resource

According to Siemering et al. (1998) community radio stations “provide opportunities for poor and rural communities to not only express themselves in their own language in a convenient manner and in ways they know how, but at the same time listen to their own voices” (cited in Megwa, 2007: 52). The participants in the FGDs reported that previously
they had no opportunity to have their voices heard on the radio because they had no access to the national broadcasters.

At first we were not able to talk on the radio but now we are able to talk freely on the radio and our voices are heard by many people from far places. This makes us very happy and this has changed our lives (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

Voice as used in the context above relates to having access to communication technology. Following the introduction of community radio in their areas ordinary people have an opportunity to communicate through the media. For example, in those radio programmes in which farmers are featured explaining their farming experiences, farmers report being happy when they listen to their own voices or representative voices from their community on the radio. This adds interest to radio listening because ordinary people rarely have a chance to have their voice heard on the national broadcasters. For example, it was also reported in one FGD that:

It’s true there are some people who were not interested in joining a radio listening club like this one, but now they are becoming enthusiastic because they listen to our voices on the radio, so they also come to join this radio listening club in order for their voices to be aired on the radio as well (FGD 7, 12 November 2012).

Therefore, the presence of a community radio station in the study areas enables ordinary people not only to have access to media technology but it also allows opportunities for self expression. In this way community radio achieves one of its aims which is ‘to demystify radio’ by enabling ordinary people to have access to the technology, thus making it attractive to the listeners and helping to foster a feeling of ownership and participation in the owner community (Megwa, 2007). To further illustrate how community radio is being used as a community resource for communication, the following example is of a life-saving experience by a woman who appreciates what the radio station did for her:
**Woman:** I went there [Nkhotakota community radio station] when my child was admitted at the hospital so I realised that relatives were not very far. I did not want to suffer alone, so I informed them and they knew that I was at the hospital with my child who had insufficient blood.

**Facilitator:** Were you helped?

**Woman:** Yes. I was helped.

**Facilitator:** Was your message aired on the radio?

**Woman:** Everyone heard it and relatives came to donate blood *(Clapping of hands)* (FGD 2, 3 November 2012).

Here is evidence that community radio as a community resource can play a life-saving function when ordinary people are given the right to communicate. The community radio station can function as a community resource for the members of the community when they want to communicate with one another or to send urgent messages. The messages are transmitted very quickly unlike sending messages by letter, as further explained below:

I would like to thank this radio station for what it has done to us. In the past it was difficult to send messages home from the hospital if you didn’t have a phone. Today, if one has a patient at the hospital, she/he just goes to the radio station and the message is sent (FGD 2, 3 November 2012).

I also listened to a programme on one of the community radio stations about two elephants which had strayed from a game reserve which is in the district. The programme was *Titukule Boma lathu* “Let’s Develop our District”. In the programme, the producer was explaining how he had investigated the issue of the two stray elephants which terrorized people in the villages in addition to destroying their crops. This ordeal happened for a week and during the week people reported that they were engulfed with fear such that most of them remained indoors and did not attend to their crops in the garden. In the programme, the villagers who were interviewed claimed that they at first reported the issue
to their village headmen who in turn reported to the district council and the district council reported the issue to the police for action but nothing happened. When the radio station broadcast the news, game rangers from the Department of Parks and Wildlife acted quickly and killed the elephants. However, what these people reported remains a claim because there could have been other communication and action taking place in the background which these people did not know about. Nonetheless, the community radio station played a part. According to Mano (2011: 103) “in Africa, radio’s main advantage is its ability to overcome the main communication barriers on the continent”. In the example above, the villagers in their claims believed that the community radio station acted as a mouthpiece to reach responsible authorities who acted in good time. In this way, community radio can also be used as part of community communication. It takes over functions which should be part of government machinery. In evaluating communication for development initiatives, Lennie and Tacchi (2013: 27) emphasize the importance of understanding “the local ‘communicative ecologies’ that can influence the outcomes of C4D”. These include “existing local communication networks, and information flows and barriers that are unique to each place” (Lennie and Tacchi, 2013: 27). The way the issue of stray elephants was reported reveals that there are channels of communication that people follow when presenting their grievances at community level, for example, they report issues to the village headmen, who in turn report to the local council and so on. The context for this use of the community radio station partly results from weaknesses or barriers in the existing community communication system because of the bureaucracy that exists in the system. In such situations, community radio can be used as a community’s alarm system in times of
emergencies such as in the case of elephants above and donating blood at the hospital to save a life as discussed earlier.

According to Alumuku and White (2004) “sharing of joys, sorrows and resources is a way of life in African communities where interdependence and reciprocity are the norm” (cited in Kivikuru, 2006: 7). This was reflected in the focus groups when it was reported that the two community radio stations give people a chance to send messages about illnesses, funerals, and lost property for free. Previously, such messages were passed on from one person to another orally or through letters delivered by hand or posting messages on tree trunks as reported below:

The practice of pasting messages on tree trunks is now an old fashion in this village because of this radio. Even those who are not in this club, they also know and appreciate how beneficial the radio is to the whole area (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

Therefore, by ‘tapping into’ and revitalizing community communication, community radio supplements the oral tradition which is the most vital form of communication in Africa (Alumuku and White, 2004 cited in Kivikuru, 2006). Similarly Nyamnjoh (1999: 34) describes an ‘African text’ which is “conceived and written in accordance with a cultural perspective in tune with the African experience”, and Mano (2011: 116) believes that “radio in indigenous languages mediates this African text in a special way, providing a public service that many in Africa appreciate on daily basis”. Community radio has the added advantage of spreading messages fast and widely enabling people to take immediate action. For example, the participants claimed that lost or stolen property is easily and
quickly recovered when the owner makes an announcement on the radio station, as explained below:

If someone steals our cattle and the report is aired on the radio, it becomes easier to track down the thieves and recover stolen items- a thing that was difficult in the past without the radio. This radio station has also reduced the burden of running across to spread messages about funerals because now almost all funeral messages are aired on the radio, then people know about funerals in time (FGD 7, 12 November 2012).

This information was confirmed by the station managers. For example, the station manager of Mzimba community radio station claimed that the station helps to reduce crime in the district:

There are situations whereby it has served to reduce crime in the district. Even the police authorities have testified to that. For example, Mzimba is a livestock rearing district, there are situations whereby some people have their cattle stolen and they report to the police and the police refers them to here. Immediately it is announced on the radio they are able to recover their animals. Sometimes the missing of people themselves, it has helped people to quickly locate where their member of the family strayed or where they went (interview, 13 November 2012).

I cross-checked this information with the Police Public Relations Officer for the district who also confirmed this development. He too claimed that the police used to record many cases of cattle theft. When the radio station was established, a working partnership was formed between the police and the radio station which resulted in curbing crime:

We had a lot of cattle theft cases and we moved around the district to observe how they rear the cattle. What we discovered is that people build cattle kraals at a distance away from their houses. We had to sensitize people through the radio to be guarding their kraals because the cattle are their wealth. As I am talking now cattle theft cases are going down. This shows that people are getting sensitized through the radio (interview with district Police PRO, 14 November 2012).

Therefore, community radio can also partner with local organizations to achieve the programme goals of those organizations, for example, curbing crime as is the case with the local police station. This has the potential to build and enhance the community. In short, as
a community resource, community radio can be used for self-expression, as a community mouthpiece or as part of community communication to facilitate rapid community action when needed. In all this, community radio is being used to enhance or expand ordinary people’s capabilities.

9.2 Empowerment

Empowerment is another aspect of development which community radio aims to deliver to marginalized people. The term ‘empowerment’ has been described by several scholars in different ways. However, common in all the definitions is the urge for disenfranchised or marginalized people to transform their lives and their community, to control and influence decisions in their environment (Narayan, 2002; Nair and White, 1993; Dugan, 2003). For example, empowerment is defined as “a multilevel construct that describes a social action process for people to gain mastery over their lives, their organizations, and the lives of their communities” (Butterfoss, 2006: 326). This suggests that when people are aware of their identity, talents and capabilities, and can translate this into action, then they are empowered. This empowerment can enable them to participate with confidence in development activities in which they are involved. Therefore, participation and empowerment are two sides of the same coin, and both are necessary for development to take place. This section, therefore, examines how the two community radio stations are empowering marginalized people.
9.2.1 Women and Empowerment

According to Lennie and Tacchi (2013: 4) “it is particularly important to take gender issues into account in the evaluation of C4D because of the significant role women and girls play in the development process, the fact that they are often more negatively affected by inequalities and disadvantage” (see also Held, 2006; Sterling et al., 2009). For Held (2006: 89), it is the subordination of women that “has created fundamental ‘hindrances to human improvements’”. Lennie and Tacchi (2013: 65) further argue that “while the participation of women is a fundamental principle for development, it is often difficult to carry through because of gender inequalities in many societies”. This is particularly true for Africa where women’s marginalized situation has seen little improvement over the years despite efforts to improve women’s status. This is the case because “HIV/AIDS, famine, and poverty disproportionately affect women, since they not only suffer from these conditions, but are typically the designated caretakers and providers of others so afflicted” (Sterling et al., 2009: 145). Women’s empowerment, therefore, is an important aspect of development according to Mongella (1995: 121) who argues that improving women’s status “is essential if we are to move the world towards a better life for individuals”. For rural women, the situation is especially aggravated by their “lack of access to the very information that could help them mitigate or manage these crises” (Sterling et al., 2009: 145). In such situations, community radio can offer a potential solution to the lack of access to information. For example, the participants claimed that:

Here along the lakeshore area, women were not engaging in any economic activities, only men did. These days, because of the programmes which are broadcast on the radio, women have become as active as men economically. They
are now doing business just like their male counterparts (FGD 1, 2 November 2012).

This claim can be read as meaning that the radio station has encouraged women to think about gender roles and to do something about it to reverse the situation. The claim that more and more women are now involved in small scale businesses is a sign of development as result of access to information through community radio. The people feel that they are informed and so their awareness has been raised, and because of this, they are motivated to change. The radio station somehow legitimizes this change. The women further claimed that they are now closing the gaps in the gender divide by contributing equally to the running of their families instead of just depending on men. One woman explained that:

As women we were just depending on our husbands for everything. Currently, many women are farming on their own thereby benefiting their homes as well (FGD 3, 3 November 2012).

Organizations such as Farmers Voice Radio and Total Land Care which encourage farmers to adopt conservation farming consider this system of farming as suitable and convenient for women because it involves a minimum amount of labour; hence the claim that they are involved in farming on their own. Women’s ability to contribute to the family income or food basket is indicative of ‘women’s agency’ (Sen, 1999). Sen (1999: 192) argues that women’s “contribution to the prosperity of the family is then more visible, and she also has more voice, because of being less dependent on others”. Alternatively, “it is women’s capacity to exercise voice in the key areas of their lives that provides the impetus for change” (Kabeer, 2011: 1). Community radio, therefore, can enhance women’s capabilities
by enabling them to access information which contributes to their self-development and that of others.

I also found that women’s participation in RLCs increases the opportunity for them to access and discuss crucial information necessary for expanding their capabilities. In his study of participation in RLCs in Malawi, Manyozo (2005: 7) noted the problem of ‘gender imbalance’ within the initiative, “with more women dominating RLCs”. This is consistent with the findings of my research in that in almost all listening clubs I visited, there were more women than men. The reasons for this are varied; some have to do with gender roles, others have to do with traditional practices and economic reasons. For example, members of some RLCs reported that men are usually busy with work and sometimes their work demands going away from home frequently. On the other hand, women remain at home most of the times so they have time to participate in club activities where radio listening is one of the activities. For example, it was reported in one FGD that:

Being a lakeshore area, boys and men normally prefer going to the lake to fish unlike being in groups because they make money from fishing. This explains why we have more female members in our groups because women and girls are at home when men have gone fishing (FGD 6, 6 November 2012).

The participants further explained that while the men are away fishing or doing other jobs, it is mostly women who are involved in farming, hence their increased interest in joining farmers clubs. The women claimed that they are always determined to succeed in implementing what they have learnt from the programmes. Women see themselves as being responsible for the upbringing of children and so if they do not work hard in the garden then there will be no food for the children. Furthermore, because of their considered low status in society, women are said to welcome development news more positively than
men so that they can improve their livelihoods through the benefits that may come through joining clubs (FGD 6, 6 November 2012).

Another reason for the gender imbalance in RLCs is that sometimes ownership of the radio set is problematic. For example, an FVR projects manager explained that:

Some men think that they own the radio set so when they are going away they take it with them so that they can listen to it when doing their daily duties. Sometimes men hide batteries so they can listen to their favourite programmes at their own time when they come back. This leaves women with no opportunity to listen to the radio hence they opt to join radio listening clubs and listen to the radio in their clubs (interview, 16 March 2013).

According to a Farm Radio International (2011: 15) report, 75 percent of males and 56 percent of females in Malawi own radio sets. Although these figures do not indicate listening habits between men and women, it can be inferred that more men than women have access to a radio set. This is consistent with Moyo’s (1991) study. In her feature article, Development through Radio (DTR) in Zimbabwe, Moyo (1991: 229) reports that during district meetings in Chikwaka area, when the idea of DTR/RLCs was introduced, the women accepted the idea of forming RLCs with ‘great enthusiasm’ because a small number of people owned radio sets there. For example, she reports that out of 150 women present only 11 of them had working radio sets but when nine RLCs with 35 members in each club were introduced in the area, it gave an opportunity to more than 315 people to access a radio (Moyo, 1991: 229). Therefore, in their quest for information more women join RLCs so that they can listen to a radio there. The RLCs serve to increase women’s access to radio and to information necessary to improve their livelihoods.
However, unlike Manyozo (2005) who found that there was male dominance in the dialogues that characterize RLCs despite women being in the majority, I found that when making contributions, both men and women expressed their views equally. I observed this when conducting FGDs in the clubs. It can be suggested, therefore, that over the years the RLCs have empowered women in the research area to participate without fear in issues that affect them. As Sterling et al. (2009: 145) posit, “women will be more likely to benefit from technology-mediated opportunities for development if they themselves produce information that contributes to their advancement, rather than simply consuming information provided by others”. By participating in RLCs, more women can gain confidence to come in the open and express themselves about issues that affect them as individuals. According to Tucker (2013: 400) “community radio participation develops individual self expression, speaking, argument, and writing skills, all of which are necessary for political participation in a democracy”. This is also consistent with the findings of a study of ‘the role of community radio in livelihood improvement: the case of Simli Radio in Ghana’. The study found out that:

As the incomes of women engaged in Income Generating Activities (IGA) have been enhanced with the help of the promotional activities of Simli Radio, there is increasing acceptance of women’s views in matters that affect not only the family but the community as well. The daily programmes aired on Simli Radio have helped to ‘soften’ the grounds for female voices to be heard … on some topical issues that affect the family and community generally (Al-hassan et al., 2011).

Therefore, RLCs can provide a forum for women not only for accessing information but also increasing their capacity to participate in democratic processes such as decision-making. Such a forum can enable women to make informed decisions, to speak out their mind and to have a voice just as their male counterparts. In this way, community radio can be said to play a role in empowering marginalized groups such as women and to help
expand their capabilities, increase opportunities for their participation, and create a forum for discussion of issues affecting them.

9.2.2 Youth Empowerment

According to Nair and White (1993: 60) “the concept of empowerment suggests that power itself would be spread across a greater number of persons in a community and that every enlightened individual would hold some measure of power, if not for shaping community decisions, for shaping their own decisions”. Information is an agent of enlightenment; it enlightens individuals to be aware of opportunities available for them. The youth claimed that they have also gained more confidence which enables them to among other things, negotiate use of a condom during sex, as illustrated in this response:

We as girls are equipped with skills necessary to curb harassment. We can be bold and firm on the use of condoms and in addition, if one violates our rights, we know where to go and report the human rights violations (FGD 6, 6 November 2012).

Consequently, this has the potential of reducing youths’ vulnerability to abuse because the information they receive from the community radio and the discussion they hold in the RLCs can raise their awareness about such issues. This information can help empower them to defend their rights by reporting abuse cases and human rights violations. The spread of HIV/AIDS can further be reduced among the youth in the process. Therefore, instead of suffering in silence, RLCs provide a forum where the youths’ personal problems such as sexual harassment and abuse are shared and discussed, solutions suggested, and the necessary course of action taken by the affected person. This is particularly significant for people living in rural areas where there are no or very few places or organizations where
abuse cases can be reported. There are also no places where people can receive counseling on the problems affecting them. Therefore, by listening to specific programmes on the community radio together and discussing problems in groups, the youth can enlighten one another about how to mitigate those problems. This is consistent with Perrons and Skyers’ (2003: 279) argument that “community empowerment implies that people will have the necessary information, as well as power and influence to exercise some control over the future of their area”. They are also able to exercise control over their own lives, as one girl reports:

In my case, I have benefitted a lot. It’s been my wish to be a leader and since I joined this club, an organization known as Network for Youth Development came and introduced a programme known as Young Women Can Do It. Since then, I have learnt a lot of things which I could not on my own (FGD 5, 5 November 2012).

Here again is noted the link between the activities of NGOs, community radio and the listeners. Young Women can Do It (YWCDI)\(^{27}\) is a youth grouping working under the umbrella of Network for Youth Development (NFYD), an NGO which is working with the youth in different parts of the country. It promotes the participation of young women in leadership positions at different levels within their communities. Therefore, community radio stations can be a tool of empowerment of marginalized sections in society such as women, the youth and the poor by enabling expression and participation in development activities for individual and community benefit. It can also be used to provide public service and enabling civil society at the local level.

\(^{27}\) This information was extracted from their website, www.nfydmw.org
9.2.3 Economic Empowerment: Promoting Small-scale Businesses

Finally, it was claimed that the two community radio stations have given a boost to small scale businesses through advertising on the radio. For example, it was reported that:

Even the business community once they have advertised, they have testified that they were seeing few customers before but after the advert more customers are able to identify their shops and so, buy from them. So these are some of the impact realized. It is through things like these that we find that the radio station is serving its purpose (interview with station manager of Mzimba, 13 November 2012).

This sentiment was corroborated by the participants who explained that:

We now advertise our businesses on the radio and customers become aware of the products we sell. In the past, it was a challenge to do small scale businesses because customers were not aware of our merchandise (FGD 1, 2 November 2012).

Community radio offers opportunities for affordable advertising thereby promoting small scale businesses. Previously, such opportunities were not available because these business people could not afford advertising on the national or commercial broadcasters. The benefits of advertising on the community radio station extend to the customers as well. It was reported that: “The radio helps to boost businesses, for example, the adverts that they run help us to know what to buy and where to buy them” (FGD 6, 6 November 2012). In turn, advertising benefits the radio stations because it is one source of generating revenue for them as discussed in Chapter 5.

However, when it comes to advertising farm produce on the community radio stations, some farmers reported to have had a bad experience because the adverts resulted in attracting unscrupulous traders or vendors who usually offer unattractive prices. The unavailability of markets in the district “gives chance to vendors who go to remote areas
and buy produce at a low price and using un-recommended weighing scales” (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 44). The farmers also complained about this situation claiming that:

When we advertise our produce on the radio, what happens is that vendors come the following day to unscrupulously buy from us. They have their own extra large pails and a 50kg bag is filled with only two of their pails. So sometimes we just secretly sell the produce for fear of attracting these unscrupulous vendors (FGD 4, 4 November 2012).

Although this experience can be viewed as the negative side of radio advertising, it should be appreciated that the “prices of agricultural produce are not fixed and highly fluctuating. Small holder farmers are not cautioned from the effects of price fluctuations as they lack bargaining power” (Republic of Malawi, 2010: 44). Here radio advertising achieves its intended purpose of attracting buyers but it is the untrustworthiness of the buyers that is the problem. These are the unintended effects of advertising. It should also be appreciated that radio advertising helps farmers to avoid incurring transport costs because they need not travel to markets to sell their produce.

9.3 Chapter Summary

In conclusion, this chapter has identified and discussed some positive changes that have taken place in the communities served by the community radio stations under analysis. The discussion has shown that there are positive changes driven by different factors that are reflected in the activities of community radio stations. The chapter has demonstrated that the two community radio stations do not live up to the ‘ideal’ of community media which are “operated in the community, for the community, about the community and by the community” (Tabing, 2002: 9). In other words, they are not strongly linked into community based initiative. Instead these radio stations fit well with an approach to
development related to building capabilities. They do this in a variety of different ways. For example, sometimes the stations give ordinary people access to the means to communicate and therefore, they are looked at as a community resource. As a community resource, they are used to achieve a number of purposes; for example, they used as a community’s mouthpiece when ordinary people want to communicate urgent news. As a community mouthpiece, they complement the existing community communication channels, which as the chapter has discussed are inefficient most of the time. Finally, as a community resource, the radio stations are used to give people, especially in rural areas, access to information on a number of development issues. Community radio can also empower marginalized people for self-development and to participate in development activities in the community. Local organizations also form partnerships with the community radio stations to provide public service and to support government policies. In relation to participation and development, the findings show that there are some activities which require the full involvement of the beneficiary community while others require minimal involvement for development to take place. Participation also takes place at different levels. This implies that fully-fledged participation is not necessary to bring about development. These examples demonstrate that community radio as a tool for development is malleable. It can be changed and adapted to serve the community in various ways depending on the circumstances and needs of each community to enhance the capabilities of marginalized groups. The next chapter sums up the various findings and arguments presented.
CHAPTER TEN: CONCLUSION

10.0 Introduction

This chapter summarizes the key findings of the thesis, presents the conclusions based on the findings, and draws out implications for theory. The chapter also makes policy recommendations and provides directions for future research on community radio. The research reported in this thesis was about community radio as a tool for development drawing on a case study of Nkhotakota and Mzimba community radio stations in Malawi. The research aims were to investigate the extent and ways in which two community radio stations in Malawi are used as a tool for development through audience participation, and secondly to examine the extent to which communication for development in community radio in Malawi takes the form of participatory communication. Specifically, the research examined the functions of participation in development through community radio and to what extent community radio can play a role in encouraging development through enhancing capabilities and participation; how RLCs help to expand ordinary people’s capabilities; and how the programming of community radio stations is influenced by the development agenda through the activities of the NGOs and other development agencies in Malawi. I drew from Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation and Carpentier’s (2011) minimalist and maximalist versions of participation to evaluate the different levels of participation identified in the findings. The research was informed by the communication for development and ‘another’ development theories to examine the various ways in which community radio engages with development.
10.1 Main Findings and Implications

The findings reveal that community radio plays two major functions in Malawi. First, as a medium that affords ordinary people the opportunity to participate in the media and in development projects. Second, community radio is used to support development projects in which it is used to inform people about development agendas and initiatives from NGOs and development agencies. As such the major questions throughout the dissertation have been, first, how community radio facilitates development aims through audience participation and what levels of participation are achieved, and second, how development initiatives use community radio to improve practices and to expand capabilities. In both cases, the focus was on participation but the kind of participation needed to meet these two different sets of norms (role of community radio and communication for development) suggests different levels of participation, hence the use of Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation as criteria for evaluating the different levels. Below I draw conclusions on these issues and their implications. I will first address the issue of how community radio in Malawi encourages participation and how it contributes to development especially in the communities where this research was conducted. I also draw conclusions on how participation albeit minimal (in Carpentier’s (2011) terms) is potentially of value to both development agencies and ordinary people.

One main finding of this research shows that community radio stations in Malawi do not live up to the ideal of community radio as owned, operated and managed by members of the community (Tabing, 2002). Rather, community radio in Malawi fits well with Myers’ (2000: 90) definition of community radio stations as “small-scale decentralized initiatives
which are easily accessed by local people, actively encourage their participation in programming, and which include some element of community ownership or membership”.

Although community radio stations in Malawi emerged within a policy vacuum amidst media deregulation and pluralism during the transition from single to multi-party democracy, the results show that they are being appropriated for development purposes, especially in rural communities. They are used to provide information to local people in the communities they are located in and they are also supporting development projects started by NGOs, government or the stations themselves. In the radio stations I studied in Malawi, the idea to start a community radio station originates from the community; however, the stations are established with donor assistance in terms of buying equipment, setting up the station and training staff. Principally, the stations are owned by the development agents except through management and daily operations of the stations in which the members of the community participate. This form of ownership has implications for participation and development. Participation is a necessary component of the development process in the sense that it enables marginalized people to become their own change agents and enables autonomy among them. Furthermore, participation enables marginalized people to recognize their capacity to intervene in the challenges affecting them, enables them to define their development path through identification and implementation of projects that they start (Rennie, 2006). Participation in community radio also allows marginalized people free and equal access to the means to express their concerns and opinions, to exchange information and to make informed decisions. However, the present study has shown that due to the involvement of donors in the
operations of community radio stations in Malawi, there are limited opportunities for participation available to ordinary people.

What has emerged from the findings is that NGOs and other development agencies fund community radio stations by sponsoring programmes. Consequently, the stations start to depend on the sponsored programmes for their sustainability thereby reducing opportunities for participation. However, while this may mean that community radio stations are able to meet their operational costs, dependence on sponsored programmes is leading towards hybridization of community radio broadcasting whereby community radio serves the interests of both the community and those of the donors. This implies that hybridization can diversify models of community radio and, this influences our understanding of the definition of community radio. Since each community that requires a community radio station is unique, their development challenges and needs are also unique. Therefore, community radio as a tool for development must respond to the challenges and needs of that community as the situation demands. This can be done or achieved regardless of whether the station is owned, managed and operated by members of the community or by NGOs on behalf of a community. In that case, a community radio station does not always necessarily need to be fully owned, managed and controlled by the community in order to meet development goals. Although this remains a contentious issue in community radio broadcasting, the reality remains that the need for community radio to be financially secure is always in tension with a pristine ‘community ownership’. As a result of dependence on sponsored programmes, the programming of community radio stations is influenced by the agenda of development agents or by considerations coming
from outside the community. This leaves little opportunities for members of the community to be involved in production because the schedules of community radio stations are filled with sponsored programmes which bring in money for the sustainability of the stations. This is one factor which is diluting the opportunities for participation.

To what extent do the two community radio stations, therefore, encourage ordinary people’s participation in the media and in development? In communication for development, Inagaki (2007) identifies two ways of measuring the ‘successful’ outcome of communication interventions:

One kind involves the examination of the extent to which the target populations adopt, in a broad sense, the communication practices that are promoted. The second type of successful outcome consists of changes, as a result of communication interventions, amounting to the realization of specific programmatic goals, such as a reduction in HIV prevalence (Inagaki, 2007: 23-24).

The data generated in this dissertation can be understood in terms of Carpentier’s (2011) distinction between participation in the media and participation through the media introduced in Chapter 2 and discussed in Chapter 6. To return to that discussion, the difference between the two is that, whereas participation in the media deals with participation in production of media output and in media organizational decision-making, participation through the media refers to opportunities for mediated participation in public debate and self-representation (Carpentier, 2011: 68). When evaluated against Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation, the overall findings in this dissertation demonstrate that participation in the media is low or reduced. Ordinary people’s participation is concentrated in the lower levels or what Carpentier (2011) describes as ‘minimalist’ forms of participation. In minimalist forms, “participation remains unidirectional, articulated as a
contribution to the public sphere but often mainly serving the needs and interests of the mainstream media system itself” (Carpentier, 2011: 69). However, Carpentier (2011) was mainly thinking about Western media. This is the case because there are other ways in which through the media, people can benefit, enhance their capabilities and through which development agencies can reach their goals, other than through representation and engagement in the public sphere, for example, through RLCs. The RLCs provide a forum for sharing and discussing issues both personal and communal. They provide opportunities for both reception and participation. Ordinary people are able to represent themselves through the same clubs when radio producers visit them to hear their views and grievances about development activities taking place in their communities, which they later present to community leaders for action. The RLCs further provide an interface between the people and the leaders and they are also a forum for women participation and empowerment. The conclusion that can be drawn here is that there are separate routes to community media having a role in development associated with different levels of participation. Therefore, full-blown engagement in community radio is not needed to meet the development goals of a community. In other words, community radio can still meet the development goals of the community even though it does not meet the ideals of community media as owned, operated and managed by members of the community.

According to White (1994: 16) “the word participation is kaleidoscope, it changes its colour and shape at the will of the hands it is held”. The point being made here is that different models or assumptions about community radio make different assumptions about participation implying that there is not one thing that can be called participation. There will
be forms of participation in and through community radio as Carpentier (2011) postulates and the inclusion of the middle category of tokenism on Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation directs our attention to the idea that community radio can encourage participation at different levels. Although different models and assumptions about community radio accord people opportunities for participation in different ways, the problem of reduced participation in the media does not necessarily result from who owns that station because the findings demonstrate that community radio can facilitate participation through the media to achieve development goals. This reinforces the view that community radio does not necessarily need to be owned, managed and operated by members of the community all the time for ordinary people to participate just as was the case with Radio Sutatenza in Columbia whose ownership was private but ordinary people participated in adult literacy campaigns initiated by the founder priest. This is a significant finding and an important lesson for scholars, critics and practitioners of participatory communication including development partners to learn from and bear in mind when designing and implementing grassroots development projects. Therefore, Arnstein’s (1969) ladder of participation provides a fair assessment of understanding participation and how it relates to development. However, maximalist forms of participation or full citizen control over the stations remains difficult to achieve.

From the conclusions drawn above, we can establish the link between participation, community radio and development in the sense that development agents and agencies use community radio to provide information about development initiatives such as health, agriculture, education and others to people in the community. The aim is to improve
practices and to help achieve sustainable development through the participation of the people (Lennie and Tacchi, 2013). Ordinary people participate in these development initiatives thereby enabling community development and self-development or autonomy. In communication for development, therefore, the role of community radio is to provide information to people and promote development projects especially in marginalized communities. As Inagaki (2007) has observed above, the success of communication intervention can be measured when changes amounting to the realization of specific programmatic goals such as reduction in HIV prevalence are achieved. Therefore, this information helps to raise people’s awareness to some social problems and this triggers self-reflection among them to do something about their problems. While participation is seen as a vehicle to achieving development goals, the findings of this research demonstrate that different levels of participation achieve different results. At the same time, while some development goals can be met through the direct participation of the people in station activities, others do not require direct involvement.

In view of this, these radio stations fit well with an approach to development related to building capabilities. Therefore, I propose that the capabilities approach to development (Sen, 1992; UNDP, 1994; Nussbaum, 2011) is a viable way to understanding the role of these two community radio stations in development. To remind ourselves, in the capabilities approach, development is defined as “a process of expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy” (Sen, 1999: 3). The purpose of development in this approach is to “create an enabling environment for people to enjoy long, healthy and creative lives” (Nussbaum, 2011: 1). In this understanding, the community radio stations can be viewed as
a public service, giving people resources to enhance their capacities. Useful information is provided through community radio programmes to raise people’s awareness. Furthermore, community radio is used as a rallying point for attaining poverty reduction and improving food security through complementing the role of agricultural extension workers in rural areas. All these are related to the capabilities approach in the sense that adoption of these practices is helping to improve the livelihoods of ordinary people thereby enabling them to enjoy ‘long, healthy and creative lives’. They all contribute to ‘expanding the real freedoms that people enjoy’.

In the same vein, communication for development is also related to the capabilities approach in the sense that community radio is used to stimulate debate for participatory decision-making (Servaes, 2000). In this dissertation, this is evidenced through the activities that take place in the RLCs in which people listen to a radio programme content, discuss it and then decide how best to use the information. The interpersonal communication associated with RLCs plays a big role in influencing behaviour change and adoption of best practices among the members. This system of information flow triggers reactions leading to the adoption of desirable behavioural patterns (Inagaki, 2007). This relates to the capabilities approach in the sense that development cannot take place without changes in attitudes among the people concerned (Servaes, 2000). Therefore, changes in attitudes and adoption of desirable behaviour as a result of information and skills imparted to them can contribute to expanding people’s capabilities, and community radio facilitates this process. In brief, our understanding of communication for development and how it
relates to expanding capabilities can be likened to the mantra ‘teaching people to fish rather than giving them fish’.

10.2 Implications for Theory

This study set out to examine community radio as a tool for development by employing the communication for development, participatory communication and development theories (Berrigan, 1979; Servaes, 2000; Myers, 2011, Lennie and Tacchi, 2013). The thesis has demonstrated the application of aspects of these theories to the study of community radio as a tool for development. This section, therefore, presents the original contributions that the thesis makes to theory, to the field of media and communication in general and the role of community radio in development in particular.

The first original contribution that this thesis makes to the study of community radio as a tool for development is by demonstrating how community radio in Malawi fits in well with an approach to development related to expanding ordinary people’s capabilities (Sen, 1992). This thesis has identified and discussed a number of ways in which community radio engages with the idea of capabilities through different communication interventions. For example, the findings demonstrate how community radio stations have been used to provide public information to people on HIV/AIDS, education, malaria control, safe motherhood and family planning among others. In turn, this information helps to address development challenges leading into improved well-being, such as food availability, having smaller families, literacy, health and sanitation, all of which are aspects of
development which the capabilities approach is concerned with. Therefore, community radio as a tool for development can be understood in terms of expanding people’s capabilities.

The second original contribution is that the thesis shapes our understanding of the relationship between community radio, development, and participation. The findings show that although participation is an inevitable component of the development process, community radio can facilitate a variety of development goals and agendas, all of which, it has been argued, enable capabilities although not often through fully-fledged participation. In other words, the thesis questions the overemphasis on the role of participation as the panacea of development challenges by demonstrating that community radio has potential to encourage development through enhancing capabilities even when community members do not own and manage the stations through a variety of ways, for example, through RLCs and also through promoting development initiatives started by NGOs.

Thirdly, with regard to the ideal definition of community radio as ‘owned, managed and operated by members of the community’, the findings in this thesis open up possibilities for a number of community radio broadcasting models. For example, community radio stations can be owned by the community or development agents provided that emphasis is on the people and what the station can do for them in terms of expanding their capabilities.

Another contribution to theory in terms of the relationship between participation and development is to look at participation in two ways. First, that sometimes participation is a
development goal meaning that participation itself is a form of development. In communication for development, development is facilitated through producing and sharing information which empowers participants. The other way is to look at participation as a means to development, referring to the fact that participation is used to achieve predetermined programmes goals of NGOs and other organizations. Although there is an overlap of participatory and top-down approaches, what has emerged from the findings is that community radio stations in Malawi concentrate more on the latter in their operations. Therefore, while some development goals require the full involvement of the people; for example, access to media technology, participation in programme production, management and daily operations of the stations, others do not require full-blown engagement for development to be realized, for example, participating in RLCs, adopting best practices disseminated on and legitimized by community radio stations to improve livelihoods. It can be concluded, therefore, that community radio in Malawi supports development by enhancing people’s capabilities - “the ability of people to help themselves and also to influence the world” (Sen, 1999: 18).

Finally, this thesis makes a contribution to theory by demonstrating that although the earliest models of modernization such as the diffusion of innovations are criticized by many scholars for not including an account of participatory processes, they are still being used today in communication for development practices by development agencies. This has been reflected in this dissertation in the way development agents use community radio as part of their communication strategy to disseminate development information which eventually leads to the enhancement of people’s capabilities. In this approach,
interpersonal communication is valued as a necessary factor to ensure adoption of practices disseminated through community radio.

10.3 Recommendations and Broadcasting Policy

Based on the literature review, findings and the conclusions discussed above, I make the following recommendations:

First, management of community radio stations should explore more avenues of income generation which can make community radio stations more self-sustaining to reduce dependence on sponsored programmes in a quest to earn more income to meet operational costs. Community radio stations can take advantage of their location in a business-friendly environment to become creative in devising acceptable forms of income generation. For example, they can establish multi-media centres where they can provide internet services to the community for a fee. They can also offer typing, printing, scanning and photocopying services for a fee. Community radio stations can also hire out their equipment and services for outside broadcasts such as weddings and other functions. Once community radio stations become financially independent they can serve the community better.

Secondly, communities need to be trained or sensitized on what constitutes participation in the media and how to participate so that they can understand what their role is at every stage of the station operations. Therefore, NGOs such as UNESCO and other development
agents which have been instrumental in funding the establishment of community radio stations need to invest time, effort, and other resources in mobilizing and sensitizing people about the need to participate. This should be done before establishing the stations. The community should be sensitized about the station and how they can own it before a license is granted. This can help to promote participation from many people in the community.

Thirdly, RLCs can be an effective way of ensuring that the community members are participating actively in the activities of the community radio station. Radio producers should, therefore, train members of RLCs in programme production and other activities related to community radio broadcasting so that all clubs can equally contribute to the daily running of the stations. All clubs should be given the same equipment such as voice recorders so that they can produce programmes within their clubs which they can send to the radio stations for editing and broadcasting. Since there are different types of clubs such as farmers clubs, HIV/AIDS clubs, farmers clubs, youth clubs, and so on, all of which are involved in different activities, it can ensure the production of programmes covering a variety of topics on issues that affect the community. This can ensure diversity of voices and heterogeneity of the audience which is a characteristic of the maximalist version of participation (Carpentier, 2011). It can also reduce the monopoly of only a few volunteers who are tasked with programme production.

Furthermore, in the same area of programme production, community radio stations should also form partnerships with local NGOs working in the communities. This can ensure that
the programming of community radio is addressing the needs of the community and not coming from outside the community.

Finally, the government should formulate a community broadcasting policy which should stipulate the role of community radio. The policy should contain clauses which state clearly the role of NGOs in operating community radio stations on behalf of communities and also provide clear procedures to be followed by all potential applicants to follow when applying for a community broadcasting license. This can help clear the confusion regarding who can apply for a license and also help clear ownership issues as was the case with both community radio stations.

10.4 Future Academic Research

There are a number of gaps that can be indentified from the findings and these gaps provide areas for future academic research. It might be necessary to conduct audience research in the areas where there are community radio stations to find out public understanding of community radio. My study was conducted with people who already had strong connections to the community radio stations through their RLCs. In the area of participation, it might be necessary to explore why some people do not participate in radio activities by joining RLCs. It might also be necessary to find out who listens and who does not and why some people do not listen to community radio stations.
It might also be necessary to conduct research with the initiators of community radio stations to find out their motivations for establishing a community radio station. This is the case because this study has shown that initiators of the community radio stations did not consult community members on the need to establish community radio stations. This information can be compared with community perception about the most pressing community needs and whether the station is addressing those needs. If not, it might be necessary to find out why and what has changed over the years.

Another area of research is on the regulatory environment of community radio, to find out the challenges and opportunities and to suggest best practices to which community radio can be used. For example, since community radio stations are used to support the development of rural communities, are there any other areas apart from development to which community radio can be put? For example, can community radio be used to provide civic education to rural communities about elections and voting since most people in rural areas are not adequately informed to make a decision about who to vote for since they lack access to information? In such instances, what regulations can be put in place to ensure that community radio is not promoting hate speech but is concentrating on civic education through public debates on political and other social issues?

10.5 Personal Reflections and Limitations

Reflecting on the research process, there are some issues that researchers need to establish in advance about the organizations that they are going to study as their case study. For instance, my visit to Mzimba community radio station raised some suspicion because I was
accompanied by a policeman who acted as my gatekeeper. This caused problems of access at the initial stage of my data collection exercise there because of the history of the station which I was not aware of. Therefore, doing some background research into organizations to be studied as cases and ensuring easy access to them as well as issues of gate-keeping are necessary because they have an impact on the quality and quantity of data to be generated. The other issue is how to recruit participants and how to explain the aim of the research to them especially in the rural areas. Some organizations which work with people in rural areas pay participants or give them tokens of appreciation for attending meetings. Therefore, when researchers visit those communities, the participants fail to distinguish between researchers and representatives of NGOs as such they also expect payments from researchers. In my case, the major limitation which might have influenced the results is the manner in which the participants were informed about my visit as a researcher. My visit to the RLCs where I conducted FGDs and participant observation was publicized on the radio station through announcements followed by a phone call. This might have led the people to form their own expectations about what the visit was all about. Therefore, their responses might have been influenced by the preconceived ideas regarding my visit. They might have been influenced to say many good things and less bad things about their community radio station to avoid putting its image in bad perspective and also in anticipation of some benefits from me.

Finally, the case study in which I adopted a mixed-method approach to data collection and analysis has its own challenges as well. For example, deciding how many methods to choose and incorporating results from different data sources to provide a coherent analysis
of the results can pose a big challenge and needs to be carefully thought out and done in a systematic way. However, if one has clear aims and research questions informed by theory, a thematic analysis of the data can provide good guidance for analysis and interpretation thereby providing patterns for integrating the results. The other issue arising from the case study approach is the extent to which the findings from case study research can be generalized. In most cases, the results may be specific to the case study and as such cannot be generalized.
REFERENCES


Commonwealth Local Government Forum (CLGF). (2013). *Local government system in Malawi*. Available at:


Unpublished PhD dissertation submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate School of the University of Missouri at Columbia.


Nkhotakota Community Radio Station Policy document, (n.d).


312


313


APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1: QUESTIONNAIRE FOR STATION MANAGERS OF COMMUNITY RADIO STATIONS

Introduction

1. When was the station established?
2. What is the mission statement of your radio station?
3. How are you fulfilling your purpose or role?
4. Who is the legal owner of this station?
5. Where did funding for establishing this station come from?
6. Why did they establish this station in this community and not any other?
7. How do you define your community?
8. What are your license conditions?

STAFFING

9. How many staff members are males and how many are females?
   - How many are on pay roll and how many are volunteers?
   - What are their levels of education?
   - How many of them have experience in radio production?
   - How were they recruited?

TECHNICAL STRUCTURE

10. When did your station receive a broadcasting license?

11. What is your area of coverage?

12. How many hours do you broadcast per day?

13. What is the size of your listenership? Any estimates?

14. Who are your regular listeners?

ADMINISTRATIVE STRUCTURE

15. How is your station run and administered?

16. What is the structure of your governing body?
17. What is the role of the governing body?

**FUNDING**
18. What type of financing does your station receive?
19. Which of these sources does your funding mostly come from?
20. Do outside agencies fund any of your programmes?
21. How do you make use of the income you earn?
22. Are you allowed to do any advertising? Explain how this is done.
25. Is the money you receive from donors and the money you make yourself enough for your operations?

**DEVELOPMENT AGENDA**
26. How do your programmes serve development in your area?
27. How does the radio station initiate community development activities?
28. What development news does your radio station broadcast?
29. What has been the impact of this radio station in promoting development in this area?
30. Do you have any evidence of development initiatives that this radio station has brought in this area, something that has changed people’s lives for the better?
31. What would you consider to be the greatest impact of this radio station?
32. How does the government use this radio station for development work? Explain and give examples.
33. How do NGOs use this radio station for development work? Explain.
PROGRAMMING

34. Who formulated your programme schedule?

35. How did they come up with those programs and why?

36. Were community members involved in coming up with the programmes? Explain?

37. Do you think that the programmes are helping the local communities? Explain?

38. What kind of feedback do you receive from the listeners on your programmes?

39. Are community members allowed to come up with their programmes on the radio stations?

41. Do you have sponsored programmes from NGOs/Government?

42. Why do NGOs sponsor those programmes?

PARTICIPATION

43. Do community members participate in financing the radio station? Explain.

44. Do community members participate in production of programmes of the radio station? Explain how?

45. Does the radio station offer local people a forum for debate of local issues? Explain.

46. How are people’s problems and views conveyed to relevant authorities?

47. Can you give specific examples of problems raised by people and were brought to the authorities who finally solved them?

48. Are there community development projects taking place in this community?

49. If so what is the role of the radio station in these development projects?
50. Who are funding these projects?

51. What kind of partnership (if any) does this radio station have with different donors?

52. What kind of partnership does this radio station have with the government?

**ICT4D**

53. Do you have phone-in programmes?

54. If ‘Yes’, what sort of programmes do you invite people to call in?

53. Who are the regular callers?

55. What sort of issues do callers raise?

56. Explain how these issues are handled?

57. Do you have local elected/government officials who respond to people’s views through phone-in programmes?

**PARTICIPATION THROUGH LISTENERS CLUBS**

58. Do you have listeners clubs?

59. How many are they and how were they established?

60. What is the composition of the listeners clubs?

61. What is their role?


63. Why do people join listeners clubs?

64. What is the relationship between the clubs and the radio station?

65. How do members benefit by belonging to a listeners club?

**ACCOUNTABILITY AND TRANSPARENCY**
66. Does the radio station help people understand government development policies? Explain.

67. Does the radio station receive complaints or suggestions from local people about local governance and development issues? Explain and give examples.

68. If “Yes” how does the radio station handle such complaints and suggestions?

69. Does the radio station invite relevant authorities to explain or provide answers to people’s complaints?

**CHALLENGES FACED BY COMMUNITY RADIOS**

70. What works well in your radio station?

71. What does not work well?

72. If you were to change something in the way this radio station operates, what would it be?

73. What would you maintain and why?

74. What are the challenges that you face as a community radio?

75. How are these challenges affecting your operations?

76. What would you want community radio stations to be doing in the future?

Thank you for your time and assistance
APPENDIX 2: Focus Group Discussions with Listeners of Community Radio Stations

Question Schedule

A. Development Agenda of Community Radio Stations and Its Effectiveness

1. Do you listen to your community radio station?

2. When was the radio station established?

3. What is the purpose of this station?

4. Is it meeting its stated purpose? Explain.

5. What activities has the radio station introduced in the communities?

6. How does the radio station promote cultural values and indigenous knowledge?

7. Do you like listening to this radio station?

8. What do you like or dislike about

   (a) The station?

   (b) About how it operates?

   (c) About the personnel?

   (d) About management?

9. What works well?

10. What doesn’t work well?
11. What do you think has been the station’s greatest accomplishment since it was established?

12. What has been the greatest failing?

13. Is the station responsive to your needs and interests?

14. How do you give feedback to the station? Do they seem to act upon your suggestions?

15. Do you see any evidence of change in your community this year that can be attributed to the station? If so, what?

16. Which issues seem to be of greatest importance to this station?

B. Programme-related: (Audience or Listener Specific to Determine Reach and Reactions)

1. Which programs do you listen to regularly and why?

2. Which programs do you never miss? Why?

3. Which do you always miss and why?

4. Where are you, physically, most often when listening to this station?

5. What would you like to hear more of?

6. What would you like to hear less of and why?

7. How often do you listen to this station (days, times, frequency)

8. How long do you listen each day and why? Who do you listen with?
9. Do you recall a time when the programming was not on the air, as anticipated? What happened? What did the station do as a result?


11. Who are your favorite presenters and why? Your favorite programs and why? Least favorite?

C. Impact on Social Change

1. What are people saying about this community radio station within this community?

2. Is this station contributing to how people think (about development, i.e. agricultural practices, gender equality, good governance and transparency, etc)? How?

3. Is this station influencing the way people act in this community? How?

4. What signs or evidence do you have of such change?

5. How is this station contributing to local culture, local society, your country?

6. What is important for you to change in this community? How can the station play a role? Is it playing such a role now, and if so, how? If not, why not?

7. What are you learning from listening regularly? What have you learned so far?

8. If you could set guidelines for how the station should operate, what would they be?

9. What do you know about how the station is managed? Are you satisfied?
D. Development News/Programmes

1. How do the programmes broadcast on the radio affect/influence your lives?

2. Can you give a specific example of how your life was changed as a result of a certain programme that you listen to on the radio? What was it all about?

3. Do these programmes encourage you to engage in different development activities to improve your livelihoods and that of the community? Explain and give examples.

4. Can you mention some programmes which address the problems faced in this community?

5. How are these programmes helping in solving those programmes?

6. Which other development news would you like to be broadcast on this radio station?

E. Participation

1. How do you participate in this station? If you do not, have you ever been approached to do so? If you do not, why don’t you participate?

2. What motivated you to participate?

3. Are you satisfied in the way you participate in these activities? Explain.

4. What would you want to see happening in the way you participate which is not happening now?

5. What would you want to be maintained and why?
6. In what way does the radio station encourage you to participate in development process?

7. Were you consulted on the need to establish the radio station? If ‘Yes’, at what level?

8. Are there benefits that you realize from participating in the radio station activities? Explain.

9. What have you benefited as an individual as a result of participation in the radio station?

10. What has the community as a whole benefited from participating in the radio station activities?

11. What barriers do you think hinder some people from participating?

12. In what way has the community been involved in the radio activities?

13. Can you give specific examples of how the community is involved?

14. How is the community represented in the radio station?

15. Can you name one person who is a representative of the community in the management of the radio station?

16. What problems do you experience as a result of participating in the radio activities or development activities?

17. What are the reasons why some people do not participate? What reasons do they give?

18. Do you think they are right? Why?

19. What would you say that people who do not participate miss?
F. Role of NGOs and Government

1. Can you mention names of NGOs which are working in this community?

2. What development projects are these NGOs implementing in this community?

3. How do these NGOs use the radio station to spread development news?

4. What is the major source of development news in this area?

5. Does the radio station encourage you to participate in the projects run by NGOs?

6. How does the radio link up with the NGOs and government?

7. Are you satisfied with the way the radio station is spreading development news from government and NGOs? Explain

8. In participation in development projects what do you consider more important, personal benefit or community benefit? Explain why?

G. Accountability and Transparency

1. What are the major development challenges in this community?

2. As a community how are you tackling these challenges/what solutions do you have about these challenges?

3. How is the radio station assisting you in solving these challenges?

4. Are you satisfied with the assistance? Explain
5. What have been the accomplishments of this radio station in addressing issues such as corruption of leaders, good governance, transparency etc?

6. Does the radio station offer you an opportunity to complain about problems that you face in your communities?

7. Does the radio station invite relevant authorities to hear your complaints and deal with them? Give specific examples.

Thank you for your time and for answering my questions
Appendix 3: Questionnaire for the Malawi Communications and Regulatory Authority (MACRA) Officials on Community Radio Broadcasting in Malawi

1. How many community radio stations are there in Malawi, and what are they?
2. When was each one of them established?
3. Where are they located in Malawi (geographical area)?
4. What is their area of coverage?
5. Who owns each of the community radio stations that are there?
6. Why is it that most community radio stations in Malawi are established by international NGOs?
7. Are individual Malawian citizens allowed to apply for a community radio license? Explain.
8. What is the demand for community radio license at the moment?
9. Who can apply for a community radio license?
10. What criteria are followed when offering community radio licenses?
11. What are the major sources of funding and sustainability for community radio in Malawi?
12. Does the source of funding influence the programming policy of the radio station? Explain.
13. How does MACRA define community radio?
14. What are the license conditions for community radio stations in Malawi?
15. Are there policy documents detailing how community radio broadcasting was conceived in Malawi?
16. How was the idea of community radio framed during the policymaking process?

17. How were the different understandings of the role of community radio sector shaped in the policymaking process?

18. How was community radio policy developed amidst the context of the liberalization of the airwaves?

19. What policy statements are there regarding community radio stations in terms of:

   (a) their definition

   (b) their role/function

   (c) ownership

   (d) how they should operate

   (e) location

   (f) funding and sustainability?

20. The Communications Act (1998) states that MACRA will produce a schedule describing the license conditions of each radio station, why is this so, and why are there no general guidelines for all community radio stations?

21. How does MACRA monitor the operations of community radio stations to ensure that they are operating within the license conditions given to them?

22. Why was community radio introduced in Malawi? What gap does it fill?

23. What is their role in the socio-economic development of the country?
24. What specific purposes do they serve in the communities they are located?

25. How do community radios differ from public service broadcasting and commercial radio services in Malawi?

26. How does the licensing of community radio differ from that of commercial or private radios? 27. So far what has been the impact (success stories) of community radios and their failures/challenges?

28. Does each station choose its own format of broadcasting or there are specific criteria that each community radio station should follow. If so, what are the criteria?

36. How is the programming of community radio dictated?

Thank You
Appendix 4: Questionnaire for Farmers Voice Radio (FVR) Projects Officer

1. Tell me about FVR

2. How were you encouraging farmers to maximize their farming?

3. When did you start your activities in Malawi?

4. Is there evidence that when farmers listen to fellow farmers they get knowledge better than when they learn from experts?

5. Are you not undermining the role of agricultural extension workers?

6. Do you sponsor programmes on the community radio stations you are working with?

7. Where did the idea of one-to-one maize planting (sasakawa) and conservation agriculture (ulimi wa ntayakhasu) originate from? In other words, were these farming practices experimented somewhere and after realizing their benefits FVR decided to bring them to Malawi?

8. When FVR rolled out its activities in Malawi, were there farmers clubs already set up or it was FVR that established farmers clubs?

9. If it was FVR that established farmers clubs, how did they woo or convince villagers to form farmers clubs? Were there any incentives given to people to form or join clubs?

10. If farmers clubs were already existent in the communities, how different were they from the clubs that FVR established?
11. What reasons do you think made farmers to form or join farmers clubs?
12. Why did other people not join these clubs?
13. Now that the first phase/pilot phase is over, what mechanism did FVR put in place to ensure sustainability of the farmers clubs?
14. From the data I gathered, there is evidence that FVR project has had a big impact on the farmers in rural areas, can you suggest some of the factors that have led to this success?
15. At what point did FVR engage in community radio stations to start broadcasting agricultural programmes?
16. Were community radio stations already broadcasting agricultural programmes at that time, or it was FVR which introduced agricultural programmes on community radio stations?
17. On the use of the frontline sms to remind farmers about the farming calendar, does FVR pay for these to the mobile service providers? How do the community radio stations benefit from the frontline sms system?
Appendix 5: Questionnaire for the Director of Nkhotakota AIDS Support Organization (NASO)

1. Can you tell me more about your organization and what it does in your community?

2. What is your major source of funding?

3. How do you reach out to these people in the communities with your programmes?

4. How do you use the community radio station?

5. How often is this done?

6. How effective is this communication through the community radio station?

7. How are the messages developed, do you do research to find out the needs of the people?

8. Are you satisfied with the way the community radio station is disseminating development news?

9. What do you think is the major achievement of this radio station?

10. Do you think the radio station is influencing the way people think about development and other issues affecting the community?

11. What would you consider to be the major weakness?
Appendix 6: Questionnaire for the Representative of Nkhotakota District Commissioner

1. What is your relationship with Nkhotakota Community Radio?
2. As government what kind of assistance do you give to the radio station?
3. What about implementing government programmes, do you use the radio station to reach out to the communities?
4. What programme do you have on the radio station?
5. What do you consider to be the major role of this community radio station?
6. Do you think that the radio station has contributed to the development of this community?
7. Can you cite a specific example?
8. What would you like to see the radio station doing?
9. In terms of accountability and transparency of elected leaders what is the role of the radio station?
10. Are there other organizations which are working with radio station?
11. Is the money that comes from the government and other organizations enough for the sustainability of the radio station?
12. How did this radio station come about?
13. In two or five years to come where do you want the radio station to be?
## Appendix 7: Table of Sponsors

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NO</th>
<th>SPONSOR ORGANIZATION</th>
<th>AREA OF SPONSORSHIP</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 1  | Sasakawa Global 2000                     | - Establishing farmers clubs  
- Promoting 1-1 maize planting                                                   |
| 2  | Farmers Voice Radio (FVR)                | - Establishing Radio Listening Clubs  
- Encouraging farmers to adopt modern farming techniques  
- Production of agricultural programmes.  
- Provide equipment for programme production  
- Establishing Village Banks                                  |
| 3  | Catholic Development Commission of Malawi (CADECOM) | - Promoting various development projects in the communities, i.e., construction of school blocks, promoting human rights, etc  
- Encouraging farmers to establish Village Banks                                |
| 4  | Total Land Care (TLC)                    | - Encourage farmers to adopt modern farming techniques  
- Train farmers to invest their money in farming  
- Conduct training workshops for farmers  
- Assists community radio stations with recording equipment for recording programmes  
- Assists farmers with pigs and goats to rear                                      |
| 5  | National Smallholders Farmers Association of Malawi (NASFAM) | - Assisting farmers with free farm inputs  
- Giving loans to farmers                                                           |
| 6  | Nkhotakota District Hospital             | - Providing health services  
- Promotion of health-related services                                            |
<p>| 7  | Monsanto Seed Company                   | - Promotion of seed varieties and herbicides                                         |
| 8  | Panaar seed Company                      | - Promotion of seed varieties                                                        |
| 9  | Seed Company of Malawi (SeedCo)         | - Promotion of seed varieties                                                        |
| 10 | National Insurance Company (NICO)       | - Helps farmers with drums for rain water harvesting and water storage for irrigation farming. |
| 11 | WACRAD                                   | - Promotion of safe motherhood                                                       |
| 12 | Ministry of Agriculture and              | - Promotion of modern farming practices                                               |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Organization</th>
<th>Activities</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| 13  | Nkhotakota AIDS Support Organization (NASO)                      | • HIV/AIDS awareness  
• Promoting behaviour change  
• Promoting voluntary HIV/AIDS Testing and Counseling (HTC) |
| 14  | Pakachere                                                       | • HIV/AIDS awareness and behaviour change through minidramas or radio series |
| 15  | Story Workshop                                                  | • HIV/AIDS awareness and behaviour change through mini-dramas and jingles |
| 16  | World Vision International                                       | • Implementing various development projects in the communities, i.e. provision of clean water, construction of school blocks |
Appendix 8: MAP OF NKHOTAKOTA DISTRICT SHOWING BOUNDARIES OF TAs